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# THE DIFFICULT TRANSITION FROM CLIENTELISM TO CITIZENSHIP

## Lessons from Mexico

By JONATHAN FOX\*

ELECTORAL competition is necessary but not sufficient for the consolidation of democratic regimes: not all elections are free and fair; nor do they necessarily lead to actual civilian rule or respect for human rights. If there is more to democracy than elections, then there is more to democratization than the transition to elections. But in spite of the rich literature on the emergence of electoral competition, the dynamics of political transitions toward respect for other fundamental democratic rights is still not well understood.

Political democracy is defined here in classic procedural terms: free and fair electoral contestation for governing offices based on universal suffrage, guaranteed freedoms of association and expression, accountability through the rule of law, and civilian control of the military.<sup>1</sup> Although analyses of democratization typically acknowledge that these are all necessary criteria, most examine only electoral competition.<sup>2</sup> This study, however, develops a framework for explaining progress toward *another* necessary condition for democratization: respect for associational

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<sup>1</sup> In Karl's terms, this is a middle-range definition of democracy, in that it falls between the narrow Schumpeterian range of contestation needed for strictly intraelite competition and approaches that depend on particular socioeconomic or participatory outcomes. See Terry Lynn Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 23 (October 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Democratization is defined here as the process of movement toward these conditions, while the consolidation of a democratic regime requires fulfilling all of them. Regimes can therefore be in transition to democracy—further along than liberalization—but still fall short of a democratic threshold. For further discussion, see Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

autonomy, which allows citizens to organize in defense of their own interests and identities without fear of external intervention or punishment.<sup>3</sup>

Most analysis of the emergence of electoral competition concentrates quite appropriately on high politics—on the pacts that define the rules of contestation and the founding elections that shape much of national politics. But to analyze the effective extension of the full range of citizenship rights *throughout* a society involves studying how most people are actually represented and governed—before, during, and after the historic turning points of high politics. In this process, intermediate associations are crucial complements to political parties because they are potentially more responsive to the inherent diversity of societal interests. Increasingly, political scientists are stressing the Tocquevillian idea that democratic governance depends on the density of associational life in civil society.<sup>4</sup> However, rather than attempt here to explain the empowerment of autonomous organizations in civil society (which often both predates and encourages electoral competition), this study focuses on the empirically related but analytically distinct question of how regimes begin to accept the *right* of citizens to pursue their goals autonomously.

As authoritarian regimes give way to electoral competition, the degree to which the full range of citizenship rights becomes respected varies quite widely both across and within national political systems.<sup>5</sup> For example, a wide range of political systems, including many that hold regular elections, oblige the poor to sacrifice their political rights if they want access to distributive programs. Such conditionality interferes with

<sup>3</sup> On associational autonomy as a democratic right, see Robert Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). Note that autonomy is inherently relational and is therefore a matter of degree. On the difference between autonomy and capacity, see Jonathan Fox, *The Politics of Food in Mexico: State Power and Social Mobilization* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), chap. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, "Secondary Associations in Democratic Governance," *Politics and Society* 20 (December 1992), on the U.S.; Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), on Italy; Jonathan Fox and Luis Hernández, "Mexico's Difficult Democracy: Grassroots Movements, NGOs and Local Government," *Alternatives* 17 (Spring 1992), on Mexico; and Kay Lawson and Peter Merkl, eds., *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), on broader problems of party representation. This paper treats intermediate associations as broadly representative though not necessarily democratic. On the problem of internal democracy within such organizations, see Jonathan Fox, "Democratic Rural Development: Leadership Accountability in Regional Peasant Organizations," *Development and Change* 23, no. 2 (1992). Note also that intermediate associations in developing countries often do not appear as formal organizations; they may be kinship or religiously based community associations, for example, as in many African or Middle Eastern societies.

<sup>5</sup> The guaranteed rights of political citizenship in a democracy include basic civil and political freedoms, majority rule with minority rights, and the equitable administration of justice, as well as respect for associational autonomy.

the exercise of citizenship rights and therefore undermines the consolidation of democratic regimes.<sup>6</sup> These relations of domination can be broadly understood in terms of *clientelism*, a relationship based on political subordination in exchange for material rewards.

It is, however, undeniably risky to use the concept of political clientelism to frame the study of the construction of the right to associational autonomy. Because analysts have found elements of clientelism in an extraordinarily wide range of hierarchical power relations, the usage can become so broad as to encompass almost any reciprocal exchange between actors of unequal power. Hence, it is difficult to distinguish what is specific to clientelism from most political bargaining more generally. But since its core notion captures the exchange of political rights for social benefits, it is worth trying to sharpen its boundaries.

How do subordinated people make the transition from clients to citizens? This study analyzes how less-than-democratic regimes come to respect autonomous, representative societal organizations as legitimate interlocutors. It draws on the Mexican experience to illustrate one important indicator of this transition: the process by which poor people gain access to whatever material resources the state has to offer without having to forfeit their right to articulate their interests autonomously.

Since clientelism is a form of bargaining, some degree of autonomy between the parties is inherent to it; yet its distinctive meaning derives from the significantly unequal constraints on that autonomy. For the purposes of this argument, the working definition of political clientelism is deliberately narrow, to highlight the process of transition from clientelistic to other kinds of unequal exchanges that permit somewhat greater associational autonomy. The focus here is on specifically *authoritarian* clientelism, where imbalanced bargaining relations require the enduring political subordination of clients and are reinforced by the threat of coercion. Such subordination can take various forms, ranging from vote buying by political machines, as under semicompetitive electoral regimes, to a strict prohibition on collective action, as under most military regimes, to controlled mass mobilization, as in communist or authoritarian populist systems.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Associational autonomy is an especially vital right for the poorest members of society, for two main reasons. First, they are usually the most vulnerable to state-sanctioned coercion should they express discontent. Second, their survival needs make them especially vulnerable to clientelistic incentives. Together, these threats and inducements inhibit autonomous collective action. See Ruth Collier and David Collier, "Inducements versus Constraints: Disaggregating 'Corporatism,'" *American Political Science Review* 73 (January 1979).

<sup>7</sup> The appearance of subordination should not be confused with actual submission, however; see James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); and idem, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New

POLITICAL CONFLICT AND THE EROSION OF CLIENTELISM:  
AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Although most studies of clientelism focus on how the relationship works rather than on how it changes, one group of analysts does show how political entrepreneurs build clientelistic systems, emphasizing the transition from patrimonial patronage to mass political machines.<sup>8</sup> The role of political action in explaining the breakdown of clientelism has received less attention, however. Most analysts explain the erosion of clientelism in terms of either gradual social changes, such as urbanization and education, or structural economic shifts, such as the commercialization of agriculture. But these secular trends are not sufficient explanations, since political action can either inhibit or accelerate the weakening of clientelism. Thus, where "traditional" patterns of deference erode, the

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Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Others stress the subjective importance of "trust" in such dependent relationships; see Luis Roniger, *Hierarchy and Trust in Modern Mexico and Brazil* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1990). For a view that stresses the role of coercion, see Peter Flynn, "Class, Clientelism, and Coercion: Some Mechanisms of Internal Dependency and Control," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 12, no. 2 (1974). For overviews of political clientelism, see Christopher Clapham, ed., *Private Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientelism in the Modern State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982); S. N. Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980); S. N. Eisenstadt and René Lemarchand, eds., *Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1981); Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury, eds., *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London: Duckworth, 1977); Robert R. Kaufman, "A Patron-Client Concept and Macropolitics: Prospects and Problems," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, no. 3 (1974); Alain Rouquié, "Client Control and Authoritarian Contexts," in Guy Hermet, Richard Rose, and Alain Rouquié, eds., *Elections without Choice* (New York: John Wiley, 1978); Steffen W. Schmidt et al., eds., *Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Arnold Strickon and Sidney Greenfield, eds., *Structure and Process in Latin America: Patronage, Clientage and Power Systems* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972). Note that the literature on political clientelism virtually stopped over a decade ago, long before the flowering of analysis of regime change. Few analysts explore how the persistence of machine politics affects the nature of transitions to civilian rule. For exceptions, see Frances Hagopian, "'Democracy by Undemocratic Means?' Elites, Political Pacts and Regime Transition in Brazil," *Comparative Political Studies* 23 (July 1990); idem, "The Compromised Consolidation: The Political Class in the Brazilian Transition," in Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela (fn. 2); and Guillermo O'Donnell, "Challenges to Democratization in Brazil," *World Policy Journal* 5, no. 2 (1988).

<sup>8</sup> On the construction of political machines, see, among others, Luigi Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," in Schmidt et al. (fn. 7); James C. Scott, "Corruption, Machine Politics, and Political Change," *American Political Science Review* 63 (December 1969); idem, *Comparative Political Corruption* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972); Martin Shefter, "The Electoral Foundations of the Political Machine: New York City, 1884-1897," in Joel Silbey et al., eds., *The History of American Electoral Behavior* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Steffen W. Schmidt, "The Transformation of Clientelism in Rural Colombia," in Schmidt et al. (fn. 7); Sidney Tarrow, *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); and Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

political effectiveness of clientelistic controls can be bolstered by threats of violence.<sup>9</sup> Note, for example, the extraordinary resilience of violent electoral machines in the backlands of Brazil, the Philippines, and Colombia in the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> And as the Mexican case shows, political entrepreneurs can replace rigid, antiquated controls with new, more sophisticated clientelistic arrangements without necessarily moving toward democratic pluralism. Nevertheless, the main point here is that if political action can create (or revive) clientelism, it can also undermine it.<sup>11</sup>

In developing a framework for analyzing the transition from clientelism to respect for citizenship rights, one can draw lessons from the interactive approach to the study of the transition to competitive electoral regimes.<sup>12</sup> For example, many authoritarian regimes became electorally competitive only after extended periods of repeated semicompetitive contests that strengthened democrats and weakened autocrats; this occurred in the 1980s in Brazil, Colombia, the Philippines, and Korea. Similarly, the right to associational autonomy, too, is constructed gradually and unevenly through cycles of conflict that leave nascent democratic forces with political resources to draw on in successive rounds. In contrast to cycles of semicompetitive electoral contests, however, the movements to broaden the political terms of access to social entitlements often unfold on extrainstitutional terrain (political parties, for instance, may not be the key actors), and their periodic cycles are certainly not regularly scheduled. Furthermore, the right to associational autonomy does not simply follow from national electoral change; the opening of political

<sup>9</sup> For discussions of how clientelism can evolve from patrimonial to repressive, increasing the role of coercion, see Anthony Hall, "Patron-Client Relations: Concepts and Terms," in Schmidt et al. (fn. 7); and James C. Scott and Benedict J. Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy: A Theory with Special Reference to Southeast Asia," in Schmidt et al. (fn. 7).

