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Revision Commission Meets With Success**

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**Counterpoint: The Unpredictable
Power of Generation X**

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Journal of the Florida Political Science Association

Political Chronicle

The *Political Chronicle* is the official journal of the Florida Political Science Association. We offer an insightful, readable journal addressing topics on U.S. government and international affairs, as well as timely topics of interest to the general reader. Articles by Florida academicians and analysis of Florida politics is an additional feature.

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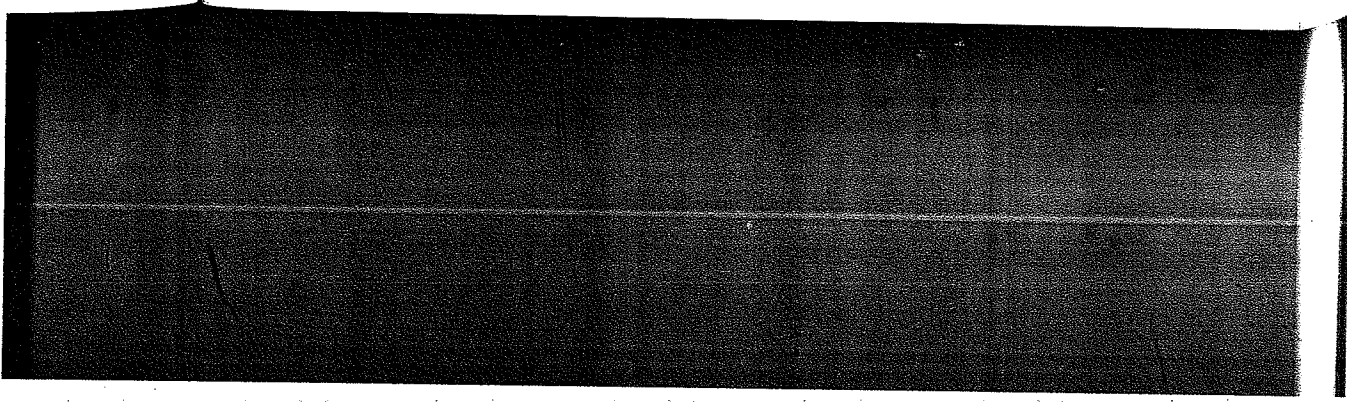
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THE SECOND TIME AROUND: FLORIDA'S CONSTITUTION REVISION COMMISSION MEETS WITH SUCCESS

Robert A. Kurfirst

One of the winners in the election of November 1998 was Florida's Constitution Revision Commission. For only the second time since Florida's 1968 constitution took effect, amendments proposed by the revision commission were put before the voters. The first group of amendments offered in 1978 proved disastrous as all eight were roundly defeated at the polls. In 1998, however, eight of the nine amendments proposed by the commission were adopted by the electorate, a stunning reversal of fortune for this unique constitutional body. This article examines modifications in the structure of and approach taken by the 1998 revision commission as well as changes in Florida's electorate that may have contributed to its success. The prospects for the next revision commission, scheduled to meet in 2017, are also evaluated.

Introduction

In accordance with Article XI of Florida's constitution, the state's Constitution Revision Commission (CRC) convened for a second time on June 5, 1997, to begin the process of evaluating possible amendments to the state's fundamental law.¹ Florida is the only state to mandate that amendments proposed by the CRC be ratified directly by the voters. In all other states, revisions are either forwarded to the legislature for review and amendment before being placed on the ballot for ratification, or sent to the governor or the legislature as advisory recommendations only. Florida is also the only state to enshrine a requirement for regular CRC meetings in the constitution itself. In all other states, these commissions are authorized by statute,² convened by executive order, and in rare cases created by private associations.³

State constitution revision commissions have been in use since 1852, when New Jersey called their first into session. Since 1960, however, 36 states have established such commissions to perform different functions.⁴ These boards have become a popular adjunct to or substitute for full-blown constitutional conventions because of the savings in time and expense they bring relative to the constitutional convention. They have also been used by governors or independent associations to broach the matter of constitutional reform when legislatures have been reticent to do so. The commission approach also has the advantage of being perceived by the public as independent of government, and given the fact that the public has soured on the idea of state constitu-

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tional reform since the flurry of activity in the 1960s and 1970s, rejecting all referenda calling for new constitutional conventions in the 14 states that take this issue before the public, the revision commission has become an effective way of placing piecemeal reforms before the public with greater success (Gais and Benjamin 1995).

The one major drawback to the revision commission strategy is that often, and especially when commissions are convened by legislative statute, commissioners craft their reforms with one eye on the legislature, whose favor they must curry before their proposals are given electoral consideration. The advantage of Florida's constitution revision system is that these concerns need not enter into the picture. Rather, commissioners take the *public* into consideration, not the legislature, insofar as they will have the final say on these matters. Moreover, the uniqueness of Florida's system brings public opinion into play as amendments are being crafted, since the CRC engages in a series of public hearings where hundreds of citizen-initiated proposals can be put before the commission for their consideration.

In the 1997-98 hearing process, any public proposal that received the support of 10 of the 37 commissioners was given additional attention in the second round of deliberations,⁵ and recommendations that received the support of 22 members of the panel, 36 in total, were grouped into nine constitutional amendments submitted for electoral consideration in November of 1998. The three-fifths supermajority rule for ballot access established by the 1998 commission was an innovation not employed in 1978 when the CRC operated on the principle of simple majority rule. At that time, former Governor LeRoy Collins objected that a supermajority requirement would serve as "a tool of obstructionists,"⁶ but instead the simple majority rule opened the door for a host of controversial proposals, such as merit selection of judges and the total abolition of Florida's unique cabinet government. This time around, a number of highly controversial topics, from school vouchers and abortion to capital punishment and a state income tax, were filtered out of the proceedings during the final round when the three-fifths requirement was in place. Consequently, the 1998 CRC avoided highly charged topics and put before the voters a rather conservative slate of constitutional amendments, which in all likelihood enhanced their prospects for success.

When the votes were counted, eight of the nine CRC proposals were approved by Florida's voters in the 1998 election (table 2), a stunning reversal of the fortunes of Florida's first CRC, which saw all eight of its proposals defeated in 1978 (table 1). The success of Florida's second CRC was even more surprising because even though it broke with 1978 procedures and adopted a supermajority ballot access requirement, it did nothing to avoid what was considered the second major pitfall of the 1978 commission, its controversial strategy of grouping dozens of disparate propositions into a very few amendments. The consensus opinion on the failure of the 1978 CRC amendments was that in part this debacle could be explained by the fact that voters were confused by the bundling together of numerous often unrelated proposals into a single amendment. Justice Dexter Douglass, a member of the 1978 commission and chairman of its 1998 reincarnation, made note of this in the preparatory stages of the 1998 commission, stating his intention to insure that each issue put before the voters would appear on its own ballot question. However, his plans were to no avail as the final report of the second CRC brought forward 36 proposals in nine amendments.

Amendment Eight, for example, was titled "Restructuring the State Cabinet" on the November ballot, but in addition to merging the positions of treasurer and comp-

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Table 1
Percentage of Electoral Support for CRC Amendments,
1978 and 1998

1978 AMENDMENTS	YES	NO	ROLLOFF
#1: Miscellaneous Constitutional Revisions	29.2	70.8	15.6
#2: Declaration of Rights	43.1	56.9	8.1
#3: Single-Member Legislative Districts and Reapportionment Commission	46.9	53.1	17.7
#4: Abolition of the Cabinet	25.1	74.9	14.8
#5: Public Service Commission and Public Counsel Reform	35.9	64.1	15.1
#6: Merit Selection and Retention of Judges	49.1	50.9	14.9
#7: Finance and Taxation Revisions	36.3	63.7	15.1
#8: Organizational Reforms in Public Education	36.3	63.7	16.0
1998 AMENDMENTS	YES	NO	ROLLOFF
#5: Creation of Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	72.3	27.7	8.2
#6: Education Declaration	71.0	29.0	6.8
#7: Merit Selection and Retention of Judges	56.9	43.1	10.0
#8: Cabinet Restructuring	55.5	45.5	11.4
#9: Gender-Neutral Declaration of Rights	66.2	33.8	8.0
#10: Property Tax Exemptions for Local Governments and Citizen Access to Local Officials	49.8	50.2	11.2
#11: Electoral Process Revisions	64.1	35.9	11.9
#12: Local Option for Firearms Purchases Reg.	72.0	28.0	7.0
#13: Miscellaneous Constitutional Revisions	55.0	45.0	14.2

Note: Ballot rolloff figures indicate the percentage of voters who voted for a gubernatorial candidate but did not cast a vote for the amendment listed.

troller into a single chief financial officer and downgrading the secretary of state and commissioner of education from cabinet status, it also redefined the duties of the secretary of state, changed the composition and method of appointment of the state Board of Education, and specified new procedures for constituting the state's Board of Administration, its Internal Improvement and Land Acquisition trust funds, and the Department of Law Enforcement. Amendment Eleven addressed a host of electoral issues including the equalization of ballot access requirements for all candidates,

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including those with no party affiliation; mandating nonpartisan elections for school boards; allowing gubernatorial candidates to run without a lieutenant governor candidate in primary elections; permitting all voters to participate in a closed primary race if the winner of that primary will run unopposed in the general election; and investing the state's unique campaign finance legislation in Article VI of the constitution. Amendment Thirteen was most extreme in this regard, presenting a cornucopia of miscellaneous matters and technical revisions of the constitution, among them the removal of gender-specific language, the consolidation of the state ethics code, the specification of time-frames for responding to gubernatorial vetoes and for submitting general appropriations bills to state officials, two revisions of court-martial procedures, and adjustments to the schedules for reconvening the CRC and the state Taxation and Budget Reform Commission.⁷ However, here too the 1998 commission exercised a modicum of restraint, at least when compared with the 1978 CRC which bundled together 57 proposals in one single omnibus amendment, Amendment One, which garnered all of 29.2% of the vote, the lowest total by far of any of the 1978 proposals.

Three of the 1998 amendments revisited issues advanced by the first CRC, all which were roundly defeated in 1978. Amendment Seven rejuvenated the idea of merit selection for county and circuit court judges, albeit as a county option this time around; Amendment Nine reintroduced the matter of gender equality in the constitution's Declaration of Rights; and Amendment Eight again recommended the restructuring of the cabinet, though on a reduced scale since it eliminated only three elective positions, not all six as had been proposed in 1978. The 1978 CRC amendments that addressed these matters were Amendment Six, Amendment Two, and Amendment Four, respectively. This time, all three proposals proved palatable to the voters. In fact, only one amendment was defeated in 1998, Amendment Ten that combined provisions for local and municipal property tax exemptions with the easing of restrictions on citizen access to local officials.

