

An Empty Zócalo:

Democratization's Effect on Mobilization for Zapatismo

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Since the Zapatistas emerged on the national scene on January 1, 1994, they have been dependent on civil society's support to implement an agenda based on democracy and indigenous rights and to protect them from the Mexican military. Without massive mobilization from civil society, the Zapatista Movement has no influence in Mexican politics. Over the course of the movement, there have been periods in which this mobilization has been very high and effective and others in which it has been minimal to nonexistent. This paper seeks to find a variable that has consistently driven these changes in mobilization throughout the movement. The paper argues that Mexican civil society's changing perceptions of democracy between 1994 and 2006 is the independent variable driving mobilization. This is shown by tracing the fluctuations in both satisfaction with democracy in Mexico and fluctuations in mobilization.

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1.0 Introduction:

Al pueblo de México: Por último, hacemos un llamado a obreros, campesinos pobres, maestros, estudiantes, intelectuales progresistas y honestos, amas de casa y profesionistas, y a todas las organizaciones políticas y económicas independientes para que se unan a nuestra lucha en su medio y en todas las formas posibles hasta lograr la justicia y la libertad que todos los mexicanos anhelamos.¹

CCRI-CG del EZLN, Firma del Subcomandante Marcos, 06-01-1994

On January 12, 1994, the Mexican government announced a ceasefire that would end twelve days of violent conflict with the Ejército Zapatista de la Liberación Nacional (EZLN). Strictly considering the overwhelming military advantage of the Mexican government, there was no reason for military withdrawal. On January 1, 1994, the rebel group had seized four municipalities throughout the state armed with a various array of shotguns, revolvers, AK-47s, and wooden guns painted black. Meanwhile, by the time of the ceasefire, the Mexican government had successfully located the Zapatista training camps and base communities, dispatched 15,000 heavily armed troops, P-7 bomber aircraft, and armored vehicles into Chiapas.²

It was the massive outcry from civil society that defeated the Mexican military. On January 12, Mexicans from all over the country swarmed the capital in the “March for Peace in Chiapas,” donated food and clothes to the rebels, and went on strike to demand that the

¹ *EZLN Documentos y comunicados: 1 de enero / 8 de agosto de 1994* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1994)

² Ross, John. *War Against Oblivion: Zapatista Chronicles 1994-2000* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2000), Ch. 1

government stop the massacre. Undoubtedly, it was this civil defense rather than the violent uprising that brought the government to the negotiating table.³

By 2008, however, Mexican civil society no longer mobilizes for the Zapatista struggle even though the state violence continues in the indigenous communities. In December 2007, La Jornada reported that “since September, there had been a marked increase of violence: shots in the air, brutal beatings, Zapatista families reporting threats of death, rape, and dismemberment [in Zapatista communities],” by Mexican soldiers or groups associated with the Mexican government.⁴ Photographs show child refugees hiding in the mountains to escape the violence.⁵ As recently as October 2008, the attack on nine-year old Carmelino Navarro Jiménez in Zapatista territory by armed men linked to the government elicited little interest or reaction. Only Amnesty International came to the community’s defense.⁶ Despite these reports of violence, Mexican civil society has not made any effort to demand peace from their government.

The juxtaposition above illustrates that the civil society that was once an active participant in implementing and protecting Zapatismo now seems disconnected from the constant struggle between the EZLN and the Mexican government. Public opinion is still very supportive of the Zapatistas, but the nature of the support seems to have become politically ineffective. Ultimately though, the EZLN, originally a group that inspired effective action throughout Mexico, no longer maintains its capacity to mobilize the masses in a politically productive way. Because high support has been so vital to the movement’s success, it is important to see why that support has vanished. Scholars of Zapatismo emphasize the importance of civil society’s support

³ Chris Gilbreth and Gerardo Otero, "Democratization in Mexico: The Zapatista Uprising and Civil Society," *Latin American Perspectives* vol. 28 no. 4, 2001: 7-29

⁴ Klein, Naomi. "Alerta roja zaptista." La Jornada, 24 December 2007.

⁵ Photograph by Camacho, Víctor. La Jornada, 20 January 2008.

