

**Finding the Shape of the Mountain:
When ‘the Poor’ Set the National Agenda**

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Whether a mountain can be moved depends as much on the character of the mountain as on the resources, strategies, and commitment of the would-be movers. E. Clemens 1998: 109.

This paper develops a framework for analyzing the political conditions under which organizations of the poor are able to enter into broad coalitions and influence national-level policy making.¹ The core premise on which this framework rests is that the nature of ‘mountain’—that is, the political system broadly speaking—establishes the opportunities and constraints organizations of the poor confront. Finding the shape of the mountain is the central task of this paper. The paper does not address the grass-roots dynamics of collective action and organization building, nor the bases of organizational strength (or leverage) of the poor. These are explored in great detail in the literature on social movements and collective action. Here the presence of relatively coherent local-level organizations is assumed.

The paper is centrally concerned with the fragmentation and “localism” of most organizations of the poor. This fragmentation contrasts to earlier movements that in many parts of the world successfully institutionalized their access to the state and exercised considerable influence—that is, the organized working class. The fragmentation of contemporary movements is widely seen as one of major obstacles that keep the poor from having a greater say in national-level policy. The framework developed here is ‘polity-centered.’² It focuses on a small number of variables that shape the opportunities and constraints organization of the poor face in the political system: the structure of the state and the party system, elite alliance patterns, and movement allies’ proximity to centres of power.

The key finding of the paper is that the *character of the state* has a substantial impact on whether the poor enter into broad coalitions and exercise influence over policy. To be more specific:

1. *A well-institutionalized and coherent state, whose authority is widely accepted, facilitates the formation of broad coalitions and is a requisite for building stable*

¹ The ‘poor’ can be defined in numerous ways but I focus on people, or social groups, which have no or very limited access to decision making centers within the state *and* fall below the national poverty line. This combined political and socio-economic definition excludes people who fall below the poverty line but still have access to decision making centers because the country as a whole is poor, and those people who do not have access but do not fall below the poverty line (such particular gender, ethnic or religious groups in some national settings). Similarly, I will limit the definition of “organizations of the poor” to *membership organizations* whose members belong to the poor, as defined above. This definition says nothing of the political proclivities of the organizations, which may be organized around radical, reformist, or reactionary agendas.

² The term polity-centered comes from Skocpol’s work on social policy in the United States (Weir, Orloff et al. 1988; Skocpol 1992: 41), but the framework suggested here also draws on the political process approach in social movement theory (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Kriesi, Koopmans et al. 1995; Banaszak 1996; Tarrow 1998) and recent work on state-society relations (Fox 1992; Migdal, Kohli et al. 1994; Evans 1995; Hagopian 1996).

working relations between organizations of the poor and state agencies on substantive grounds. States' whose authority is contested by guerrilla groups or separatist movements, or which are poorly institutionalized, undermine such relationships in various ways and discourage coalition building.

2. *Structural linkages between state and society forged in the past serve as political axes around which the poor attempt to mobilize and make claims in the present.* Structural linkages are the productive, social, and regulatory functions of the state, such as the systems of labor relations, social welfare, and land tenure. These linkages have a significant politicizing effect on issues and provide points of access to the state.

An important concern of the paper is the impact of poorly institutionalized multi-party systems in many Third Wave democracies on the access of organizations of the poor to the state, and the concomitant increasingly common role of *NGO-brokered coalitions*. NGO-brokered coalitions have emerged in such contexts as partial 'functional equivalents' of the progressive parties that have historically guaranteed organized labor's access to the state. These coalitions escape the threat of having the goals of constituent organizations displaced by broader party goals, but face significant challenges in forging collective identities necessary to keep the coalition intact over time, and in institutionalizing their access to vital policy-making centres.

In the next section the paper sets out the polity-centered framework. Following are three case studies of organizations of the poor that participated in broad coalitions and achieved some degree of influence over national policy making. The cases are the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR) in the Philippines (1987-96), the Campaign for Agrarian Reform (CNPR) in Brazil (1983-92), and the women's *comedores* movement in Peru (1982-92). All three cases are situated in Third Wave democracies, although Peru suffered a significant reversal in the early 1990s.

I. Polity-Centered Framework

Political outcomes are the result of interactions between organized social groups that occur within the context of particular political institutions. *Power is relational, hence contingent.* The degree of influence organizations of the poor exercise does not simply reflect their organizational and mobilizational capacity. It is contingent on organizations' relationship to other constituted actors and to political institutions, which facilitate certain types of claim making and coalition building while inhibiting others. The framework is built on work by Tilly [1978], Skocpol [1992], McAdam [1982], Kriesi et al. [1995] and others who suggest that the issues around which social groups organize to make claims and build alliances are strongly influenced by the organization of political institutions such as the state and party system.³

³ Skocpol [1992: 41] for example argues that whether groups succeed in influencing policy is critically contingent on "changing points of access and leverage allowed by a nation's political institutions."

It is of course difficult to determine whether a policy change, or policy continuity, resulted from the actions of a particular actor or coalition. As Kriesi et al. [1995: 212] suggest, the causal link can only be made indirectly. Furthermore, influence is a highly aggregate concept. The policy-cycle literature identifies various moments in the policy-making process when groups may exert influence, such as agenda setting, policy formulation, legislation, organization, implementation, and evaluation. This paper disaggregates influence into four components, and a temporal dimension based on Kriesi et al. [1995: chapt. 9].

- *Procedural* influence alters aspects of the policy making process, and includes recognition of previously excluded organizations as legitimate political actors and the opening of new political channels to those actors.
- *Substantive* influence results in changes in policy itself.
- *Structural* influence entails the transformations of political institutions and/or national political alignments.
- *Sensitizing* influence entails the favorable alterations in either the attitude of particular actors towards a coalition's goals, or in public opinion more generally.

Influence has an important temporal dimension. Policy is frequently renegotiated during implementation, often to the detriment of organizations of the poor but occasionally to their benefit. "Exercising influence" therefore occurs across time. Furthermore, a set of actions taken by a group at point **A** may have differential impacts across time periods **B** and **C** if there are significant changes in the political system. For example, legislation that results from the lobbying and mobilization may not be implemented under one government, yet become a cornerstone of a successor one.

Bearing all this in mind, I will use ordinal comparisons to establish partial causality of various political variables and create a relatively nuanced multi-causal framework. The focus is on covariation of the principle dependent variable (degree of influence) with a limited number of disaggregated independent variables that are scored as either high, middling, or low. The approach highlights how different scores on political variables can lead to broadly similar outcomes. Low scores on certain variables may foreclose particular paths to exercising influence, but high scores on others may open different paths. The variables are listed in Table 1 and are discussed below.

Table 1 Polity-Centered Approach—Variables

Variables	Scoring
State Structures	
authority (degree contested)	low, middling, high
institutionalization	low, middling, high
role in socio-economic life	n/a
Party System	
number of parties	low, middling, high
ideological polarization	low, middling, high
institutionalization	low, middling, high
Elite Behavior	
level of conflict	low, middling, high
Allies	
proximity to decision centers	in power jr. partner in power not in power

State Structures. Influencing public policy means influencing the state.⁴ How the state is organized, and particularly where authority resides, has a profound impact on the issues around which organizations of the poor organize and build coalitions, the form these take, and the strategies they pursue. First, the degree to which state authority is contested within a national territory is of fundamental importance. On the one hand, the modern state eliminates rival centers of authority over large geographic areas and populations and creates a new normative order to legitimize its authority. This provides the bases on which social groups can organize on a national scale and construct collective identities that cut across diverse geographic regions and social strata (Tilly 1984; Migdal, Kohli et al. 1994).⁵ On the other hand, whether or not social groups mobilize to influence the state depends in part on whether they believe the state has the authority and capacity to meet their demands. Where state authority is tenuous or heavily contested, such as in war torn regions or areas with guerilla activity, one would not expect to find a significant amount of collective action by the poor targeting the state.

Second, the degree to which the state is institutionalized, in the sense of a modern Weberian bureaucratic apparatus, influences the types of linkages organizations of the poor can establish with the state. It also conditions the state’s capacity to respond to the demands of the poor. Close working relationships around substantive issues are difficult to establish when the state is weakly institutionalized and run along patronage lines. In such settings political leaders have periodically sought to create of “islands of efficiency”—that is, agencies, departments, or parastatal companies that are insulated from clientelist pressures. As Evans [1995: 61] observes, however, for these islands not

⁴ The modern state makes and enforces the binding rules for society and is the locus of policy making.