<sup>10</sup> See the following essays in Jonathan Fox, ed., *The Challenge of Rural Democratisation: Perspectives from Latin America and the Philippines* (London: Frank Cass, 1990) (also published as *Journal of Development Studies* 26 [July 1990]): Candido Grzybowski, "Rural Workers and Democratization in Brazil"; Francisco Lara, Jr., and Horacio Morales, Jr., "The Peasant Movement and the Challenge of Democratization in the Philippines"; and Leon Zamosc, "The Political Crisis and the Prospects for Rural Democracy in Colombia."

<sup>11</sup> Revolutions are the most obvious examples of political processes that can sweep away clientelistic systems, but they are rarely followed by respect for associational autonomy. New webs of clientelism can emerge in their wake, especially in rural areas. See, e.g., Jean C. Oi, "Communism and Clientelism: Rural Politics in China," *World Politics* 37 (January 1985). On the tensions over associational autonomy between peasant movements and left-wing political parties that claim to represent them in Latin America, see Jonathan Fox, "New Terrain for Rural Politics" *Report on the Americas* 25, no. 5 (1992).

<sup>12</sup> See Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

access to state entitlements can precede electoral competition, as in Mexico, though it is often encouraged by it.<sup>13</sup>

The causal argument here is that the right to associational autonomy is politically constructed through iterative cycles of conflict among three key actors: autonomous social movements, authoritarian elites reluctant to cede power, and reformist state managers—the latter defined as those willing to accept increased associational autonomy.<sup>14</sup> The argument is based on the assumption that as long as authoritarian elites remain united, there is little room for the construction of citizenship rights. If faced with legitimacy problems, however, authoritarian political elites sometimes split over how to respond—whether with repression or concessions.<sup>15</sup> In the first instance reformists, defined by their greater concern for political legitimacy and resulting preference for negotiation over coercion, may conflict with hard-line colleagues over whether and how to cede access to the state.<sup>16</sup> Second, if and when such cracks appear in the system, social movements often attempt to occupy them from below, demanding broader access to the state while trying to defend their capacity to articulate their own interests. Third, once triggered, these recursive cycles of bargaining between ruling hard-liners, reformist elites, and social movements can gradually increase official tolerance for auton-

<sup>13</sup> Note that the political terms of *access* to social entitlements are distinct from the *levels* of benefits, which are sometimes referred to as “social citizenship” rights. The argument here does not attempt to explain the determinants of the levels of material entitlements; they are logically and historically distinct from regime type in general and from the right to associational autonomy in particular. Democratic regimes, for example, may offer access to a narrow range of social rights without attaching political conditions (food stamps in the U.S.), whereas authoritarian regimes may offer a broad range of material entitlements in exchange for deference (as in communist and populist regimes). Analysts of the construction of rights have tended to focus either on electoral enfranchisement or on the extension of social welfare benefits, but not on the political terms of access to the latter. See, e.g., J. M. Barbalet, *Citizenship* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> Note that this argument does not attempt to account for the emergence of each of these three actors but rather shows how certain patterns of interaction among them can explain the construction of respect for associational autonomy. On cycles of social mobilization and reform, see Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: How They Succeed and Why They Fail* (New York: Pantheon, 1977); and Sidney Tarrow, *Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements and Cycles of Protest*, Occasional Paper no. 21, Western Societies Program (Ithaca, N.Y.: Center for International Studies, Cornell University, 1989). To frame the issue of associational autonomy as broadly as possible, this discussion does not detail the diverse range of repertoires of action and forms of representation among poor people's movements.

<sup>15</sup> For the purposes of this discussion, the trigger for division within authoritarian regimes is considered here to be contingent. Possible causes include economic crisis, international pressures, military defeat, and the “excessive” use of repression.

<sup>16</sup> When reformists deliberately encourage social mobilization to offset hard-line authoritarian rulers, they can be said to be pursuing a “sandwich strategy” for political change. See Fox (fn. 3). Other examples include the U.S. federal government's antipoverty and civil rights efforts in the early 1960s, Colombian agrarian reform policy in the late 1960s, and Gorbachev's glasnost policies of the late 1980s.

omous social organizations, often following a pattern of "two steps forward, one step back."<sup>17</sup>

Even though societal actors often fail to win their immediate demands, they may manage to conserve some degree of autonomy in the troughs between cycles of mobilization, a resource to be deployed at the next political opportunity. This process is highly uneven within nation-states. Societal groups gain legitimacy and leverage at very different rates and in different bargaining arenas.<sup>18</sup> This iterative framework suggests that the transition from clientelism to citizenship involves three distinct patterns of state-society relations within the same nation-state: redoubts of persistent authoritarian clientelism can coexist with new enclaves of pluralist tolerance, as well as with large gray areas of "semiclientelism" in between.<sup>19</sup> The analytical challenge is to explain changes in the relative weights of each of these distinct "subnational regimes."

The authoritarian and pluralistic poles of this proposed continuum from clientelism to citizenship are easily defined; but it is the multiplicity of political relationships in between that challenges analysts to develop categories appropriate to systems in transition (especially since many regimes in transition tend to get stuck somewhere short of a democratic threshold). This framework suggests that semiclientelism is a useful category for an exploration of those state-society relationships that fall in between authoritarian clientelism and pluralist citizenship rights.

If the authoritarian-clientelist combination of material inducements and coercive threats is to be effective, elites need to appear to be able to enforce compliance. If instead they lack the means to uncover, oversee, and punish noncompliance, then the deals they strike with their subordinates are much less enforceable. Semiclientelist power relations induce compliance more by the threat of the withdrawal of carrots than by the use of sticks.<sup>20</sup> Semiclientelism differs from authoritarian clientelism be-

<sup>17</sup> Note that in this argument, mass mobilization alone cannot win citizenship rights. If authoritarian elites remain united, they can simply respond with coercion rather than concessions. Even when reformists are present within the state, they can lose; cycles of bargaining may well fail to build democratic rights. If hard-liners prevail, they will repress social movements and purge reformists from the state (as in the downward spiral that followed El Salvador's 1979 reformist coup).

<sup>18</sup> In Mexico, for example, citizen's groups from the north have had much greater success at winning official respect than in the much poorer, largely indigenous southern states. Even within the south, results vary greatly across bargaining arenas; winning access to social programs is much easier than ending impunity for violent officials. Similarly, even in relatively democratic Brazil, official respect for human rights varies directly by the victims' race and region.

<sup>19</sup> Though analytically distinct, these categories often overlap in practice.

<sup>20</sup> Seen from the receiving end, the differences between the withdrawal of benefits and the threat of coercion are quite significant. Both can discourage autonomous collective action, but only one is potentially permanent in its effects.

cause it relies on unenforceable deals, while it differs from pluralism because state actors still attempt to violate the right to associational autonomy.<sup>21</sup>

The differences between these categories can be illustrated by the example of vote buying, a practice widely considered to violate basic democratic rights. To understand how the balance of power between patrons and clients can shift toward the client, one must examine the differences between authoritarian and semiclientelist vote buying. There is a qualitative difference between having the coercive capacity to require proof of compliance (such mechanisms abound) and using less violent electoral inducements that "trust" the voter to go along with the bargain. In some contexts cultural norms are sufficient to guarantee compliance, but political culture can change as regimes become more competitive.<sup>22</sup> The politics of trust is shaped by institutions. Ballot secrecy, for example, is one of those democratic formalities that is especially important to the weakest members of the polity—those most vulnerable to reprisals for voting the wrong way.<sup>23</sup> If civic mobilization and/or institutional change increases the actual secrecy of the ballot, then citizens can avoid the reprisals associated with rejecting authoritarian vote buyers and vote their conscience.

The Mexican experience is useful for exploring the transitions from clientelism to semiclientelism and citizenship, even though the political system is still largely dominated by an authoritarian corporatist brand of electoral machine politics. First, the Mexican state's hegemony has long

<sup>21</sup> The term pluralism refers here to respect for associational autonomy rather than to the political system as a whole. Access to social programs can be considered pluralistic when it is not conditioned on political subordination.

<sup>22</sup> Taiwan is a case where political attitudes and opportunities are changing quickly, showing how political action can undermine clientelism. Vote buying is still pervasive in Taiwan, and traditional norms of gratitude used to be sufficient to produce compliance. In the last several years, however, partly as the result of effective civic education campaigns, increasing numbers of voters accept the money and only comply symbolically. According to a recent study by the Center for Policy Studies at Sun Yat-Sen University, 44.8% of the population of Taiwan's second largest city were given money for their vote, but only 12.7% of them said they would actually vote for the candidate who bribed them; see Robin Herr, "A Call for Independence in Taiwan," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 5, 1993. Reportedly, one member of the family may return the favor with a vote for the ruling party while the rest feel free to vote their preference.

<sup>23</sup> In Colombia, for example, an apparently small change in ballot procedures after 1990 significantly weakened clientelistic bosses. Until then separate ballots were cast for each party, allowing bosses to check how people were going to vote while they waited in line. After 1990 the system was changed to a single ballot, which greatly increased ballot secrecy. Even where individual ballots might be secret, however, communities that are united in voting for the democratic opposition still reveal their dissent to authoritarian elites. In the key 1987 congressional elections in the Philippines, for example, government military units regularly assembled farmworkers to threaten them with reprisals should their villages vote for pro-land-reform candidates (author's field interviews).

been based on the successful clientelistic incorporation of the poor; understanding how respect for pluralism can be extended in this especially difficult case can shed light on the dynamics of change under less institutionalized regimes. Second, Mexico's two decades of stop-and-go political openings since the dramatic legitimacy crisis of 1968 make it possible to examine the ambiguous relationship between the liberalization of associational autonomy and increased electoral competition.

The empirical discussion begins with an analysis of Mexico's cycles of societal mobilization from below, openings from above, conflict, and backlash within both state and society. This interactive approach is then applied to an analysis of the determinants of respect for associational autonomy in the case of indigenous peoples' access to rural development programs.<sup>24</sup> The empirical analysis combines change over time in the course of three successive generations of targeted rural development programs with an explanation of the range of outcomes across a development policy that was especially promising in terms of increased respect for associational autonomy.

#### FILLING THE CRACKS IN THE MEXICAN SYSTEM

Ever since the legitimacy crisis that followed the harsh repression of the 1968 student movement, Mexico's ruling political class has sought ways to accommodate change without ceding power. The result has been recurrent cycles of conflict over the terms of state-society bargaining relations. From below, organizations of civil society have pushed the state to respect associational autonomy. From above, reformists have sought to displace machine-style authoritarian brokers whose intransigence provoked opposition and unrest, by creating alternative bargaining channels that bypassed parties—both official and opposition.