⁶ Bellinghausen, Hermann. "Teme Al nuevos ataques contra zapatistas ante la falta de vigilancia de autoridades." La Jornada, 30 October 2008.

for the Zapatista movement.⁷ Some sources even say that civil society's mobilization on behalf of Zapatismo was an important exercise in democracy that enabled the democratic processes in Mexico to improve.⁸ However, there is no research that identifies how that support has changed or that traces the fluctuations of civil society's support over time. This paper attempts to provide an explanation of why that occurred, particularly in the context of democratization in Mexico. In the end, this paper seeks to show that democratization can lead to a decrease mobilization for social movements.

It seems clear that the relationship did not sink steadily from very supportive to essentially absent. Instead, there are periods of high and low mobilization throughout the movement. This can be seen in literature on Zapatismo as various scholars present four distinct versions of the relationship with Mexican civil society. Each interpretation is based on a distinct period of the movement's history, and taken together they would appear incoherent. The genuine nature of the relationship between the Zapatistas and Mexican civil society reveals itself by studying how the movement changed over time through the comparison of the distinct contexts from which these interpretations are drawn. Below, I describe four authors who represent these four periods.

First, there are authors such as Clifford Bob who, in Marketing of Rebellion, argue that the Zapatistas have mobilized civil society more successfully than any other modern social movement. Bob notes the wealth of funding and NGO support that the movement has attracted, and attributes this success to the Zapatista's effective and flexible marketing strategies which

⁸ Chris Gilbreth and Gerardo Otero, "Democratization in Mexico: The Zapatista Uprising and Civil Society," *Latin American Perspectives* vol. 28 no. 4, 2001: 7-29

have allowed them to reach various audiences in civil society within Mexico and abroad.⁹ It is important to note that while many authors might argue that mobilization has not been high throughout the entire movement, no one would argue with Bob that the mobilization was extremely successful at the start of the movement.

Other scholars suggest that the main peak of mobilization occurred in late 1997. One such scholar is Heidi Moksnes who studied the relationship with civil society from the perspective of an indigenous community, San Pedro Chenalhó, in her book Mayan Suffering, Mayan Rights.¹⁰ According to Moksnes, the indigenous group had been at odds with civil society since the PRI began to develop its patron-client relationship with the poor communities in a relationship which left the communities were essentially powerless when they were independent of mestizo Mexicans. The Pedranos (the members of the San Pedro community) were not part of the larger civil society, but they were ruled by its leaders, divided by its politics, and weakened by its economic policies. The relationship remained largely unchanged until December 1997 when the massacre in the region attracted supporters and ideological tourists from all of Mexico and the international solidarity community. At this point, the indigenous movement was able to effectively mobilize civil society.¹¹

Other authors argue that the Zapatista movement has failed to provide the revolution that civil society needs, and thus civil society has not supported the Zapatistas effectively. Mihalis Mentinis exemplifies this interpretation in Zapatistas: The Chiapas Revolt and What It Means for Radical Politics. He points out that while civil society has mobilized, the Zapatista March in

⁹ Bob, Clifford. *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ The book does not focus on the Zapatista movement. However, the Tzotzil community is part of a larger language group that makes up one of the strongest bases for the movement, and eventually one faction within the community (Las Abejas) become closely associated with the Zapatistas.

¹¹ Moksnes, Heidi. *Mayan Suffering, Mayan Rights*. (Gottborg: Gottborg University, 2003).

2001 shows that the mobilizations are not revolutionary in character. Mentinis argues that the Zapatistas and civil society have not created a revolutionary situation because the movement did not create a void in the institutional structures or provide sufficient autonomy of thought to break with the existing institutions. As a result of these deficiencies in Zapatismo, civil society has failed to create the revolution that the Zapatistas want.¹²