⁵ The most obvious example is the current widespread organizing around citizenship rights in the Third Wave democracies (Foweraker and Landman 1997).

to be flooded by waves of clientelism they depend heavily on the protection of individual presidents.

Third, the nature of the state's structural linkages to society, as determined by the state's role in economic and social spheres, play a significant role in defining the parameters of the political arena and the axes around which organizations of the poor mobilize and build alliances (Houtzager and Kurtz forthcoming).⁶ Structural linkages are the productive, social, and regulatory functions of the state, such as the systems of labor relations, social welfare, and land tenure. Organizations of the poor lower the costs of collective action and increase the likelihood of success by mobilizing around such linkages, seeking to politicize them. The extent of state intervention in social and economic life therefore has important implications for the forms and levels of organizing activity among the poor.

Party systems. How a party system is organized affects the nature of representation, how public policy is made, and the state's capacity to implement policy. As Mainwaring [1999: 13] points out, parties are the first and foremost route to state power and "virtually monopolize access to elected positions in most democracies." In particular, parties monopolize the process of enacting legislation, which is one especially valued target of coalitions. Institutionalizing one's demands through legislation, Tilly observes, is "the ultimate touchstone of the value of political action" [cited in Tarrow, 1998: 50]. Why? Legislation does "at a sweep what myriad of strikes, demonstrations, absenteeisms, featherbeddings, sit-ins, marches, assassinations, and prayer meetings [can] not, precisely because the latter [are] inevitably local or regional, episodic, and without legal force" (Anderson 1996: 13). The assumption is that laws are enforced across national territory, with reasonable impartiality. This presumes an effective state organized along Weberian lines.

Party systems, and the level of access they afford different actors, therefore shape the behavior of nonparty actors in basic ways (Mainwaring 1999: 15). In particular, if the party system offers high-level of access, coalitions are likely to emerge around political parties and invest heavily in electoral politics. In cases where party systems are relatively closed to movements, parties will play a far less important role. Party systems vary in myriad ways but in order to assess how they may influence organizations of the poor it is helpful to identify three dimensions. Sartori [1976] suggests party systems dynamics are conceived along two dimensions: the number of parties and the level ideological polarization. In the case of Third Wave democracies, Mainwaring [1999] argues, a third dimension can usefully be added: level of institutionalization. By his definition weakly institutionalized party systems are those that suffer instability in the patterns of party competition and have parties that are comparatively weakly rooted in society, have weak organizations, and enjoy low-levels of legitimacy (3-4).

Access to the party system is highest in multiparty system with ideologically diverse and well-institutionalized parties. In such systems electoral competition is most

⁶ There are two kinds of linkages, *political* and *structural*. Political linkages encompass the formal and informal institutions that are explicitly involved in the aggregation of interests and regulation of political conflict, such as the party system and the myriad forms of clientelism (Houtzager and Kurtz forthcoming).

likely to push parties to seek alliances with newly constituted social actors. Importantly, it also gives non-party actors the most leverage vis-à-vis parties. Party systems with two dominant but incoherent and poorly institutionalized parties offer the least access. Personalism and clientelism undermine movement efforts to establish substantive ties to parties. Many Third Wave democracies have multiparty systems that are weakly institutionalized and have a narrow ideological spectrum. These systems, such as in Brazil and the Philippines, offer relatively low levels of access.

Elites Behavior and Allies. The relationship between organizations of the poor and the political elites on whom claims are being made is central to the polity-centered framework. Elite response to such claims determines a coalition's influence, and often its survival as well. What types of responses are likely is contingent in part to the level of intra-elite conflict and presence of reformist officials within the state. When intra-elite conflict is low elite actors are most likely to ignore or repress movements of the poor. Middling levels of conflict entail a significant degree of elite contestation but within previously accepted boundaries of the political arena—elites are likely forge new alliances with subordinate social actors. In cases of high levels of conflict, such as in democratic transitions, the basic contours of the political arena are in dispute. Elites will seek out new allies and, in some case, may act as institutional hosts for entirely new actors.⁷ There is growing agreement among students of development that the ability of organizations of the poor to influence policy is greatly enhanced by alliances with reformist elements within the state (Fox 1992; Evans 1996; Fox 1996; Tandler 1997).

Much of the literatures on civil society, NGOs, and social movements associate movement strength with autonomy from elites, political parties, and the state. This focus on autonomy is misguided. Only in instance where broad coalitions of the poor succeed in attracting the support of critical elite and non-elite allies are they like to gain access to policy making centers. Two questions need to be asked. First, how close are a coalition's allies to such centers? The prospect of an ally who is senior partners in a governing coalition or occupies influential positions within the state significantly enhances the capacity to influence policy, whereas allies marginalized from power obviously do not.

The second question concerns the nature of the relationship between coalitions and their allies: how have they negotiated their relationships with other actors, such as political parties, NGOs, and the state? Engaging in alliances, or integration into larger movements, confederations, or parties, entails surrendering some degree of authority to set goals and strategy. In the case of building alliances with political parties one of the fears many activists and students of development have is the subordinated of the organization's goals to broader party objectives. Is this fear well-founded, and if so,

⁷ While allies *support existing* movements, institutional hosts attempt to *create new* movements by drawing disparate peoples into their organizational and ideological fields and redefining them as social groups. Hosts in effect seek to remake the political cleavages and re-orient political contestation by organizing new actors. Unlike allies, hosts contribute in a critical way to the local social networks, organizational resources, and ideological frameworks needed to overcome the obstacles to collective action. The concept of institutional hosts is developed in Houtzager [1999].

does this suggest such relations ought to be avoided?

Labor parties have played a decisive role in institutionalizing labor movements' access to the state earlier this century. In an excellent analysis of social movement-party relations in Western and Central Europe over the last century, Hanagen [1998: 3, 28] argues that "incorporation of left-wing social movements into political parties has often resulted in persistence of movement activities *within* party structures and that incorporated social movements have exerted enduring influence on social policy." He argues that "parties have proved more enduring and resourceful than independent SMOs [social movement organizations]....While less rewarding, at least the subordinate incorporation of movements into parties has provided routine political access denied to independent movements." Molyneux [1998], in her analysis of contemporary women's movements, reaches a similar conclusion.

The growing importance of NGO-'brokered' national coalitions in Third Wave democracies raises basic questions about the extent to which NGO networks can serve as a functional equivalent of progressive parties. NGOs can link isolated groups into broad coalitions and help formulate broad programmatic agendas. As Putzel [1998: 83-4] notes, they permit "more autonomous development vis-à-vis both the state and political organizations [and] facilitate access to foreign and government funds and provide expertise in management or the special skills necessary of socioeconomic projects." Unlike political parties, however, NGOs cannot aggregate interests, build strong collective identities, and provide sustained and institutionalized access to the state.

Significant trade-offs therefore exist between the two possibilities. The salient questions that must be asked in each national context are: what types of relationships are possible in that political environment and which are preferable? The answer to both is to a significant degree shaped by the nature of the state and party system.

Transitions to Democracy produce significant changes in a number of the variables examined in this paper and, because of the breadth of the recent wave of transitions, deserves a brief comment before engaging the case studies. Transitions create important, if relatively rare, opportunities for organizations of the poor to coalesce at the national level. Transitions have two basic characteristics: the renegotiations of national-level political alliances and the redefinition of institutional linkages that bind state and society. The first offers the prospect that organizations of the poor may be able to find new elite and non-elite allies. There is also no doubt that the writing of new constitutions has been a particularly influential mobiliser of the poor and its allies during transitions. The second implies new opportunities to institutionalize access to the state and embed demands in new institutional arrangements. While the case studies confirm the former claim, they cast serious doubt on the latter. It appears that in practice the high-level of institutional flux that is a characteristic of democratic transitions limits the state's ability to act on behalf of the poor and leaves it more vulnerable, not less, to elite pressures.