In this instance, the "grouping" approach seems to have backfired because voters appear to have sacrificed better access to government officials at public meetings because they balked at the idea of allowing local and municipal governments to exempt from taxation a schedule of special properties, including attachments to mobile homes and property used for airports, seaports, environmental conservation, and other public purposes. Ironically, voters approved two additional tax-exemption amendments placed on the ballot by the state legislature, Amendment One that authorized exemptions for "historic property," and Amendment Three that broadened Florida's homestead tax exemptions for property owned by the state's senior citizens.⁸ Two other legislative proposals also succeeded, Amendment Two that reaffirmed the use of capital punishment even if the state chooses to employ methods other than the electric chair, and Amendment Four that authorized the filing of legal documents electronically and at county branch offices.

Analysis

Why did Florida's electorate approve 8 of the 9 CRC proposals and 12 of 13 amendments overall in the election of 1998? A number of factors may have influenced the success rate this time around. First, only one of the 13 proposals attracted significant interest group

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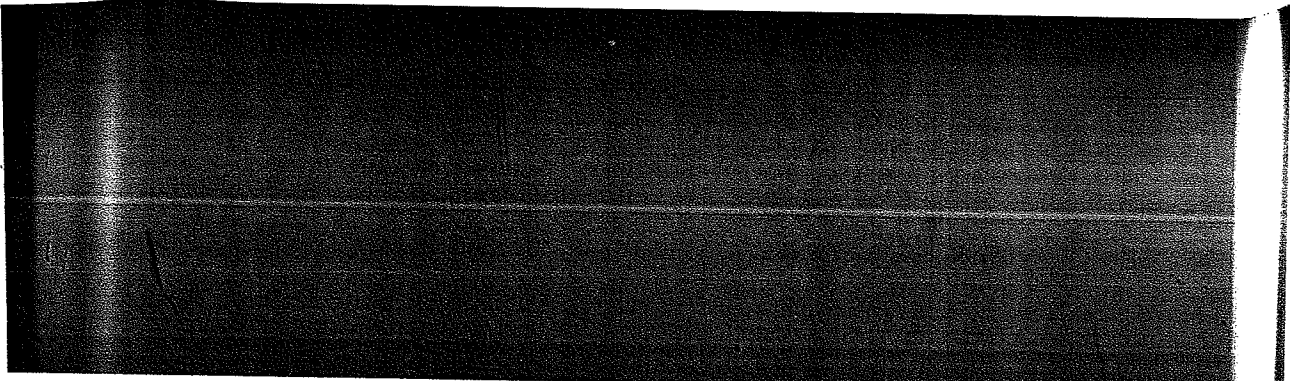
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attention. Amendment Twelve, the gun sales proposition, received support from the Florida Campaign to Close the Gunshow Loophole which was countered by an advertising blitz during the final week of the campaign sponsored by the National Rifle Association, the amendment's principal opponent. None of the other 12 amendments spawned the media campaigns that have become commonplace in Florida this decade, especially for high-profile citizen initiative campaigns like term limits in 1992, marine net bans and casino gambling in 1994, and the highly volatile sugar tax for Everglades restoration in 1996 (see Kurfirst 1996a; 1996b; Jameson and Hosack 1995). The conservative focus and procedures of the 1998 commission may account for this absence of volatility, since many of the issues advanced by organized interest groups received a fair hearing but failed to pass muster given the supermajority requirement for final approval.

In this connection, the composition of the 1998 commission may also have played a part. As opposed to the 1978 CRC which was comprised almost entirely of legislators, ex-legislators, lawyers, and judges, the 1998 roster displayed considerably more variety. This time around, only two sitting legislators and seven former legislators served on the panel, along with a number of business and community leaders and even an environmentalist, William Clay Henderson, president and CEO of the Florida Audubon Society. Party affiliation was roughly even, with only a few more Republicans than Democrats, not to be unexpected given that in contrast to 1978, the state of politics in 1998 found the Republican Party in control of both chambers of the state legislature. The appointments of the two Republican legislative leaders was not without controversy, however, as evidenced by the strong words of the editorial staff of the *St. Petersburg Times*. While Speaker Webster's appointments were criticized for being "selected more for their conservative dogma than for the quality of their contributions to Florida," Senator Jennings was chided for selecting business leaders "with an eye toward stroking fund-raisers and supporters who could be helpful in a future campaign for statewide office." The panel was also chastised for having "too few women (nine) and African Americans (three) and too many former Republican Senate presidents (two out of a possible two) and lawyers (21)."

Another noted concern was that "[i]nstead of being philosophically and geographically balanced, it significantly tilts toward conservative viewpoints and South Florida." The *Times* concluded that this panel did "not comprise the 37 best constitutional minds in the state. Not by a long shot."⁹ However, when compared to the 1978 commission roster it can be said that the 1998 configuration brought some new perspectives to the task of constitutional reform. Complaints about the 1978 panel abounded also. It was suggested that the overbearing presence of sitting and former state legislators on the first CRC led to a sabotage mentality, since many of these participating legislators and scores more who were nonparticipants believed that the CRC was usurping legislative authority to revise and amend the state constitution, a sentiment borne out by the fact that one year after the 1978 debacle the legislature approved an amendment to abolish the CRC entirely (Dauer 1984). Voters rejected this vindictive proposal in the 1980 general election.

Another reason for the success of the slate of amendments considered in 1998 may be the increasing sophistication of Florida's electorate when judging the merits of constitutional amendments. After three decades under a new constitution which empowered Floridians to initiate constitutional, though not statutory changes via the citizen initiative process, the state's electorate seems to have warmed up to the process

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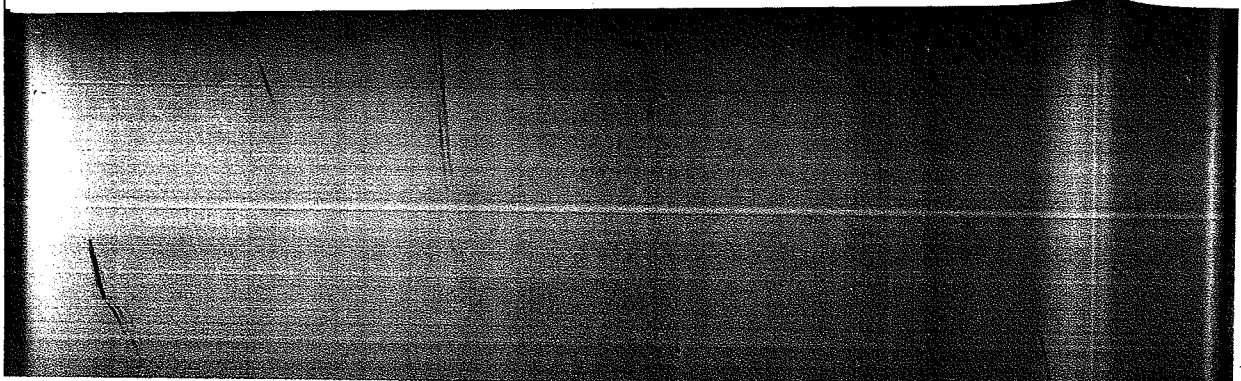
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of constitutional change, both as initiators and ratifiers of amendments. In the former regard, a flurry of citizen initiative activity has engrossed the state since 1986. Twelve initiatives have appeared on the ballot since then, another half-dozen were invalidated by the court, and 30 additional initiative campaigns were formally in process by February 2000. In the latter connection, nearly 100 amendments to Florida's 1968 constitution have been sponsored by the state legislature, the Constitution Revision Commission, and the Tax and Budget Commission and voted on by the electorate.

A comparison of the "ballot rolloff" or abstention numbers in 1978 and 1998 provided in table 1 is quite telling. In 1978 only one CRC amendment, number two dealing with gender equality in the Declaration of Rights, had less than 10% rolloff, as compared to the number of electors who cast a vote for governor, the high profile race that year. Only two others garnered a vote from at least 85% of those who voted for a gubernatorial candidate. In the 1998 election, in contrast, only the final omnibus amendment, number 13, drew about 85% of the attention of voters (85.8%); five of the other eight CRC amendments got 90% participation or more, as did three of the four amendments sponsored by the legislature.

As illustrated in table 2, with the exception of 1992 when none of the nine amendments facing voters on the ballot got a 90% response, five of the last six elections exhibited an average rolloff figure for constitutional amendments less than 10%. This may signify that Florida voters are growing comfortable with the amendment process as they gain more experience participating in it. All indications are that the public response to the CRC hearings far exceeded the turnout at public meetings during the 1977-78 cycle, though the fact that the 1998 CRC took their act on the road touring a dozen venues across the state in the course of their schedule of 42 meetings, an

Table 2
Average Ballot Rolloff Rates for All Constitutional Amendments:
1978-98

ELECTION YEAR	# OF AMENDMENTS	% AVERAGE ROLLOFF
1978	9	13.5
1980	6	16.2
1982	2	14.5
1984	8	19.9
1986	5	9.0
1988	10	9.4
1990	4	9.0
1992	9	12.1
1994	5	8.7
1996	6	9.0
1998	13	9.5

Note: Rolloff averages were calculated with reference to gubernatorial votes in 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, and 1998; presidential vote totals were used for 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996.

innovation not employed by the 1978 commission, certainly helped stir up public interest.¹⁰ The resounding turnout at public meetings, especially at locations outside of Tallahassee, was further amplified by the fact that this time around citizens could access the CRC by e-mail and internet, an option not available two decades ago.

Three reasons are regularly advanced for the dismal showing of the CRC amendments in 1978. First, it has been argued, that after a mere 10 years, voters did not see the need to amend their new constitution, especially since there was no popular call to do so. A second and related deduction is that by 1978, the public's openness to cultural and institutional change so evident throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s had run its course and been replaced by a general disillusionment about government after Watergate and Viet Nam. Remember also that the election of 1978 found Howard Jarvis' anti-tax Proposition 13 on the California ballot. Finally, the presence on the 1978 ballot of one non-CRC amendment, Amendment Nine authorizing casino gambling, produced enough hostility among voters to torpedo all of the amendments along with the casino plan (Sturm 1982, 85).¹¹ Not only did the casino gambling proposition garner the most votes among all the amendments, it got a vote from more than 95% of those who voted in the gubernatorial race, and was defeated resoundingly by a margin of 71.4% to 28.6%.