In Mexico machine-style political brokers play the key role in mediating state-society relations, both within and without the corporatist apparatus.<sup>25</sup> The classic political bargain required official incorporation of

<sup>24</sup> Classic individualistic ideas of citizenship may be inappropriate for non-Western social actors. For a critique of the imposition of foreign notions of citizenship on indigenous societies, see Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Liberal Democracy and *Ayllu* Democracy: The Case of Northern Potosí, Bolivia," in Fox (fn. 10). In part for this reason, this study analyzes associational autonomy in terms of the state's respect for ethnic and community-based groups rather than in terms of individual members of those communities.

<sup>25</sup> New historical research stresses that the coverage of Mexico's well-known corporatist organizations was partial rather than complete; see Jeffrey W. Rubin, "Popular Mobilization and the Myth of State Corporatism," in Joe Foweraker and Ann Craig, eds., *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1990). On rural bosses, see Roger Bartra, ed., *Caciquismo y poder político en el México rural* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1975); and Fox (fn. 3). On elite political clientelism, see Roderic A. Camp, "Camarillas in

social groups under state tutelage in exchange for access to social programs. Mass protest that was strictly "social" was sometimes tolerated, but if it was perceived as "political" (that is, as challenging the hegemony of the ruling party) the usual mix of partial concessions with repression shifted toward the latter. Movements were more likely to be labeled as political if they expressed their autonomy by publicly rejecting official subordination.<sup>26</sup>

The pyramid of brokers managed challenges to stability for decades, but as they became increasingly ossified and provoked growing resentment, social groups sought greater autonomy. By the 1980s ascendant technocrats who viewed the old-fashioned brokers as both expensive and politically ineffective moved social policy away from reliance on traditional patronage and generalized subsidies toward measures that ostensibly targeted the poor directly. This process favored a mix of official and nonpartisan social movements. In contrast to the repression of the past, this new bargaining style recognized autonomous movement leaders as legitimate interlocutors as long as they steered clear of overt political opposition.

This new approach shifted the mix of clientelistic carrots and sticks faced by social movements. Where state managers replaced their traditional crude insistence on ruling party control with more subtle forms of controlling access to the system, one can speak of emerging semiclientelistic relations. Such relationships are not pluralistic, however, because they still discourage any questioning of the government's broader socioeconomic policies and its controversial electoral practices. Thus, while the transition from clientelism to semiclientelism may look like a step in the direction of responsive government, the erosion of strict controls on voter compliance may also *increase* the incentives for state managers to rely on

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Mexican Politics: The Case of the Salinas Cabinet," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 6 (Winter 1990); Miguel Angel Centeno and Sylvia Maxfield, "The Marriage of Finance and Order: Changes in the Mexican Political Elite," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 (February 1992); Susan Kaufman Purcell and John F. H. Purcell, "State and Society in Mexico: Must a Stable Polity Be Institutionalized?" *World Politics* 32 (January 1980); and Peter Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

<sup>26</sup> This dichotomy of "official versus independent" social movements was especially pronounced in the 1970s and 1980s, as collective resistance to the state grew. By the 1990s social movements increasingly stressed autonomy from political parties in general, since contestational "independence" had often involved subordination to opposition parties. See Jonathan Fox and Gustavo Gordillo, "Between State and Market: The Campesinos' Quest for Autonomy," in Wayne A. Cornelius, Judith Gentleman, and Peter H. Smith, eds., *Mexico's Alternative Political Futures* (La Jolla: UCSD, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1989); Foweraker and Craig (fn. 25); and Judith Adler Hellman "The Study of New Social Movements in Latin America and the Question of Autonomy," in Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez, eds., *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992).

electoral fraud to minimize uncertainty. This may be happening in Mexico.<sup>27</sup>

It is important to point out that Mexico's postrevolutionary political class has a long tradition of mobilizing contending social groups to settle its own internal conflicts. With the 1970s and 1980s social movements were better able to retain some degree of autonomy in their bargaining with the state. Insofar as movements could conserve these small increases in tolerance for autonomy in the troughs between waves of mobilization, they could increase their capacity to take advantage of the next political opportunity.

These conflict cycles led to three distinct patterns of interaction between the state and social movements: continued clientelism, modernized semiclientelism, and more pluralistic bargaining, distributed unevenly both geographically and socially. As the autonomous organizations of civil society broadened and deepened their still-nascent roots, the relative weights of these patterns changed and the pluralist enclaves grew over time. The following analysis traces this process in the Mexican environment most hostile to the consolidation of autonomous representative organizations: the poorest, largely indigenous rural regions.<sup>28</sup>

#### OPENINGS FROM ABOVE MEET MOBILIZATION FROM BELOW

Since the early 1970s reformist policymakers have promoted three successive rural development programs that bypassed and competed with the rest of the state apparatus. These reformists never fully controlled policy implementation, but they were sometimes sufficiently influential to open up alternative channels to antipoverty programs for the rural poor, allowing them to bypass authoritarian bosses. The first cycle of reform was launched during a wave of nationalist populism in the early

<sup>27</sup> Distributing patronage through semiclientelistic means (i.e., nonenforceable deals) can also make fraudulent electoral outcomes seem more politically plausible to the electorate, since even individuals who accepted the incentives but voted their conscience anyway cannot be sure how many others did the same. This in turn undermines the potential for collective action in defense of clean elections.

<sup>28</sup> Although similar cycles of social mobilization can also be found in Mexican urban politics, their emergence in remote rural areas as well shows that the erosion of clientelism can be encouraged by strategic political action and is not driven exclusively by secular socioeconomic trends such as urbanization. On urban politics and the poor, see Vivienne Bennett, "The Evolution of Urban Popular Movements in Mexico between 1968 and 1988," in Escobar and Alvarez (fn. 26); Wayne Cornelius, *Politics and the Migrant Poor in Mexico City* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975); Susan Eckstein, *The Poverty of Revolution*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Fox and Hernández (fn. 4); and Peter Ward, *Welfare Politics in Mexico* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986).

1970s, in the wake of the student movement and in response to growing rural protest. The second was initiated in 1979 from above; social pressures had ebbed, but the preemptive goal was to create channels to contain future waves. The third targeted reform responded to the regime's first national electoral challenge in decades, extending into urban areas and building on the policy lessons and organizations left by the previous cycles. In each cycle of distributive reform, high-level, moderate reformists tried to offset more authoritarian elites by recruiting radical reformists at lower levels to promote contained social mobilization. They attempted to create counterweights to displace more rigid elites, though not to share power with the opposition. The goal was to induce and channel conflict in the short run in order to make the regime more stable in the long run.

In practice, most of these distributive programs were either captured by traditional authoritarian elements or delivered through semiclientelistic channels, yet each also involved small but significant openings to the autonomous organizations of civil society. Since this inquiry focuses on the opening of pluralistic access, the discussion concentrates on the dynamics of those exceptional programs that permitted the creation of new political space. The first two rural development reform cycles are reviewed briefly to show how mobilization from below interacted with openings from above. This is followed by an analysis of Mexico's most recent antipoverty strategy, the National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL).

### THE RURAL INVESTMENT PROGRAM (PIDER)

Mexico launched the Program for Rural Development Investments (PIDER) in 1973. After decades of antipeasant policies, rapidly growing social pressures overwhelmed the official corporatist organizations inherited from the land reform of the 1930s. Waves of radical direct action swept the countryside, and guerrilla movements emerged in the most polarized regions. Reformists gained leverage within the state and advocated recognition of some dissident movements as a way of channeling their mobilization. Large-scale World Bank funding for PIDER made this task easier.

PIDER claimed to target the rural poor, rather than the powerful elites who had captured most of the benefits of previous development programs. In practice, however, community participation was largely nominal<sup>29</sup>—except where reformists controlled actual project implemen-

<sup>29</sup> According to one PIDER official: "If participation is stimulated too much it gets out of PIDER's control and brings political problems. It becomes a political problem for PIDER when

tation. They targeted investments to political hot spots as concessions to independent mass movements. The Community Access Road program, for example, created employment and increased freedom of movement in some of the poorest and most isolated regions, undermining both traditional authoritarian bosses and incipient guerrilla groups. In some areas "PIDER Brigades" successfully organized peasant protest against regional bosses for broader distribution of credit and fertilizer.<sup>30</sup> However, some reformists (including a future president) concerned with restoring the system's legitimacy in the longer run concluded that they needed to open up broader channels of participation and thereby weaken entrenched rural bosses more systematically.<sup>31</sup>

#### THE VILLAGE FOOD STORE PROGRAM (CONASUPO-COPLAMAR)<sup>32</sup>

The national crisis surrounding the 1976 presidential succession was followed by an emphasis on restoring investor confidence. The partial political opening of antipoverty policy closed up. Reformers then tried to channel dissent by liberalizing electoral politics. As the oil boom revived the economy in the late 1970s, the president's concern shifted to legitimation, which allowed for the creation of a more open channel for delivering resources to the very poor. The National Plan for Depressed Zones and Marginal Groups (COPLAMAR), together with the National Basic Foods Company (CONASUPO), organized an extensive network of village food stores designed to weaken local monopolies over staples in remote rural areas. As with PIDER, the degree to which the CONASUPO-COPLAMAR village store program actually encouraged or tolerated autonomous mo-

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it begins to break up or threaten commercial interests"; quoted in Merilee Grindle, "Official Interpretations of Rural Underdevelopment: Mexico in the 1970s," *Working Papers in U.S.-Mexican Studies* 20 (1981), 43. See also Michael Cernea, *A Social Methodology for Community Participation in Local Investment: The Experience of Mexico's PIDER Program*, World Bank Staff Working Paper no. 598 (Washington D.C.: World Bank, August 1983); and Daniel Noah Lindheim, "Regional Development and Deliberate Social Change: Integrated Rural Development in Mexico" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1986).

<sup>30</sup> In one notable case, the PIDER Brigade was so effective at encouraging autonomous mobilization that the governor expelled it from the state; see Fox (fn. 4).

<sup>31</sup> Notably, Carlos Salinas de Gortari's dissertation concluded that because of the ineffectiveness and corruption of the conventional state apparatus, the regime lost the political pay-off associated with increased antipoverty spending: "The State [must] rely on a corps of leaders of local development programs who will be attentive to the problems encountered in the delivery of development projects to targeted communities. . . . They must lead, not in the hierarchic sense of demanding obedience, but in the sense of coordinating and orienting a decision-making process in which the members of affected communities participate." See Carlos Salinas de Gortari, *Political Participation, Public Investment, and Support for the System: A Comparative Study of Rural Communities in Mexico*, Research Report Series 35 (La Jolla: UCSD, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1982), 41-42.