II. NGO-Brokered Coalition: CPAR in the Philippines

The Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR), formed a year after the 1986 Philippine democratic transition, represents an almost ideal-typical NGO-brokered coalition. At the instigation of rural development NGOs, sectors of the Catholic Church and other groups, thirteen Philippine peasant federations and a similar number of NGOs formed what became the broadest and most enduring national peasant coalition in the history of the Philippines (Goño 1997: 15; Putzel 1998: 90).⁸ CPAR's member federations claimed to represent one and-a-half million members, though the actual number is probably less. The coalition's stated goal of radical agrarian reform never materialized but as a movement of the poor, CPAR was able to exercise substantial procedural and sensitizing influence. The significance of its substantive influence became apparent only after its dissolution in 1993. The analysis that follows therefore examines two periods: 1987-1992 when CPAR was active, and 1993-1997 after its dissolution.

What was the shape of the mountain in the Philippines when CPAR first emerged? State's authority was highly contested. The state bureaucracy had a low level of institutionalization and weak linkages to the rural sector. And, the party system had a large number of parties but was poorly institutionalized. Two countervailing factors, however, contributed decisively to CPAR's emergence: the transition to democracy and the strength of the NGO sector, parts of which obtained important positions within the state after the transition. In addition, the Marcos regime had kept agrarian reform on the national agenda, despite few concrete results, and the legitimized coalition building and political action in this issue area. After 1992 the state consolidated its authority and achieved a relatively higher degree of institutionalization. The strengthening of the state made possible a significant advance in agrarian reform, on the foundations laid by CPAR.

A State on the Brink

Access to the state, and the state's capacity to act, were severely limited in the 1986-92 period. The new democracy inherited a patrimonial state that was poorly institutionalized and permeated by the private interests of regional clans, Marcos' cronies, and the powerful (and politicized) military (Thompson 1995). The Department of Agrarian Reform, created by Marcos in the 1970s and the principle agency responsible for implementing reform, was not an exception. It had four different Secretaries between

⁸ The federations, and their founding dates, are: Aniban ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (AMA)-1976; Pambansang Pederasyon ng Kababaihang Magbubukid (AMIHAN)—1986; Bahanggunian ng mga Maliliit na Mangingisda sa Lawa ng Laguna—1985; Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina (KABAPA)—1976; Kapatiran ng Malalayang Maliliit na Mangingisda ng Pilipinas (KMMMP)—1975; Kalipunan ng mga Samahang Mamamayan (KASAMA)—n.a.; Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP)—1985; Lakas ng Magsasaka Manggagawa at Mangingisda ng Pilipinas (LAKAS)—n.a.; Lakas ng Magsasakang Pilipino (LMP)—1986; National Federation of Sugar Workers and General Trades (NSW-FGT)—1972; Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA)—1986; Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA)—n.a.; United Farmers-Fishermen Association of the Philippines (UFFAP)—1953.

1987 and 1992, some lasting as little as 2 months, and was racked by corruption scandals (Borras 1998).

Critically, the state's authority was severely contested by various sectors throughout the 1980s. In fact, Thompson argues [1985] that the Philippines was on the edge of a revolutionary precipice in the mid-1980s. Between 1985 and 1992 sectors of the military initiated 9 coup attempts, in the south the Moro National Liberation Front fought for independence, and at the local level warlords exercised considerable authority (Lara and Jr. 1990: 148; Thompson 1995, 168-170). Most important, however, was the challenge posed by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the National People's Army (NPA). Through the NPA the Communist Party created a parallel bases of authority in substantial parts of the countryside. At its height in 1987 the NPA had an estimated force of 25,200. In areas under its control the NPA played an important law-and-order role, provided services such as medical training and adult education, and ran "rudimentary" local administration, often more effectively than was done by either local or central government agencies (Putzel 1992: 122; Riedinger 1995: 60).⁹ The dramatic growth of the NPA during the 1980s is directly related to the weakness of the state's military wing, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, which was highly politicized and fragmented, the state's inability to deliver better services and public goods to rural communities, as well as the lack of formal political channels for making claims in the Marcos regime (Anderson 1988; Putzel 1992; Riedinger 1995).

One factor did support the emergence of CPAR. Although state-society links were tenuous in most rural areas, in the 1970s Marcos launched an agrarian reform program that kept reform on the national agenda and legitimized claim making in this issue area during the transition. Marcos declared that the entire country would be subject to land reform and frequently touted reform as the basis of his New Society, though in practice only 13,590 tenants had received official land titles by 1986 (Putzel 1992: 124, 137). The agrarian reform law, Presidential Decree 27, and existence of an bureaucracy dedicated to reform, the Department of Agrarian Reform, facilitated organizing and building alliances around the issue.

Starting around 1992 the level of institutionalization of the state increased, and contestation of its authority decreased. Fidel Ramos took office in that year and pushed through a number of steps to strengthen the state apparatus. In the area of agrarian reform he appointed a close associate and reformer as Secretary of DAR, Ernesto Garilao. The new secretary had strong ties to the business community and enjoyed the president's protection. Garilao sought to turn DAR into something resembling an 'island of efficiency;' brought other reformers into DAR; and undertook administrative reform of the department (Clarke 1995; Borras 1998: 26-27). One measure of the Department's enhanced capacity was the remarkable increase in the number of agrarian reform cases it adjudicated: these increased from 53 to 95 percent of the total, even though the absolute number of cases increased more than fourteen-fold (from 1,184 to 117,487) (Borras and Franco 1998b). Perhaps most importantly, however, Garilao forged close ties with the

⁹ It launched its own agrarian reform, which included reduction in land rent, limits on usury, and in some instances outright redistribution

pro-reform alliances, which could pressure the state from the outside, and institutionalized the access of peasant federations in the policy process so that pro-reform groups could “penetrate the state” and “push...from within.”¹⁰

An Awkward Actor: The Revolutionary Left

The challenge of the CPP/NPA to the state in the 1986-92 period had a profound impact on peasant sector coalition-building efforts. The CPP/NPA was largest and best-organized sector of the left and occupied a key political space in the countryside. Its popular organizing efforts were central in creating a mass base that made CPAR possible, but its dominant position made any efforts at building a broad-based coalition to engage the state and work through the political system extremely difficult. The Party had influence over an array of popular organizations in what became known as the ‘national democratic’ camp, including several large peasant federations. Tancangco [1988: 99] estimates that national democratic groups “totaled 50,000 full-time organizers operating in two-thirds of the country’s provinces.” The party refused to participate in the transition and to accept the authority of the state—its strategy was a “protracted people’s war” that combined armed struggle with a political united front (Putzel 1992; Putzel 1995).

Inchoate Party System

If the state provided limited access to movements of the poor, the party system offered even less. The Philippines has a weakly institutionalized multiparty system in which parties are based primarily on personalities and are dominated by regional clans (Anderson 1988; Thompson 1995; Thompson 1996). In the 1990s a new type of personalistic electoral politics has emerged alongside the traditional pattern—that of personalities without strong ties to traditional clans but who form parties solely as electoral vehicles and rely heavily on the mass media (Canlas 1988, 73-4). The personalistic and poorly institutionalized nature of party system made it impossible for movements of the poor to establish stable and substantive ties with parties.

The only ideologically coherent mass-based party was the CPP, which opted for a clandestine existence. In large measure due to the CPP’s dominant position on the left, no center-left party emerged during the democratic transition. The CPP attempted to form such a party in 1986, the Partido ng Bayan (PnB), but it failed to attract the support of social democrats and democratic socialists who saw it as an instrument of the CPP. The party’s poor performance in the elections, and collapse of peace talks with the government that same year, shut down the CPP’s electoral experiment. In the absence of a strong left or centre-left party, the Congress elected in 1987 was dominated by members of traditional political clans. Of 200 seats in the lower house of the Congress elected in 1987, which would legislate a new agrarian reform law, 130 were won by members of “traditional political families” who played a central role in the pre-1971 period, and another 39 by relatives of these families (Anderson 1988, 27).

¹⁰ Ernesto Garilao personal communication, 1 August 1999.

NGO's as the Functional Equivalent of Parties

The large and well-organized NGO sector in the Philippines, however, compensated in part for the weakness of the party system and state. During the 1980s there was a dramatic growth in the number of NGOs and civil society organizations in the Philippines, making it one of the largest and best organized in the developing world (Clarke 1995: 67). A number of important rural development NGOs emerged during this period. Among the most important was PhilDHRAA, which had supported Aquino and stood at the center of a network of organizations on the left that formed the principle counter-weight to the CPP/NDF. The NGOs' organizational strength, programmatic orientation, and autonomy from clan politics contrasts markedly with that of political parties. Their strength and relative autonomy from domestic actors, however, was in large measure a result of resource dependence on North European and North America donors.¹¹ Putzel [1998: 85] for example observes that "NGOs [in the Philippines] have developed at a pace largely determined by the provision of foreign funding."