There was no comparable "poison pill" on the 1998 ballot. In fact, for only the second time since the election of 1984, no citizen initiatives appeared on the ballot to compete with the legislative and CRC proposals. Nevertheless, one measure recommended by the Commission, Amendment Five, coopted a citizen initiative still in process by merging the state's Game and Freshwater Fish Commission and the Marine Fisheries Commission into a single Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Furthermore, critics of Amendment Six on education argued that this proposition implicitly adopted the principal objective of another citizens group, the Education First! campaign, which hoped to separate the state's education budget from the general budget for special and primary consideration. In both cases, the CRC provided a fast-track for citizen initiative campaigns at very different stages of the process. Whereas the Education First! campaign had secured less than 6,300 signatures since its inception in 1990, far short of the 43,510 necessary for court review and the 435,073 required to make ballot, the Fish and Wildlife Commission campaign had met the standard for review with more than 55,000 signatures collected since May of 1996. However, the supreme court invalidated this proposal because it failed to meet constitutional standards for language and content.¹² Hence, the lesson of the 1998 election for citizen initiative groups in Florida is that the Constitution Revision Commission can be an important ally since it may enable a citizens group to overcome a negative court review or perhaps even circumvent review entirely. A well-organized lobbying effort targeting the next CRC (or the next Taxation and Budget Reform Commission) may prove to be a more economical strategy than a long, expensive signature drive.

More importantly, the election of November 1998 has put the state's Constitution Revision Commission back on the political map, reinvigorating an institution whose utility had been in question since the debacle of the 1978 election. The CRC has now proven itself to be a useful instrument for amending, revising, and updating the state constitution with the assistance of the electorate. While the next CRC should be advised to follow the 1998 model rather than its 1978 predecessor and stay clear of highly controversial issues, it should be remembered that the first CRC exercised quite a bit of influence on Florida government, albeit after the fact. A number of 1978 CRC

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proposals that failed on the ballot eventually made their way into the basic document as legislatively-sponsored constitutional amendments. Among the proposals adopted by the voters in essentially the same format as they appeared on the 1978 ballot were amendments adding the right to privacy to the Declaration of Rights (adopted in 1980), authorizing the legislature to classify inventory for property tax purposes (1980), altering in a number of ways the state's bonding power (1980; 1984), standardizing rules for judicial nominating commissions (1984), extending the impeachment process to apply to county judges (1988), and broadening the widows' property tax exemption to apply also to widowers (1988). Added to this are the three issues revisited by the 1998 CRC, merit selection of judges, though now as a county option; the addition of gender neutrality to the designation "natural persons" in the Declaration of Rights; and cabinet restructuring.

Given its astounding success in 1998, sentiments may even emerge to amend Article XI once again, this time in order to shorten the time period between CRC meetings, perhaps to every 10 years rather than every 20. Such a revision could be initiated by the state legislature. A more intriguing prospect would be an enterprising citizens' group, perhaps one with a stalled initiative campaign already in process, sponsoring such an amendment. However, even if neither event comes to pass, the Constitution Revision Commission has now established beyond question its standing as an integral player in the drama of constitutional politics in Florida.

Notes

- 1 In 1965 the Florida Legislature established a Constitution Revision Commission charged with reporting to that body recommended changes in the Florida constitution. These recommendations were reviewed and revised in four special legislative sessions with the end result being the present Constitution of the State of Florida that went into effect in 1968, after ratification by the electorate. Article XI, section 2 of this new constitution mandated that an appointed Constitution Revision Commission would convene 10 years later in 1978, and every 20 years thereafter. In the general election of 1996, Florida voters approved a legislature-sponsored amendment to move up the date of the impending CRC meeting from May 1998 to May 1997, thereby affording the commission more time to solicit public opinion about constitutional reform. In accordance with constitutional mandate 15 members of the commission were appointed by the late Governor Lawton Chiles, 3 by Chief Justice Gerald Kogan of the Florida Supreme Court, and 9 each by House Speaker Daniel Webster, and Senate President Toni Jennings. Attorney General Bob Butterworth received an automatic appointment, as specified in Article XI, section 2. Justice Kogan and Senator Jennings elected to serve on the commission themselves.
- 2 In 1969, Utah created a permanent Constitution Revision Commission by statute. The 16 members of the Utah CRC serve six-year terms. The governor appoints 3 commissioners, as do the speaker of the house and president of the state senate who each chose members from their respective chambers; these 9 commissioners then select 6 additional members. The revision commission reports to the state legislature, though final amendments are put before the electorate for ratification.
- 3 An illustration of this third procedure occurred in North Carolina where a joint steering committee of the North Carolina State Bar and the North Carolina Bar Association created the North Carolina Constitution Study Commission at their own expense without official mandate.
- 4 During the period of 1964-93, for example, 51 of the 62 revision commissions established simply studied the need for constitutional change. Four commissions engaged in prepara-

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- tory work for constitutional conventions in Idaho, Illinois, Ohio, and Mississippi. The smallest commission was created in Alaska with two members; in sharp contrast, the Mississippi commission had 350 members, the largest CRC ever.
- 5 Commissioners could also advance their own proposals for consideration without the support of nine other members.
- 6 Quoted in *Miami Herald*, 28 September 1977, sec. 1, p. 16.
- 7 Amendment Thirteen rescheduled future CRC meetings to correspond with the new timetable approved by voters in the 1996 amendment outlined in note number one above. It also revised the schedule for future meetings of the state's Taxation and Budget Reform Commission. This 25-member commission, created by a legislature-sponsored amendment in 1988, also has constitutional status. This scheduling change may serve to deflect the attention of the CRC away from tax and budget issues, areas it was given jurisdiction over in 1992 by constitutional amendment, and create a division of labor when both commissions next meet.
- 8 Florida law currently allows the first \$25,000 of every home's market value to be exempt from property tax assessment. The new amendment permits up to an additional \$25,000 to be sheltered for homes owned by state residents over the age of 65.
- 9 "The Commission's Mission," *St. Petersburg Times*, 5 June 1997, p. 18A.
- 10 This innovation, too, was not without controversy. Complaints were heard that ordinary citizens waited long hours before being recognized to speak, if at all, while political insiders were recognized out of turn and given more than the five minutes allotted to everyone else. Andy Kayton, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, went so far as to challenge the constitutionality of these perceived preferences, citing First Amendment freedom of speech concerns (*St. Petersburg Times*, 21 September 1997, p. 6D). Others bristled at the fact that while on tour the Commission saw fit to make house calls to well-connected lawyers and lobbyists, attending social functions held in their honor (*St. Petersburg Times*, 27 July 1997, p. 2D; *Tampa Tribune*, 2 August 1997, p. 6). Chairman Douglass acted quickly to nip this controversy in the bud by calling a halt to all such gatherings in early August of 1997. Complaints were also voiced about the absence of serious press coverage of these proceedings (*St. Petersburg Times*, 28 December 1997, p. 3D).
- 11 Similar sentiments were expressed by Chairman Dexter Douglass in *Tampa Tribune*, 16 June 1997, p. 1.
- 12 The court objected to the fact that the ballot summary for this amendment did not sufficiently inform voters that the legislature's power to regulate marine life would be transferred to a new constitutional entity. See: Supreme Court of Florida, "Advisory Opinion to the Attorney General Re: Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission," (No. 91,193 [1998]).

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STRUCTURING POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY FROM BELOW: LATIN AMERICAN POPULAR MOVEMENTS ENVISIONING THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Gerard Huiskamp

The article develops a theoretical revisioning of regime transitions by incorporating insights from cognitive framing theory into the political opportunity structure model of social movement action. The alternative analytical framework is then applied to the Mexican transition, tracing the growth of popular movement mobilization in relation to the more familiar focus on state-led social and economic reform. It is argued that this more dynamic conception of opportunity theory expands analytically the meanings of popular movement groups' "everyday forms of political action," which collectively have begun to form a diffuse associational subculture. In response to the state's receding presence in society, ordinary citizens effectively "privatize" a portion of the state's monopoly on political aggregation, interest formation and representation, and legitimate authority, thereby offering an alternative source of democratic pressure and meaning.

A considerable literature has grown up around the rise of popular "movement" politics in Latin America since the late 1970s and early 1980s, coincident to a more general interest in both the resistance to authoritarian political rule and the still evolving "transitions to democracy" in the region. As a consequence of this intersection between popular movement (e.g., Mainwaring and Viola 1984; S. Eckstein 1988; Otero 1989; Foweraker and Craig 1990; Lambrou 1990; Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Haber 1992; Keck 1992; Fox 1994; Oxhorn 1995; Jelin and Hershberg 1996; Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998) and democratization literatures (e.g., Stepan 1985; O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986; and Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1989; Malloy and Seligson 1987; Przeworski 1991; Bermeo 1992; Higley and Gunther 1992; Friedman 1994; Shin 1994), a number of debates have emerged, raising questions about the links between emergent forms of micro-level organization and interest representation on the one hand, and the more prominent macro-level social change embodied in the concept of "regime transition." What are the origins and meanings of these new forms of societal representation and political action in the region? What role did these "new social movements" have upon transitions from authoritarianism? And in turn, what place—if any—do popular movements have in the postauthoritarian period of contemporary Latin America?

The article explores these issues by examining the subtle but important changes in the political behavior and attitudes of certain popular sector groups seeking to navigate the changing structure of opportunity in Latin American political systems

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over the last two decades. The analysis centers on these emergent forms of autonomous associational activity both as distinct phenomena unto themselves, and as one of a number of social actors contending for position within a broader dynamic of political change. In this, I give special attention to the still indeterminate experience with democratic transition in Mexico. Despite the fact that Mexico still stands far short of an institutionalized commitment to democratic politics, its reform process in many respects stands as an archetypal case of transition success as defined within the mainstream regime transition literature: a gradual course of reform, orchestrated from above by the ruling Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI), seemingly without significant pressure from below, maximizing the goals of social order and political stability during the period of change. A series of liberalizing political reforms, beginning in the early 1970s, have thus granted opposition parties some greater access to electoral competition, while allowing the dominant party to maintain control over the process and overall stability of the political system. This process, nevertheless, has had a cumulative effect in eroding the effectiveness of the regime's traditional mechanisms of social control and political legitimation. If one's analytical purview is circumscribed by the boundaries of these state-party initiatives, changes in citizen attitudes and behavior are elegantly positioned as the effect of an elite-driven reform process. I argue, however, that the process of regime liberalization itself finds a significant cause in the state party elites' recognition that traditional patron-client linkages were already no longer serving to provide support for the regime.