Texts that describe the relationship after 2001 suggest that civil society is effectively distanced from the Zapatistas as the indigenous communities develop their *de facto* autonomy. Duncan Earle and Jeanne Simonelli illustrate such a relationship in Uprising of Hope: Sharing the Zapatista Journey to Alternative Development. The authors conducted anthropological fieldwork in the Rio Chayote valley via solidarity organizations that provide financial and political assistance to the Zapatistas. Through this experience, they realized how distant civil society was from the reality of the movement. There have been some efforts to help the Zapatista movement such as plans for building projects and donation drives, but the projects are not appropriate for the communities. For instance, Marcos points out that civil society donated a pile of broken computers and one pink stiletto. While organizations exist to help the indigenous communities, they do not understand how to do so and make little effort to change their structures to respond to advancements in the movement.¹³

In summary, it seems that mobilization began very high at the beginning, was minimal until 1997, then weaker, and then plummeted in the last period. This paper, then, seeks to understand the patterns of mobilization between 1994 and 2008 and in doing so will explain

¹² Mentinis, Mihalis. *Zapatistas: The Chiapas Revolt and What it Means for Radical Politics* (Pluto Press, 2006).

¹³ Earle, Duncan and Jeanne Simonelli, *Uprising of Hope: Sharing the Zapatista Journey to Alternative Development* (Altmira Press, 2005).

what was driving the patterns to change between these periods. This understanding is not only important for the Zapatista movement but also for mobilization for social movements more generally. Indeed, this movement is a noteworthy case because the movement erupts and grows while Mexico undergoes a significant process of democratization (arguably culminating in the election of Vincente Fox in 2000). Though this paper focuses on Zapatismo, the overall question asks: what drives mass mobilization for social movements? More specifically, what drives mobilization for social movements in countries undergoing democratization?

1.1 Mobilization for Social Movements

First, it might be the case that these periods of mobilization parallel the collective action patterns of other social movements. Sidney Tarrow, arguably the most influential scholar of social movements, asserts that, “contentious collective action is the basis of social movements... because it is the main and often the only resource that most people possess against better-equipped opponents.”¹⁴ As a result, it has been studied extensively, and social movement research might provide an explanation of changing patterns of mobilization. Unfortunately, most research on social movements explains the capacity for collective action as a phenomenon that occurs once in a movement’s history. Most scholarly attention explains whether or not a movement as a whole is able to garner effective mobilization. However, in regards to Zapatismo, no one would question that - at some points - mobilization has been very high, so the question is not whether or not the movement is capable of rendering high collective action.

This limits any discussion of general social movement explanations to the research on phases of mobilization, and this research is not common. Joseph Perry and M.D. Pugh describe

¹⁴ Tarrow, Sidney. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

two of the more popular models depicting civil society's role in social movements. The first, a model developed by Rex D. Hopper in 1950, is a four step process that describes a slow development and a fast decline. The process begins with unorganized civil unrest over an issue from which a leader emerges. Next, the restless individuals come to an awareness of the group they create and unify over the issue. In the third stage, the issue is disputed, and violence or organized conflict often erupts. As the issue is institutionalized as a legal issue, the social movement dies off. One of the most influential scholars to map the stages of social movements is Armand Mauss who published his five step model in 1975. First, in the *incipiency* stage, there is unorganized public concern about an issue, and society is generally threatened by that concern. In the *coalescence* stage, society represses the issue. Next, in the *institutional* stage, the movement is at its highest peak. It is organized with large membership, abundant resources, and political power. *Fragmentation* occurs as the supporters of the movement begin to accept the victories they have earned and the process becomes a matter of bureaucracy. Finally, the supporters drop the issue as victory or surrender in the *demise*.¹⁵

These models of civil society's mobilization for social movements do not correspond with the pattern of mobilization for Zapatismo though. The literature on the Zapatista movement and the research that will follow in this paper show that mobilization for the Zapatista movement began very high, then decreased, then increased again, and then decreased. The models, however, indicate that social movements will demonstrate a pattern of one major peak of mobilization before dying off. Again, considering the scarcity of research that analyzes social movements in phases at all, it seems that this research does not adequately explain mobilization for the Zapatista movement. Particularly, there does not appear to be any research on patterns of

¹⁵ Perry Jr., Joseph B. and M.D. Pugh. *Collective Behavior: Response to Social Stress* (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1978).

mobilization for social movements in Latin America. It would seem that Mexico's unique political history would yield distinct patterns of mobilization, but there is no research yet that analyzes the country's responses to social movements.