The network of rural development NGOs served in a limited sense as a *functional equivalent* of a center-left party. That is, NGOs took the lead in bringing competing peasant federations together into a broad coalition, mediated their conflicts, and helped give it direction and secure access to financing (Goño 1997: 20-1; Putzel 1998). They also played an important role in providing access to the state, albeit not in an institutionalized fashion—various NGO activists found positions within the executive branch, including DAR, and on congressional committees.¹² The NGOs efforts led to the creation of a new national peasant federation in 1986, PAKISAMA, and culminated in the creation of CPAR.

Transition to Democracy and CPAR

Several factors in the Philippine transition favored the formation of CPAR in the Philippine transition. (1) The transition occurred by collapse—Marcos was forced from power in a sudden combination of insubordination by segments of the armed forces, popular protest of the 'people's revolution,' and elite political maneuvering (including that of the US government) (Thompson 1995). As a result, the Aquino government had virtually unlimited power as it discarded the Marcos constitution and Congress. (A new Congress, which many predicted would be conservative, would be seated in mid-1987.) (2) Because Aquino's legitimacy came in large measure from her role in the "people's revolution", expectations ran high that she would tackle major social reforms. This expectation was reinforced when the government opened negotiations with the CPP/NPA. (3) Furthermore, peasant groups had important potential allies within the state after 1986. Aquino came to power on the shoulders of a broad coalition that included

¹¹ One estimate put at \$20 million the volume of money flowing to NGOs annually by 1991. Clarke (1995: 70) points out, however, that the influx of foreign donor money and the 1991 decentralization law that gives local officials discretion.... Lead to a proliferation of NGOs created by "politicians, local government units, military, ..." (Clarke 1995: 69, fn14).

¹² For example, PhilDHRRA won an appointee to the Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Social Services and Development spot.

traditional political elites marginalized under Marcos, sectors of the armed forces, the middle class, and NGOs and popular organization (PO) leaders who represented the aspirations of the “people’s revolution.” This latter group received prominent cabinet appointments: Executive Secretary, Labor Secretary, Presidential Spokesperson, and Social Welfare Secretary (Clarke 1995: 72). (4) Finally, there was the prospect of writing a new agrarian reform program into law with the redrafting of the constitution.¹³

The creation of CPAR was orchestrated by rural development NGOs, along with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and a number of academics and other groups. CPAR brought together two of three broad and ideologically highly differentiated peasant movement camps: the national-democrats linked to the CPP (the single largest organized block), and the social-democratic and democratic-socialist peasant federations with strong ties to rural development NGOs and progressive sectors of the Catholic Church (Borras 1998: 30). The NGOs made a concerted effort to bring the national-democrats into the coalition, but ensured that they would not be dominant.¹⁴ Not included were conservative federations which had had close ties to the Marcos regime (Goño 1997: 24). The member federations of CPAR saw the coalition as a coordinating body that operated as a national level lobby and left the essential structure and identities of the federations intact.

CPAR first worked with allies in the executive branch to influence the drafting an Executive Order on agrarian reform. When this effort was defeated CPAR and its allies shifted their attention to Congress. Three members of CPAR’s NGO team sat on the Technical Committee of the House on Agrarian Reform and the coalition worked with a handful of progressive legislators to craft a progress reform bill. The bill in 1988—the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL)—was a significant defeat for CPAR, which unequivocally rejected the law. In response, the coalition launched a campaign to replace CARL with its own agrarian reform law, PARCODE, under a provision of the new constitutions that allowed for ‘people’s initiatives.’¹⁵ That campaign also failed but CPAR nonetheless won considerable popular support and became a significant political actor (Putzel 1995: 658). Among other things, it attracted substantial donor funding and became an important channel for disbursing aid to rural popular organizations.

The weakness of the state and closed nature of the party system ensured that conservative, anti-reform groups would dominate both the Executive and legislative branches of government and block CPAR’s efforts. From the start the dominant elements within the Aquino government were sectors of the armed forces, conservative business

¹³ The Constitutional Commission formed by the government to produce a new Magna Carta included a number of popular leaders, including Jaime Tadeo of the KMP.

¹⁴ The four NDF organizations that participated in CPAR accounted for over half of the 1.5 million members CPAR claimed to represent. They had strong reservations about joining the coalition, but did so to ensure they did not become further isolated after the CPP’s 1986 election boycott fiasco and as a part of a united front strategy.

¹⁵ To become law an initiative had to secure signatures of three percent of the voters in each legislative district, or approximately three million signatures.

leaders and traditional elites marginalized under Marcos (Putzel 1992: 176-9).¹⁶ The cabinet, however, did include supporters of reform and there was widespread popular support for decisive action on the issue. The increasing threat to the state by rebel groups within the armed forces and the CPP/NPA, however, pushed the government to the right. The influence of the military, which was staunchly opposed to agrarian reform and working with popular organizations, grew significantly (Putzel 1992: 260-1).¹⁷ The closed nature of the party system, in turn, ensured that pro-reform Congressmen would number less than 50. In the meantime DAR made little headway in implementing the new law—pro-reform officials were isolated within the poorly institutionalized bureaucracy and lacked Presidential support (Borras 1998: 24-25).

CPAR collapsed in 1992, but not because its reform campaigns came up short. Instead three factors contributed to its dissolution: (1) several federations opposed CPAR's efforts to strengthen its organization by reproducing the coalition at the regional and local level; (2) CPAR's efforts to play a direct role in the Presidential and Congressional elections of 1992 created profound partisan divisions;¹⁸ and (3) the national democrats, facing declining influence among peasant groups even as that of the CPR grew, "appeared to work actively to wind down the organization" (Putzel 1998: 96).¹⁹

Consolidation of State Authority and Agrarian Reform, 1993-96

Paradoxically, after the dissolution of CPAR in 1992 the Philippines made significant progress in agrarian reform. The reasons for this resides, on the one hand, on the consolidation of state authority—the CPP/NPA declined significantly as a military threat, peace talks with the Moro National Liberation Front progressed, and the wave of military coup efforts stopped. On the other hand, Fidel Ramos rode a more cohesive coalition to power than Aquino and was able to strengthen certain segments of the state. Ramos did not come from the old landed elite and as the threat of the CPP/NPA declined so did the role of the armed forces in the governing coalition.

The strengthening of DAR, and the decline of the CPP/NPA, also opened the door for progressive forces to pursue new types of relations with the state. CPAR's opposition to CARL gave way to efforts by the peasant federations to work with DAR in implementing its more progressive features. Efforts to ally with pro-reform groups within state agencies became an important part of the strategy of most federations,

¹⁶ Aquino was a member of one of the largest landowning families in the Philippines and had little personal inclination toward reform.

¹⁷ The US, which long influenced government policy in the Philippines, was split on reform but generally favored conservative groups and favored strong counterinsurgency measures against the CPP/NPA (Putzel 1992: chapt. 9).

¹⁸ This in part reflects the lack of a cohesive identity among CPAR members and in part the personalism of the party system. Leaders from the federations supported different candidates, ranging from the center-left to traditional clan politicians and Ramos (Goño 1997: 101-110).

¹⁹ Efforts by state agencies in the 1990s to institutionalize peasant representation by sponsoring their own peasant umbrella organizations also contributed to CPAR's dissolution. In order to gain access to state resources and decision-makers a number of CPAR's federations participated in these new organizations.

combined with substantial pressure from below (Borras 1998: 33-39). Although peasant groups lost the unity enjoyed under CPAR, their ability to forge stable substantive ties with DAR more than compensated for this loss and played a significant role in accelerating reform.

Outcomes

CPAR's contribution to the new dynamics of agrarian reform was two fold. First, it was fundamental in creating the legal bases on which the post-1992 relationships were built. It obtain recognition as a legitimate national political actor and through its lobbying, collective action, and participation in congressional debates helped created a political climate favorable to agrarian reform, keeping the issue at the top of the national agenda at a time when the government had little interest in reform. Perhaps the clearest indication of CPAR's sensitizing influence was the widespread editorial support for its PARCODE. Second, CARL is an improvement over previous agrarian reform laws and it is quite likely that CARL would have been considerably weaker without CPAR's campaign. CARL provided the legal bases for an acceleration of reform after 1992. By the end of 1997 the government distributed no less than 4,619 million hectares of land, meeting 57 percent of the revised program target set in 1988 under the legislation, of 8.2 million hectares (Borras and Franco 1998b). This represents a significant improvement over the record of the 1970s and 1980s, although both the Aquino and Ramos governments focused primarily on the less contentious provisions of CARL, such as voluntary-offer-to sell and voluntary land transfers which substantially increased the cost of reform (Borras and Franco 1998).