In sum, the relationship between elite and mass action is recursive rather than unilinear or causal in either direction, and represents an ongoing negotiation of the boundaries and shape of the political system.¹ Thus, as the patron-client ties underlying the old regime have atrophied and frayed, the focus is on the implications of the state's attempts to forge new linkages with popular sector groups outside the traditional corporatist system and official party structure. Democratization is thus framed as a significantly cultural phenomenon, as both ruling elites and ordinary citizens attempt to "reframe," or renegotiate, the bases of institutional legitimacy.

The article is organized into two sections. The first section begins by highlighting certain fundamental premises of the regime transition literature, as a means to uncover the implicit theory of action underlying its explanation of regime reform. In general, two competing analytical frameworks have been used to explain global trends of regime change in the direction of political democracy: the elite-centered analysis of the mainstream "transitology" paradigm, and a subsequent critical revisionist school that has placed a greater emphasis on the contribution of popular social movements to Latin American transitions. These models are examined both in their diversity and shared assumptions. In brief, both frame collective action in terms of an abstract calculus of political opportunity, rationally discernable by actors from the "objective" operation of the political system. This stance, in essence, leaves both political strategizing and political outcomes structurally predetermined. By way of contrast, this study contends that one cannot adequately understand the motivations or behavior of either elites or popular actors without reference to a more diffuse and more dynamic political cultural calculation—a struggle over ideas and values to justify alterations in the social pact. Thus the study of political reform in Latin America may be profitably framed as a series of political cultural exchanges between a multitude of actors within and without the state, and within a larger cycle of mobilization in the region. This argument draws upon

a reworking of opportunity theories of collective action to introduce a more dynamic understanding of the ideational aspects of transition politics.²

The second part of the article applies this alternative analytical framework to the Mexican transition. It traces the broad historical outlines of the growth of popular movement mobilization, in relation to the more familiar transitology focus on state-led social and economic reform. Although the Mexican transition serves as a "crucial case," that is, "a case that *must closely fit* a theory if one is to have confidence in the theory's validity" (H. Eckstein 1975, 118), the purpose is not to test the transitology school's sociology of action. The objective here is a theoretical, rather than empirical, refutation of extant opportunity theories of collective action.³ In casting doubt on the explanatory power of opportunity theories of collective action—and thereby the regime transition theories that are dependent upon these for the explanation of events—the article hopefully highlights otherwise invisible potential outcomes in these political and social change processes. Finally, the article suggests the alternative theoretical commitments in the study of democratization and democracy that such a framework entails.

Transition Theory of Action: Assigning Political Capacities and Opportunities

Questions surrounding the emergence of popular movements in contemporary Latin America have often been treated as ancillary to the "high politics" of elite bargaining and reform, the characteristic foci of transition theory. In describing the origins of authoritarian breakdown and the instauration of democratic transitions, almost all transition analysts have noted an initially (and unusually) high level of popular movement activity. As more traditional actors reemerged after years of repression to push the agenda of electoral and institutional reform, however, social movements' relative prominence in explanation receded. What is clear, with important exceptions, is that Latin American popular movements *have not* played a central role in what has been termed the "consolidation phase" of the democratic transitions, defined as activity oriented toward the traditional political arena and the process of reforming the national state, rebuilding formal representative institutions, and resurrecting (or inventing) efficacious political parties.⁴ Explanations of this relative decline or demobilization, however, differ markedly in their fundamental understanding of the initial role of popular movements in advancing political and social change.

As implied above, transitologists pose the modal transition as one in which elites, isolated from the influence of popular pressures, initiate a controlled process of "reform from above." Analysts thus often reference the Spanish transition from Francoism as a paradigmatic case of "elite settlement" (Gunther 1992), in which Juan Carlos I skillfully initiated a pacted return to democracy through behind-the-scenes negotiations among party leaders. As well, the Brazilian transition is seen as an especially pure case of reform from above, as argued by Alfred Stepan (1989, x):

The Brazilian transition began as "regime-initiated liberalization." Of all the recent transitions in southern Europe and South America, those of Spain and Brazil contain the strongest elements of elite initiation and elite transaction. In 1973 when the process of Brazilian liberalization began, there was no significant political opposition, no economic crisis, and no collapse of the coercive apparatus due to defeat in war.

Within such openings, pragmatic civilian elites find new motivation to seek consensual common ground with each other, and to negotiate the return to democracy with authoritarian forces by providing a series of mutual guarantees restricting the parameters of change. Successfully creating this negotiating space, it is held, is directly related to elites' insulation from mass pressures.

Central, then, to the explanatory power of transitology is the primacy of elites over other social actors in directing the course of political reform. In this regard, Mexico compares quite favorably to both Spain and Brazil, as the PRI's preeminent position and effective power were further enhanced by its considerable popular legitimacy, especially in its formative period. Neither Spain nor Brazil could match the considerable elite unity and stability underlying the Mexican elite pact institutionalized in the ruling party, as the PRI regularly won elections by overwhelming margins. Indeed, political reforms proposed by the regime in 1977 were aimed primarily at reinvigorating the plebiscitary electoral process, which had been a powerful means of symbolic legitimation for the state party (Middlebrook 1986, 128-29). Although the average PRI winning margins of 84.4% in legislative races for the period 1961-76 were partially a function of massive vote fraud, these figures merely exaggerated the degree of the official party's dominance (Klesner 1987, 129-30).⁵ Over time, however, opposition parties had been increasingly unable to obtain even their token opposition in the national legislature; prompting state reforms to create the illusion of competition.

Even in less clear cases of elite dominance, in which (as noted above) there is a considerable presence of popular protest coincident to these openings, transitologists explain this popular collective action as a conditioned, reflexive response to elite-initiated openings in the political system. For example, Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986, 48-49) argue that regime liberalization from above had the effect of animating the political identities of all societal actors previously lulled into complacency by the authoritarian regime's campaign of depoliticization and atomization. In this opening, traditional political actors are seen to rise to the opportunity, but popular movement participants' activation is portrayed as a *prepolitical* development. Any awakening of popular sector citizens is deemed to be important in terms of the potential mass base traditional political parties might mobilize in a subsequent return to electoral competition (Stepan 1985, 338).

From this perspective, the apparent "demobilization" of popular movements was not only natural, but also functional. The transitology literature is thus able to shift its focus to elite actors' collective duty to remake political relationships in a more democratic and consensual mode after years of authoritarian compression. Nancy Bermeo's explanation of the social and psychological challenges inherent in the politics of transition articulates the reasoning behind this move:

Dictatorship can force us to reevaluate the nature of particular regimes, our enemies, and our own goals and behavior. The experience of dictatorship can produce important cognitive change. . . . *Though political learning occurs at all levels of society, the learning experience of political leaders is particularly important for the reconstruction of democracies.* Mass actions such as strikes, riots, and armed insurrections can bring down a dictatorial regime, but they do not in themselves produce an alternative. Popular mobilization and mass struggles are key to provoking crises within dictatorships and are thus of

great importance in the first phase of the redemocratization process. But during the second phase of the redemocratization process elite bargaining and accords become key. . . . *For better or worse, the construction of democracy is an occasion where "the beliefs of some are more important than others"* (Bermeo 1992, 273, 276, emphasis added).

By way of contrast, other observers credited popular movements with a more active and integral role in originating and shaping the subsequent trajectory of democratic reform in these authoritarian regimes. Revisionist social movement scholars identified moments in the breakdown period in which the prior organization, creativity and innovation of popular movements were critical in opening spaces for political debate, and in strengthening societal opposition to authoritarian rule. For example, Sonia Alvarez (1990, 25-26) notes that while almost all traditional forms of popular representation—political parties, the militant left, student groups, and organized labor—were actively suppressed or controlled during the authoritarian period, military regimes in the Southern Cone allowed apparently apolitical neighborhood associations, Christian base communities, middle-class feminist groups, and shop-level labor unions considerable latitude in associational autonomy. These spaces of social articulation provided the first autonomous criticism of the military regimes, and gradually widened to include other voices silenced during this period. Margaret Keck's (1992) study of the Worker's Party in Brazil, and Laura Edles' (1995) study of labor unions and the Socialist Party rank-and-file during the Spanish transition come to similar conclusions regarding the positive (and pragmatic) role played by popular movements in these ostensibly paradigmatic cases of elite-driven reform. In Mexico, similarly, observers have pointed to the pivotal impact of a wide spectrum of local and regional movements behind the opposition candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the 1988 presidential election in pushing reform; or even to the *damnificado* mobilizations of 1985, in which ordinary citizens mobilized against the regime in reaction to the state's tepid response to the plight of urban residents displaced by the earthquake in Mexico City (Eckstein 1988, 263-78; Foweraker and Craig 1990; Fals Borda 1992, 306-7).

The degree and manner in which traditional organizations were controlled or suppressed by state authorities varies from case to case. The larger point is that when conventional channels of political activity were cut off, political energies eventually resurfaced in these unconventional spaces. Moreover, the effusion of citizens' collective action independent of state direction or control thereby provided an actual alternative political practice inconsistent with official constraints—strictures as much or more ideational as legal-formal. Popular movements thus materialized as the manifest expression of autonomous association—an alternative to authoritarian regimes' variants of paternal statism. And in the case of Mexico, Orlando Fals Borda (1992, 306-7) argues that this "invisible infrastructure" would provide the basis for a new sense of political opportunity—not only for popular movement participants, but also for disaffected elites within the ruling coalition—to nearly topple Latin America's most stable (if less overtly coercive) authoritarian regime.

In this version of events the demobilization of popular movements was considered neither inevitable nor advantageous. Yet post-transitology critics, too, held that structural constraints and/or poor strategic choices would eventually marginalize popular movements in a new political culture centered on elections and the institutions of

formal democracy. The most commonly cited cause for popular movements' decline was the apparent inability to make the adjustment from protest to "politics." It was thus argued that the autonomy that proved useful to popular groups in the authoritarian period turned out to be an obstacle to coalition building in the transition stage, particularly in finding a workable relationship with traditional political parties. At the same time, moreover, the self-limited and segmented nature of popular movements often left them without the organizational skills or infrastructure necessary to compete with other vested societal interests in the formal political arena.⁶ In other words, the very mobilizations that figured so prominently in reestablishing political democracy recreated a space of interest representation more suited to the discourse and practice of conventional political actors.