There are also some less developed hypotheses that explain the decline of mobilization for social movements, but they also describe situations in which there is one peak of mobilization followed by a decline. Sidney Tarrow, for instance, identifies politicization as an explanation of decline. Institutionalization of social movement tactics could take away the excitement of collective action. This would occur as the government and police become more capable of dealing with the movement, and it would result in the ultimate politicization of the social movement. This institutionalization robs civil society of the energizing feeling of efficacy that comes with collective mobilization and of the excitement of risks involved.¹⁶ This would be an interesting approach to studying Zapatismo because politicization has played an important role in the EZLN's strategies with civil society and the government, but does not immediately present an explanation of why mobilization increases and decreases throughout the decade.

However, the Zapatista movement is not a quintessential example of classic social movements. Many scholars describe it as a new type of global social movement instead. These types of movements do not only oppose local issues, but they confront institutions that affect several states without the control of one or a couple of national governments.¹⁷ The Zapatista movement fits into this category because it opposes three international issues: neoliberalism as a doctrine, indigenous oppression, and irresponsible democracy. It is important to note that this

¹⁶ Tarrow, Sidney. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁷ O'Brien, Robert, Anne Marie Goetz, Jan Aart Scholte, and Marc Williams. *Contesting Global Governance: Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

paper strictly traces Mexican civil society because Zapatismo began as a movement to benefit Mexico. It is largely debatable as to whether Mexican economics, indigenous rights, or democracy was the priority, but it is clear from interviews with Marcos and from Zapatista rhetoric at the beginning of the movement that an international social movement was not an initial objective. Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow reconcile this tension between domestic and international foci by describing the movement as a local movement that clings to issues which related movements throughout the world could interpret and diffuse to create international solidarity.¹⁸ Thus, the global nature of Zapatismo and the existence of the international solidarity movement could make the Zapatista movement distinct from other more heavily studied social movements and could provide an explanation for unique phases of collective action. In his historical narrative of the movement, John Ross hints at such an explanation by suggesting that inherent xenophobia in Mexico makes civil society less willing to mobilize when there is a strong international presence in the movement.¹⁹ Thus, it could be the case that mobilization within Mexico would decrease and mobilization of the international solidarity movement increased.

One author has carefully tracked the progress of the international solidarity movement for the Zapatistas, and, according to his analysis, its peaks and nadirs do not correspond with those of Mexican civil society. Thomas Olesen summarizes the international solidarity movement as beginning slowly between 1994 and February 1995 as international groups developed a structure and organization to incorporate the initial rebellion. After February 1995, international groups began to gain momentum as they traced human rights abuses in Chiapas, and the zenith of

¹⁸ McAdam, Doug and Sidney Tarrow. "Scale Shift in Transnational Contention," in Della Porta, Donatella and Sidney Tarrow (eds). *Transnational Protest and Global Activism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2005).

¹⁹ Ross, John. *War Against Oblivion: Zapatista Chronicles 1994-2000* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2000).

international attention came in December 1997 when the human rights abuses were the most blatant and widely publicized. From 1999 to the present, the international organizations have been less involved.²⁰ Once again, this does not correspond with stages of mobilization in the Zapatista movement, so it would seem that a relationship with the international solidarity movement does not primarily drive mobilization within Mexico.

1.2 Democratization and Social Movements:

Outside of research on classic social movements and global social movements, scholars have suggested vague connections between democratization and rises and falls of mobilization for social movements. This connection seems immediately compelling with regards to Zapatismo because the period between 1994 and 2008 is a pivotal period for democratization in Mexico, and it seems reasonable that these political changes would affect collective action for the movement. Some authors have identified that Mexicans draw a connection between social demands and demands for democracy. In *The Illusion of Civil Society: Democratization and Community Mobilization in Low-Income Mexico*, Jon Shefner describes the Union of Independent Settlers (the UCI - a group much smaller than the Zapatistas) to illustrate the connection between mobilization and democracy. Supporters of this group, like the supporters for Zapatismo, mobilize with simultaneous demands for improvements in material living conditions and democratic conditions.²¹ Specific to Zapatismo, Jeff Haynes describes the Zapatistas as one of many examples of an “action group,” a group that emerges from strenuous economic conditions and attempts to change these conditions by demanding democracy. Such

²⁰ Olesen, Thomas. “Long Distance Zapatismo: Globalization and the Construction of Solidarity.” Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark, 2002.