CPAR's structural influence has been limited. No coherent rural electoral base has emerged as a result of CPAR's work, despite its efforts through the United Rural Sector Electoral Council to coordinate electoral activity. It did, however, spawn the Nationwide Coalition of Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform in 1990, which became a nationally acknowledge actor in its own right and has outlived CPAR.²⁰

III. Corporatism and the National Campaign for Agrarian Reform in Brazil

In Brazil a very different type of coalition from that of the Philippines emerged to lead the National Campaign for Agrarian Reform between 1983 and 1988. The Campaign was led by the corporatist National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), which joined with urban-based NGOs, centre-left political leaders, and sectors of the Catholic Church.²¹ As the peak organisation of the state-recognised Rural Workers Union Movement, CONTAG represented 2,300 unions and encompassed an estimated 6.2 million small farmers, landless families, and rural wage labourers. The union movement's role in the campaign challenges the presupposition that corporatist institutions serve only as instruments of social control and preclude effective

²⁰ NACFAR today has 8 federations and approximately 600,000 members.

²¹ The other entities officially participating in the campaign included the Church organisations CPT, CNBB, and CIMI, and the Rio de Janeiro-based NGO IBASE.

representation. Tightly controlled by the state under military rule, during the transition to democracy begun in 1979 key sectors of the union movement asserted their autonomy from the state. The campaign for agrarian reform had an important sensitising influence and kept the issue on the national agenda throughout the 1980s. Agrarian reform, as a broad national policy, however, was soundly defeated. In the 1990s, pressure from below organized by CONTAG and the Movement of the Landless (MST) in particular, has nonetheless led to an ad hoc process of land expropriation and the emergence of a small but not insignificant “agrarian reform sector.”

CONTAG was able to construct a coalition around agrarian reform because of two critical state-society linkages—state-corporatism and agrarian reform legislation—and the opportunities created by transition to democracy in the mid-1980s, as well as the availability of critical allies such as the progressive political leaders and sectors of the Catholic Church. Two features of the political system, however, helped block substantial reform: (1) the fragmentation and low-level of institutionalisation of both the state and party system; and (2) the conservative nature of the negotiated, or pacted, transition. Combined, these two factors foreclosed important points of access to the state and contributed to a generalised policy paralysis, or crisis of governability, during the 1980s and early 1990s. This crisis blocked a series of critical reforms, including seven different economic reform packages (Linz and Stepan 1996 167). The emergence of an important party on the left in the transition—the Workers’ Party—did not have a significant impact on the outcome, because of its marginalization from power and the union movement’s avowed non-partisan stance.

Pervasive and Fragmented State

The state in Brazil has been the dominant actor in both economic and political arenas since the 1930s. The state’s authority has not been seriously contested since the 1930s despite of, perhaps because of, several regime changes.²² In the political arena the state has been both the dominant political actor and, as Schneider [1987: 214] points out, a critical “arena for elite accommodation and aggregation of interests.” The Brazilian state has two characteristics that ensure limited access of the poor. The first is state-corporatism, which through a highly developed set of institutions links various social groups directly to the state, bypassing the party system. The second is a highly fragmented bureaucracy with a middling to low level of institutionalisation, and which is deeply penetrated by clientelist networks.²³

The 1985-1992 period saw a gradual but unprecedented erosion of state capacity. In the new democratic regime the revival of federalism exacerbated the fragmentation of the state, while state-based clientelism grew at an alarming rate. The policy paralysis under the first civilian government, and poorly conceived public sector cutbacks under

²² The urban and rural guerrilla movements of the 1960s and 1970s were repressed before they became a significant threat to the state.

²³ Evans [1995: 61] for example notes that in Brazil, an “unusually extensive powers of political appointment complement lack of meritocratic recruitment...[W]hile Japanese prime ministers appoint only dozens of officials and U.S. presidents appoint hundreds, Brazilian presidents appoint thousands.”

the second government of Fernando Collor in 1989-91, eroded capacity and triggered a severe fiscal crisis (Kinzo 1993; Lamounier 1996; Weyland 1997). The precipitous decline in the state's tax collection capacity was emblematic. In 1979 the federal government had 12,000 tax agents; in 1992 there were only 5,700; the index of non-payment of income tax by juridical persons who acknowledged they owed taxes (i.e. not normal tax evaders) rose from 1.6 percent in 1988 to 50.7 in 1991 (Linz and Stepan 1996: 185).

The organisational solution that political leaders have historically found to the problems associated with fragmented and poorly institutionalised state institutions has been to create 'pockets of efficiency' within the bureaucracy.²⁴ The parts of the state responsible for agrarian reform, however, did not enjoy the protection of the President and fell victim to a continual assault by conservative forces within and outside of the state. The segments of the state apparatus responsible for agrarian reform—the Ministry of Agrarian Reform (MIRAD) and National Institute of Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (INCRA)—suffered constant personnel changes and institutional reengineering.²⁵ Adding to the institutional confusion was the fact that the enacting legislation of the 1988 Constitution clause on agrarian reform, the Agrarian Law, was passed only in 1993. In the interim agrarian reform stood in a legal netherworld.

Structural linkages binding state and rural society did exist, however. These facilitated the emergence of the coalition behind the national campaign for agrarian reform in the transition. These linkages included foremost the rural labour legislation, social welfare programs, and the Land Statute of 1964, and their accompanying bureaucratic apparatuses. These linkages brought a new set of issues onto the political agenda, or kept old ones from falling off, and led to a significant infusion of resources in to rural areas.

Fragmented Party System

Brazil has a highly fragmented multi-party system that is poorly institutionalised and also offers little access to the poor. The dominant features of the party system are its "weakness, fragmentation and instability," and parties "lack of cohesion and representativeness and consequently the absence of linkage with society" (Kinzo 1993: 139; Mainwaring 1999: 4).²⁶ Democratisation appears only to have produced an unprecedented proliferation of new parties (Meneguello 1994: 152). The weakness of the party system is widely identified as one of the main contributing factors to the

²⁴ Until recently examples include the National Economic Development Bank (BNDES), the state mining company CVRD, and the Bank of Brazil.

²⁵ MIRAD was created in 1985, lasted only 4 years (1985-89), but nonetheless had several ministers. Its duties were incorporated into the anti-reform Ministry of Agriculture in 1989, only to be transferred a new *Ministério Extraordinária de Política Fundiária* in 1994. INCRA predated the transition to democracy but was dissolved in 1987, then resurrected in 1990s.

²⁶ The state has been a decisive force shaping the party system by (a) repeatedly modifying electoral rules and dissolving the party system altogether (in 1889, 1930, 1937, 1965, and 1979), and (b) concentrating most decision making power into the executive branch. The latter leaves parties with little role in policy making and turns them into conduits of state patronage.

generalised political crisis of the 1980s. Not only did it fail to serve as an institutional channel through which organised groups could influence policy, but also it failed to construct a political base for economic and social policy that would allow the state to act (Kinzo 1993: 139; Lamounier 1996: 178-181; Linz and Stepan 1996: 180).

As in the Philippines, the only programmatic parties in Brazil are found on the left. In contrast to the Philippines, however, the Workers' Party (PT), the most important of the left parties, never seriously considered taking up arms. It emerged during the transition a mass party with strong ties to the labour movement and urban and rural social movements and a strong commitment to grassroots party democracy (Keck 1992; Mainwaring 1999: 165-7). During the 1980s, however, the PT remained marginalized from the centres of power—it had no presence in the executive branch and only a small delegation in the national Congress. In the Constituent Assembly the PT had only 16 of 559 seats, and left parties as a block only 10 percent of the total seats (Meneguello 1994: 155-6).

