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Governance and Rural Development in Mexico: State Intervention and Public Accountability

JONATHAN FOX

Pro-market economic reforms are usually associated with the regulatory withdrawal of the state. In some policy areas, however, successful implementation of pro-market reforms poses powerful challenges to the institutional capacity of the state. In the case of Mexico's ambitious rural development reforms, the withdrawal of past patterns of heavy-handed state economic intervention has been accompanied by the construction of new regulatory institutions that maintain significant central state involvement in rural life. This article analyses the restructuring of state intervention in four policy areas: rural economic development, decentralisation to rural municipalities, efforts to improve the administration of justice, and the electoral process in rural areas. The first two sets of reforms are influenced by the second two: economic development and decentralisation are influenced by the administration of justice and democratisation. The governance challenges posed by the complexity of the rural economic policy reforms are compounded by the persistent political constraints on the construction of more accountable public institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Proponents of reduced state intervention in markets increasingly recognise that effective non-market public institutions are needed for successful pro-market economic reforms. Pro-market economic reformers increasingly use the notion of governance to refer to the public institutions that enforce the

Jonathan Fox, Political Science Department, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. First submitted: October 1994. An earlier version of this article was first presented as a paper at 'The Agrarian Problem and Social Movements in Mexico', Mexican Studies Program, University of Chicago, 6-7 May 1994. Thanks very much to David Myhre, Richard Snyder and the editors for their suggestions.

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Editorial Policy

The Journal of Development Studies welcomes research papers on development issues from all social science disciplines. Priority is given to papers which (a) are interdisciplinary; (b) provide critical tests, based on empirical work, of alternative theories, perspectives or schools of thought; and (c) are relevant to important issues in development policy. It also welcomes critical surveys of the literature in important fields of development policy and practice.

The Dudley Seers Prize 1994

The Editorial Board of the *Journal of Development Studies* is pleased to announce that the authors of the following two articles have been awarded Dudley Seers Prizes, these articles being judged the best of those published in Volume 30 of the Journal (1993–94):

Jean-Philippe Platteau, 'Behind the Market Stage Where Real Societies Exist – Part I: The Role of Public and Private Order Institutions; Part II: The Role of Moral Norms', Vol.30, Nos.3 & 4, April/July 1994, pp.533–77; 753–817

Heather D. Gibson and Euclid Tsakalotos, 'The Scope and Limits of Financial Liberalisation in Developing Countries: A Critical Survey', Vol.30, No.3, April 1994, pp.578–628

The value of each prize is £500. Members of the Editorial Board extend their congratulations to each of the authors.

The process of judging articles published in Volume 31 of the Journal will soon begin. As before, all the articles published during the year (1994–1995) will be eligible for the prize, excluding Notes and Communications. Special weight will be given to both analytical originality and work of an interdisciplinary nature. At least one of the prizes will normally be awarded for contributions which are not wholly or primarily within the discipline of economics.

Nominations for consideration for awards will be made by the Editorial Board. The judges will be drawn from amongst members of the Editorial Board, and details of the awards made will be published in the Journal.

'rules of the game' for market activity. Some limit the concept of governance to a narrow range of issues linked to the private sector, such as respect for contracts. More generally, however, 'governance' refers to the institutions and processes that structure the exercise of state power, framing the broad 'who gets what, and why' of development policy.¹

The concept of governance is increasingly contested. For some it includes political process and conflict, while for others it is limited to the ostensibly apolitical management of the state's development activities. The World Bank, for example, increasingly acknowledges the importance of 'good governance' – sustainable and effective public institutions – to the management of even 'market-friendly' economic development. The World Bank defines governance exclusively in terms of the state's management of 'economic and social resources', yet 'good governance' is defined in terms of accountability, the participation and strength of civil society, and the effective rule of law [*World Bank, 1994: vii*]. Yet, these 'good governance' institutions are created and mature through processes that are inherently political.² As a result, one must take into account the nature of the political regime as a whole – the determinants of who governs and how – in order to understand that subset of state action that involves development policy. In regimes governed by electoral competition – even if less than fully democratic – it is inherently difficult to draw clear boundaries between the political arena, shaped largely by parties and social movements, and the development policy arena, shaped primarily by the state's executive branch and its socio-economic investments and regulations.

This article explores the ways in which the processes of development and democratisation interact to help to understand the determinants of the state's capacity for effective rural reforms.³ The study brings the arenas of development and democratisation together to analyse key problems of governance in rural Mexico, examining the challenges encountered by the state's efforts to reform its longstanding patterns of intervention in rural areas. This study of the restructuring of state intervention is of broader cross-national relevance because Mexico falls in a growing category of less-than-democratic electoral regimes.

Political democracy is defined here in minimum procedural terms, including free and fair elections, effective universal suffrage, guaranteed respect for freedoms of expression and association, and civilian control over the military. If one applies these minimum conditions consistently, then the conventional dichotomy between authoritarian and democratic regimes is no longer useful. There is a growing category of regimes that hold elections but fall short of one or more of these minimum conditions, where authoritarian ruling parties dominate important segments of their electorates through undemocratic means, included limits on freedoms of expression

and association. Even a superficial empirical review suggests that in many of the Latin American, African and Asian countries whose regimes have instituted elections, competitive politics is still largely limited to urban areas.⁴ Authoritarian ruling parties often retain their rural bases by combining the 'stick' of limited freedoms with the 'carrots' of clientelistic incentives.⁵ Because of the widespread persistence of clientelism in the rural areas of many of these 'semi-democratic' regimes, government rural development programmes cannot be fully understood outside of this broader political context. As urban politics becomes more competitive in many societies, ruling parties face increased incentives to continue state intervention in the rural economy, though perhaps under the guise of modernising reforms. Many ruling parties are therefore able to make limited concessions to urban-based civic movements and opposition parties while using their control of rural votes to retain power. The Mexican case is especially relevant for understanding rural development reform in this broader category of semi-democratic regimes because it has become an international model for the rollback of state intervention.

The widespread conventional view is that the Mexican state has withdrawn its heavy hand from regulating rural markets, property and politics. This article argues, in contrast, that the Mexican state's rural intervention continues in new forms, in some ways penetrating the countryside more deeply than before. State managers considered the option of abrupt unilateral withdrawal, but the potential political costs in an increasingly competitive electoral system obliged them to attempt the creation of new ostensibly accountable public institutions – market-friendly, but regulatory nevertheless.⁶ This process is quite different from the patterns of rapid withdrawal that characterised the Mexican state's privatisation of state enterprises and international trade liberalisation, for example.⁷ In contrast to these 'macro' policy areas, rural productive and distributive policies inherently involve a much more decentralised and heterogeneous implementation process, as well as large voting blocs important to the regime, thereby posing quite different political and administrative challenges to state managers.

Mexico's pro-market rural reforms, to be successful on their own terms, require the state apparatus to operate with qualitatively higher levels of accountability than in the past. Yet progress towards accountable governance in Mexico has been highly uneven, across both policy arenas and geographical space. Because civic movements for local democratisation and accountable governance have advanced little in most rural areas, the official project of streamlining and targeting the state's role in agriculture and anti-poverty efforts may well be undermined by authoritarian elements deeply embedded within the state itself.

The context for the restructuring of rural state intervention was set after the debt crisis of 1982, when the Mexican state recast its long-standing leading role in the national economic development process. Until then, the post-revolutionary state balanced the competing challenges of economic growth and political stability by closely regulating the distribution of both income and property. After 1982, Mexico's presidents began to restructure the nature of state intervention in the economy, gradually dismantling much of the 'revolutionary nationalist' legacy in favour of increased integration into the international market. In terms of governance issues, this pattern of state withdrawal at the macro level involved little public institution-building to occupy the resulting vacuum.⁸

Distributive policy was a partial exception, falling largely under the heading of the National Solidarity Programme. In general, the administration's effort to use the National Solidarity Programme's targeted projects succeeded in buffering political conflicts driven by the social costs of economic reform – until the indigenous rebellion in Chiapas. The widespread support for the uprising among Mexico's rural poor showed that rural social programmes were not necessarily having their intended political effect.⁹ The Chiapas rebellion showed that the central government's increased funding for rural poverty reduction programmes, both nationally and regionally, was not actually reaching its intended beneficiaries. More generally, the increased public sector accountability supposed to accompany market-friendly institution-building lagged far behind the withdrawal of the state's earlier levers of intervention.