<sup>32</sup> This section draws from the more detailed discussion in Fox (fn. 3).

bilization varied greatly in practice, but the creation of political space was much more systematic. Radical reformist organizers deliberately encouraged the creation of democratic regional consumer organizations to challenge corrupt private and bureaucratic elites.

The program provided three key resources for community organizing. First, the offer of cheap staple foods created a material incentive for participation to ensure its delivery to the villages. Second, the program's official legitimacy limited the violent repression often directed against autonomous grassroots mobilization. The regional elites whose political and commercial monopolies were threatened did fight back and most of the reformist organizers were eventually purged. The program survived nevertheless. Third, the program gave the community access to transportation, which had formerly been tightly controlled by rent-seeking, often violent elites. With over three thousand trucks, the program could both stock more than twelve thousand village stores and regularly bring together large numbers of otherwise dispersed local delegates to create regionwide community food councils. As one might expect, elites often captured the official channels for poor people's representation: most community food councils were at best consultative and failed to play their intended role as autonomous, "coresponsible" partners in food distribution operations. But unlike previous populist reforms, CONASUPO-COPLAMAR did not systematically make political subordination a condition of material benefits.

While participatory traditions had survived at the village level, especially in indigenous areas, only rarely had isolated communities been able to overcome the powerful obstacles to *regionwide* organization. Regional peasant organizations are especially important in representing the interests of the rural poor because they have the potential to combine the clout of a larger group with the responsiveness of smaller associations. Village-level groups are easily isolated by their enemies, while national peasant organizations are usually democratic only insofar as they are made up of representative regional building blocks. In areas where loyalties rarely extended beyond family and village, the warehouses and food councils encouraged the emergence of regional collective identities. This targeted social program survived Mexico's post-1982 economic crisis; it had generated an organized, relatively autonomous constituency, which greatly raised the potential political cost to the state of reneging on its commitment to the program. By the time the rural consumer movement peaked in 1985, more than one-fourth of community food councils had gained the capacity to articulate their interests autonomously, as evidenced by their willingness to join a national network to protest corrupt and au-

thoritarian policy implementation. For one to two million of Mexico's most impoverished rural people, the food councils were among the first genuinely mass-based, regionwide representative organizations of any kind.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, the community food councils became a new, two-way bridge between state and societal actors. From above, state reformists structured new patterns of representation within rural society. From below, these new channels offered opportunities for autonomous interest articulation in some regions, which in turn left an imprint on the state. This "objective alliance" between social movements and reformists within the government food distribution company permitted the consolidation of effective mechanisms of citizen oversight, making it the first national experience with what would later be called *concertación social*.<sup>34</sup> This new bargaining relationship moved away from traditional forms of subordination to a mix of semiclientelism and respect for autonomy.

#### REVITALIZING SINGLE-PARTY RULE: THE NATIONAL SOLIDARITY PROGRAM

After the 1982 collapse of the oil/debt boom, social spending was reduced by cutting generalized programs and clientelistic patronage while strengthening the more targeted programs.<sup>35</sup> By the mid-1980s, with the ruling party under unprecedented electoral pressure from the Right, some federal-level reformists ceded new space to the Left in the nonelectoral arena. Where autonomous social organizations were sufficiently powerful, reformists sometimes stopped requiring overt political subordination in exchange for material concessions, as in the case of Mexico City's housing movements in the aftermath of the earthquake. The reformists were still overshadowed, however, by the technocrats who made macroeconomic policy, the "dinosaurs" in the corporatist sectors of the party, and the government "alchemists" who continued to handle elections. Then, in the 1988 presidential election, Mexico's dominant party was shaken by a surprise challenge from the voters.

After a hotly disputed race marred by widespread fraud, President Carlos Salinas took office declaring the end of the one-party system. He promised a new relationship between state and society, seeking to revive citizen confidence by bypassing both the opposition and the traditional

<sup>33</sup> For the geographic distribution of autonomous Food Councils, see Fox (fn. 3).

<sup>34</sup> *Concertación* in the Mexican context has been translated in a variety of ways, ranging from "social dialogue" to "corporate agreements."

<sup>35</sup> This shift was especially clear in the area of urban consumer food subsidies, which supported a wide range of staples until the mid-1980s. Then the government began limiting food subsidies to tortillas and milk for means-tested low-income city dwellers.

corporatist apparatus. The traditional bureaucratic and corporatist channels were too inefficient to buffer the social costs of austerity that had fueled the 1988 opposition. Social spending would be increased, but targeted through new, less leaky channels that would have the largest possible positive impact on the president's public image. Social spending was brought under the umbrella of the National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL), which claimed to shift the balance of power away from the bureaucracy and toward organized citizens.<sup>36</sup> The impact on poverty was debated, but it worked politically; the president and Solidarity both had very high 1991 opinion poll ratings, much higher than those of the official party.<sup>37</sup>

Solidarity was clearly politically motivated in that it skillfully allocated disproportionate amounts of resources to recover areas of strong center-left electoral opposition. For example, 12 percent of Solidarity's entire 1992 budget went to the relatively small state of Michoacán, the main base of the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), just before the heated gubernatorial elections.<sup>38</sup> One-fourth of the twenty-five hundred Solidarity promoters nationally were deployed there. The geographical targeting of spending to swing districts does not necessarily mean that access to the program's benefits was systematically conditioned on traditional forms of subordination, however.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Solidarity proclaimed that its "new dynamic . . . breaks with bureaucratic atavism and administrative rigidity. Public servants increasingly share a vocation for dialogue, agreement, *concertación* and direct, coresponsible work with the citizenry, which also assumes an increasingly active and leading role in the actions intended to improve their standard of living." See Carlos Rojas et al., *Solidaridad a Debate* (Mexico City: El Nacional, 1991), 23.

<sup>37</sup> For comprehensive overviews of PRONASOL politics, see Denise Dresser, *Neopopulist Solutions to Neoliberal Problems: Mexico's National Solidarity Program*, Current Issues Brief no. 3 (La Jolla: UCSD, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1991); idem, "Pronasol: los dilemas de la gobernabilidad," *El Cotidiano* 49 (July-August 1992). See also the *Los Angeles Times* poll, October 22, 1991. Solidarity spending rose sharply just before the 1991 midterm elections and was widely credited with helping to revive the official party's electoral fortunes, although its impact is difficult to disentangle from reduced inflation and the beginnings of economic growth. For journalistic accounts of direct electoral use of Solidarity funding, see Pascal Beltrán del Río, "Solidaridad, oxígeno para el PRI, en el rescate de votos," *Proceso* 718 (August 6, 1990); idem, "El memorandum de Pichardo, prueba de que el Pronasol es para servir al PRI," *Proceso* 730 (October 29, 1990); Guillermo Correa, "EL PRONASOL, que nació como esperanza, ha generado corrupción y protestas," *Proceso* 727 (October 8, 1990); and Ciro Gómez Leyva, "Solidaridad gratuita en todas las pantallas," *Este País* 7 (October 1991).

<sup>38</sup> Tim Golden, "Point of Attack for Mexico's Retooled Party Machine: The Leftist Stronghold," *New York Times*, July 12, 1992. See also Jesús Cantú, "Solidaridad, además de electorero, se manejó en Michoacán coercitivamente," *Proceso* 819 (July 13, 1992). In addition, the governor's election campaign expenses reportedly topped U.S. \$30 million, almost \$80 per vote officially cast for the PRI; see Elías Chávez, "Michoacán: cada voto costó 239,188 pesos; cada voto del PRD costó 6,916 pesos," *Proceso* 821 (July 27, 1992). For a state-level statistical analysis of electoral targeting, see Juan Molinar and Jeffrey Weldon, "Electoral Determinants and Consequences of National Solidarity," in Wayne Cornelius, Ann Craig, and Jonathan Fox, eds., *Transforming State-Society Relations in Mexico: The National Solidarity Strategy* (La Jolla: UCSD, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, forthcoming).

<sup>39</sup> So far, much of the debate surrounding Solidarity's political character has been based

Solidarity officially targets the urban poor, peasants, and indigenous peoples, with various programs for sewage and potable water, health, education, food distribution, electrification, street paving, housing, and soft loans for low-income rural producers.<sup>40</sup> Its early accomplishments in building physical infrastructure were dramatic, delivering services to thousands of communities. At the receiving end, Solidarity usually required beneficiaries to form local Solidarity committees, which in turn could choose from a fixed menu of public works (for example, electrification, paved roads, school repair).

Although Solidarity's official discourse stressing participation and co-responsibility was drawn from earlier PIDER and village food-store programs of the 1970s and 1980s, four differences were especially notable. First, Solidarity responded directly to an electoral challenge. Second, it focused on the municipality, not just federal agencies, for delivery of services. Third, it concentrated on the urban poor, using lessons from rural development. Fourth, its ideological thrust was much more prominent, promoting the idea of a partnership between state and society.

Most Solidarity funding was distributed through targeted grants to state and municipal governments.<sup>41</sup> The actual degree of public accountability and antipoverty targeting depended in part on whether local governments were democratically elected. Even where majority rule prevailed, however, there was no guarantee that Solidarity funding would

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more on ideological polemic than on empirical evidence, but the most plausible hypothesis is that, on balance, most of the electorally targeted spending was probably delivered through semiclientelist means. The basis for this general proposition, which will not be tested here, is that since most Solidarity programs were delivered from outside the community, they lacked the official party's once-powerful capacity to monitor and punish noncompliance at the individual level. As long as fraud remains an option for the regime, however, it can reduce the importance of individual compliance. Recently, most electoral manipulation appears to have occurred before election day. For example, over one hundred thousand likely opposition voters were allegedly "shaved" from the registration rolls in Michoacán, especially in urban PRD strongholds. See Ted Bardacke, "The Lion Learns New Tricks," *El Financiero Internacional*, July 20, 1992. It must also be noted that the regime still uses sticks as well as carrots; selective political violence against the Left also continues with impunity. The PRD reported that 230 of its members had been killed for political reasons since 1988 (*La Jornada*, May 11, 1993). See also America's Watch, *Human Rights in Mexico: A Policy of Impunity* (New York: America's Watch, 1990); idem, "Unceasing Abuses: Human Rights in Mexico One Year after the Introduction of Reform" (New York: America's Watch, September 1991); and PRD Human Rights Commission, *The Political Violence in Mexico: A Human Rights Affair* (Mexico City: Human Rights Commission Parliamentary Group, April 1992).

<sup>40</sup> In addition to provision of public goods, this wide range of programs also included many with benefits that were much more divisible and therefore more vulnerable to local elite diversion (for example, soft loans for peasant producers). This distinction is central to the analysis of targeting. See Judith Tendler, *Rural Projects through Urban Eyes: An Interpretation of the World Bank's New-Style Rural Development Projects* Working Paper 532 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1982).