Whether CONTAG would have worked closely with the PT had the party won a large body of elected representatives is difficult to know. CONTAG developed close ties to a number of political leaders but not stable ties to any one party. This reflected both the closed nature of the party system and the impact of corporatism on the union movement. Corporatist legislation sought to depolitize labour relations and to force an institutional separation between union and party activity. As a result of this union-party dichotomy, parties from the far left to the far right were represented within the movement and any efforts by the national leadership to establish close ties to a particular party would have divided the movement. In the 1990s, however, there have been numerous instances of such collaboration between CONTAG and the PT, though more enduring ties remain elusive.

Possibilities and Limits of a Pacted Transition

The democratic transition in Brazil occurred through a political pact, negotiated by the military, supporters of the authoritarian regime, and key opposition leaders. It left the basic structure of the state in tact. The Rural Workers Union Movement launched the National Campaign for Agrarian Reform in 1983 with the NGO Brazilian Association for Agrarian Reform (ABRA), progressive sectors of the Catholic Church, and other NGOs and civil organisations. The campaign was organised around the promises contained in the military's Land Statute of 1964 but never implemented. The movement joined a diffuse centre-left block that included among others the traditional left (including what was left of the Communist parties) and the progressive wing of the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB). CONTAG negotiated its support with the Democratic Alliance—the broad coalition that oversaw the transition and elected the first civilian president—in return for a national agrarian reform program and the consolidation of a form of liberalised state corporatism.

The campaign developed in two stages, according to the shifting locus of authority in the political system. In the first phase it concentrated much of its energy on

the executive branch. The coalition was amply rewarded for its support of the AD in 1985 and one of the first acts of the first civilian government in 21 years was to announce the National Program for Agrarian Reform. Leaders of the movement had actively participated in the program's formulation. The government also created a new Ministry of Agrarian Reform (MIRAD) and placed a pro-reform politician at its head. It also chose the former president of ABRA, a long time champion of agrarian reform, to lead INCRA. A number of people from the union movement, and people close to it, entered the government.

The conservative nature of the transition and the lack of support for agrarian reform in Congress, however, condemned the government's national agrarian reform plan. CONTAG sought to establish close ties with the state to push reform forward but pro-reform forces within the state, located primarily in Ministry of Agrarian Reform and INCRA, were isolated by conservatives (Silva 1985; Silva 1985b; Pereira 1992). Although the AD represented a broad coalition, the transition pact ensured the dominance of traditional political elites within the governing coalition. The first civilian president, Jose Sarney (1985-89), had been the president of the pro-military political party during the 1970s and the conservative party PFL would play a significant role in the government. Like Aquino, Sarney's commitment to reform was suspect—he is a large landowner and has supported the organising efforts of landowners and large rural enterprises. Furthermore, the military had ensured a significant role for itself within the government, occupying no less than six cabinet posts under Sarney, a weak president who, again like Aquino, leaned heavily on their support. Linz and Stepan [1996: 169] observe that “on a whole range of key policy issues [including agrarian reform], the civilian government, at best, shared sovereignty with the military.” In the Congress inherited from the military period perhaps as few as 40 parliamentarians supported agrarian reform. A surprisingly vigorous counter-mobilisation by landowners and representatives of rural enterprises ensured the issue would receive critical scrutiny in the legislative and the executive branches.

The actual land reform enacted in 1986 bore little resemblance to the plan divulged the year before and represented a significant step backward from the military's Land Statute. The new minister of Agrarian reform and new director of INCRA both resigned in protest. CONTAG criticised the government but nonetheless sought to work with state agencies to influence the implementation of the reforms. Implementation of even the limited reform envisioned by the government proceeded at a snail's pace, however.

The second phase of the campaign began when CONTAG shifted attention from the executive to the legislative branch. The change reflects both the failure of the executive to act and the hope of influencing the writing of the new constitution. The campaign was expanded to include new rural popular movements such as the emerging Movement of the Landless and rural new unionism of Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT). Members of the coalition lobbied the Constituent Assembly, worked closely with progressive legislators, and gathered 1,2 million signatures for a popular amendment proposing agrarian reform (popular amendments required 30,000 signatures to make it to the Assembly for consideration). Landowners in response submitted their own popular

amendment with 43,000 signatures (Medeiros 1989: 204–5; Silva 1989: 10; Novaes 1991:195).

Agrarian reform was among the most contested issue in the Constituent Assembly. The final document, however, was a staggering defeat for the pro-reform coalition. The decision to have the Congress elected in 1986 double as a Constituent Assembly assured the strong presence of conservative rural elites. In Brazil, small and predominantly rural states, those most dependent on federal aid, are over-represented in Congress. The ten most rural states (with over 50 percent of the population rural) account for 20 percent of the national electorate, but hold 25 percent of the lower house and 42 percent of the upper house; the three most urban states, with 34 percent of the electorate, hold 20 percent and 13 percent respectively (Grzybowski 1990: 23–24). The weak party system also worked to ensure the Assemblies conservative bias. Newspapers estimated that the 32 percent of the delegates were left and centre-left, 32 percent centre, and 36 percent centre-right (Silva 1989: 30). Furthermore, the largest party in the Assembly, the PMDB was a broad umbrella party that had both well-known defenders of reform and members who played important roles in the defeat of reform (Medeiros 1994: 48). Given the limited presence the pro-reform forces in Congress, they were surprisingly successful in mobilising a broad coalition of delegates around their proposals.

After the Campaign and Transition

During the second civilian government, that of Fernando Collor, action on agrarian reform came to a virtual standstill. Legislation needed to operationalize the 1988 Constitution's article on land reform was passed only in 1993, after Collor had been impeached and removed from office. By then significant changes had occurred in the executive and legislative branches that gave pro-reform groups considerably more access to the state. The new president was far more open to the demands of pro-reform groups and placed a reformer and strong ally of CONTAG at the head of the resurrected INCRA. In the legislature the Workers' Party, and the left in general, had become an important voting block (its representation rose to 36 in the House, while left parties as a group held 18 percent of the seats). In this context the Franco administration negotiated with the Workers' Party for support on a bill modernising ports, in exchange for the government's support for a stronger agrarian reform law. With the support of the government's Congressional base, the Agrarian Law of 1993 recovered a substantial degree of the ground lost under the 1988 Constitution. Franco further vetoed a number of articles conservatives had slipped in to the bill and to which pro-reform groups strongly objected.²⁷

Outcomes

The greatest impact of the campaign was sensitising public opinion and other political actors. When people were asked in 1987 what the 15 most important issues were facing the Constituent Assembly, agrarian reform came third, after free education

²⁷ Folha de São Paulo 27-6-92, 26-2-93; Estado de São Paulo 28-2-93.

and income distribution (Silva 1989).²⁸ Procedural gains, however, were minimal—CONTAG and CUT, and rural workers' union movement generally, had national stature independent of the campaign—while the substantive impact of the campaign was clearly limited. As in the case of the Philippines, it is likely that the 1988 Constitution would have been worse on agrarian reform had it not been for the campaign. Although the formal CNPRA ended in 1988, the history of collaboration between various peasant, church, and party organizations facilitated the joint efforts behind the passage of Agrarian Law of 1993, which did recover important lost ground. Nonetheless, José Gomes da Silva, one of Brazil's foremost experts on agrarian reform and former president of INCRA, calculates that under the military's Land Statute 284 million ha qualified for expropriation, while under the Agrarian Law the number fell to 115 million, slightly under 30 percent of all farm land in Brazil. Gomes da Silva does observe, however, that even this reduced number would allow for the settling of up to 5 million families (on 15 ha. plots) and eliminate Brazil's landless problem.

The total number of families settled by 1996 was 219,386 (on 8,856,960 ha of land), less than 16 percent of the 1.4 million goal set in 1985, and 7.6 percent of the land that could be expropriated according to the figures of Gomes da Silva. The pace of reform appears to have fluctuated with the level of political stability and state capacity. Under the first civilian government (1985-89), when the legal bases for reform were relatively favourable but state capacity was eroding and virtually all policy making was held hostage to a generalized political paralysis, an average of 23,014 families was settled on expropriated land. Under the disastrous Collor administration (1990-92), during which no agrarian reform law was in effect and state capacity was emasculated, reform came to a standstill and the number fell to 164. His vice-president (1993-94), with the new law in place and a reformist with strong ties to CONTAG at the head of INCRA, settled 18,205 families a year. In his first two years the Cardoso performed the best settling 33,670 families a year (Leite 1997: 159).