This article analyses four interlocking issues of governance in rural areas in Mexico, highlighting challenges confronting the state's own policy changes. These four problems of governance all began to unfold before 1 January 1994, but the Chiapas rebellion underscored how limits to the state's capacity for implementing its rural reforms can become national problems.¹⁰ The first two issue areas involve rural development policy reforms, while the second two involve efforts to reform the administration of justice and electoral process – procedural changes with the potential to strengthen civil society and encourage accountable public institution-building.

Rather than entering the important debate over the desirability of the government's policy goals, this article instead assesses the state's capacity to carry out its own declared reforms of rural policy and governance. The results highlight important internal contradictions in the state's undeclared strategy of 'intervening in order to withdraw'. These processes of change are still quite recent and are still ongoing, and relatively little systematic independent empirical research has become available on their operations. Nevertheless, because of the importance of the Mexican model for the

broader debate over the roles of state and market, it is worth assessing the state's regulatory withdrawal based on the partial evidence available. This article draws primarily on official government sources, as well as on those policy studies which have been carried out by independent researchers and, in the case of election studies, non-governmental civic organisations.

The first problem of governance involves major challenges to the state's capacity to carry out its new agricultural and agrarian policies effectively. The state dismantled most of its levers of intervention in the rural economy, replacing them with new agencies that attempt to reach producers as individuals rather than as members of organised groups, as in the past. The second governance problem is the ambiguous linkage between decentralisation and democratisation. Decentralisation of control over development decisions to local government has progressed somewhat with the National Solidarity Programme, but it can fulfil its promise of greater efficiency and responsiveness only if local government is already accountable, especially to low-income citizens. The third problem of governance involves the administration of justice in rural areas. President Salinas officially recognised this problem with the creation of the National Human Rights Commission, but its own performance data so far do not indicate that it has been able to influence the behaviour of the rest of the state apparatus to a significant degree. The fourth problem of rural governance involves the difficulty of democratising electoral politics in remote areas beyond the reach of the mass media and urban-based civic movements. In the 1994 presidential elections, the most reliable independent observer data found a striking contrast between the quality of the electoral process in urban and rural areas, suggesting that controlled rural vote reserves persisted in spite of the improved procedural guarantees decreed in Mexico City. The effect was to exclude large numbers of rural citizens, including much of the indigenous population, from access to such fundamental democratic processes as the secret ballot.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES: CHALLENGES TO STATE CAPACITY

The Mexican state's classic pattern of state intervention in rural institutions is complex but well known. Federal agencies regulated access to land rights through legal-administrative means, markets for key agricultural commodities through prices and service provision, and channels for representation through corporatist membership organisations (whose effective coverage was quite uneven in practice).

While generalisation about such inherently heterogeneous processes is risky, one can argue that the main levers of state intervention in the peasant

economy were largely indirect. In agrarian matters, the federal government deposited a great deal of discretionary authority in local hands, relying on a new political elite drawn from *campesino* and small farmer ranks, empowered by agrarian reform, or on the landowners themselves in those regions where the reform was not implemented. In general, however, the land reform relied on layers of intermediaries, producing a new local nomenclatura of political bosses whose power within the *ejido* (agrarian reform community) structure depended precisely on their discretionary authority (for example, to determine community membership, intra-*ejido* land distribution and boundaries, and access to credit).¹¹

State intervention in major crop markets was also largely indirect, via regulatory prices and public investment. State enterprises set official prices at which they would buy crops, usually processing them as well. The official goal was to create competition for private buyers, often local monopsonists (*coyotes*), by setting the official price and creating a vast infrastructure for collecting and processing a diverse array of smallholder crops (especially basic grains, oilseeds and coffee).¹² In the area of public investment, irrigation works were the most important form of state intervention, creating a new class of farmers in the Northwest. Most of these mechanisms of state intervention did not require an institutional relationship between the federal government and the individual producer. Rather, the relationship was mediated by the relatively anonymous means of the price mechanism, or by local and regional officials. These local officials often became corrupt and authoritarian bosses, known as *caciques*, who were granted relative local autonomy in exchange for delivering votes and political stability.

The new style of state intervention did not dominate agricultural and agrarian policy until the Salinas administration. After 1989, agricultural policy rejected market and price regulation, as well as most public sector input provision (credit, agro-chemicals, etc.). This involved increased opening to the international market, as well as privatisation and downsizing of the major state enterprises involved in agriculture. This shift completely changed the terrain of bargaining between the state and peasant movements, since agencies that had been the main targets for producer movements withdrew from their role as shock absorbers between peasants and the market.¹³ The main arena for state-peasant movement bargaining over rural development projects shifted to the National Solidarity Programme. In terms of resource allocation, however, most Solidarity spending went to urban service delivery rather than rural development or job creation. Indeed, the official category of 'urbanisation' alone accounted for more than 40 per cent of annual Solidarity spending during most years, reaching over 46 per cent in 1992, when generally urban water projects accounted for another 17 per cent [*Lustig, 1994: 92*].¹⁴

The pro-deregulation policy-makers had predicted that the combination of subsidy cuts, trade opening and the privatisation of the agrarian reform sector would be likely to reduce the rural population by *one half* within a decade or two.¹⁵ At first, no serious transition strategy was planned, whether via crop conversion or job creation. As the implications of these changes became more widely understood in the countryside, protest began to mount. Towards the end of the Salinas administration, increasing numbers of peasant producers chose 'voice' over 'exit' [*Fox, 1994e*]. Protests were especially widespread around the issue of cuts in farm credit, but the looming NAFTA-driven drop in the price of corn also provoked increasing concern. Pressure from producer organisations was probably reinforced by worries among traditional politicians about the electoral implications of abandoning corn producers to stiff competition from US growers. By early 1993, policy-makers abruptly recognised that a complete withdrawal of the state from basic crop supports was socially and politically unviable, and instead proposed a new programme of compensatory payments for growers of basic crops. In contrast to support prices, the new 'Procampo' programme would not 'distort' market signals, and therefore it would not conflict with Mexico's participation in NAFTA and GATT. Individual producers would receive government cheques based on the number of hectares sown with basic crops in the previous three years. Though the payment structure was graduated to benefit smaller producers proportionately more compared to the previous system, large growers who had only recently switched into corn also stood to benefit.¹⁶

In principle, the Procampo programme permits the state to buffer the social costs of trade opening and the elimination of support prices for basic crops, at the same time as low income net consumers of corn may benefit from lowered prices resulting from cheaper international imports.¹⁷ In practice, the effectiveness of Procampo will depend on both the amount budgeted and the institutional channels used to reach individual producers. The issue of the size of these trade compensation payments to be channeled to producers of each crop can be debated on socio-economic grounds, but the process of actual programme implementation depends on state institutional capacity. Under the previous support price system, the official procurement agency (Conasupo), did not need to know exactly who produced what. Procampo, in contrast, requires the state to determine who was growing basic crops, with how many hectares and whether they had legal use-rights to the land, complete with each producer's correct name. This new approach fits well with the new official ideology of 'social liberalism', in which the state combines pro-market economic policies with continued social concern. In contrast to the indirect patterns of regulation in the past, however, the new crop payment programme requires the state to

develop a formal relationship with every producer of basic grains in the country. This is a major challenge to state capacity, especially since the task of developing an official census of producers was given to the Ministry of Agriculture, an agency whose field apparatus is not known for its efficiency and transparency.¹⁸