<sup>41</sup> Solidarity spending is allocated at the president's discretion, as distinct from Mexico's official revenue-sharing, which is allocated according to technical formulas. See John Bailey, "Centralism and Political Change in Mexico: The Case of National Solidarity," in Cornelius, Craig, and Fox (fn. 38).

reach the poorest in society. Even if public works were built in poor regions, the electoral logic of high-profile bridges, highways, park benches, and basketball courts had little to do with alleviating poverty. According to one top Solidarity policymaker, for example, less than 40 percent of its 1991 budget should really be considered antipoverty spending, since the rest consisted of untargeted public works.

Solidarity's declared emphasis on strengthening the municipality differed notably from previous reforms of social policy. Where opposition political parties managed both to win over the majority of voters and to get their municipal victories recognized, federal funders appeared not to discriminate, since Solidarity spent money in almost all opposition municipalities. But many opposition mayors protested that the program bypassed them completely, linking the state and federal government directly to local Solidarity committees in their jurisdictions. The most notable case was Michoacán's state capital, the largest city with a PRD mayor.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, where democracy did not prevail at the municipal level and citizens' groups persisted in pressing charges of fraud, they tended to be excluded from Solidarity.

Overall, Solidarity appeared to centralize power, promoting a symbolic link between the president and the local community, often bypassing both traditional political bosses and the opposition. This provoked serious subterranean conflicts between "*salinistas*" at the federal level and more traditional state authorities in the ruling party.<sup>43</sup> Solidarity proclaimed the creation of over one hundred thousand local committees, with an average of about 120 members each, and they became increasingly important as counterweights to the official party apparatus. One top Solidarity official estimates that as many as 40 percent of the committees had actually become local actors by 1993. In conflict with the party's traditional corporatist sectors, the president openly encouraged the local Solidarity committees to build statewide and possibly national organizations with what he called the "new mass politics of the Mexican state."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> See Cantú (fn. 38). On the PRD, see Jonathan Fox and Julio Moguel, "Pluralism and Anti-Poverty Policy in Mexico: The Experience of Left Opposition Municipal Governments," in Victoria Rodríguez and Peter Ward, eds., *Opposition Government in Mexico: Past Experiences and Future Opportunities* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, forthcoming); and on the National Action Party state government in Baja California Norte, see Gerardo Albarrán de Alba, "Con Pronasol, la necesidad de la gente se usa electoralmente: Ruffo," *Proceso*, no. 829, September 21, 1992. The pattern was not consistent, since some opposition municipalities of both Right and Left managed to bargain for control over PRONASOL resources.

<sup>43</sup> See Dresser (fn. 37, 1991 and 1992); and Jorge Fernández, "El PRI ante su propia transición," *Unomásuno*, November 7, 1991.

<sup>44</sup> In this context, the president reportedly once told the following to a longtime friend, a

Solidarity had a mixed record with autonomous social organizations, recognizing some while challenging others. In some cases, Solidarity agreements permitted independent poor people's organizations to bypass hostile governors; this kind of federal-local alliance permitted the Popular Defense Committee (CDP) to win the mayoralty of the state capital of Durango, displacing regional PRI elites.<sup>45</sup> Where especially authoritarian governors managed to exclude autonomous social organizations, however, they used Solidarity programs to promote competing development and welfare projects and reinforced the most authoritarian elements within the ruling party (for example, in Guerrero). In many areas the local Solidarity committees appeared to reflect the "modernization" of clientelistic control, as poor people in need of basic services shifted their patrons from regional elites to federal officials.

The broader question is, what exactly was the combination of clientelist, semiclientelist, and pluralistic patterns of policy implementation embedded within Solidarity's "new mass politics"? Because of the extraordinary heterogeneity of the programs under Solidarity's banner, systematic generalization awaits further empirical research. The remainder of this essay explains the limits and possibilities for respect for associational autonomy in a limiting case, one of the most potentially "propluralism" Solidarity programs.

#### TARGETING THE POOREST: SOLIDARITY BOLSTERS THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS INSTITUTE

The National Indigenous Institute (INI) carries out some of Solidarity's most innovative development projects. Mexico's fifty-six indigenous peoples represent 10–15 percent of the nation's population and almost one-third of the fourteen million Mexicans officially considered to be in "extreme poverty." With Solidarity, INI's budget increased eighteenfold

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historic radical leader of the urban popular movement: "You were my teacher: everywhere I go I leave a base of support." At a meeting of five hundred representatives of five thousand urban Solidarity committees, for example, the president called for the creation of a national neighborhood network outside the ruling party. See Emilio Lomas, "La democracia ya no es de las cúpulas, afirma Salinas," *La Jornada*, September 13, 1991; idem, "Salinas: nueva relación Estado-sociedad civil," *La Jornada*, September 15, 1991. Midway through the Salinas presidency, his advisers secretly debated three options—use the committees to build a new reform party, fold them openly into the official party, or keep them relatively nonpartisan. The latter position reportedly won.

<sup>45</sup> The CDP won the mayoralty in 1992 without allying with either the PAN or the PRD, leading some observers to suggest its access to Solidarity resources moderated its approach to national politics. See Paul Haber, "Collective Dissent in Mexico: The Political Outcome of Contemporary Urban Popular Movements" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1992); idem, "Political Change in Durango: The Role of National Solidarity," in Cornelius, Craig, and Fox (fn. 38).

during the first three years of the Salinas government.<sup>46</sup> Most indigenous peoples also happen to live in the rural central and southern regions that provided Salinas with his official margin of victory in the 1988 presidential elections.<sup>47</sup> Most of INI's budget had tended to go to its own staff rather than to indigenous economic development.<sup>48</sup> With Solidarity funding, however, INI could transform itself from a service provider into an actual economic development agency.<sup>49</sup> But money alone was not enough; INI's capacity to implement innovative policy also depended on the role of a reform faction still embedded in the agency since past openings. Since its founding in 1948, INI's history has been shaped by a shifting internal balance of forces among three factions: authoritarian patrons primarily identified with the ruling party and local elites, semiclientelist opponents of local elite domination of indigenous peoples who did not support independent demand making, and pluralists who supported autonomous self-organization for indigenous rights. The latter group has long provided only a minority of local outreach staff, who rarely managed to have any input into INI policy-making. INI officials stressed that they could be "faithful" to Solidarity principles of participation, pluralism, and transparency because most of their development funds were distributed directly, bypassing municipal and state authorities that were often openly racist.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> According to INI's annual report, its budget for the 1991 fiscal year was U.S. \$140 million. President Salinas named Arturo Warman, PADER veteran and one of Mexico's most distinguished anthropologists, as INI director. Solidarity's overall coordinator, Carlos Rojas, had worked for INI in Veracruz.

<sup>47</sup> Many Mexican anthropologists see indigenous voting patterns in terms of local "short-term considerations that have nothing to do with political programs that propose alternative models for the future. The vote is seen more as a resource for here and now, [for] finishing a road, building a school or a drinking water system; [the] small benefits that help to resolve ancestral problems which shape their daily lives"; see Guillermo Bonfil, *Mexico Profundo: Una civilización negada* (Mexico City: Grijalbo/CONACULT, 1990), iii. Indeed, parties are not present in most indigenous regions (though this began to change after 1988). The analytical problem is to distinguish cause from effect. If opposition political parties fail to champion indigenous rights, then isolated villagers have few incentives to take the serious risks inherent in partisan collective action, especially when it so often appears unviable. As voters, they may not lack national political preferences as much as they lack meaningful national political choices.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., see Juan Flores, "Proyectos de Etnodesarrollo = los ricos más ricos y los pobres más pobres," *Etnias* 2 (January 1991); and Alvaro González, Teresa Valdivia, and Martha Rees, "Evaluación de los Programas Agrícolas del INI: Chiapas, Puebla y Oaxaca" (Paper presented at the Society for Applied Anthropology, Oaxaca, April 1987).

<sup>49</sup> INI's other new initiatives during the Salinas administration included a human rights program that released over six thousand indigenous prisoners, as well as promotion of a constitutional amendment that for the first time officially recognized Mexico as a multicultural society. As of mid-1993 human rights groups campaigned for the freedom of several thousand indigenous prisoners who remained in jail without due process.

<sup>50</sup> One INI official also stressed that his staff was different from that of most Solidarity programs because they were "usually not in any political party. It's very unusual that INI personnel are in the PRI—but they aren't in the [opposition] PRD either. They aren't people

INI had nominally supported the participation of indigenous organizations since the mid-1970s, but for the first time the agency committed itself explicitly to a pluralistic bargaining process. Now, INI was to

*contribute to the strengthening of indigenous organizations, increasing their autonomy and their capacity for representation and [project] management. . . . All the representative and legally constituted organizations can be subjects of these *concertación* processes, without any political or religious discrimination. . . . Public institutions will abstain from intervening in the internal decisions of the organizations with which INI has concerted actions.*<sup>51</sup>

How did INI put these policy guidelines into practice? This question is best answered by examining INI's largest economic development program, the Regional Solidarity Funds (FRS).<sup>52</sup> In principle, these funds went farther than most other Solidarity programs in developing a pluralist relationship between the state and organized citizens, for two reasons. First, the state devolved *regional* development decision making to civil society, rather than micromanaging each local project from above. Second, the interlocutors were supposed to be *systematically* made up of autonomous councils of representative organizations, in contrast to the ad hoc and discretionary relationships with autonomous groups that predominated elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> Ostensibly, elected officials were not involved, and government-affiliated organizations participated in the Regional Funds just like any other producer group.<sup>54</sup>

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who are going to induce [i.e., manipulate] or condition." He claimed that because they work in such remote regions, "they will work with existing organizations—they can't invent others."

<sup>51</sup> INI, 1990, 41–42; emphasis added. Participation is limited to policy implementation here. INI continued to reject the long-standing demands of indigenous groups for greater involvement in the policy process itself. Some of INI's most reformist policymakers tried this in 1983, but they were quickly purged.

<sup>52</sup> INI's other main economic program was its support for coffee producers after the abrupt withdrawal of the Mexican Coffee Institute from the market. Two-thirds of coffee producers are indigenous, accounting for 30 percent of national production and one-third of coffee lands; see INI, *Programa Nacional de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 1991–1994* (Mexico City: INI, 1990), 17. INI's coffee program involved both pluralistic relations with autonomous producer organizations and semiclientelist relations with INI-sponsored local Solidarity committees. See Luis Hernández and Fernando Celis, "Solidarity and the New Campesino Movement: The Case of Coffee Production," in Cornelius, Craig, and Fox (fn. 38).