IV. Political Parties and the Women's Comedores Movement in Peru

The comedores movement in Peru represents an entirely different type of coalition from CPAR and CNPRA, yet its trajectory confirms the utility of the polity-centered framework. The movement of community-based kitchens, known as comedores, emerged in 1986 and is composed of various federations, including the Comision Nacional de Comedores (CNC). This section examines the trajectory of the movement in the 1986-1992 period, during which it was one of the most dynamic sectors of the Peruvian women's movement. During this period the comedores sought to move beyond their traditional survival strategies and make demands in the political system. The size of the movement was substantial: in 1991 there were 5,112 comedores in Lima alone providing subsidized meals, with 200,000 women participants (Blondet 1995, 150, Villanueva, 1994, 582).²⁹ The federations had critical support from the Catholic Church,

²⁸ In the 1990s the activities of the MST has helped keep the issue on the political front burner.

²⁹ In Lima alone community kitchens served close to one and-a-half million meals a day in 1991 (Barrig 1998: 106).

foreign donors, NGOs, and a number of government agencies and political parties. They won recognition as national actors and exercised a limited degree of substantive influence over social policy, including the enactment of new legislation. Along with other popular movements they also had a structural impact by building local-level solidarity among poor women.

The trajectory of the comedores national organizing efforts can be divided into two distinct periods. The first encompasses the Presidency of Alan García during the years 1985-1990, and the second that of Alberto Fujimori from 1990. In the first period national federations developed in response to electoral competition in the context of a highly polarized multi-party system, the availability of non-party allies such as the Catholic Church and NGOs, and new structural linkages binding state and society that resulted from an expansion of urban social programs. These new linkages developed at least in part because of the pressures of electoral competition placed on the ruling party, American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA). The low-level of institutionalization of the state and growing challenge to its authority from the Maoist guerrilla movement the Shining Path in the late 1980s, however, placed substantial limits on the federations' influence.

Access to decision-making centres decreased markedly after 1990. The party system virtually collapsed. Fujimori's auto-golpe in 1992 led to an extreme concentration of power in the executive branch, while state reforms under structural adjustment policies led to a significant reduction in state-society linkages. Although the state after 1992 was strengthened and counter-insurgency operations reduced the Shining Path threat, the guerrilla movement's urban operations severely undermined the political activities of the comedores. These changes in the political environment of the movement, along with a savage economic recession, forced the federations such as the CNC to refocus on more limited survival strategies.

Weak State, Strong Executive

The Peruvian state between 1985 and 1992 experienced a gradual process of de-institutionalization and erosion of authority. Peru inherited a far more coherent and effective state apparatus in the 1980 democratic transition than Philippine had in 1986. When García took office in 1985 the state had a middling to low level of institutionalization, but as was the case in Brazil and the Philippines, clientelist networks and patronage politics were pervasive. There was also a very high level of centralisation of power in the executive branch, which further weakened other sectors of the state and limited social groups' access to the state. Although the state's authority faced a growing challenge from the Shining Path in rural areas, particularly in the southern highlands, it was uncontested in urban areas.

The state did have extensive linkages to sectors of the urban poor. These included the Programa de Apoyo Directo (PAD), a program created in 1986 designed to provide shanty-towns with social services from primary health care to sports complexes, and to provide assistance to comedores (Graham 1992: 178). PAD provided comedores with

food donations, kitchen equipment, assistance with constructing buildings and credit (van Wesemael-Smit 1988: 28). Government-sponsored comedores were organised under the control and advice of the PAD, an agency administered from the Presidential Palace (Mujica 1994: 6; Montero 1995: 262).

The Peruvian state by the end of the 1980s had lost its monopoly over the use of violence and suffered significant de-institutionalization. Its authority was contested by the Shining Path in rural and urban areas, by the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, as well as by right-wing death squads, and civilian self-defense groups, all of which claimed legitimate use of violence (Sagasti 1994, 24). The growth of the Shining Path was made possible in part by the weakness of the state and the post-1986 rift between the government and the military, and in part by the severity of the economic crisis. More generally, the failure of the political system to address the deep economic, racial, ethnic and regional divisions within Peruvian society was a significant factor as well.

State capacity declined significantly as a result of the concentration of power in an executive branch that relied heavily on patronage, as well as a severe economic crisis. Wise [1997: 98] observes that state financial institutions were marginalized from the policy-making process, government abandoned “any pretense at national planning and relied heavily on “patronage and the meager expertise of those with close personal ties to the executive. Roberts [1998: 236-7] notes that with hyperinflation in 1988 “a series of adjustment programs produced the most violent economic contraction in national history...Per capita domestic product shrank by nearly 30 percent over the course of the 1980s, falling back to the level of 1960.” By 1990 per capita public spending had shrunk by 83 percent compared to 1975, not least because the tax base had shrunk inexorably (Wise 1997: 98).

The process of institutional decline was reversed in some degree under Fujimori. Fujimori strengthened the state while cutting it back. He fired thousands of state bureaucrats who allegedly owed their positions to party patronage in the 1980s; reformed the tax system and customs offices, and coopted the military high command (Wise 1997: 98; Obando 1998). Structural adjustment policies, however, led to a significant decline funding for social projects, weakening state-society linkages established during the 1980s. Furthermore, power became even more centralized in the executive branch and access to the state was very limited.

Party Competition and the Comedores Movement

In contrast to the Philippines and Brazil, Peru during the 1980s had a highly competitive and polarized multiparty system. The governing party APRA and the principal opposition party the United Left (IU) were among the few institutions with mass-based legitimacy. Both had strong ties to the women’s movement and many members of the movement were also active in party politics. Roberts [1998: 202] observes that “after the transition to democratic rule [in 1980] Peru boasted the strongest and most successful electoral left in South America for most of the 1980s.” The IU and APRA fought for the same urban constituencies and the votes of the urban ‘poor’ women

were particularly important (Radcliffe 1988). The competition for this constituency led APRA to initiate PAD after Garcia took office in 1985.

APRA and IU had different strategies vis-à-vis poor urban women. The IU sought to integrate itself with the social bases, to develop densely networked, self-governing, horizontally linked grassroots activist organisations (Roberts 1998: 226). It worked closely with the comedores autogestionares (self-managed community kitchens). APRA favoured a more paternalistic vertical approach. Unlike the IU, and NGOs working with comedores, APRA exercised considerable control over the comedores it sponsored. PAD provided funds but expected loyalty to the party in return. APRA party cadres acted as intermediaries between the comedores and the government and excluded other grassroots organisations from participating in PAD.

Ideological cleavages within the IU and APRA's declining popularity due to the widespread view that it was responsible for the economic and political crises which enveloped the country left the party system in disarray by 1990. The IU split in 1989. APRA in this context had both supporters of the armed revolutionaries of both the MRTA (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement) and the counter-revolutionary paramilitary death squads of the Comando Rodrigo Franco (Graham 1992). By the end of the 1980s, the two most highly institutionalised parties had been discredited. The Peruvian people, reeling under the weight of a severe economic crisis and disenchanted with established parties, all of whom were tainted by APRA's failings, voted in Fujimori under the banner *Cambio 90*—more a collection of individuals than a political party.

The process of economic informalisation played an important role in the collapse of the party system and in building Fujimori's support amongst the urban poor (Cameron 1997: 37). Peru's profound economic crisis at decade's end intensified the extent of informalisation among the poor, and fragmented and destabilised political and community identities. The loyalties and identities of the informal workers, unlike the unionised and non-unionised factory workers of the late seventies, were highly mobile. Informal workers were immersed in smaller socio-economic networks and tended to make individual assessments when voting (Roberts 1998: 237-243). Shifts in political identities in turn undermined both APRA and the IU parties.

CNC and Allies

In 1986, the same year President Garcia launched PAD, the comedores began to multiply their horizontal linkages. In fact, PAD provoked a concerted drive on the part of the movement to centralise its organisation in order to assert its autonomy from the state and enter the national political arena. One of the many consequences of new government program was that resources that would otherwise have been received by comedores autogestionares were diverted to PAD comedores (Barrig 1990: 379). Federations were formed first at the neighbourhood level, then at the district level, and finally at the metropolitan and national level. By 1989, there were 62 federations of comedores in Lima bringing together hundreds of smaller organisations (Barrig 1988: 107). Centralisation of the movement made negotiations for food supplies, kitchen equipment,

and health campaigns for children more successful. It also increased the availability of educational workshops which were “available in a myriad of subjects at the NGOs, through the central and local government, and in Catholic and other churches” (Barrig 1988: 107).³⁰ Supported by its allies, assisted by access to parties, and galvanised by APRA’s vertical approaches to the grassroots, the comedores, organised into federations, had become a political actor.