²¹ Shefner, Jon. *The Illusion of Civil Society: Democratization and Community Mobilization in Low-Income Mexico*. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

groups develop as a direct result of increased democratization within a country because it becomes clear that the groups do not benefit politically or economically even while the political system opens up. Haynes uses the Zapatistas as an example that shows how these types of groups could lead to democratization. They simultaneously demand indigenous rights and democracy for Mexico as a whole because they see the poor conditions in indigenous communities as evidence for a lack of democracy, and this puts democratic standards on the national platform.²² Overall, it is accepted that civil society is prone to mobilize for social movements demanding democracy, but the relationship between mobilization and democracy is very vague. In this project, I argue that the relationship is not some ambiguous connection, but rather a causal relationship in which satisfaction with democracy drives mobilization.

In general, causal relationships between the collective action of social movements and democratization follow in a reverse order than the one proposed above. It is commonly argued that the organization and collective action of minority groups can have a democratizing effect on the state. Kenneth Roberts, a political scientist, supports this hypothesis by arguing that the increased organization of minority interests into leftist parties and social movements works to deepen democracy as indicated by the relationship between government and citizens. He agrees that collective action is the primary and most effective tool of the Left and argues that failure to coordinate collective action results in a failure to effectively involve a plurality of interests in the political process. In his explanations of what causes failed collective action, he discusses a lack of coordination and horizontal linkages, locality of interests, and the difficulty in articulating

²² Haynes, Jeff. *Democracy and Civil Society in the Third World: Politics & New Political Movements*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).

effective demands.²³ It is also common to find arguments in which collective action results from increased democratization. For instance, Tarrow shows that periods of democracy building generally lead to an increase in collective action as citizens find their roles in civil society. Democratic institutions create opportunities for citizens to form groups and communicate group interests which then had some degree of political efficacy.²⁴

1.3 Hypothesis and Methodology:

In summary, mobilization for Zapatismo has changed drastically between the initial period of the movement and today, and it seems that the mobilization has risen and fallen in periods throughout the movement's history. These phases of mobilization are not explained in research that follows mobilization patterns for other typical social movements or global social movements. Further, there is an identifiable connection between social movement demands and democratization, but this relationship is oftentimes ambiguous.

In this paper, I argue that Mexicans are more likely to mobilize in support of Zapatismo when they are less satisfied with the way democracy functions in their country. That is not to say that low satisfaction automatically sends Mexicans to the Zócalo to fight for Zapatismo, but rather that dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy renders civil society more prone to see the benefits of an opposition group that criticizes the democratic processes. Public mobilization does not respond to the Zapatista agenda. Rather, the Zapatista agenda has changed throughout the span of the movement, and the waves of public support have not coalesced in favor of any particular agenda.

²³ Roberts, Kenneth. *Deepening Democracy? The Modern Left and Social Movements in Chile and Peru* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

²⁴ Tarrow, Sidney. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

The dependent variable is the mobilization of Mexican civil society. In this paper, high mobilization is associated with high involvement of civil society, or civil society taking an active role in supporting Zapatismo. Of course, when civil society does not take the minimum initiative of getting together in reasonably high numbers, then mobilization is clearly very low. However, rallying in high numbers is not a sufficient condition of mobilization because it does not fully indicate civil society's willingness to support the movement. I base mobilization on how active a role civil society plays in the event. I determine the level of activity by specifically looking for evidence in one of two ways. One, civil society must make concrete demands to the Mexican government, or two, they must play an active role in setting the Zapatista agenda.