There are three main challenges to the creation of a complete producer census. First, some legitimate producers may be left off, perhaps because of the Agriculture Ministry's limited outreach capacity. Second, some individuals who are not legitimate producers may end up on the list. Third, access to the list may be conditioned on political subordination, contrary to the spirit of the policy. The first two problems were prominent in the only similar programme to precede Procampo, a much smaller-scale effort during the previous year to 'retire' henequen growers in the state of Yucatán. Large numbers of producers were excluded, while many non-producers were included. Within a week of announcing the census, more than 25 per cent of the *ejidatarios* to be included submitted complaints.¹⁹

No systematic evidence is available regarding the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in the Procampo programme. The government's political use of Procampo cheques during the 1994 presidential elections was widely alleged and criticised by producer groups and opposition political parties, but the practice was not systematically documented. The timing of the delivery of the funds is not a matter of debate, however, since a large wave of Procampo cheques were delivered just a few weeks or days before the 1994 presidential election (in open violation of the government's own promise to suspend the programme for the two weeks prior to the election).²⁰ It should be noted, however, that Mexico's nonpartisan Civic Alliance election observer campaign did produce findings which could serve as an indirect indicator of the political manipulation of the crop payments. They found that local authorities attempted to pressure voters in more than 35 per cent of rural polling places observed (see Table 2, below), and Civic Alliance observers reported that Procampo cheques were one of the main instruments used to induce votes for the ruling party.²¹

The reform of land tenure policy raises analogous questions about state capacity to develop accountable relationships with millions of *campesinos* in a very short period of time. The reform of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution permits the private sale and rental of land for the first time in the agrarian reform sector, which accounts for about half of Mexico's arable land. Privatisation is voluntary, however, requiring a two-thirds vote of agrarian community members.²² Before, agrarian reform beneficiaries could not legally sell or rent their land use-rights, and many other forms of economic activity were sharply constrained by government regulations. The private sector had also long complained that landholding ceilings and the

threat of expropriation discouraged investment. In response, the reform formally ended the decades-long land redistribution process. In practice, redistribution had largely ended in 1976, but a massive backlog of adjudication decisions persisted (about 30 per cent of which was in Chiapas). Joint ventures with private investors and the direct ownership of land by agribusiness firms were also legalised.²³ The constitutional reform also made major changes in the institutional structure of the ejido community, recognised its legitimacy as a form of tenancy, allowing intra-ejido land transfer, weakening the powers of the ejido 'commisar' while strengthening those of the membership assembly, and reducing government intervention in their internal affairs. The reform also creates an official 'Agrarian Attorney General' (*Procuraduría*) and a new system of civil courts (Agrarian Tribunals) to deal with the adjudication backlog and to encourage accountability in the process of land titling and boundary disputes.²⁴

The new agrarian regulatory apparatus was created with the explicit recognition that abuses of authority were possible, and as a result agrarian officials had the obligation to 'receive, investigate and channel complaints and denunciations regarding possible violations of agrarian law and procedures committed by public servants to the appropriate authorities'.²⁵ As Baitenmann found in her Veracruz field research, however, since these agrarian officials 'are also part of the same team that coordinates [the new land titling programme], it was obvious that they were not going to denounce themselves' [1994b]. As she points out, the experience of the government's official human rights commission, discussed below, provides a notable contrast with the new agrarian apparatus, in that the new pro-accountability human rights institutions are at least independent of the agencies that may have abused their power.

Like the change in producer price policy, the reform of Article 27 did not provoke immediate open rural resistance. In vast areas of the countryside, land use patterns have followed *de facto* patterns rather than legal forms for decades, and the reform of Art. 27 threatened to uncork many long-smouldering conflicts about boundaries between communities and between families within communities.²⁶ The ejido titling programme (*Procede*) requires these boundaries to be defined, and in public. Not surprisingly, foot-dragging was widespread, as many peasant communities were reluctant to sign up for *Procede*.²⁷ At the same time, the Agriculture Ministry was drawing up its census for Procampo, though the government denies that access to compensatory payments was conditioned on participation in *Procede*.

By the second year of the 'reform of the agrarian reform', the government reported that 74 per cent of the ejidos in the country had been

visited by the representatives of the Agrarian Attorney General's office at least once. Of the ejidos visited in 1993, 78 per cent were 'diagnosed' as lacking significant boundary conflicts, and therefore eligible for 'incorporation' into the programme of title certification. This means that 11,636 ejidos were eligible, but 3,603 ejidos were found to have contested internal and/or external boundaries (of a total of 26,473 ejidos in the country). Procede acknowledged that it concentrated on the smallest and most accessible ejidos for titling in the first year. As one agrarian official reported:

... of the 9,208 ejidos that approved entry into the Procede program [in 1993], only 1,692 were able to carry out the 'Assembly of Delimitation, Destination and Assignment'. The figures reflect simultaneously the peasant will to possess their certificates and titles and the difficulties to conclude more quickly the integration of the files of each ejidatario, occupier and neighbor, the measuring of the ejido lands and the elaboration of the respective documents. [He concludes] the development of the program in the short and medium term will depend on the resources and the work of the institutions involved, on the definition of the rules for resolving the situation of ejidos in urban areas and communal lands, as well as the solution of the agrarian backlog (rezago) and the satisfaction of the demands for land distribution where land has been appropriated in violation of the law [Enríquez Arcaraz, 1994: 13, 16-17].

The Chiapas rebellion made the task of the Agrarian Ombudsman's office more complex, since the government officially recognised that the agrarian reform was not fully carried out in the first place – in sharp contrast to the official discourse surrounding the reform of Art. 27. Indeed, Zapatista leader Sub-Commander Marcos has said that the government's decision to withdraw the Constitutional promise of land redistribution tipped the balance in their internal debate over whether to take up arms against the government.²⁸

Both Procede and Procampo were created as part of a broad policy shift to withdraw the heavy hand of the state from regulating peasant life. Perhaps in the long run they will, but only if both programmes are fully implemented as designed. Such an outcome requires each programme to make the transition from public declarations of intentions to the actual delivery of cheques to real producers and the confirmation of individual land titles that match users' claims to each parcel. These tasks require the national state to develop remarkably intimate relationships with millions of individuals for the first time. This requires bureaucrats to intervene in the countryside more deeply than ever before, to learn about, measure and

mediate the complex diversity of real life producer-land use relationships. It will be a major challenge to the state's capacity to carry out Procampo and Procede with the accountability and transparency promised. The electoral process of 1994 put even greater pressure on those officials committed to the apolitical implementation of these programmes.

DECENTRALISATION AND DEMOCRATISATION

Decentralisation is often associated with democratisation, but the political and developmental impact of devolving decision-making to local levels depends on the prior structure of local government. This issue is directly related to the debate over the degree to which the National Solidarity Programme became an effective social safety net, since it devolved many key resource allocation decisions to state and municipal authorities. Solidarity promised to reform social programmes with its commitment to the principles of community participation, public transparency and co-responsibility between state and society. From the beginning, Solidarity's public image was closely associated with the President, and many analysts drew the conclusion that it was a highly centralised programme, designed to bypass state and local authorities.²⁹ This was true to some degree early on in the programme's history, but over time Solidarity resource allocation decisions were increasingly shifted down to state and local governments. Indeed, the Minister of Social Development announced that Solidarity was 'the most decentralised federal programme' because by 1994 it transferred 95 per cent of its resources to state governments, of which 50 per cent was to go to municipal governments.³⁰

The quality of municipal governance varies greatly in Mexico, ranging from increasingly consolidated, modern and democratic public administration in northern cities to entrenched redoubts of corrupt, authoritarian rule in many rural areas, especially in the south.³¹ There is also great variation between different rural areas, ranging from extensive patterns of non-Western indigenous village self-governance and democratic electoral party systems in Oaxaca, to Chiapas' combination of indigenous caciquismo in the Altos region with non-indigenous rancher political power in places like Ocosingo and Altamirano. The latter town was an extreme case of boss rule, provoking Zapatista rebels to attack the 'Municipal Palace' with sledge-hammers and evoking images of Germans enjoying the cathartic sense of liberation from dismantling the Berlin Wall by hand.³² With authoritarian rule in rural Chiapas at one extreme and indigenous self-government in much of Oaxaca at another, the centre of gravity for indigenous municipalities in most Mexican states tends to be much closer to the centralisation of local executive power in Chiapas than to Oaxaca local-

level decentralisation (though no comprehensive comparative studies of local rural governance structures are available to confirm this hypothesis).