<sup>53</sup> INI described the FRS's in explicitly political terms: "The Funds are an innovative process [to] increase the participatory role of civil society in decision making and in the definition of policy, which reflects a change in state-society relations. The relationship of coresponsibility established between the government and the indigenous population implies a turnaround in the role of [government] institutions to avoid reproducing paternalistic and vertical attitudes that interfere with indigenous peoples' development"; see INI, "Manual de Operación de los Fondos Regionales de Solidaridad para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas" (Unpublished manuscript, Mexico City, November 1991), 2. This statement was dropped from the version eventually published for mass distribution in 1993.

<sup>54</sup> INI also encouraged the FRS's to go beyond economic support for production projects and

The Regional Funds were launched in 1990. Each INI field outreach office convened a general assembly of the formal and informal community-based social and economic organizations in its area of influence. The general assembly was to elect a leadership council (LC), which would actually operate the fund and evaluate project proposals submitted from the organizations of the region. Loans could be for a single crop cycle or for as long as several years and could cover a broad range of economic activities. In theory, those with regionwide multiplier effects were to be given preference over projects whose benefits were limited to small groups. In practice, however, projects ranged from tiny family enterprises and corrupt clientelistic payoffs to long-term investments in group marketing that actually had regionwide development impact.

After the first two years INI's internal evaluations found that between one-fourth and one-third of the Regional Funds were being consolidated under indigenous organization control, a comparable share were failing, in part due to capture by authoritarian elites, and a plurality were still run by INI outreach staff.<sup>55</sup> A variety of factors account for the mixed performance, including continuing INI semiclientelism, uneven levels of indigenous organizational development, and outright authoritarian exclusion. The most consolidated funds emerged in regions where two factors came together: first, that indigenous producer groups were already well organized, and second, that INI officials were either willing or obliged to cede power over funding.

#### LEADERSHIP COUNCIL CONSOLIDATION: ARE ADVERSARIES INCLUDED?

The Regional Funds were the most promising "propluralism" case within Solidarity, but to what degree did the state actually share power with civil society? The answer requires a detailed study of who was actually represented by each leadership council and of the extent to which those that were representative gained autonomy vis-à-vis INI. Administrators were to provide technical support for project design but were not to intervene in the actual decision-making process. Nevertheless, the official financial procedures required that local INI directors co-sign project

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become advocates for indigenous communities in the broader public investment allocation process; the effort was largely unsuccessful.

<sup>55</sup> The more consolidated Regional Funds were reportedly in Veracruz, Chiapas, and Oaxaca, while those in the Huasteca, Chihuahua, and the Yucatán peninsula did poorly. Tabasco was especially disastrous: the governor tried to impose a corrupt crony as local INI director, which provoked a mass protest movement, and then rejected any development aid that could possibly reach potential opposition sympathizers. Not coincidentally, the state PRD leader, Manuel López Obrador, had won a broad indigenous following during his tenure as local INI director in the early 1980s.

loan checks. This gave each director potential veto power over the decisions of the leadership councils, provoking serious debate between grassroots organizations and INI officials.

The field study of the politics of access to the Regional Solidarity Funds focused on the southern state of Oaxaca, which accounted for twenty of the almost one hundred Regional Funds in 1992.<sup>56</sup> INI's Oaxaca staff used evaluation categories that paralleled the traditional clientelist, semiclientelist, and pluralist patterns suggested above. They categorized the leadership councils as: (1) LCs whose development was blocked by the intervention of political parties, local economic or political bosses or conflicts between local groups, (2) LCs that were INI-run (that is, semiclientelist), (3) LCs that gained autonomy from the INI, using the fund to consolidate their organizing process and pursue regional development strategies. According to INI's confidential evaluations, toward the end of their first year, of the twenty Oaxaca LCs, five were blocked or taken over by political bosses, ten were still run by the INI, and five were gaining autonomy. This general pattern was confirmed by the author's direct field study, together with a survey of independent indigenous leaders and nongovernmental development experts from throughout the state. This survey also found a consensus that after the first two years of Regional Fund operations, at least six leadership councils had reached "consolidation," meaning that autonomous groups played a leading role in allocating resources.<sup>57</sup> This survey found that only three of the twenty Oaxaca leadership councils excluded representative indigenous organizations.

Perhaps the single most revealing indicator of relative pluralism was the presence of affiliates of the nonpartisan Oaxaca State Network of Coffee Producing Organizations (CEPCO), the most consolidated autonomous grassroots economic organization in the state, including over twenty thousand mainly indigenous producers.<sup>58</sup> In most leadership

<sup>56</sup> Oaxaca is one of Mexico's poorest states and at least 44% of the state's population speaks one of the state's seventeen indigenous languages; Rafael Blanco Rivera, "Oaxaca, 1980," *Cuadernos de Demografía Indígena* (Mexico City: INI, Dirección de Investigación y Promoción Cultural, 1991).

<sup>57</sup> These leadership councils were based in Jamiltepec, Miahuatlán, Huautla, Tlacolula, Guelatao, and Cuicatlán. It must be stressed that "consolidation" does *not* imply that all or even most member groups of an LC were representative grassroots groups. Five of Oaxaca's twenty LCs were not "test" cases because of the lack of autonomous indigenous producer organizations in those regions as of mid-1992. For details, see Jonathan Fox, "Targeting the Poorest: The Role of the National Indigenous Institute in Mexico's Solidarity Program," in Cornelius, Craig, and Fox (fn. 38).

<sup>58</sup> Most CEPCO member groups are nonpartisan or operate within the PRI, although a few sympathize with the PRD. CEPCO's main activity is buying, processing, and selling coffee, setting a floor price following the withdrawal of the state from the market in 1989, and representing about one-third of Oaxaca's small coffee producers. Much of the state government

councils they shared power (and therefore funds) with both corporatist and other autonomous organizations, often for the first time. Several CEPCO members claimed to be underrepresented in the councils, but only in two LCs out of thirteen were they excluded.<sup>59</sup> Overall, the Regional Funds program constituted a small fraction of overall Solidarity funding, even in largely indigenous rural areas, but it was unusual because the pluralistic access was officially supposed to include the entire universe of representative groups in each region, in contrast to the ad hoc and discretionary entry points autonomous groups faced in other Solidarity programs.

### THE "WAR OF POSITION" FOR PLURALIST INCLUSION

The potential distribution of pluralistic leadership councils depended fundamentally on the varying "thickness" of Mexico's organized indigenous civil society—in some regions richly textured, in others quite thin or still heavily structured by clientelism. Some regions had experienced two decades of the ebb and flow of protest and mobilization, often beginning with issues of land rights and then focusing on issues of ethnic identity and human rights.<sup>60</sup> Most of the movements that managed to offset entrenched regional political and economic elites had previously received some kind of support, or at least toleration, from reformist programs like PIDER or CONASUPO-COPLAMAR; each brief and partial opening of political space for new levels of regionwide collective action left the movements better able to take advantage of future cracks in the system.

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and the corporatist apparatus felt threatened by CEPCO's success at providing an alternative. See Julio Moguel and Josefina Aranda, "La Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café de Oaxaca," in Julio Moguel, Carlota Botey, and Luis Hernández, eds., *Autonomía y nuevos sujetos sociales en el desarrollo rural* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI/CEHAM, 1992).

<sup>59</sup> A robust notion of pluralism would go beyond this inclusion/exclusion dichotomy and involve some degree of proportional representation. Funds include groups ranging in size from tiny kinship groups to producer associations representing thousands of families, yet in most leadership councils each has the same vote. Some INI directors used their clientele as counterweights to keep more broadly representative groups in the minority. The Mazateca highlands leadership council led the first experiment in institutionalizing proportional representation in the leadership councils, weighting the number of assembly delegates according to the membership of each participating organization. The INI convened this process in an apparent effort to undermine the outspoken CEPCO-affiliated leadership of the Mazateca region's LC and to strengthen the official corporatist group, but the independent coffee producers swept the elections.

<sup>60</sup> Recent indigenous movements have been most intense in Chiapas, Oaxaca, Hidalgo, Veracruz, and Guerrero. See Maria Consuelo Mejía Pineiros and Sergio Sarmiento, *La lucha indígena: un reto a la ortodoxia* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1987); Carole Nagengast and Michael Kearney, "Mixtec Ethnicity: Social Identity, Political Consciousness and Political Activism," *Latin American Research Review* 25, no. 2 (1990); Sergio Sarmiento, "Movimiento indio y modernización," *Cuadernos Agrarios* 2, new series (1991); and the journals *Etnias* and *Ojarasca* (formerly *México Indígena*).

This "accumulation of forces" was very uneven, however, and many regions still lacked autonomous groups with the necessary bargaining power and organizational capacity to handle development projects. INI officials in these regions continued to control the Regional Funds, according to both nongovernment development organizations and INI's own internal evaluations.

If the map of representative societal groups was uneven, so was INI's commitment to the program's pluralist principles. The directors of each of the almost one hundred outreach centers were key actors, responsible for convening the elections for leadership councils in their region. They also retained the power to co-sign the development project checks. According to high-level "pro-pluralism" INI staff, *fewer than half* of the outreach directors "understood" the goals of the Regional Funds program (that is, were willing to relinquish their traditional discretionary authority over funding). Both state and societal actors willing to share power were distributed unevenly throughout the country, and possibilities for respect for associational autonomy were greatest where they overlapped. Where consolidated, representative organizations already existed and INI directors were willing to devolve effective power over Regional Fund resource allocation, "virtuous circles" of pluralistic policy implementation emerged. These nascent processes nevertheless faced two major obstacles at higher levels in the political system. The first was resistance from more authoritarian political elites, often entrenched in state governments, and the second was INI's own semiclientelistic tendencies.