I use mainstream-left Mexican newspapers, Proceso and La Jornada, to find evidence of changes in the dependent variable. These periodicals publish messages from civil organizations calling Mexicans to rally in support of the Zapatistas for particularly important events, and there are articles about nearly every Zapatista event. The EZLN repeatedly used these two periodicals to contact their social base with communiqués, and these publications have published several interviews with Subcomandante Marcos. These two sources are considered leftist or left-center among the Mexican press, and they represent the media and audience that is most favorable of the Zapatistas.²⁵ Negative press or missing coverage of the Zapatistas from these sources shows that even the left-leaning sector of civil society is dissatisfied or not paying attention to the movement. It is true that these publications do not represent the most right or left wings of civil society, but these sectors are either completely against or unabashedly supportive of the movement. For this paper in which I study the fluctuations of mobilization, it is more important to focus on a group who supports the movement but whose support has wavered throughout its

²⁵ Lawson, Chappell. *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of the Free Press in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

history. There of, of course, drawbacks to using these sources exclusively. It leaves a degree of uncertainty about civil society as a whole. The perception of democracy in Mexico is examined with random samples that determine the overall opinion of the country, but the examination of mobilization is limited to left and center left. Moreover, there are drawbacks in using mainstream press exclusively because these sources do not provide specificity about specific organizations or groups who mobilize. Further research might yield different or more specific conclusions if it included a broader spectrum of newspapers or if it focused on identifying a particular group or organization and then at the same time targeted that group's individual perception of democracy.

The independent variable is Mexican civil society's perception of democracy. Further study might determine the actual level of democracy in Mexico, how Mexicans judge democracy in their country, or why the perception of democracy changes. This paper is strictly concerned with how the level of satisfaction with democracy impacts mobilization for Zapatismo. I use surveys from 1993 to 2005 to measure the independent variable. The ideal survey asks: "Are you satisfied, unsatisfied, or partially satisfied with the way democracy functions in Mexico?" For more data, I use other questions that indicate what citizens think of the democracy in Mexico. Latinobarómetro is the source with data for most of the years relevant to this project, but I am reluctant to draw conclusions exclusively from this source. For one, the months in which the surveys are distributed are not specified, so I am uncertain that the data coincides with perceptions of democracy at the time of the mobilizations. Also, there is a general reluctance within academia to trust the sampling in Latinobarómetro. Thus, I use a variety of sources which include the Office of the President of Mexico, the Cabinet of Public Opinion, and Latinobarómetro.

With press coverage of mobilization and survey data of public opinion, I show that as satisfaction with democracy goes up, mobilization for Zapatismo goes down. I use the press in a different way to further suggest a causal relationship. I show that moments of high mobilization are always associated with discussions of democracy in Mexico. When civil society makes demands or plays an active role in Zapatista agenda-setting, they explain their actions by complaining of the undemocratic nature of the Mexican government and identifying the Zapatistas as a movement for democracy. However, this discussion of democracy is lacking in moments of low mobilization.

I construct two indicators based on public responses through the press, namely: reactions to violence and conventions. This approach allows me to compare similarities and find patterns between seemingly unrelated events. A convention is an event in which the EZLN calls upon civil society to discuss a particular agenda. The mobilization in conventions is determined by how large a role civil society plays in planning or implementing the agenda. In examining responses to violence, high mobilization is defined by demands for government change. Military violence is a clear instance of the Mexican government acting undemocratically. When civil society mobilizes as a result of such violence, it is an opportunity to demand genuine peace and democracy from the government. There are also a couple of events that involve high interaction between the Zapatistas and civil society but do not identify with either of these indicators, and I discuss these events on an individual basis.

I organize the data and events into four time phases that divide the twelve year period of analysis generally along the lines that they appear in the literature on Zapatismo as I described earlier. The first three phases are two years each and the final phase lasts six years. Phase one is the introduction of the movement, phase two is the main negotiating period, and phase three

involves bringing the movement back into the public's attention. Phase four is the longest phase because the Zapatistas are mainly concerned with building their autonomous communities, and there is little interaction with civil society.