Mexico's municipalities gained new responsibilities in 1983, with the reform of Article 115 of the Constitution.³³ Resources lagged behind responsibilities, especially in rural areas. By the late 1980s, however, the Municipal Solidarity Funds became one of the key channels for the National Solidarity Programme. Several other Solidarity programmes also used the municipality as their main conduit to reach the population, but the Municipal Funds programme was the most explicitly designed to increase the service delivery capacity of local government.³⁴ The Municipal Solidarity Funds were most relevant to rural municipalities, since the larger cities had access to a wide range of other Solidarity programmes for large-scale infrastructure investments (for example, water, sewerage, electricity).³⁵

Overall nation-wide Solidarity funding was, indeed, targeted more to the middle-income than to the poorest states. An internal World Bank analysis of spending data from the government's public annual report found that overall 1988–92 federal investment patterns were 'skewed in favour of the wealthiest states... average annual per capita federal investment in the poorest states was N\$381 while the wealthiest states received N\$765 – more than twice as much'. Solidarity investment accounts for 17 per cent of this total federal investment, but even Solidarity spending during the past five years 'has not targeted the poorest states; every year during this period per capita Solidarity expenditure in the medium cohort [of state level marginality indicators] has exceeded that of the high cohort, and in like manner the high cohort has been systematically greater than the very high [poorest] cohort' (see Table 1). Nevertheless, one cannot draw clear conclusions about the social distribution of resources from this geographic pattern. It is quite possible that the funds did target lower-income citizens in the middle-income states.³⁶ Indeed, the targeting of low-income citizens in middle-income states is consistent with the hypothesis that electoral competition significantly influenced resource allocation. In this hypothesis, the World Bank's 1990–92 findings are explained by the central state's greater electoral incentive to allocate anti-poverty resources to middle and lower-middle income states where there is significant electoral competition, such as Michoacán, rather than to the poorest states, such as Chiapas, where the ruling party retained a de facto monopoly and therefore did not appear to need to spend as much to produce a favourable outcome.³⁷

The Municipal Funds programme's rural focus was bolstered by supplemental funding from a World Bank loan, the 'Decentralisation and Regional Development Project', targeted to Mexico's four poorest states, which allocated approximately 30 per cent to Municipal Funds. The

TABLE 1
FEDERAL INVESTMENT PER CAPITA IN 1992 PESOS (1990–92)

State Poverty Level	Total Federal Investment			Solidarity			(Solidarity) / (Total Fed Investment)		
	1990	1991	1992	1990	1991	1992	1990	1991	1992
Very Low	1,256.10	1,403.61	1,003.06	21.62	15.99	24.63	1.72%	1.14%	2.46%
Low	314.24	316.62	282.47	37.53	40.95	62.13	11.94%	12.93%	21.99%
Medium	674.69	558.25	621.00	69.97	72.76	116.75	10.37%	13.03%	18.80%
High	471.57	427.21	503.88	56.30	64.04	103.22	11.94%	14.99%	20.48%
Very High	435.95	334.02	485.15	48.49	50.59	101.69	11.12%	15.14%	20.96%
Average	547.65	530.34	513.45	43.38	45.86	77.68	7.92%	8.65%	15.13%

Source: Data from *Informes Presidenciales*, 1990–92. Calculations presented in 'Intergovernmental Relations in Mexico: An Examination Focusing on Disadvantaged Rural States and Municipalities', World Bank, 19 Nov. 1993 (unpublished).

research results from a representative sample of 50 Oaxaca municipalities found that the distribution of Municipal Funds indeed favoured small rural communities (in contrast to Guerrero and Chiapas). In Oaxaca, most of the funds allocated were actually delivered to the local committees directly responsible for carrying out the local projects. Projects were to be selected by open community assemblies, and this was found to have happened in 58 per cent of the cases. Municipalities found a variety of mechanisms through which to divide development funds between villages, though the small amounts of money available sharply constrained the possible range of project choices. As a result, even though communities often participated in project selection, the projects did not necessarily prioritise the most pressing basic service needs. Although most Municipal Fund grants were too small to construct, for example, decent drinking water systems, basketball courts were seen as better than nothing. Another notable finding was that there was little partisan political discrimination against opposition-controlled municipalities in the distribution of Municipal Funds in Oaxaca.³⁸ In the background, however, the state government played a major role, significantly influencing project choices in 38 per cent of the cases. The state government retained discretionary power of inter-municipal distribution of funds as well as de facto veto power over projects through financial controls and a virtual monopoly on the technical assistance needed for community development projects of any magnitude.⁴⁹

Many discussions of local government and decentralisation assume that the municipality is the lowest level of government. This is not the case. Beyond the town centre, there is a wide range of different forms of local village representation, ranging from *rancherías* to *agencias*, some of which

are formally recognised and regulated while others are not. The Municipal Fund programme attempted to strengthen the voice and resources of the outlying areas by putting a ceiling on the percentage of funds that could be spent in the *cabecera*, 25 per cent in most cases (partly because the World Bank expressed concerns about more effective anti-poverty targeting). In practice, at least in Oaxaca, most of the Solidarity Committees that made Municipal Fund project decisions were in practice based on the previously existing structures of submunicipal government. In other words, the 'municipal agents', or submunicipal leaders, were key actors.⁴⁰ In principle, the cap on municipal centre funding could strengthen the bargaining power of submunicipal governments *vis-à-vis* the town centres, thereby decentralising power as well as funding flows.

The results of the Oaxaca study cannot be generalised to other states, mainly because the prior structures of local government, and their relations with state governments, are so different. The problem in other states is not only the question of whether local elections are free, or whether the town centre of an indigenous municipality is dominated by non-indigenous elites. The problem extends to the broader issue of how municipal governance processes are structured.

The governance issue arises when one focuses on how the municipal agents are chosen. In Oaxaca, they are chosen by community assemblies, though state law only accepted this system as recently as 1989.⁴¹ Outside Oaxaca, however, most submunicipal government leaders are appointed by the mayors rather than chosen by their constituents, and therefore this potential pro-decentralisation power shift may not strengthen accountability to local communities. In Chiapas, for example, the village-level municipal agents are chosen by the mayors. In other words, municipal authoritarianism is reproduced at the submunicipal level in Chiapas. As a result, instead of decentralising power, increased grants to local authorities in Chiapas *strengthened* the hand of local bosses in Chiapas. Indeed, prior to the rebellion, the demand for local control over the selection of local municipal agents was one of the key issues for the 1992 historic Xi'Nich human rights march from Palenque to Mexico City.⁴² Since the rebellion, a massive wave of civic protests against authoritarian municipal rulers erupted throughout the state, *outside* of the region involved in the uprising. These movements call not only for municipal democratisation, but also for a change in governance structure, from local 'presidentialism' to more pluralistic and decentralised municipal councils, as well as creating new, regional governing bodies that include multi-ethnic representation from civil society. In response to the civic mobilisation that spread far beyond the area of the rebellion, more ethnically and politically pluralistic town councils replaced the 'presidentialist' mayors in almost one third of Chiapas municipalities.