Both general explanations of the ostensible demobilization of popular movements in the democratization phase of transition—those with "weak assumptions" of the significance of popular resistance (transitologists), and those with "strong assumptions" (social movements revisionists)—implicitly frame their analyses in terms of a "cycle of protest" that initiates a new structure of political opportunity. Inside this new space (opened from above) political challengers—those without a share of power in the current regime—can maneuver to alter the balance of forces. This model of collective action thus presents a more general explanation of why events played out as they did, as the theory purports to clarify both how societal resistance to the state originates, and why some actors (traditional political elites) fare better than others (popular movements).

Sociology of Structuring Political Opportunities

Transition theories thus implicitly follow more general explanations of why social movements decline over time, as in Sidney Tarrow's opportunity theory of collective action. This underlying theory of action is not well developed within the broader explanation of transition politics, at least partially because its more central concern rests with outcomes.⁷ These basic premises are important, however, as they shape transition theory's emphasis on elite politics and the range of possible outcomes to the transition process.

Social movement theorists developed the concept of "political opportunity structure" to explain the general conditions under which people will come together to engage in collective political action, including presumably the emergence of a collective opposition to authoritarian rule. In great part, opportunity theory seeks to correct the inadequacies of earlier collective action models:

Older, collective behavior approaches emphasized the depth of despair and deprivation among the lower classes. . . . [P]eople in truly desperate straits seldom revolt, . . . [as] it takes control of some resources to mount a campaign of collective action. . . . More and more, scholars turned to developing a theory of the political situations in which states become vulnerable to collective action and in which ordinary people amass the resources to overcome their disorganization and learn where and how to use their resources. . . . These scholars argued that movements are organized, take fire, and occasionally succeed as a function of the political opportunity structure and not—as earlier studies had suggested—as a direct function of the deep-seated frustrations of the . . . poor (Tarrow 1991, 32-33).

Thus conceived, opportunity theory differentiates itself from earlier psychological—"mass society" (Kornhauser 1959), and absolute (Scott 1976; Moore 1978) or relative deprivation theories (Davies 1962; Gurr 1969)—and material—resource mobilization (Oberschall 1973; Gamson 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1975; Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982)—explanations for the emergence of extraordinary episodes of mobilization. It asserts the centrality of political factors, particularly changing perceptions of regime vulnerability by those who would seek to challenge prevailing relations of power. Tarrow defines "political opportunity structure" as:

Consistent—but not necessarily formal or permanent—dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure. . . . The most salient changes in the opportunity structure are four: the opening up of access to participation, shifts in ruling alignments, the availability of influential allies, and cleavages within and among elites. People join in social movements in response to political opportunities and then, through collective action, create new ones. As a result, the "when" of social movement mobilization—when political opportunities are opening up—goes a long way towards explaining its "why" (Tarrow 1994, 85-86 17-18).

Tarrow's theory purportedly differs from monocausal structural explanations of collective political behavior in its attention to group strategy, and the ability to alter one's position within the political opportunity structure. Once a "cycle of protest" has been initiated, actor agency is crucial. Movements' decisions regarding choices of strategies and/or alliances, then, in great part determine their eventual success or failure—*independent of initial structural causes of mobilization:*

In a protest cycle, as in a business cycle, the original factors that gave rise to protest are structural, but they cannot explain directly all the actions that take place within it. Once the cycle begins, the actions of some groups trigger responses by late-comers, which may be independent of the structural factors that incited the early risers. . . . Thus unlike the relatively fixed resources of finance, organization, and group solidarity, political opportunities are expanded by the political imagination and initiative with which collective action is organized (Tarrow 1991, 51, 36).

These structural openings, then, are argued to produce episodes of "generalized mobilization," in which civil society develops a "generalized predisposition to confront elites and authorities with collective action" (38). Importantly, however, Tarrow argues that the initial call to action is answered by certain key actors known for their historical predisposition for collective contention.

The generalization of conflict into a cycle of protest occurs when political opportunities are opened up for "early risers," when they make claims that resonate with those of others, and when these give rise to objective or explicit coalitions among disparate actors and create or reinforce instability within the elite. . . . Particular groups recur with regularity in the vanguard of waves of social protest, for example, miners, students; but they are fre-

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quently joined during the peak of the cycle by groups that are not known for their insurgent tendencies, for example, peasants, workers in small industry, white-collar workers (Tarrow 1994:155).

Thus for Tarrow, regime transitions and other cycles of mobilization may allow for marginal groups to gain concessions within the flux of these extraordinary periods, but the origins and outcomes of these processes are structurally determined by the coalition of forces at the top of the system. In other words, prepolitical "inputs" may come from the margins of society, but to have any effect popular action must eventually be channeled through the formal political process in order to produce "political outputs." The mobilizations of marginalized groups are thus made viable only through the aid of state authorities or other "conscience constituents," acting either out of sympathy or for cynical political gain (Tarrow 1991, 15-22). Echoing Bermeo, some actors are theoretically positioned to be more central than others. And thus while more dynamic than other theories, opportunity theory is ultimately deterministic: whatever the creative potential of social movements *within* cycles of mobilization, all roads must eventually lead to the state, along a well-trodden path.

Demobilization or Strategic Reemployment of Resources?

These "cyclical" and "structural" assumptions lie at the heart of what are otherwise fairly disparate interpretations of the role of popular movements in contemporary Latin American social change. For transitologists, opportunity and cycle theories provide an explanation for the perception of both the limited impact and early exit of these groups. The political opportunity structure provides "opportunities" for political action, but groups must be more than willing to challenge the status quo; they must also possess sufficient resources (monetary resources, influential elite allies, conventional political skills, and/or a sophisticated organization of national scope) to exploit the opportunities presented. The major difference between these observers and their more optimistic counterparts is the post-transitologists' greater sense of lost opportunity, the passing of a moment in history. For them, the transition period promised a potential rupture of an historical impasse in the region—the emergence of a democratic coalition of forces—but in the end yielded to politics as usual.

The problem for Latin American popular movements, then, is seen as too much or too little. Popular movements inspired by quasi-utopian visions of politics and social relations (such as Christian base communities or radical feminist groups) are seen to reach beyond their grasp—i.e., available opportunity—and thus have become politically isolated from the new centers of decision-making. Alternatively, the demands of some groups were either too specific (such as human rights groups like the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina) and became obviated with the deposal of military rule; or too limited (such as neighborhood associations and other self-help groups, centered on issues of basic economic survival), as their needs could be comfortably accommodated within the boundaries of traditional patron-client relations of Latin American political parties and states. In either case, reaching too far or not far enough, the new challenges implicit in popular social movement politics are lost because of the ill fit with the reconstructive tasks of civilian democratic rule. It is thus precisely the moderate "reach" of more conventional actors—a self-understanding and political behavior repertoire that resonates well

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with readily available political opportunities—that allows them to take over the process in the cycle's "descending phase," and a return to some sense of political "normalcy."

As noted above, however, the weak conception of popular sector mobilization potential and opportunity makes a number of questionable assumptions about the origins of transition mobilization cycles throughout the region, and is particularly misleading in the Mexican case. In Mexico we see clearly that groups much less advantaged in terms of conventional resources were among the most important "early risers." Moreover, many have arguably fared much better in terms of securing their objectives, and a better placement within the prevailing structure of opportunity than have many traditional actors: opposition political parties, corporatist industrial labor, teacher organizations, student unions, etc. (see, e.g., Middlebrook 1995, 297-311, 319-28). Within the generalized mobilization surrounding the 1988 election and its aftermath, different movements made strategic choices about their best opportunities. However, the initiation of their course of action—many organizing decades before 1988—was not, primarily, a function of Tarrow's four structural determinants of political opportunity. In fact, popular movements were important "early risers" in nearly every Latin American transition cycle, as groups from the marginalized sectors of society substituted for the usually more central figures Tarrow specifies as determinative in initiating and defining mobilization cycles.⁸ Moreover, popular groups in the South American transitions initiated collective efforts and maintained activity precisely during periods of authoritarian rule, when any reasonable assessment of structural opportunity—in terms of the military's internal cohesion and the absence of viable alternative allies—would lead one to predict impassivity and quiescence, especially among popular sector groups (Oxhorn 1995).

Undoubtedly, openings in the formal political arena and the degree of elite cohesion serve as important factors in the perception of opportunity. Yet in Mexico and other Latin American nations, at least, it was a prevailing sense of the *lack* of opportunities within the prevailing system that motivated groups to seek solutions to their problems through their own collective efforts. One may perhaps argue (from an opportunity theory perspective) that these groups benefited precisely by the regimes allowing them to exist and not repressing them, as had been the experience of others. If this is the argument, however, the concept of "opportunity" becomes severely strained conceptually (if not tautological), and thus fails to help much in the explanation of why collective contention occurs at one moment rather than another.⁹

Tarrow's reliance on the explanatory power of "cycles" suffers from a similar (and related) problem. Tarrow eventually came to acknowledge that in some cases mobilization (and the resultant expansion of opportunity) diffuses from the "periphery" of society to its "core" (1994, 155-56). He thereby conceded that marginal actors sometime initiate the "contagion effect" that impels more general mobilization. These "peripheral" actors originate mobilizations in the same way as the more traditional vanguard, by showing the way for other challenging groups and/or regime elites, altering the perception of what is politically possible, and thereby opening up alternative paths of opportunity. While Tarrow's more recent theoretical stance is empirically more accurate, the admission removes an important link in the causal chain of his overall argument. In the earlier version of the theory, Tarrow stressed the outward diffusion of opportunity and protest by well-positioned "early risers," which allowed for a more direct—and theoretically elegant—link between openings in the political opportunity

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structure and the initiation of a generalized cycle of collective contention. In other words, if early risers are more "resource rich"—in the conventional sense resource mobilization theorists use the term—it would be clear why such groups would be better positioned to take advantage of perceived openings in the political opportunity structure. It would additionally help to explain how less well-positioned groups could subsequently take advantage of the "trickle-down effect" of these groups' victories. But when Tarrow concedes that these less well-positioned groups sometimes initiate episodes of collective contention, his argument about the presumed close link between his answer to the "when" question of social movement mobilization, and the explanation of the "why," is seriously muted.