Governors are strategic authoritarian elements within the regime, in part because they can resist reform efforts in the name of federalism.<sup>61</sup> In states where indigenous peoples joined the electoral opposition, authoritarian elites usually blocked the Regional Funds program (for example, Tabasco, Michoacán, Guerrero). INI may have had more room for maneuver in Oaxaca in part because the state lacked a statewide electoral challenge. Yet the most authoritarian response to the program was in a state with virtually no electoral competition at all—Chiapas. Governors of Chiapas, one of Mexico's most socially polarized states, tend to be among the most repressive and patrimonial. Indigenous organizations in Chiapas were nevertheless highly developed in many regions, reportedly leading to consolidation among almost half of the Regional Funds in the state, according to INI's survey. INI and indigenous producer organizations were sufficiently successful at building tolerant relationships such that the governor jailed three top INI officials on trumped-up charges of

<sup>61</sup> The rate at which presidents remove governors is an excellent indicator of the degree of intrastate conflict in Mexico. During the first three years of the Salinas administration, nine of the thirty-one governors had been forced to resign.

fraud. Autonomous indigenous organizations marched to defend them. As one leader put it:

Their only crime was to work with everyone, whether or not they are sympathizers of the government. . . . We demand that they respect us, now that we're learning [to carry out development projects], that they don't block our work. . . . This is a political problem—they blame the INI for everything that happens in Chiapas, but we want to make clear that these are our decisions.<sup>62</sup>

The other main threat to pluralistic inclusion of autonomous groups was INI's political imperative to demonstrate its loyalty to the government's broader policy agenda. For example, in the brief period of public debate before President Salinas announced his historic 1991 privatization of the land-reform system, INI was perceived as being concerned about the possible social cost.<sup>63</sup> Once the constitutional reform was announced and the national debate peaked, however, INI's director closed ranks in support, calling a last-minute national meeting of five hundred Regional Fund representatives to meet the president. The first reaction of Oaxaca's twenty leadership councils was to reject the "invitation." They felt that since their membership had not yet had the opportunity to discuss the proposed reform, they were in no position to go to a national meeting of de facto acclamation. Some even expressed concern for their physical safety upon their return to their communities, since they would be perceived as having supported the reform. After an extended open debate a desperate appeal from INI's Oaxaca state director helped to swing a 14–6 vote in favor of going to Mexico City. If he failed to deliver his ostensible base in a major INI effort to show the agency's loyalty to this key presidential project, he risked being replaced by a less flexible director. Regardless of their vote, most fund leaders felt the INI had betrayed its promise to treat them like citizens.

Although this heavy-handed "roundup" for the presidential meeting resonated with traditional clientelism, it was actually more semiclientelist in content. The reformists attempted to condition access, but indige-

<sup>62</sup> Rosa Rojas, "Indígenas de Chiapas piden se libere a 3 funcionarios del INI," *La Jornada*, March 21, 1992. Leaders of the Chiapas funds were also involved in the successful Xi'Nih human rights protest march to Mexico City in early 1992. The national leader of Mexico's Independent Front of Indian Peoples (FIP) —a frequent INI critic—confirmed that the Chiapas Regional Funds were remarkably open to independent groups. See Margarito Xib Ruiz Hernández, "Todo indigenismo es lo mismo," *Ojarasca* (February 1993).

<sup>63</sup> See Matilde Pérez, "El ejido es un sistema equitativo y eficaz: INI," *La Jornada*, October 23, 1991. For a political analysis of the 1991 reform of Mexico's land-tenure system, see Jonathan Fox, "Political Change in Mexico's New Peasant Economy," in Maria Lorena Cook, Kevin Middlebrook, and Juan Molinar Horcacas, eds., *The Politics of Economic Restructuring in Mexico* (La Jolla: UCSD, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, forthcoming).

nous leaders freely debated the strategy and tactics of their response. They faced the threat of the withdrawal of carrots, not sticks. Several months later, when INI officials asked the same state council of Regional Fund leaders to meet with the government's candidate for governor of Oaxaca, they again debated how to respond. Again, the vote was 14 to 6 to invite the official candidate, but on the condition that the statewide council invite all other candidates for governor as well. INI arranged the meeting but "forgot" to invite the opposition candidates. The indigenous leaders proceeded to meet with opposition leaders on their own; this time they used their autonomy to open new terrain for civic pluralism.

In summary, an important minority of the Regional Solidarity Funds made progress toward developing more tolerant relationships between reformist branches of the state and many of Mexico's autonomous indigenous organizations. This process also led to new degrees of power sharing between politically and ethnically diverse indigenous organizations themselves. Nevertheless, this process lagged in much of the country because of entrenched semiclientelism, authoritarian exclusion and backlash, and the uneven degrees of consolidation among autonomous indigenous groups themselves.<sup>64</sup>

### TOWARD PLURALISM WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

Since the early 1970s successive waves of rural development reform opened small but significant cracks in the system, permitting greater space for more tolerant bargaining relations between the state and society in some of Mexico's poorest regions. The openings were small because they were limited to those few regions and policy areas where reformists effectively intervened in the implementation of rural development policy. The openings were significant because they offered political and economic resources that fostered the consolidation of growing representative and autonomous social organizations.

Even some of society's weakest actors—indigenous smallholder move-

<sup>64</sup> As of mid-1993 the future of the Regional Solidarity Fund program was in doubt. The Social Development Ministry, which controls overall Solidarity funding, had frozen most of INI's 1992 allocations for the Regional Solidarity Funds, blaming lagging repayment rates. Difficulties with repayment were not surprising, given the problems of profitability throughout the agricultural sector; but since the government was very flexible with much larger debts from other agricultural borrowers, such as owners of large coffee plantations or the buyers of privatized sugar mills, slow repayment rates alone were not an especially credible explanation for defunding the program. INI had been politically weakened by the transfer of its influential director to the newly created post of agrarian attorney general. This left INI's Regional Funds vulnerable to powerful antipluralist elements within the Social Development Ministry itself, which wanted to take project decision-making power away from the leadership councils.

ments—increased their capacity to bargain with the state while retaining important degrees of autonomy. Some chose to abstain from overt electoral challenges, mainly to avoid losing semiclientelistic access to significant resources. But if representative leadership remained in place, they could then choose to engage in open opposition politics if and when the political opportunity structure changed. In a gradual “war of position,” social movements and state reformists pushed back the boundaries of the politically possible.<sup>65</sup> With the National Solidarity Program, political action from both above and below further eroded classic clientelism, in urban as well as rural areas. Semiclientelism largely took its place, along with enclaves of pluralist bargaining.

Yet the relationship between the distributive and electoral realms of politics remains problematic. In the electoral arena, Mexico’s gradual liberalization began in the early 1970s and was largely limited to the Congress, the weakest branch of government.<sup>66</sup> Both the vote-counting process and the broadcast media remained virtually closed to independent scrutiny. Nevertheless, by the early 1990s the regime began an uncertain process of selective democratization, recognizing some opposition victories (usually from the Right) but not others (usually from the Left). The regime began to accept electoral defeats more often, but in response to mass civic antifraud protests rather than because of actual ballot results. As of 1992 most contested elections were still settled through protest and negotiation *after* the actual voting process was over, a process known as the “second round.”<sup>67</sup>

One indicator of the ambiguous relationship between distributive and electoral politics is the uncertain relationship between the liberalization of access to distributive programs and the limited democratization in the electoral arena. Was more open access to social programs a substitute for

<sup>65</sup> Distributive reform thus became political reform, as Przeworski defines it: “a modification of the organization of conflicts that alters the prior probabilities of realizing group interests given their resources.” See Adam Przeworski, “Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy,” in Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 58.

<sup>66</sup> See Wayne Cornelius, “Political Liberalization in an Authoritarian Regime: Mexico, 1976–1985,” in Judith Gentleman, ed., *Mexican Politics in Transition* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987); and Kevin Middlebrook, “Political Liberalization in an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Mexico,” in O’Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead (fn. 65). On electoral change in the 1980s, see Cornelius, Gentleman, and Smith (fn. 26). For a comparative discussion of Mexico’s transition that explores the distinction between the formal regime and the actual political system, see Antonio Camou, “Once tesis sobre la ‘transición’ mexicana: Gobernabilidad y democracia,” *Nexos* 55 (February 1992).

<sup>67</sup> The regime was able to manage this uncertain process largely because the most contested races—for governors and mayors—were staggered so that the ruling party faced only one or two difficult states at a time.

further electoral democratization, or did it occur in spite of its absence? Did the relatively open distributive policies analyzed here simply constitute the exception that proves the rule of Mexican authoritarianism, in that each partial opening of social programs merely bought votes to reinforce electoral hegemony? Generalization is difficult because electoral conflict had a contradictory impact on most of Solidarity's distributive programs: it simultaneously pressured reformists to encourage the legitimacy of pluralism, created an incentive for them to use the programs as a semiclientelistic mechanism to discourage electoral opposition, and provoked an authoritarian backlash from clientelistic machine politicians. As a result, implementation of Solidarity involved three *concurrent* scenarios: more of the same authoritarian clientelism; modernized semiclientelism, involving attempted but unenforceable buying of political support; and pluralism, where antipoverty resource allocation was not conditioned on political subordination. The Regional Solidarity Fund experience showed that the trend for state action to divide into these three patterns emerged in both regions with and regions without electoral competition.

The clearest connection between distributive and electoral politics involves social spending in opposition voter strongholds, but the actual electoral impact of such targeting depends on the degree to which clientelistic controls have eroded on the ground. In other words, electoral impact of pork barrel-type spending on potential opposition voters depends not only on the disproportionate *amount* channeled to a given district but also on the degree to which political control mechanisms can actually *enforce* compliance in exchange for these resources. One good indicator of the potential persistence of authoritarian controls is the degree of actual ballot secrecy. The 1992 Michoacán governor's race, for example, which coincided with massive Solidarity funding, saw the right to ballot secrecy violated in one-fifth of the polling places, according to an independent observer group. Ballot secrecy for indigenous people was especially vulnerable, as it was subject to manipulation under the pretext of handling literacy and language problems.<sup>68</sup>

Solidarity's electoral targeting certainly helped to buffer the political impact of the government's controversial macroeconomic program, weakening the opposition in the short run in some areas.<sup>69</sup> In the longer

<sup>68</sup> On the numerous irregularities, including widespread reports of attempts to condition Solidarity funding on PRI votes, see the election observer report by the Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la Democracia, "Informe de observación electoral," *Perfil de la Jornada*, August 16, 1992.

<sup>69</sup> The regime's willingness to cede legitimacy to some autonomous citizens' groups while continuing to manipulate elections also sharpened divisions within the left-leaning electoral

run, however, if the state's mechanisms for enforcing voter compliance continue to weaken, then more and more citizens may well accept pork-barrel funding but also still vote their conscience, as civic activism broadens and deepens. Opposition party leaders increasingly urged potential supporters to accept the inducements from the ruling party, especially since they were usually paid for with public funds, and then vote their conscience. Whether this opposition response to official semiclientelism succeeds will depend largely on whether the share of votes that is deposited secretly and counted fairly can be increased.

Because the relationship between distributive and electoral politics can be contradictory—liberalizing in one arena while remaining closed in another—the erosion of clientelistic controls over distributive politics will not necessarily lead to electoral democratization. Indeed, it is possible that the lack of guaranteed enforcement mechanisms inherent in semiclientelism will *increase* incentives for hard-liners in the regime to rely on electoral fraud. The prospects for clean elections are likely to reflect in part the relative strength of more reformist currents within the regime that are willing to consider further political change and in part the efforts of opposition parties and autonomous social actors to broaden and deepen their still uneven roots in society. The prospects for democratization in Mexico will thus depend on how conflict between more and less authoritarian policy currents within the state interacts with growing civic pressure from below.<sup>70</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

It is difficult to generalize about how national political change interacts with the process of extending effective citizenship rights to the entire population, largely because the analytical categories for “actually existing” political systems fail to capture important gray areas.<sup>71</sup> Many of the

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opposition. When the wounds of the 1988 electoral conflict were still fresh, the PRD harshly condemned social organizations that bargained for Solidarity funds, asserting that they were implicitly recognizing the president's legitimacy. The PRD's stance later softened, but its relationship with important social movements was damaged. See Dresser (fn. 37, 1991); and Haber (fn. 45).