HUMAN RIGHTS: LIMITS TO REFORM

President Salinas' formation of the governmental National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) officially recognised for the first time that checks and balances were needed to constrain the impunity of human rights violators within the state.⁴³ Mexico's human rights record had begun to receive serious international attention with Amnesty International's 1986 report, 'Human Rights in Rural Areas', which documented classic cases of systematic patterns of state-sanctioned violations of human rights related to problems of land conflicts and independent political organising in rural areas, especially in Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero. Virtually all studies conducted since then indicate that human rights violations are the worst in rural, and especially indigenous regions of the country. Under the Salinas administration, the government's National Indigenous Institute carried out a major programme to release indigenous prisoners, leading to freedom for 6,848 people, mostly held without due process on charges related to narcotics cultivation. Even after several years of INI's campaign, however, its calculations showed that 19,770 indigenous prisoners were still in jail. INI also found that the number of indigenous people jailed per year increased 24 per cent from 1992 to 1993.⁴⁴ The implication is that government reformists can release prisoners, but they have yet to change the system that jails them in the first place.

Analytically, the best 'test' of state capacity to reform the administration of justice is to review the record of the official human rights commission. To know whether the overall level of violations has improved, one would need much better baseline data than are currently available. The creation of the official commission does permit the analyst to evaluate how the state itself decides what constitutes a human rights violation, and then to evaluate how this subset of the total number of cases rises or falls. At least as important, it permits the analyst to evaluate the efficacy of reform intervention in those cases where the official commission recognises that problems have occurred.

Although it is an executive agency, the CNDH does not have the authority to intervene in the activities of government security forces. Instead, it uses the mechanism of emitting public 'recommendations' to the respective agencies involved in abuses, such as state governors and the federal attorney general's office. According to the CNDH's data through June 1992, of 269 recommendations emitted, only 39 per cent were 'attended to'.⁴⁵ The rest of the cases produced inadequate responses or were simply ignored. It is important to keep in mind that these cases represent only the most clear-cut subset of those presented to the CNDH.⁴⁶ The pressure for improved performance increased as the 1994 election loomed,

however. The CNDH presented public data on non-compliance, showing that of the 796 recommendations emitted in its four years, 47.2 per cent were 'totally complied with', 50.7 per cent were 'partially complied with' and two per cent were 'not accepted'. Of those 'partially complied with', the CNDH considered 103 to be 'delayed through negligence', with 23 ignored for more than two years [Elizalde, 1994a]. The report named the negligent officials, and the president insisted that these problems be cleared up within 30 days. By then the CNDH reported that 68 per cent of the 'negligent' recommendations had registered 'advances of such importance that they should no longer be considered negligent' [Elizalde, 1994b].

Another important indicator of the CNDH's leverage *vis-à-vis* the rest of the state apparatus is what happens to the political trajectory of those authorities singled out for 'recommendations'. Perhaps the most revealing case is that of Governor Patrocinio González Garrido of Chiapas, whose state government earned more recommendations for violations of indigenous citizens' rights than any other.⁴⁷ This public scandal was apparently no obstacle to his 1993 appointment as Secretary of the Interior, Mexico's political-electoral affairs department (he later fell in the aftermath of the Chiapas revolt). The creation of the CNDH represented an important step forward, but its limited leverage over the rest of the state apparatus indicates that the Salinas administration did not expend significant political capital to constrain those within the state responsible for continued human rights violations.⁴⁸

RURAL DEMOCRATISATION AND NATIONAL POLITICS

The extension of the minimum conditions for political democracy to rural areas is necessary to guarantee basic citizenship rights to Mexico's most disenfranchised groups. Indeed, this was the principal political demand of the Zapatista rebellion.⁴⁹ But rural democratisation is also of fundamental importance to national democratisation. Even though Mexico's urban majority is increasing, rural votes can still determine the outcome of national elections. While local municipal races are often hotly contested in rural areas, inside and outside the ruling party, there is a notable lack of effective party competition for national offices in most rural areas.⁵⁰

The classic anthropological view suggests that rural Mexicans trade their votes for local benefits, rather than use their votes to express national party preferences. The late Guillermo Bonfil, one of Mexico's most prominent advocates of indigenous self-determination suggested that they vote '*en corto*', and even did so in the contested 1988 race. That is, their vote is

based on short term considerations that have nothing to do with

political programmes which propose alternative models for the society in the future. [It] is seen more as a resource for here and now, exercised towards the promise of finishing a road, building a school or a drinking water system, moving forward a land titling process, and other small benefits which help to resolve ancestral problems which shape their daily lives [Bonfil, 1990: iii].

In light of the overwhelmingly pro-PRI 1988 returns in the region of the Zapatista rebellion, one can question the degree to which official rural votes reflect actual voter decisions. An alternative interpretation might suggest, for example, that indigenous voters do not so much lack national political preferences as lack reasons for sacrificing short-term benefits in favour of what often appear to be unviable longer-term alternatives. In other words, no opposition political party has made organising around specifically indigenous concerns a major national priority.

Whatever the motivations of rural and indigenous voters, there is very strong circumstantial evidence that the electoral machinery often does not leave the decision up to them. A study, by a non-partisan research centre, of electoral geography data from 1988 give a sense of the magnitude of this issue. First of all, this study clearly shows that rural votes gave Salinas his official majority. In 'very urban' areas, he reportedly won only 34 per cent, but in 'very rural' areas, he received 77 per cent of the votes counted. While the rural and semi-rural districts accounted for 43 per cent of the electorate, they produced 57 of Salinas' official vote.⁵¹ Within the countryside, the number of voters on the rolls in 35 federal congressional districts turned out to have between 105 per cent and 125 per cent of the number of adults estimated from the census. In Chiapas, for example, the Ocosingo district had 105 per cent, while the Comitán district had 124 per cent. These remote districts also reported extraordinarily high turnout levels, ranging over 90 per cent when compared to the population figures rather than the official rolls. Chiapas has three per cent of the population, but accounted for six per cent of Salinas' national vote in 1988.

The national electoral importance of these captive vote reserves may help to explain why the Salinistas decided to reinforce rather than weaken authoritarian rule in Chiapas during the years preceding the rebellion. In 1992, President Salinas faced a major political choice. Governor Patrocinio González had jailed the top officials of the federal indigenous affairs agency on trumped-up charges of fraud. Their real 'crime' was to have carried out the policy they were charged with. According to the INI's Regional Solidarity Funds programme, the government is supposed to support economic self-help projects organised by any legitimate community-based organisation, whether or not they are affiliated with the ruling party. In

many parts of rural Mexico, INI officials respected the policy's pluralist discourse, most notably in Oaxaca.⁵² INI officials in Chiapas were also willing to support development projects without requiring political subordination.⁵³ According to Chiapas indigenous leaders who protested in their defence, the INI officials were jailed because they were doing their job.⁵⁴ President Salinas chose to side with the Governor rather than with his own federal agency. INI's reformist approach to community development was blunted in Chiapas, while González was promoted to the cabinet. This example, along with the electoral data, shows that the 'sub-national authoritarian regime' typified by the Chiapas political system was not simply a remote backwater, forgotten by Salinistas pursuing reforms at the national and international levels. Nor was it an entrenched redoubt of autonomous resistance to Salinas' reform efforts. Alliances with state level politicians like González and his counterparts in other rural states were a crucial part of the Salinas project.⁵⁵

What was the impact of these rural authoritarian enclaves on the presidential elections of 1994? Since the political opposition was divided into two major parties and several minor ones, the anti-PRI vote was fated to split, meaning that the PRI candidate only needed a plurality to win. The two major political parties lacked a sufficiently national presence to staff most rural polling places. According to official data from the Federal Electoral Institute, the centre-right National Action Party (sometimes known as the 'asphalt party' in reference to its limited reach into poor communities) was present in 67 per cent of the polling places. The centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution was present at 71 per cent of polling places. The PRD was able to cover most rural polling places in only a few states, including Tabasco (97 per cent of statewide total), Michoacán (97 per cent), Guerrero (91 per cent) and Veracruz (86 per cent).⁵⁶ And Mexico's growing non-partisan election watchdog movements did not reach most of the rural areas either, outside of the polling places selected as part of the national statistical sample. However, the non-partisan Civic Alliance's representative sample of more than 1,800 polling places found that election law violations were significantly more widespread in rural areas; enough to affect the 'quality' of the election, though not the final ruling party presidential victory.