The following sections are organized to show the causal relationship between satisfaction with democracy and mobilization in support of Zaptatismo. First, for each phase I describe how satisfied Mexican civil society is with democracy during the relevant years. Then, each phase is examined with regard to the indicators, and I explain the level of mobilization based on these indicators. Finally, I show how the causal relationship reveals itself in the press by identifying the discussion or lack of discussion concerning democracy that motivates civil society.

2.0 Phase One: 1994-1996

According to polling data from the first phase (late 1993-1995), it is clear that Mexicans had low expectations for democracy and were generally unsatisfied with their government. In November 1993, only 38.5% of Mexicans said that they thought their government was democratic. Meanwhile, just as many (38%) thought that the government was a disguised authoritarian regime.²⁶ Nearly a year after the 1994 elections, a poll by the Cabinet of Opinion (a poll from the Mexican government) found 65% of Mexicans to be unsatisfied with the way democracy worked.²⁷ Similarly, 69% described the political situation as bad while only 3.8% said it was good.²⁸ The poll found that a little over half of Mexicans (51%) actually thought that politics had changed for the worse within the year.²⁹ Only 31% believed the country to be democratic, as opposed to 43.4% who considered it to be authoritarian.³⁰ This poll also asked Mexicans about the level of democracy or authoritarianism within specific parties or groups, and it included the EZLN as one of these groups. Interestingly, a higher percentage of people thought that the EZLN was overall more democratic than the PRI (47.2% and 45.1% respectively).³¹ Not much changes as phase one comes to an end. The Cabinet of Opinion found that in November 1995, 62% of Mexicans were still unsatisfied with the level of democracy.³²

²⁶ Oficina de la presidencia de la república Mexicana. *Elecciones 94 / Noviembre 93* (Mexico D.F.: BIIACS, 1993) <<http://hdl.handle.net/10089/389>>. p 13

²⁷ Gabinete de Opinión. *Fourth National Public Opinion Survey in Mexico, July 1995* (Mexico: Roper Center, 1995), 25.

²⁸ Gabinete de Opinión. *Fourth National Public Opinion Survey in Mexico, July 1995* (Mexico: Roper Center, 1995), 30 B.

²⁹ Gabinete de Opinión. *Fourth National Public Opinion Survey in Mexico, July 1995* (Mexico: Roper Center, 1995), 31 B.

³⁰ Gabinete de Opinión. *Fourth National Public Opinion Survey in Mexico, July 1995* (Mexico: Roper Center, 1995), 35 B.

³¹ Gabinete de Opinión. *Fourth National Public Opinion Survey in Mexico, July 1995* (Mexico: Roper Center, 1995), 78 B and D.

³² Gabinete de Opinión. *Sixth National Public Opinion Survey in Mexico, November 1995* (Mexico: Roper Center, 1995), 10.

2.1 Violence:

Phase one contains two instances in which Mexican civil society mobilized to defend the Zapatistas from military violence. The first took place in January 1994 as the Zapatistas entered onto the national stage as a belligerent group, and the second occurred in February 1995 during the negotiations between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government representatives at San Andrés.

First, it is important to see the extent to which civil society mobilized. In January 1994, the masses of peaceful protesters are described as an army of students, civil and political organizations, labor unions, and individual citizens who demanded peace from the government.³³ Without considering the thousands who marched and protested in various cities throughout the country, it is difficult enough to estimate how many people marched through Mexico City; some sources say as few as 50,000 and others as many as 100,000.³⁴ Photos show throngs of people holding banners, throwing their fists in the air, taking every inch of space in the streets.³⁵ The Mexican government called the ceasefire to satisfy these crowds and give them a feeling of peace.³⁶ As is suggested in the introduction of this paper, the end of the violence and the commencement of negotiations resulted from this particularly strong instance of civil mobilization. Particularly, it was the march in Mexico City that forced, “a reasonable, just, and peaceful exit from the situation in Chiapas.”³⁷

³³ “Rumbo a una solución pacífica.” *La Jornada*, 13 January 1994.

³⁴ Ballinas, Víctor and Alonso Urritia. “Un ‘alto a la masacre’ encabezó la marcha por la paz en Chiapas.” *La Jornada*, 13 January 2004.