The highest level organisation was the CNC (National Commission of Comedores), formed in 1986. The CNC was set up at a conference held by the Episcopal Commission for Social Action (CEAS) where the central issue was autonomy vis-à-vis the state. The struggle for autonomy within comedores autogestionares occurred in relation to political parties, the middle-class institutions which support the comedores, neighbourhood organisations (primarily male dominated) and families (Barrig 1988: 107). The CNC influenced the “designing, planning and proposing national food policies and social programmes, and became the officially recognized representative of communal kitchens across the country” (Mujica 1994: 12). One of its central demands has been the inclusion of all ‘poor’ women—and not just those with connections to the ruling party—in welfare programmes.

NGOs and church organisations provided the comedores federations with training courses and advised on the 1988 policy proposals which sought food subsidies, the elimination of food imports and the organisation of agricultural production in the river valleys near Lima (Barrig 1990: 379). Members of the feminist wing of the women’s movement increased their collaboration with the popular wing in 1986. Drawing partly on funds from overseas NGOs, they sought to educate members of the popular wing about women’s rights. However, such efforts at coordination between the two wings of the movement stopped short of formulating a clear agenda to negotiate fully with national political actors (Blondet 1995: 265).

In 1989, the CNC and its Congressional allies, the IU in particular, proposed new legislation that called on the state to grant comedores legal status as “social base groups” and create a fund to support them. The proposal became law in 1991 when Congress passed Law 25307, which obliged the state to cover the expense of 65% of the food distributed by the comedores, to institutionalize comedores access to the state through new Management Committees made up largely of representatives of the social base organizations, and to create the Programa de Apoyo a la Labor Alimentaria de Las Organizaciones Sociales de Base (Cendoc 1997?; Barrig 1998: 108). The law passed with broad support in Congress.

The Fujimori government, however, concentrated on carrying out structural adjustment policies and stalled implementation of Law 25307. The ability of the CNC and other federations to influence policy implementation was very limited. One the one hand they faced a very low level of access to the state, as a result of the extreme centralization of power in the executive branch, semi-democratic character of the regime,

³⁰ The kitchens administered food donations from state agencies, church organizations, or international donors.

and collapse of the party system. On the other hand, the high-levels of political violence and severe economic conditions forced put a halt to many of the comedores' political initiatives as they faced an "unprecedented demobilisation" (Tanaka 1998).

From 1990 on the Shining Path expanded into urban areas, seeking to neutralise the self-managed organisations of the shantytowns which they viewed as a major obstacle to their objectives. The guerilla movement was able to make substantial inroads into the comedores movement (Obando 1998: 389-394). Dozens of leaders such as the IU militant and women's movement leader Maria Elena Moyano were assassinated. The number of comedores themselves continued to rise to counteract the food price increases and wage cuts brought about by structural adjustment, the removal of subsidies, and falling wages.

Outcomes

The influence of the comedores movement, as in the case of CPAR, has perhaps been strongest at the procedural and sensitizing levels. The government and other political actors recognised the comedores movement as a national actor in the late 1980s. This recognition was put on legal footing in 1991 and access to state funds was institutionalized, although the levels of funding in practice fell. The movements sensitizing influence was important—the role of poor women in social reproduction was brought into the public domain. Women who were subordinated economically, socially, politically and on the grounds of their gender, gained access to public fora, where they could, and did, articulated demands and question the status quo.

Aside from influencing policy making, the comedores had a significant impact on local power relations in the shantytowns, and by extension structural influence on the political system. They "brought about changes in the private sphere by increasing the negotiating power and authority of women within their families, and contributed significantly to building solidarity among women. The networks of community kitchens provided opportunities to forge relationships with other women or, for some, to find an independent source of income. These networks represented a particular form of 'social capital' that enhanced poor women's value as an electoral constituency. Had the Peruvian political system been fully democratic polity, with an well-institutionalized and ideologically diverse multiparty system, this would have given the comedores significant leverage vis-à-vis the legislative and executive branches to force implementation of social policy targeting the poor.

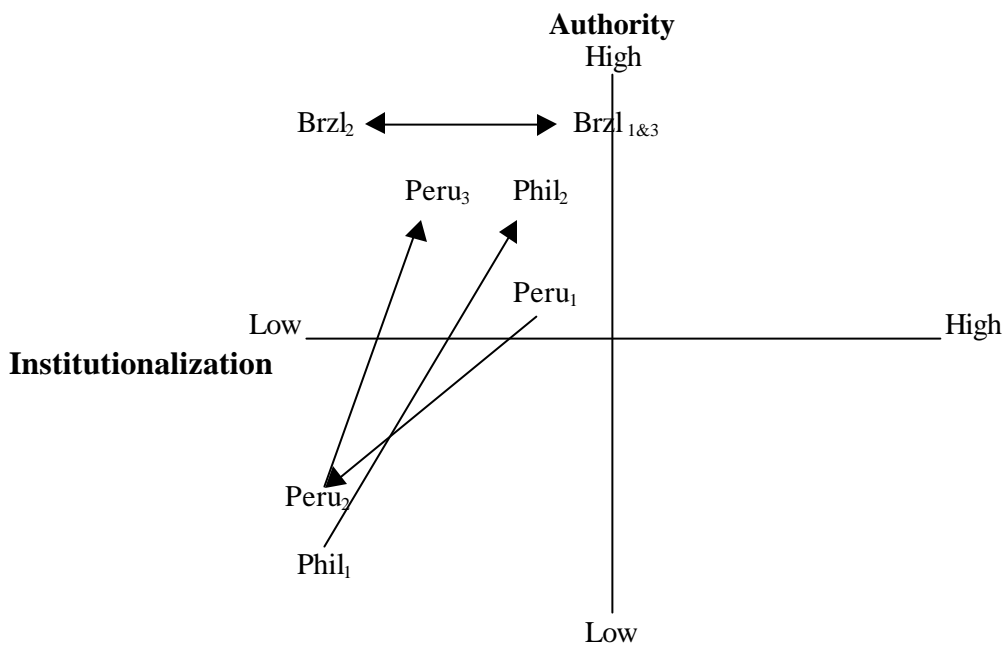
V. Conclusion

Power is relational and ability of organizations of the poor to form national level coalitions and influence public policy is in large measure contingent on the array of other actors in the political system, and on the institutions that mediate the relations between them. International donors can enhance the leverage of organizations of the poor in the

political system not only by strengthening organizations directly, but also by creating a more favorable political-institutional environment.

The findings of this paper suggest that within democratic polities, strengthening state authority, including the ability to maintain the rule of law, and increasing the levels of institutionalization, can in fact help ‘empower’ organizations of the poor. Figure 1 below offers a very rough depiction of how the three cases scored on the authority and institutionalization variables over time. From the preceding analysis we find that organizations of the poor have fared best when state authority and institutionalization were relatively high (Phil₂, Brazil_{1&3}, and Peru₁). A striking feature of Figure 1 is the significant level of change in these two variables for all three cases over relatively short periods of time. Further research might find that this level of institutional instability is a major obstacle to the efforts of organizations of the poor to exercise influence.

Figure 1



The cases also reveal the importance of structural linkages binding state and society. These linkages in all three cases served as an important axis of mobilization and coalition building. Structural linkages play this catalyst role because they bring issues into the political arena, hence legitimate and facilitate political mobilization, demand making, and coalition building around these issues. The Philippine peasant federations forged a broad coalition around an important state-society linkage, Marcos’ agrarian reform legislation and institutions. In Brazil, the CNPR was organized around the military’s Land Statute of 1964 and greatly facilitated by existing corporatist institutions. The comedores movement in the Peru built a series of federations, including the CNC at the national level, around the new government social program PAD.

Cutting back the role of the state and privatizing public services moves issues off the political agenda and into the market place. There may be significant efficiency gains in pursuing such a strategy, but it may also contribute to the 'disempowerment' of the poor, since the leverage of organizations of the poor in the market place is severely limited. It is likely, though subject to further research, that reducing the role of the state in favor of the market, and therefore reducing structural state-society linkages, can have important consequences for the ability of organizations of the poor to participate in national-level policy making processes.

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