Popular sector groups are more than expressive vehicles and potential mass publics, just as state actors and other elites are something less than purely autonomous and self-directing prime movers. Conceptualizing collective political action in terms of structural opportunities and cycles of protest can be a useful heuristic, in that it forces one to remain mindful of the structuring limitations of political institutions and the prevailing image of politics inherent in political culture. Close attention must be paid to political process (and the relations between actors underpinning process). Yet, if staying close to politics means starting from the perspective of the state rather than the reciprocal connections and conjunctions between all political actors, a great deal of what makes social movement participation different from more traditional political behavior becomes obscured, if not lost. Prevailing accounts of the post-authoritarian political landscape tend to obscure the continuing significance of popular mobilizations by both conflating the experience of different groups within the popular sector, and by confusing popular movement goals and motivations with those of more conventional political actors. In effect, then, transition theorists theoretically pre-position less powerful actors out of the picture—at least off the main stage—and thus outside postauthoritarian democratic politics. Many popular movement groups, however, predate the general mobilization, and some have remained engaged even after the general cycle has declined.

If, as contended here, popular movements have been active participants throughout the transition cycle (and opportunity theory does not adequately explain this presence), what motivated would-be participants to initiate collective mobilizations, and thereby directly and indirectly contribute to a more generalized challenge to non-democratic political systems and relations of authority? The answer intimated above is some sense of grievance, which was not answerable within the current system. But why at this point in history, as opposed to some other? This question is especially difficult to answer in the case of Mexico, as the referent for political learning is not as stark as the experience of groups in the Southern Cone; that is, it is easier to understand the sense of remorse and longing after the singular experience of bureaucratic-authoritarian rule. Some sort of cognitive change did take place, however, leading one concerned with the popular movement experience to ask, "what sort of political learning do popular sector actors take away from the experience of authoritarian rule?" And how do these resultant forms of social organization fit into the transition landscape of the cycle's "descending phase?"

The short answer to the "when" question is that we may never know with any predictive certainty. As Tarrow himself suggests, structural factors may open opportunities, but the actions and reactions of actors within cycles have effects independent of any initial triggering action. If, however, we focus instead on the "how" question, it may lead us

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to discover new sources of mobilization potential, of latent possibilities—if not predictability. Ultimately, however, the experience of popular movements reveals that “success”—that elusive concept—is contingent upon concrete action and determination.

Structural Impact of Crisis Response and Cognitive Learning from Below

There is a closer connection between the “why” and “how” questions of collective mobilization. This link becomes manifest when one focuses on social and political reform as a function of exchanges between elite initiatives and pressure from below. An important caveat, however, is necessary here: The rebellion of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) has certainly had a dramatic impact upon contemporary Mexican politics, serving as an important catalyst to accelerate the pace of political reform at the top. At the same time, however, armed resistance does not exhaust the repertoire of popular movements, nor the range of constructive contributions to democratization from below. Momentous as such events—armed rebellions, mass demonstrations, the general strike, or exceptional electoral coalitions—may be, it is a mistake to concentrate solely on the most dramatic manifestations of popular political action. Doing so only buttresses the myth that popular sector mobilizations are merely expressive vehicles—rational and largely inchoate activities that are “prepolitical” in orientation, important not in themselves but rather for their capacity to open opportunities for other actors to push forward the real action.

By the same token, since I want to take popular movements’ contribution to democracy very seriously, my claim here is not that the elite politics of electoral and institutional reform are unimportant to democratization. Democratic consolidation is highly unlikely—if not impossible—without changes in a “critical mass” of elite attitudes, institutional arrangements and political practices. Yet political reform at the top of the system (both at the institutional level, and in cognitive and behavior transformations in elites) is equally unlikely to advance beyond semiauthoritarian electoralism without available democratic political culture infrastructure within society, to both prod and support change.¹⁰ In other words, while democrats within civil society certainly benefit from elite allies, reformist elites also require allies, and allies of a particular kind—those ready and able to assume citizenship, as opposed to those content on occupying a well-placed spot in the patronage chain.

This stance is in line with a long-standing (and reemergent) tradition in democratic thought,¹¹ which maintains that much of what makes democratic politics possible and sustainable depends on cultural patterns of civil relations outside the scope of the state and formal politics. Specifically, both the state’s democratic responsiveness and general societal welfare are seen to be functions of a thriving associational culture and the cumulative benefits of citizen cooperation. Conversely, authoritarian regimes—whether *hard* versions like the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes of the Southern Cone, or Mexico’s *soft* authoritarian clientelism—are sustained by a lack of initiative and energy from civil society. This is why such regimes seek to erect an atomized political culture of individualist action, or at the very least to control the forms of interest aggregation and collective activity (Stepan 1985).

Decoupling opportunity theory’s explanation of the “when” and “why” of collective action also leads one to reconsider the presumed monadic nature of collective contention, cycles of mobilization and their resultant individual and collective out-

comes. Specifically, one is led to question the assumption that episodes of social and political systemic change are inherently state-centered, in which challengers seek to petition and/or otherwise influence elites for support of their cause. In a more dynamic conception of political process one would have to recognize a variety of objectives in any one group's agenda, based on strategic considerations of the group's position vis-à-vis other actors, and the resources they may reasonably bring to bear. This is not to argue that all actors approach the political sphere on equal footing, but it does require a recognition that considerations of available allies and resources is a concern for *all* actors, including elites both within and without the regime. Opportunities are thus made, as well as given, in the interplay between different actors seeking to achieve sometimes conflicting, sometimes coincidental, objectives.

The analytical thrust behind opportunity theory is that the specific political context of mobilization is a central factor in determining the shape of collective action within that political system. As Tarrow contends:

The pattern of institutionalization of movements depends a great deal on the relationship to the political environment. In repressive systems, social movements are likely to become secret societies, sects of true believers, or terrorist organizations. In semi-authoritarian systems, like the ones Michels studied, oligarchization is in part a defense against repression and in part modeled on the pattern of other organizations. In countries with a strong party system, there is a trend towards partisan transformation that only the most fanatical groups can resist. In countries like the United States, where a weak party system is accompanied by a strong interest group network, it is far more likely that movement organizations will become interest groups (Tarrow 1991, 20).

Tarrow here argues that cycles of mobilization and politics have a cumulative effect, depositing a political cultural residue—sedimented expectations and behavioral norms that give a distinctive cast to a political system. Any political system, through the everyday exercise of power and authority, induces learned responses for both elites and ordinary citizens. Over time, then, these interactions give shape to a more or less distinctive political culture, embodied in a set of political identities and relations of authority, political expectations, and repertoires of political action.

Thus one would expect these cultural constellations to have an important effect upon the origination and outplay of political struggle. Unfortunately, there is very little sense of dynamism in Tarrow's conception of political cultural influences here, as movements are seen to almost mechanically replicate the organizational ethos of the regime under which they find themselves. Political culture is depicted as mere mimesis, which is much in line with traditional political science understanding. Following Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963), political culture becomes a static variable: a source of diffuse ways of thinking about one's place in the world, and particularly within one's nation, underwritten by a relatively stable set of values and behavioral predispositions. From this perspective, clearly, it is difficult to find a compelling basis for explaining how any political change would come about.

While political culture certainly has important expressive or symbolic dimensions, these ideas, values and identities are embedded within manifest relations of power that undergird political structures, or regime types. The overarching principles

of political engagement within a given regime—the “rules of the game”—are precisely at the center of disputation in transition politics; and these anchoring systems of meaning, or “master frames,”¹² are especially fragile within the frenzy of cycles of mobilization. Importantly, however, the terms of legitimacy (or acquiescence) must be always more or less in play; if not, no social and/or political change would be possible (Rustow 1970, 341). Taking Tarrow’s argument about the cultural limits to political resistance seriously would require us to ask not why so many groups in the United States replicate the institutional structure of interest groups, but rather how the nation escaped the monarchical-liberal oligarchic heritage of the early British Empire.

State Delegitimation and (Re)Formation in Contemporary Mexico

Of course, state structures and norms do change, in form as well as content. They are transformed both from internal initiative, and in reaction to external pressures and forces. These changes are most clearly seen in revolutionary deposals, but more subtle changes are recurring phenomena that proceed almost without notice. The Mexican one-party state, under the aegis of the PRI, has been held up as a paragon of stability in Latin America, presiding over decades of uninterrupted rule; but what is more remarkable about the PRI is the agility with which it has been able to renegotiate major facets of the social pact upon which its own power and social peace rest. Stability in Mexico, in other words, has been largely a function of the regime’s ability to reinvent its image in light of shifting strategic alliances (Collier 1992, 3-5).

Retention of the sense of stability and continuity—of “naturalness” or “legitimacy”—requires work in normal times, and the intensity and scope of this work is only magnified in times of challenge, as events force these hidden aspects of ruling closer than ever to the foreground of social consciousness. Thus paying close attention to political process and structures as Tarrow implores, must also entail considerations of the ways in which state actors and elites continually seek to justify and legitimate the structural bases of their power—what Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent (1994, 3-23) call the “everyday forms of state formation.” Joseph and Nugent describe the state and political system not as fixed entities with closed contours, but rather as social forms in historical motion. State formation is thus seen as “above all a *cultural process* with manifest consequences in the material world” (13). Political culture is more than a diffuse reservoir of symbolic meaning; it is also a living sphere of contention premised on political relations informing the prevailing correlation of forces.

For example, the Mexican political system usually is classified as an “inclusionary authoritarianism,” or a single-party state corporatism. The regime consolidated under Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) has for decades artfully combined mechanisms for the strategic incorporation of key societal sectors and a facade of electoral democracy, with an elite pact based on controlled competition for governmental office. While authoritarianism as a “master frame” of governance has certain modularity across societies and cultures, the internal dynamics (and the severity of its effects on the lives of citizens) vary from case to case. The “inclusionary” tag applied to Mexico is suggestive of the corporatist nature of state structures, but it also distinguished it from the more overtly coercive, bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes in Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

Mexican authoritarian power has been exercised through the relationship between state as “patron” and citizen as “client.” There is little doubt that the state

corporatism erected by Cárdenas engendered a certain affective (as well as instrumental) legitimacy and resonance within the general population—at least in the formative years from 1940 to the mid-1960s. A great deal of this success was based on the actual material-economic success fostered by the ruling regime, as the lack of a more pluralistic democratic participation and influence was partially compensated by some sense of belonging to a nationalist project with substantive democratic goals. While in no sense was the Mexican regime ever a model of pluralist bargaining, the system nevertheless appeared to be responsive to the emergence of at least some new grievances and interests. Indeed, the regime's longevity can be explained at least partially by its willingness to adapt to new situations and conciliate competing interests, rather than relying on overt force and physical coercion.