The Civic Alliance brought together non-governmental organisations and individual citizens from centre right to centre left, fielding over 12,000 Mexican election observers and hundreds of international election 'visitors', as they were officially called. The Civic Alliance observed a statistically representative stratified sample of over 1,800 polling places for their national quick count (out of more than 90,000). They did not find any single obvious 'smoking gun' in terms of election law violations; instead they

found a diverse array of mechanisms that tarnished and distorted the process in different ways, so diverse that they found it impossible to quantify the overall effect on the electoral outcome. As a result, the Civic Alliance did not challenge the PRI presidential victory, but they did claim that sum total of irregularities, whatever that was, certainly affected the PRI's margin of victory, many congressional races and the Chiapas governor's race that took place the same day. The Alliance's main emphasis was to produce a 'quick count', in case the ruling party tried to change the results after the voting, and to document election law violations on the voting day itself.⁵⁷ The Alliance election observation effort was able to quantify the percentage of polling places affected by electoral law violations, though not the number of votes presumably affected by the violations.

One of the Civic Alliance's conclusions bears directly on all four problems of governance explored here. The secret ballot was violated in

TABLE 2
ELECTORAL VIOLATIONS IN THE 1994 MEXICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Type of Violation	Percentage of Polling Places where Violations Observed		
	Nation-wide ¹	Urban ²	Rural ³
Lack of ballot Secrecy	38.55	25.44	51.09
Pressure on voters	25.47	14.36	35.62
Voters not listed on rolls	7.16	4.49	9.47
Voters lacked registration credentials	7.69	8.87	7.56
Voters not from locality	2.93	1.81	3.86
Ink not applied to all voters	7.50	4.31	10.52

Source: Alianza Civica/Observación '94 [1994].

- Notes:
1. The national sample was designed to be statistically representative of the country as a whole, including 1,810 polling places, stratified into localities of four different sizes ranging from more to less urban.
 2. This is the 'most urban' category, defined as municipalities with more than 500,000 inhabitants.
 3. This is the 'most rural' category, defined as municipalities of less than 50,000.

38.6 per cent of polling places observed nation-wide (see Table 2). The figure ranged from 25.4 per cent in the largest cities to over 51 per cent in rural areas nationally. Secrecy violations reached 68 per cent of polling places observed in the state of Chiapas as a whole, 58 per cent in Veracruz, 55 per cent in Michoacán, 53 per cent in Oaxaca, 44 per cent in Guerrero, and much higher in the rural areas of these states. 'Direct pressures' on voters were witnessed in 25 per cent of the polling places, rising to 35.6 per cent in rural areas [*Alianza Civica, 1994*]. Most of these pressures were

actually exercised *before* election day, and were therefore not systematically measured by observers. The most notable tool for vote-buying was through the remarkably blatant political manipulation of millions of government crop subsidy cheques distributed only days or weeks before election.

Pressures to sell votes are directly related to the lack of ballot secrecy, since vote-buyers want to know that voter sellers keep their part of the bargain.⁵⁸ There are limits to the Civic Alliance data on the violation of ballot secrecy, however. The Alliance was not able to quantify what *fraction* of voters were denied ballot secrecy in each polling place. But this does not mean that their numbers are necessarily overly high. Indeed, one could argue that procedural violations were less likely to occur in those polling places where independent observers were present. It is quite likely that the presence of observers biased the sample observed, and that the actual levels of violation of ballot secrecy were higher in rural areas not independently observed. If so, then one might conclude that the Alliance's data suggest minimum levels of violations rather than upper limits. Since much of Chiapas was a near-war zone, one can only guess as to what happened in the state's polling places where independent observers were not present.

As indicated above, access to the state's new rural development programmes, whether through land titles or through trade compensation payments, is often conditioned on political subordination. Ballot secrecy is directly linked to the capacity of citizens to reject the pressures of authoritarian vote buyers and vote by their conscience. If voting were guaranteed to be secret, then even the poorest of the rural poor could potentially express themselves politically in favour of political alternatives that favour more accountable governance, in spite of survival pressures to accept the government's favours. The secret ballot is therefore one of those democratic formalities most important to the weakest members of the polity. Indeed, without a guaranteed secret ballot, voters are denied full citizenship rights.⁵⁹

CONCLUSIONS

One can debate the strengths and weaknesses of the government's pro-market rural development programmes in terms of their proposed social and economic logic. In principle, for smallholders, direct trade compensation payments via Procampo, individual land rights via Procede and the strengthening of rural local government through the Municipal Solidarity Funds, all offered many advantages over the paternalistic centralisation of the past, though they did not add up to a comprehensive strategy to make family farming economically viable. Indeed, top government rural policy-makers themselves predicted significantly increased rural out-migration.

But regardless of their theoretical pros and cons, the implementation of the government's multi-sectoral package of rural policy reforms presumed a very high degree of state capacity to reach deeply into rural areas effectively.

This analysis of four major areas of policy reform: agriculture and land tenure, municipal decentralisation, the administration of justice, and rural electoral democratisation, suggests that the state's capacity for reform was dependent upon the construction of new forms of exercising public authority. The official discourse claimed that the state's reforms sought new, more efficient and more accountable ways of engaging with civil society, in social, economic and political arenas. However, the state's actual capacity to implement its reforms depends on the degree to which accountability mechanisms can be broadened and strengthened. Policy-specific accountability mechanisms were needed, and some were announced, such as 'social controllers' [accountants] for some Solidarity projects, but their effectiveness is likely to be very limited without system-wide accountability mechanisms to back them up. Many of each policy reform's accountability problems are inter-dependent. For example, rural citizens, especially indigenous people, are unlikely to have much faith in official channels for complaints about abuses of crop payments or land tenure reform if their votes do not count or the local police follow the orders of authoritarian elites with impunity.

The determinants of effective governance in terms of the managed restructuring of rural state intervention lie in part beyond the realm of executive agencies. The construction of accountable institutions of public governance depends in part on broader changes in the nature of the regime, and its future movement from its current phase of semi-competitive electoral competition across the minimum threshold of political democracy for all citizens. In other words, the necessary condition for any policy-specific pro-accountability measures is political democracy at all levels of government and throughout the polity.

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NOTES

1. For a far-ranging and insightful theoretical discussion of the social conditions from which markets emerge and function, see Platteau [1994]. He stresses how both institutions and societal values determine the efficiency with which markets actually allocate resources in practice. He argues that appropriate institutions are insufficient, and that widely shared appropriate norms are also required. This distinction may be more viable in theory than in practice, however, since one could argue that the two often emerge together and may well be mutually dependent. Indeed, most discussions of the importance of norms are ambiguous