<sup>70</sup> So far, two scenarios predicted by Cornelius and his colleagues are combining: “modernization of authoritarianism with selective pluralism” and “limited power sharing,” along the lines of the Indian Congress Party model. See Cornelius, Gentleman, and Smith (fn. 26); and Wayne Cornelius and Ann Craig, *The Mexican Political System in Transition* (La Jolla: UCSD, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1991), 118–19.

<sup>71</sup> As Pye put it, “We need finer shades of typologies of political systems between the classical polar opposites of authoritarian and democratic. In the wake of the crisis of authoritarianism we can expect a wide variety of systems that will become part authoritarian and part free and that will fall far short of any reasonable definitions of democracy.” See Lucian

authoritarian regimes around the world that have now turned to electoral politics are not necessarily in transition to more democratic regimes; they can stabilize far short of democracy.<sup>72</sup> Mexico is not the only country in the early 1990s that holds competitive elections but still fails to reach a democratic threshold. El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, and Peru come to mind in Latin America. Asian examples include Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines; in Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya, among others. Serbia is the most notable case in Europe. Several of the former Soviet republics may fall into this category as well.

The politics of social policy can tell us a great deal about nonelectoral dimensions of democratization. Many types of regimes are now experimenting with "demand-based" antipoverty funds aimed at making structural economic adjustment politically viable; Mexico's Solidarity program is an especially sophisticated version of this much broader trend. Bolivia's social emergency fund was the first to attract international attention in 1986, and similar programs were carried out by Peru, Chile, Colombia, Zambia, Senegal, Ghana, Poland, El Salvador, and Honduras. Like Solidarity, some of these new targeted antipoverty programs created political openings for social movements and nongovernmental organizations, while others reinforced partisan clientelistic controls. El Salvador and Senegal used their programs as instruments of political control, at least until the late 1980s, while in Bolivia, Chile, and Zambia, transitions to electoral democracy permitted pluralistic antipoverty policy. Peru's program largely perpetuated semiclientelism.<sup>73</sup> Across

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W. Pye, "Political Science and the Crisis of Authoritarianism," *American Political Science Review* 84 (March 1990), 13.

<sup>72</sup> See Terry Lynn Karl (fn. 1) on "electoralism"; Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy Is . . . and Is Not," *Journal of Democracy* 2 (Summer 1991); Tina Rosenberg, "Beyond Elections," *Foreign Policy* 84 (Fall 1991); and Guy Hermet, Richard Rose, and Alain Rouquié, eds., *Elections without Choice* (New York: John Wiley, 1978). Stable electoral competition is sometimes confused with political democracy; see, e.g., John Higley and Richard Gunther, eds., *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Thus Mexico's ruling party holds the world's record for stability, having presided over electoral presidential successions since 1929. Some analysts fall into the opposite trap, assuming that unfair elections are politically meaningless exercises. Note, for example, the surprise military split and subsequent civic uprising following Philippine president Marcos's fraudulent "snap" elections in 1986. See also the debate over the relevance of El Salvador's sharply constrained wartime elections of the mid-1980s in Edward Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections* (Boston: South End Press, 1984); Terry Lynn Karl, "Imposing Consent? Electoralism vs. Democratization in El Salvador," in Paul Drake and Eduardo Silva, eds., *Elections and Democratization in Latin America, 1980-1985* (La Jolla: UCSD-CILAS, 1986).

<sup>73</sup> On social investment funds, see Carol Graham, "The APRA Government and the Urban Poor: The PIAT Programme in Lima's Pueblos Jóvenes," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23 (February 1991); idem, "The Politics of Protecting the Poor during Adjustment: Bolivia's Emergency Social Fund," *World Development* 20 (September 1992); idem, "Mexico's National Solidarity Program in Comparative Perspective: Demand-Based Poverty Alleviation Pro-

this disparate group of countries, the degree of political conditionality required for access to these new social funds is a key indicator of the extent of the transition from clientelism to citizenship.

This focus on the politics of social policy shows that the relationship between electoral competition and the erosion of authoritarian clientelism is not obvious. In other words, electoral competition can either strengthen or weaken coercive clientelism, which in turn can be either strengthened or weakened by electoral competition. Each clearly influences the other, but the direction is politically contingent. For example, if elections offer voters alternatives, they can increase clients' leverage over vote-buying patrons (as in Taiwan and Thailand).<sup>74</sup> But clientelistic machines around the world have also shown that the threat of electoral competition can also create incentives for elites to limit political choices sharply. Even under ostensibly democratic regimes, the use of violence with impunity against certain groups or in certain regions can perpetuate authoritarian enclaves (as in rural areas of Brazil, Colombia, and the Philippines).<sup>75</sup> More generally, clientelistic bargaining relations are most imbalanced in authoritarian bastions where clients lack the exit options associated with meaningful electoral alternatives.

Although the spread of seemingly small free spaces in civil society is widely recognized to weaken dictatorships, there is also a connection between uneven degrees of freedom at the local level and national politics—a fact rarely considered when analyzing the prospects for democratic consolidation; that is, the persistence of authoritarian redoubts under competitive electoral systems matters for national politics. The resilience of local authoritarian enclaves constrains national democratic consolidation because margins matter for majority rule.<sup>76</sup> The exclusion of potential swing voters from access to associational autonomy and competitive elections can be enough to determine national political outcomes.

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grams in Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe," in Cornelius, Craig, and Fox (fn. 38). One could argue that opposition state governments in India carried out comparable programs earlier. See Atul Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and John Echeverri-Gent, "Public Participation and Poverty Alleviation: The Experience of Reform Communists in India's West Bengal," *World Development* 20 (October 1992).

<sup>74</sup> See Herr (fn. 23); and Philip Shenon, "It's Business as Usual in Thailand (Votes for Sale)," *New York Times*, March 18, 1992; as well as Scott (fn. 8, 1992).

<sup>75</sup> Thus, in 1988 Colombia appeared to take a major step toward greater pluralism by permitting citizens to elect their mayors for the first time. But once elected, many opposition mayors were assassinated by state-sanctioned death squads. See Leah Carroll, "Repression and the Limits to Rural Democratization: The Experience of Leftist County Executives in Colombia, 1988–1990" (Paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association, April 1991).

<sup>76</sup> By contrast, some analysts consider elections to be democratic if the bulk of the population participates; see, e.g., Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

There are many examples in the Americas. Even though Chile had long been considered a consolidated democracy, the national political equation was skewed through the early 1960s by the disenfranchisement of the rural poor.<sup>77</sup> The same was true in Brazil, where the prospect of permitting the illiterates to vote contributed to the 1964 coup. Peru's largely indigenous illiterate population was also denied the vote until the return of electoral rule in 1980. Regional redoubts of exclusion persist even after such formal barriers are removed. In Brazil's 1989 presidential race the candidate of the Left took the large cities, but the Right won with the hinterland, where authoritarian clientelism and semiclientelism are still pervasive.<sup>78</sup> And rural districts gave Salinas his official majority in Mexico's 1988 presidential race.<sup>79</sup> The general point that "subnational authoritarian regimes" can tip the national political balance should not be new to observers of the United States, where the coercive disenfranchisement of African Americans and many poor whites in the South determined national political outcomes for most of the twentieth century.

The question of how effective access to citizenship rights is extended to an *entire* society requires a framework that differs from most approaches to national regime change. While transitions to electorally competitive regimes are usually analyzed in terms of movement back and forth along two dimensions, the erosion of clientelism can evolve in several directions simultaneously. Authoritarian clientelism does not necessarily erode in a linear process toward citizenship. The Mexican experience shows that even as sophisticated state managers can promote semiclientelism as an alternative to citizenship rights, social movements can gnaw at small cracks in the system and try to open them further. The result is a gradual and uneven transition from clientelism to citizenship that involves the coexistence under the same formal regime of three different de facto political systems: entrenched redoubts of authoritarianism, broad swaths of modernized semiclientelism, and enclaves of pluralist tolerance that exhibit elements of citizenship. Where subnational authoritarian regimes survive within nationally competitive electoral systems, the transitions can get stuck and fail to cross the threshold to democratic governance.

<sup>77</sup> See Brian Loveman, "Political Participation and Rural Labor in Chile," in Mitchell A. Seligson and John A. Booth, eds., *Political Participation in Latin America*, vol. 2, *Politics and the Poor* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979).

<sup>78</sup> See Fernando Da Silveira Cotrim, *A geografia do voto no Brasil: Eleições de 1989* (Rio de Janeiro: IBASE, 1990). On the persistent clout of the traditional political class, see Hagopian (fn. 7, 1990 and 1992).

<sup>79</sup> See Arturo López et al., *Geografía de las elecciones presidenciales de México, 1988* (Mexico City: Fundación Arturo Rosenblueth, 1989).

This conclusion implies that the conventional notion of political democratization as a single regime transition should be recast as a set of transitions along the various key dimensions of democracy.<sup>80</sup> What, then, are some of the more general relationships between these different genres of transition? We still lack systematic analyses of the ways in which electoral competition relates to other, also ostensibly minimum conditions for democracy, such as civilian control over the military, effective universal suffrage, an end to vote fraud, or ending impunity for state-sanctioned violence.<sup>81</sup> Such transitions may overlap, they may be mutually dependent in diverse ways, but they are logically and historically distinct.

In conclusion, this study of the transition from clientelistic subordination to citizenship rights of access to the state suggests that the relationship between national electoral competition and the gradual process of constructing respect for associational autonomy throughout society is reciprocal. The net effect of this mutual influence is politically contingent, however. Progress along one dimension of democratization may encourage movement along another, but obstacles in one arena can also hold back the rest of the process.

<sup>80</sup> Because these dimensions evolve along such different paths, Schmitter suggests that it may be useful to understand democracy as a "composite of 'partial regimes,' each of which [is] institutionalized around distinctive sites for the representation of social groups." See Philippe Schmitter, "The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups," *American Behavioral Scientist* 35 (March-June 1992), 427.

<sup>81</sup> For general discussions of measurement issues, see Alex Inkeles, ed., *On Measuring Democracy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1991). For new studies of degrees of civilian control over the military, see David Pion-Berlin, "Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies in South America," *Comparative Politics* 25 (October 1992); and Jorge Zaverucha, "The Degree of Military Political Autonomy during the Spanish, Argentine, and Brazilian Transitions," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25 (May 1993).