The defining principles undergirding the corporatist structure of the Mexican regime during its formative years were nationalism and economic development, which (fused together) were represented as state-led capitalist (import-substituting industrial) development mindful of substantive outcomes of social justice as outlined in the 1917 Constitution. Power and guidance emanated from the center, but relied on regional elites in the periphery for policy implementation, system legitimation through low-level mobilization in plebiscitary elections, and obstruction of alternative channels of organization. These local elites managed challenges to the system for decades, preempting crises of legitimacy by alerting officials to emergent issues and grievances. And while this elaborate patron-client chain imbued the system with a certain aura of responsiveness, over time its cumbersome and inefficient operation (manifested in corruption and other communicative distortions) no longer served the implicitly performance-based criteria it offered as its justification.

Bureaucratic-authoritarian rule, by contrast, is a demobilizationalist relational strategy predicated on a stern, dictatorial paternalist leadership, with civil society as its "silent partner." It originates in a supposed "crisis of governability," fomented by an artificially stimulated popular demand at the hands of pandering populist politicians. Rather than a top-down imposition of crisis containment by the military, Mexico's paternalist clientelism is the product of the above noted social compromise coming out of the Revolution. The Mexican regime traditionally positioned itself in a tutelary role vis-à-vis the rest of society, but because of its revolutionary heritage has also at least paid lip service to popular representation and participation. In contrast to the more overt and direct repression elsewhere in the region, the point of reference for the cognitive changes Bermeo discusses is not so stark. This different history, then, poses more subtle challenges for democratic reformers.

In order to understand the meaning and place of popular movements in the politics of regime transition (and in mobilization dynamics more generally), one needs to consider not only the institutional arenas of contention, but also cognitive challenges to the prevailing political culture that are embedded in the emergent behavior and attitudes of popular sector actors. At the level of political culture, a democratic transformation in the Mexican system will require a collective rethinking of actors' dispositions to respect independent initiative and associational autonomy. As Jonathan Fox argues,

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. . . . Most analysis

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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 (Fox 1994, 151-52).

Authoritarianism, at its core, seeks to acquire an effective monopoly on the aggregation and representation of society's interests, thereby limiting the political options of subjects. Fox thus reframes democratic development as a series of gradual changes in the way elites and subordinates interact—a stepwise movement from "authoritarian clientelism" to "semiclientelism," eventually arriving at some system of "pluralistic bargaining."

It is no mystery as to why bureaucratic-authoritarian rule never deeply resonated with the population at large, in spite of the military's attempts to legitimate itself in terms other than naked force. South American militaries' extraordinary actions found their motivation in a self-defined sense of noble purpose, an act of last resort the military was forced into as the nation's defenders. Moreover, the military initially came to power with the open encouragement, or at least acquiescence, of dominant elites and a significant sector of the middle classes, who had felt their political interests threatened by populist economic policies and the polarized political climate. Once the immediate objective of a return to order was dispensed with, however, the continuing rationale for military rule becomes less tenable. The military as protector against internal as well as external threats was a reasonably easy extension of the traditional understanding of this sector's role; but the military as economic engineer potentially threatened even the interests of the traditional elite. Moreover, the costs (in terms of human rights and basic freedoms) of the military's solution to the problems of society soon came to outweigh the perceived benefits, even with some considerable macroeconomic success in Brazil and Chile, for example.

By way of contrast, the postrevolutionary Mexican regime's offered justification of paternal rule had a great deal more plausibility and resonance; although, ultimately, it too implicitly constructed criteria for its legitimacy which would eventually come to undermine its own position. The facade of elections overlaying substantive government responsiveness inevitably wore thin over time, as evidenced at the popular level by ever higher rates of voter abstentionism, the increasing effusion of groups challenging official corporatist organizations, and the emergence of localized guerrilla movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The 1968 Tlatelolco massacre served as a flashpoint of systemic crisis, but the regime's more fundamental problems rested on the diseconomies of the state-led economic development project, including its exacerbation of structural income inequalities. A slowdown in the "Mexican miracle" (over three decades of impressive economic growth) beginning in the 1970s, and then the sudden collapse of the economy with the end of the oil boom in 1982, would tarnish the regime's standing.

Subsequent administrations sought to respond to the crisis on a number of fronts. Beginning with the Luis Echeverría administration (1970-76), the regime initiated a symbolic opening in the political system in an effort to restore popular interest.

Echeverría's announced "democratic opening" included the gradual release of political prisoners from the 1968 crackdown, encouraging elite and press criticism of the system's failures, and supporting the independent organization of nonviolent political opposition (Middlebrook 1986: 127). The administration also initiated a number of rural development projects and some land reform in an effort to restore a sense of responsiveness and commitment to social justice.

When José López Portillo (1976-82) came to power, his first concern was to shore up ailing relations with domestic capital and foreign creditors. López Portillo thus backed away from many of the most threatening social policy commitments made by his predecessor, and also implemented an IMF austerity program. When this precipitated a sharp drop in living standards, however, the administration sought to stave off further dissent by offering more (and more institutionalized) political liberalization through lowering the threshold of party registration (Grindle 1981, 132). Then in 1978, emboldened by the confirmation of massive oil finds, the regime introduced the massive COMPLAMAR and CONASUPO rural development and poverty relief programs (Fox 1994, 162-65).

The macroeconomic problems that began to surface during López Portillo's tenure hit his successor with full force, as oil revenues completely dried up and forced Mexico's hand in the debt crisis (Cook, Middlebrook, and Molinar Horcasitas 1994). As a result, the Miguel de la Madrid administration (1982-88) entered office with even greater economic strictures to the regime's traditional accommodationist strategy. Faced with a profound economic crisis, political reform was put on hold. Instead, the regime began to fundamentally reorient national development strategy through the implementation of stabilization and structural adjustment policies designed to placate international lenders and attract foreign investment: stringent wage and price controls to combat inflation; a sharp reduction in federal spending in social services; encouraging foreign investment and a general reorientation toward promotion of the export sector; and privatization of state industries. These policies exacerbated the effects of the economic crisis for the vast majority of Mexicans; and also weakened the state to the point where it was unable to react adequately to the calamitous earthquake in 1985. Reacting more to external forces, the PRI gradually, but decidedly, became distanced from its traditional social bases of support—with the nearly disastrous 1988 election defeat as the price of that distance.

Popular Democratization from Crisis Mobilization

Mexico has always been something of an odd case for the transition literature, a "perfect dictatorship" seemingly permanently stuck in a liminal position between the poles of military corporative authoritarianism and political democracy. Yet as the above brief historical overview suggests, beneath the veneer of unchanging sameness the one-party regime and the political system as a whole, have undergone profound changes, especially in these last two decades. While power still resides with the same PRI that has guided Mexico for over six decades, the social pact has begun to unravel—from both above and below. At the top, neoliberal reformers have gradually edged out the traditional political class, as the new Mexican state stands for fiscal austerity and economic rationalization: the *facilitator* of the preconditions of economic growth through trade liberalization, attraction of foreign investment and export promotion, instead of a *modernizing Leviathan* directly orchestrating autonomous nationalist

industrialization from above. It was a role largely thrust upon Mexican state officials in the wake of the 1980s economic collapse and changing global economic conditions, but not one with which a substantial portion of the new technocratic class is uncomfortable.

Whether in postauthoritarian systems or long-standing pluralist democracies, social movement collective contention has traditionally been viewed as an outsider strategy occurring within society, and against the state and/or other powerful interests. Traditional perspectives are cognizant of the presence of more conventional actors in the broad landscape of collective political action, but their role in the first instance is viewed as distant, almost structural—setting the background parameters of decision making for challenging groups. Clearly, however, state authorities and other elites engage in their own forms of collective contention, even if such activity is not so framed academically. On both the formal political and social development fronts, it makes less sense to see Mexican state policy initiatives in terms of a democratic opening or concession, than as an attempt to reinvent the regime's accommodationist and dispersionary strategies of social control in light of an altered structure of political opportunity. Incumbent elites were not looking to create anything beyond opportunities for their own continuation in power.¹³

This alteration in the elite correlation of forces and resultant shifts in macroeconomic policy, however, is only part of the story. Importantly, changes have come from both sides of the Mexican authoritarian chain, as the evolution, or disintegration, of the clientelist system has led a variety of popular sector actors to decide to go it alone. It is ironic that the reformist hero of the Mexican popular sector, Lázaro Cárdenas, unwittingly laid the foundation for today's conservative regimes and state. It was his incorporation of the rural poor and urban workers into the state party's corporatist system that set the pattern for the contemporary accommodationist policymaking process. For decades, without an independent base of power, the popular classes grew dependent on the state and local brokers to promote their interests, forestalling their political development. But mirroring the gradual decline of traditional elites has been a process of learning that has reoriented the political aspirations and identity of certain popular sector actors toward greater autonomy. It was a lesson harder to learn than in the more overt authoritarian regimes, and in some cases the dominance projected by the system still overshadows the cognitive transition from client to citizen. Yet in certain cases, the lesson individuals and groups have taken away from the same experience—the understanding that the state has effectively expropriated political space, creating a monopoly situation—is to “exit” this construction of domination, rather than lend either their “loyalty” or “voice” (see Hirschman 1970). Moreover, this reorientation on the “demand” side of the political market—the contradiction of structural availability—induces palpable pressure for new strategies on the “supply” side.

As Philip Oxhorn (1995, 3, *passim*) notes in his study of Chilean shantytown activism during the Pinochet regime, the paradox of authoritarian rule is that the regime inadvertently engenders a “space” for popular political cultural innovation, as a direct function of its undermining the capacity for action within the extant action frame. The South American military regimes emerging in the 1960s and 1970s came to power to “fix the mess” created by populist politicians, who were seen to be pandering demagogically to the masses. While these populist-clientelist predecessor regimes were by no means models of democratic citizenship, popular actors had at least accommodated

themselves to the ruling action frame: they learned how to manage a lifestyle within its confines, as a way of relating to political party and state elites in order to gain access to material resources required for existence. With the onset of the political and/or economic crises (the latter of which is the cause of Mexican clientelism's demise) these avenues are closed, and people must—out of the sheer need to survive—search for new ways of meeting their already existing needs; as well as the new needs that rise out of the crisis.