- regarding how to explain their emergence. Do norms shape institutions, do institutions shape norms, or are norms simply inherited from historically contingent cultural idiosyncracies, immune from analytical generalisation? Because of the ambiguity surrounding the 'causes' of norms, this article will focus on the more tangible issue of the contradictions inherent in an 'under-institutionalised' regulatory withdrawal of the state.
2. The World Bank's official concern with governance began in Africa in 1989, in response to the mixed performance of its structural adjustment programmes. See the conceptual discussion of governance issues in Moore [1993], drawing primarily from the Asian and African experiences.
 3. Capacity refers to the ability of leading state managers to use the levers of state power to get other actors in state and society to do what they want them to do. Capacity is distinct from autonomy, which refers to state leaders' capacity to formulate goals independently. This approach differs from frameworks that dichotomise state strength and weakness. This dichotomy implicitly treats the state as a unified actor, and conflates autonomy with capacity. See Fox [1992b: 11-12].
 4. One of the key issues facing the study of democratisation is to explain how the competitive electorate can expand to include the entire citizenry [Fox, 1994a]. Even in majority urban societies such as Brazil and Mexico, authoritarian control over rural voters can affect the national balance of power. For comparative discussion of this issue in Latin America, see Fox [1990; 1994d]. Asian cases include South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia, among others. While most of these regimes lack a democratic past, increased rural authoritarianism in Sri Lanka undermined a longstanding pluralistic democracy [Moore, 1994].
 5. Most discussions of clientelism do not make a conceptual distinction between its authoritarian variant, defined by the use or threat of coercion, and other forms of reciprocal bargaining between actors of unequal power. The latter definition is more common, but it necessarily spills over into the more general notion of political bargaining. This article uses the narrower definition, referring specifically to authoritarian clientelism. For a more detailed conceptual discussion, see Fox [1994a].
 6. This was the solution to what Miles Kahler calls the 'orthodox paradox', or how governments try 'to change policies that are economically damaging or irrational but politically rational', as in the case of the Mexican state's rural regulatory apparatus [1990: 47].
 7. On the politics of macroeconomic reforms, see, among others, Nelson [1990].
 8. See Cook, Middlebrook and Molinar [1994]. The new official ideology of 'social liberalism' called for the state to encourage private sector-led economic development by largely withdrawing from most of its past regulatory and productive activities, while showing the state's continued commitment to social justice through more efficient and less paternalistic distributive reforms. Like past Mexican policy-makers, however, the 'social liberals' based much of their political legitimacy on their success at encouraging both growth and distribution. And since both Mexico's contested 1988 presidential election and the Gorbachev experience underscored how democratic political competition could complicate efforts toward economic change, Mexican policy-makers worked largely within the existing political system to carry out their economic reform project, at least until the end of the Salinas presidency [1988-94].
 9. On the debate over the political intentions behind the government's National Solidarity Programme, see the range of views in Cornelius, Craig and Fox [1994].
 10. Neil Harvey refers to the sharp contrast between formal laws and public policies and their actual implementation in Chiapas in terms of 'the imaginary legality' [1993].
 11. Mexican agriculture is highly polarised. Most producers fall into one of two distinct categories: either they are medium and large-scale farmers, usually with irrigation, or they are non-irrigated smallholders with less land than needed to provide the equivalent of a full year's employment even at the minimum wage [CEPAL, 1982]. Mexico also has a significant intermediate segment of market-oriented, surplus-producing family farmers, but the overall 'bimodal' pattern of polarisation contrasts sharply with the 'unimodal' pattern of, for example, the US midwest or post-land reform Taiwan, Korea and China. In Mexico, the sub-

- subsistence producers tend to be poorly organised, the family farmers have recently become moderately well-organised and the large growers are the most-organised. This polarised pattern is the inheritance of past state intervention; government subsidies and irrigation investment induced the creation of much of the today's modern agribusiness, while intermittent waves of agrarian reform settled former farmworkers in large numbers on rainfed lands of uneven quality [Barkin and Suárez, 1985; Esteva, 1983; Grindle, 1986; Sanderson, 1981; 1986]. This 'two-track' policy, alternating between presidential administrations since the revolution, has reflected competing policy currents within the state, one which saw the government's creation of the ejido, or agrarian reform community, as a temporary political expedient and a reserve migrant labour source, and another which saw the ejido sector as a key pillar of a political project of national development with social justice. Overall, rural policy emphasised investment and subsidies for the benefit of agribusiness, except during the mid-1930s and mid-1970s, when populists briefly dominated national agrarian policy-making and peasant movements were able to win significant concessions. Though largely forgotten in the course of Mexico's economic instability of the 1970s and 1980s, this two-track model of regulation in agriculture made a major economic and political contribution to what used to be called the 'Mexican Miracle' of import-substitution industrialisation from the 1940s through the 1960s.
12. On the full array of mechanisms of state intervention in the basic grains sector, see Appendini [1992] and Fox [1992b].
 13. The movement by regional smallholder organisations to occupy the space between the state and the market in the 1980s has been called the 'appropriation of the production process'. This process of extending self-management with capitalised group credit, processing and marketing has clear limits as a policy alternative, since most peasants lack either the necessary organisational resources or viable productive alternatives [Bartra, 1989a; 1990; 1991; Moguel, 1992]. For an overview of the process of 'disincorporation' of state enterprises in agriculture, see De la Fuente and MacKinlay [1994]. The coffee movement is one of the most advanced in terms of both self-management and state support, but the results so far are mixed, highlighting the limits of group-specific supports in the absence of a national policy environment that is hospitable to smallholder production. Coffee is an especially important case because it is one of the few export crops grown by smallholders, supporting approximately two million people. See Ejea and Hernández [1991]; Moguel and Aranda [1992], and Hernández and Celis [1994].
 14. For an overview of the different Solidarity programmes, see Bailey and Boone [1994]. Of Solidarity's many programmes, three supported productive projects: the crop loans, the Indigenous Institute's development programmes and the Solidarity Enterprises. Productive investments grew over time, but even as recently as 1992 they accounted for less than 13 per cent of annual Solidarity spending [Lustig, 1994: 92]. The 'on your word' crop loans were the largest single category (7.8 per cent), and were targeted by mayors to smallholders not considered commercially credit-worthy (known officially as 'unproductive'). But these loans rarely exceeded US\$ 100, and were therefore so small that they might be better considered as a consumption subsidy rather than a production support programme.
 15. See Undersecretary of Agriculture Luis Tellez's remarks, cited in Golden [1991]. At a May 1992 Harvard forum, Dr Tellez followed up with the prediction that the economically active population in agriculture would probably fall from 26 per cent to 16 per cent in the coming decade. Government critics made comparable predictions of massive rural proletarianisation two decades ago, but they greatly underestimated the peasantry's capacity to resist full displacement. Protest drove renewed state intervention to subsidise the better-off third of the ejido sector, and campesino identity turned out to be more resilient than predicted. Recently, however, the prospects for state intervention have changed greatly, and perhaps those for peasant identity as well, at least among the younger generation with significant migration experience.
 16. For official descriptions of Procampo, see SARH [1993] and Knockenhour [1993].
 17. Urban consumers will clearly benefit, but the effects of the trade opening on low-income rural consumers are less straightforward. If corn were traded in a single, nation-wide textbook free market in Mexico, then rural sub-subsistence producers and landless