The torpid pace of political reform in Mexico contrasts sharply with the more proactive tenor of neoliberal economic restructuring efforts in the last two administrations. However, we also see that economic restructuring has not been entirely freely chosen by regime elites: the full-blown economic crises of the 1980s, and more general changing global economic conditions provided significant "push factors" coincident with the ideological "pull" of the dogmatic faith of neoliberal true believers. Likewise, although political reform initiatives from the top of the system have come grudgingly, as defensive (and selective) reactions to perceived crises in political legitimation and social order, the perception of political crisis itself implies a certain dependency on the part of elites, a need for the legitimacy that only groups in civil society can grant them. Patrons require clients, and clients necessarily need a sense of limited options to assume submissiveness. Pursuing the "exit" option not only diminishes the foundations of regime legitimacy, it also awakens a new identity and a sense of new possibilities.

As Fox argues, the traditional explanation of the demise of clientelism and corporatism in Mexico (and other developing nations) points to broad structural changes and/or elite actions informed by these global forces:

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. . . as the Mexican case shows, political entrepreneurs can replace rigid, antiquated controls with new, more sophisticated clientelist arrangements without necessarily moving toward democratic pluralism. *Nevertheless, the main point is that if political action can create (or revive) clientelism, it can also undermine it* (Fox 1994, 154-55, emphasis added).

Secular trends can provide considerable push factors, directing agents in a particular direction, but there is no automaticity to structural changes: at some point, individuals and groups need to provide the "pull" to effectuate latent opportunities. Just as crisis conditions in the economy would eventually privilege certain types of elites (*técnicos* over traditional-style *políticos*) in a political sense, crisis conditions felt on the ground by popular sector actors would induce responses that have had (perhaps largely unintended) side benefits in the political realm.

Political learning for the popular sector thus takes place in the absence of state support and/or traditional party guidance. In the hard authoritarian systems, mobilization began in the desire to stop direct military repression and/or in reaction to the regime's antipopular economic reforms. Once initiated, however, the act of mobilization itself engenders values and goals that ultimately go beyond a return

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to normalcy. Participants come to value the organizations for their own sake, thereby developing an alternative vision of democratic state-society linkages—one which, importantly, is as critical of populist clientelism as it is of military repression. Oxhorn (1995, 106-72) labels this new popular action frame and citizen identity as “*lo popular*,” centered on active participation in popular organizations and associational autonomy vis-à-vis the state and political parties. The desire for autonomy, however, is not synonymous with disengagement: popular movement participants see political parties playing a vital role in a democratic system; what they reject are efforts by the parties to overstep their legitimate bounds, seeking to manipulate or coopt popular organizations for the latter’s more narrow ends (159-66). Movement participants understand their organizations as primary political units in a healthy political democracy: a place where members have an opportunity to talk about issues, to be heard by others, to deliberate on matters of importance, and in the process to collectively educate the citizenry (156-57). Parties are seen to play the important role in the formal political arena, “representing and fighting for a project or vision of society that people identified with. . . . But this cannot supplant an equally important and active role for the popular sector’s own organizations” (161-62).

In Mexico, similarly, many of the popular movement groups which figured so prominently in the alliance of the National Democratic Front (FDN) movement that supported the 1988 electoral challenge of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas had their roots in the repression of the 1968 student movement. Despite the horror of the crackdown, a contingent of students (inspired by the movement’s success in its newfound strategy of direct participation and radical democracy) went on to form autonomous movements in other regions of the country (Haber 1992). A number of other groups had a less direct, but no less real, impetus to seek autonomous organization, stemming from the more gradual realization that the regime’s scheme of interest representation was no longer serving them.

Beyond the original motive for mobilization, the larger point is that popular movements in post-1988 Mexico have turned transition theory’s logic of elite coalition-building and the functional marginalization of the popular sector on its head. Instead of being marginalized, popular movements have been actively courted by both the PRI and the center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), the party formed out of the *neocardenista* movement-party coalition FDN after the 1988 election. Moreover, the significance of the effusion of popular movements was not lost on the incoming president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, as revealed in his analysis of the challenges before his administration and party, in light of the increasing propensity for popular sector participation outside official corporatist channels:

In previous decades, the PRI could count on campesinos who had received land from agrarian reform, and unionized workers who were the product of import-substituting industrialization. Now the country is experiencing a formidable process of transformation. We must seek new bases of support for the Party. We must build alliances with new groups, some of which are unorganized now; others are organized for various purposes, but don’t want to participate in political parties. We must convince them to participate (quoted in Cornelius, Gentleman, and Smith, 1989, 27-28).

The main vehicle for Salinas's efforts to build new alliances with this emerging popular sector was the administration's antipoverty National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL), a massive community development initiative designed (ostensibly) to provide state funds for projects defined, implemented and administered on the local level (Dresser 1991; Cornelius, Craig, and Fox 1994). While many popular movements aligned with the PRD resisted the regime's initiatives, a significant number of the PRD's key former allies—such as the Committee for the Popular Defense (CDP) of Durango (as well as lesser, unaligned groups and theretofore unorganized collectivities)—decided to enter into cooperative arrangements of *concertación social* with the administration through PRONASOL, as the best way to pursue localized agendas.¹⁴

Many *PRDistas*, some popular movement activists and other observers argue that these ties between movements and the state have detracted from a united leftist front capable of challenging the entrenched PRI regime (as evidenced in the PRD's electoral decline in the 1991 midterm elections and the 1994 presidential race), an electoral strategy which is viewed as the best hope for a democratic breakthrough in the Mexican system. More generally, analysts of the Mexican transition and other episodes of democratization in the region focus on the potential for various forms of social mobilization to combine as a larger national force to combat the considerable power of entrenched state elites and their allies. Again, there is little doubt that the struggle for a democratic transformation will require an overwhelming rejection of past political practices by both members of civil society and reformist elements in the state. Within any given discourse and relation of power, however, there are numerous nodal points of oppression to confront, and each point of confrontation will present its own challenges and potential opportunities for social and political change. As F. H. Cardoso (1989, 320) notes in his discussion of the Brazilian transition, we should hope and expect that there will be moments in which these different groups' goals and strategies will coalesce; but he also recognizes that social movements and formal political parties have different tasks and agendas in that regard.

Conclusions: "Win-Win" Solutions in Democratic Transitions

Just as structural forces have no automaticity, neither do these cognitive changes. Authoritarianism's dull sense of overwhelming powerlessness has had (and in some cases, continues to have) the effect of a cognitive weight (the lure of material inducements and/or the fear of repression) against participation outside clientelist channels. In this regard, Denise Dresser (1991) and other critics of PRONASOL are rightly skeptical of the motivations of the Salinas administration. Certainly, these autonomous groups in civil society offer the regime a palatable alternative political space to which to devolve authority and autonomy, as countervailing forces to both traditional parties and the revolutionary left. And in times of fiscal austerity, devolving responsibility for policy implementation (in addition to privatizing state firms to fund programs) has served to further both pragmatic and ideological goals of the regime. Still, it seems impertinent to condemn popular sector groups like the CDP of Durango for participating in PRONASOL, merely because the regime also benefits.

Regardless of the ideological purity of the regime's commitment to democracy, social justice, and civil autonomy, the outcomes of these new arrangements are perhaps more important than intent. Again, from Dankwart Rustow:

We should allow for the possibility that circumstances may force, trick, lure, or cajole non-democrats into democratic behavior and that their beliefs may adjust in due course by some process of rationalization or adaptation. What matters . . . is not what values the leaders hold dear in the abstract, but what concrete steps they are willing to take (Rustow 1970, 344-45, 357).

Rustow is cited favorably by transitologists, as his analysis is primarily centered on behavioral changes within the elite. Again, Bermeo (1992, 273) maintains that elite political learning is paramount in explaining the trajectory of regime transition, "for it helps explain why a new regime becomes democratic in the first place. It helps explain why, in essence, a dictatorship in crisis is replaced by a democracy rather than a dictatorial regime." As the result of their experience in being ignominiously ousted from power by the military, political elites come to the conclusion that democratic compromise and cooperation are much better than the alternative. What Rustow's overall analysis suggests, however, is that the *democratic* referents for elite political learning are not exclusively—or even primarily—other elites, but rather the potential mass base political party actors must seek to capture within an electoral democracy. Indeed, transitologists cannot account for "democracy" as a value flowing from elite political learning, except through the ad hoc introduction of subjective variables. In short, there is no *a priori* reason why the lessons of a dissensual past would be cooperation, rather than revenge (Edles 1995, 363-65); moreover, even if elites come to value cooperation, the result is perhaps more likely to take the form of oligarchic arrangements of pacted power-sharing, rather than actual democratic competition. As Oxhorn (1995, 37-80) documents well, the traditional Chilean democratic model before the authoritarian coup was based on an "overdeveloped" political party system, with a corresponding paucity of autonomous organizational development within civil society. Even when the parties sought to mobilize popular sector actors to achieve some greater degree of substantive economic participation—beginning with the Christian Democratic Party's "Revolution in Liberty," and continuing with the Allende regime's "Peaceful Road to Socialism"—the creation of popular organizations from above was primarily a strategic device to shore up electoral support, as opposed to social development per se (47-57). The organizations promoted were clientelistic in nature, seeking to limit popular participation to the occasional mobilization at election time. And this is precisely the sort of arrangement political party actors attempted to resurrect with the return to democracy.

Rather than a product of elite learning, I suggest that the political opportunity for democracy—as opposed to something else—flows most decidedly from the periphery (popular movements) to the core (traditional elites). If the transition process entails any significant concession to actual democratic competition for mass support, as opposed to prearranged power-sharing elites who have committed to the primacy of the electoral process, and seek to win office thereby, elites must construct platforms that somehow resonate with voter constituencies. And to the extent that politicians and political parties hope to appeal to popular movement participants, they must articulate the values of participation, deliberation, representativeness and accountability that underpin these movements.

In dismissing the role of locally based popular sector activity, transitologists limit the realm of the possible to an "old" image of politics. Some of this fixity within the traditional model of politics has to do with the idiom of the transition literature itself. As even transitologist Adam Przeworski (1991, 37, note 46) argues, the central analytical

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