- farmworkers would benefit substantially from the projected 50 per cent drop in the price of their staple food. There are many regions of Mexico, however, where this assumption cannot be taken for granted. In the more remote regions, local monopolies on transportation combine with scarce working capital to limit competitive alternatives for rural consumers. In this context, Conasupo's rural consumer food distribution programme has intervened to put an effective, pro-consumer price ceiling in many otherwise uncompetitive local markets. In many ways a precursor to Solidarity, this programme has operated since its design in 1979 as a 'co-responsible' partnership between a federal agency and organised villages to deliver a targeted subsidy, complete with mechanisms for participation, transparency and accountability [Fox, 1992b]. The apparatus of village stores and regional warehouses is in the process of being transferred to local organisations, with uncertain prospects for the future. If this pro-rural consumer programme is dismantled, then there will be no mechanism to ensure that the benefits of a lowered national corn price will reach many rural areas.
18. On the politicised relations between the Agriculture Ministry and smallholders, see, among others, Arce and Long [1987] and Fox [1992b].
 19. See Villanueva Mukul and Martín Castillo [1993: 88-9].
 20. According to the programme's official schedule, the majority of its participants (2.8 million peasants) were to receive cheques between 15 June and 15 August, a period ending one week before the elections. See Sosa [1994].
 21. For the Civic Alliance's criticisms of widespread vote-buying, see Rudino [1994]. As one account of the election-time cheque distribution described it: 'One government worker reminds the farmers of the need to vote Sunday and tells them that they should reflect on how their choice will affect the future of their subsidies' [Ribadeneira, 1994].
 22. This requirement has a loophole, however, since if the first assembly does not produce a quorum, then the next assembly is considered valid if at least half the members participate. In this scenario, one third of the members can produce a two-thirds majority. See Articles 16 and 27 of the enabling legislation in SRA [1992].
 23. These joint ventures received a great deal of publicity as a top policy priority, but most were subsidised by the government rather than the result of strictly 'free market' negotiations. For an overview, see Oliveira Vera-Cruz [1994].
 24. For an analysis of the reform policy process and context, see Fox [1994e]. For the official text of the reform and its enabling legislation, see SRA [1992].
 25. Chapter IX, Article 41 of the Internal Rules of the Agrarian Attorney General's office (cited in Baitenmann [1994b]).
 26. As Moore points out, in reference to analogous processes in Africa: 'The arguments for individualisation at first sight appear persuasive ... The reality can be very different. The process of formalising rights may create conflicts, incentives to divert energies into contests over legal title, opportunities for the aggressive and well-connected to benefit themselves at the expense of other, and long-standing uncertainty over rights' [1993: 46; emphasis in original].
 27. For one of the most comprehensive early studies, see Stephen [1994]. Some communities were quite concerned because they perceived threats associated with the reform of Article 27 that were not necessarily in the law itself. These worries were related to a sense of exclusion from the policy process, and by a general lack of credibility in the government's promises. In Chiapas, the government's low credibility was worsened by the obvious conflict between its declaration that there was no more land to redistribute and the widespread local perception that large estates still occupy an important fraction of the better land. For an insightful discussion of these perceptions, see López Monjardín's detailed account of an exchange between a representative of the Agrarian Ombudsman's Office and communities from the Xi'Nich movement near Palenque, Chiapas, several months before the rebellion [1993].
 28. See Collier's discussion [1994: 45, 84].
 29. See the various points of view in Cornelius, Craig and Fox [1994].
 30. Speech cited in Cuéllar and Pérez Silva [1995].
 31. See Massolo [1991] and Fox and Hernández [1992].
 32. On the widespread indigenous-civic mobilisation against authoritarian local bosses throughout Chiapas (outside of the area affected by the military conflict), see Bellinghausen

- [1994], Henríquez [1994] and Moguel [1994].
33. See Martínez Assad and Ziccardi [1987].
34. From the beginning, one of the most important programmes channeled through local mayors was the Solidarity production loans for rainfed agriculture. Putting such discretionary authority in the hands of local mayors provoked strong criticism from within the Solidarity agency itself, however. According to an internal Solidarity Programme evaluation, the crop loan programme 'excludes the participation of the community from its own development, it prioritises individual commitment over the group ... Although this individual relationship was conceived as a mechanism to guarantee the recovery of the loans from the producers, its implementation delinks the problems of basic grain cultivation from the overall community problematic (productive, social, economic, cultural and political) ...'. In terms of the programme's official accountability mechanisms, 'the composition of the Committee of Validation and Follow-up does not assure a real representation of the producers, nor the communities that the producers belong to, since only the formal representatives are involved (presidents of *núcleos agrarios* and peasant organisations), with the resulting risk that the resources are assigned based on criteria that correspond to personal or factional interests' [SEDESOL, 1993: 7-9].
35. For an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of a Solidarity programme that bypassed state and local government to reach the poorest of the poor, see Fox [1994a; 1994b].
36. No systematic independent research on this issue is available, in part because the Salinas administration kept Solidarity spending disaggregated to the municipal-level confidential.
37. Molinar and Weldon's persuasive statistical analysis of state-level Solidarity spending independently confirms the hypothesis that electoral targeting is much more closely correlated with levels of resource allocation than state-wide poverty levels [1994].
38. The political pluralism of Municipal Fund distribution in Oaxaca contrasted sharply with clear bias against opposition municipalities in the state of Michoacán, where, in contrast, the opposition presented a threat at the state level. For further comparison of Solidarity in the two states, see Fox and Moguel [1995].
39. See Fox and Aranda [1994].
40. In our sample, 64 per cent of the presidents of the Local Solidarity Committee were also municipal authorities, which usually meant that the municipal agents presided over the Local Solidarity Committee. The state government played a central role in programme implementation. The Governor personally handed out more than 80 per cent of the project cheques, and his lower level officials strongly influencing local project choices in more than a third of the sample studied [Fox and Aranda, 1994].
41. See Díaz Montes [1992] and Ornelas López [1989].
42. On this dramatic 'pro-accountability' march from Chiapas, see Cuéllar Vázquez [1994].
43. This decision was triggered by the murder of a leading anti-police abuse activist in Sinaloa, Norma Corona, followed by increased international scrutiny; specifically, the 1990 release of Americas Watch landmark report *Human Rights in Mexico: A Policy of Impunity*. Mexico's human rights movement was quite incipient as recently as the late 1980s, but since then its roots have broadened and deepened significantly. It is now possible to speak of a national human rights movement, with local organisations throughout the country [Fox and Hernández, 1992; Sikkink, 1993]. Many are linked to church groups and local civic organisations, though in Oaxaca a state-wide campesino-indigenous network [CEPCO] has created its own state human rights network.
44. See Hernández [1994]. Some reports indicate that violence against peasants in general increased significantly in the middle of the Salinas administration. According to the Centro de Derechos Humanos 'Miguel Agustín Pro', repressive acts against peasants more than doubled, increasing from 1,071 in 1991 to 2,254 in 1992 [Pérez, 1993].
45. See Acosta and Culebro [1992: 43].
46. Americas Watch was initially quite optimistic about the prospects for the CNDH and the importance of 'breaking the official silence that pervaded human rights violations before 1990' [Mendez, 1993: 6]. It considers the CNDH recommendations to 'represent serious efforts to come to the truth about violations, and their regular publication is an important step in that direction' [Mendez, 1993: 5]. But Americas Watch also concludes that: CNDH only

examines cases where torture is documented with physical evidence (excluding psychological torture), 'CNDH never recommends compensation for victims. CNDH does not complain when persons accused of torture are charged with lesser crimes [though CNDH counts this as "accepting" its recommendations] ... CNDH does complain about lack of compliance with its recommendations, but not forcefully enough; it accepts "partial compliance" as a demonstration of good faith when often it is a tactic to get CNDH off the back of the agency that must implement the recommendation ...' and so forth [Mendez, 1993: 6]. Most importantly, those who refuse to honour CNDH recommendations are not required to be punished.

47. See, for example, Correa [1993].
48. Perhaps the most important exception to this was the strong role played by the CNDH's first (and strongest) director, Jorge Carpizo, in the conflict over how to deal with the apparent complicity of an Army general in a Veracruz shoot-out between military and police forces. President Salinas certainly spent political capital to jail a general on drug-related charges. This case is not a good 'test' of the administration's commitment to reducing impunity for human rights violations committed against the rural citizenry, however, precisely because of the case's international drug-trafficking implications and the resulting need to demonstrate commitment to the US government.
49. As stated in the second EZLN communiqué: 'The grave conditions of poverty of our compatriots have a common cause: the lack of liberty and democracy. We think that the authentic respect for freedom and the people's democratic will are the indispensable prerequisites for the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the dispossessed of our country ...' (cited in Fox [1994c]).
50. For further discussion of rural electoral politics, see Fox [1994d; 1994e].
51. See López *et al.* [1989: 31-3].
52. See Fox [1994a; 1994b].
53. See Ruiz Hernández [1993].
54. See Rojas [1992].
55. For a more general presentation of this argument, see Fox [1994d].
56. Data on opposition party presence at polls were made available thanks to Dr Juan Molinar.
57. The Alliance also did systematic studies of pro-government media bias in the months leading up to the election. They were not able to address the flagrant violations of weak campaign spending laws, nor did they have the capacity to check the validity of the controversial official voter rolls.
58. As a result, some of the violation of ballot secrecy occurred when voters showed their votes to outside observers, on their way from the curtained polling place to the ballot box. This apparent 'choice' was often less than voluntary.
59. This argument is elaborated in Fox [1994a].

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