³⁵ Photos by Frida Hartz and Enrique Cortia. *La Jornada*, 13 January 1994.

³⁶ Gallegos, Elena, Juan Antonio Zúñiga and Emilio Lomas. “Ordena Salinas de Gortari cese al fuego unilateral en Chiapas.” *La Jornada*, 13 January 1994.

³⁷ “Rumbo a una solución pacífica.” *La Jornada*, 13 January 1994.

Similarly, after the offensive in early 1995, the press saw civil society's mobilization as the only way to end the violence. A column in La Jornada asserted that "everything depends on the capacity of civil society to keep the country out of a path of extraordinary violence."³⁸ Crowds engulfed the streets again in Mexico City, Nuevo León, Querétaro, and Jalisco.³⁹ Photographs showed heavily armored military vehicles winding down empty roads while the crowds squeeze tightly into the Zócalo.⁴⁰ In Mexico City alone, tens of thousands of people "of all ages and social conditions covered the Zócalo with the slogan to stop the war in the southwest and to give fresh breath to the beaten-down truce," proclaiming, "*todos somos Marcos!*"⁴¹

Furthermore, these masses of people were not in the streets to merely show support or to express their dissatisfaction. In both instances, the crowds were demanding peace and democracy from the government. On January 12, 1994 the masses "sang slogans against the intervention from the national army in Chiapas. 'Stop the massacre,' 'justice,' 'peace,' and 'stop the genocide' were the principle demands of the protesters."⁴² Civil organizations published letters in newspapers listing demands to the Mexican president. For instance, a letter from the Independent Proletariat Movement (M.P.I.) made four demands: that the government formally recognize the EZLN and negotiate with them, that they abide by the Geneva Conventions in dealing with prisoners, that they respect the constitutional rights of the people and organizations involved in the uprising, and that the government immediately resolve the economic and political circumstances that led to the conflict.⁴³ Individuals made national demands on behalf of all civil society. La Jornada interviewed a priest who made such a projection onto civil society. "Society

³⁸ Montes, Eduardo. "No hay solución miliar, sólo política." La Jornada, 11 February 1995.

³⁹ Movilizaciones por la paz en NL, Querétaro y Jalisco. La Jornada 11 February 1995.

⁴⁰ Photos by Ap and Carlos Cisneros. La Jornada, 11 February 1995.

⁴¹ "Todos somos *Marcos*, fue el grito de decenas de miles en el Zócalo." La Jornada, 12 February 1995.

⁴² "Ordena Salinas cese nilateral al fuego y ratifica oferta de perdón." La Jornada, 13 January 1994.

⁴³ Movimiento Proletario Independiente. "Carta al Pueblo de México." Proceso, 10 January 1994.

urgently demands,” he says, “that we agree on social necessities, the direction of the economy, and the urgency of making decisions based on discussions that involve everyone.”⁴⁴

After the offensive in February 1995, it was clear that the government had not taken seriously the previous demands from civil society for peace and change. This offensive was an opportunity for them to “strongly urge the government to return to their words [from the negotiations] and consequently to scrupulously respect the human rights [of the Zapatista communities].”⁴⁵ Again, the marchers required “a stop to the war,” and “peace with justice and democracy.”⁴⁶ They demanded that the government “discover who committed the acts of violence, including the public officials who abused their power, who made the wrong decisions.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, individual editorials demanded of civil society that they “fight a little every day... or the future of Mexico will be lost.”⁴⁸ An official of the PRD said the forcefulness of the demands made the mobilizations, “not a protest march... but a movement.”⁴⁹

2.2 Conventions:

In their first convention, the Zapatistas summoned civil society to the jungle to discuss potential fraud in the upcoming presidential election and to encourage civil society to take control of electoral democracy.⁵⁰ The Zapatistas built a convention center that they called an “Aguascalientes” in the Lacandona Jungle to house the Convención Nacional Democrática

⁴⁴ Ballinas, Victor and Alonso Urritia. “Un ‘alto a la masacre’ encabezó la marcha por la paz en Chiapas.” *La Jornada*, 13 January 1994.

⁴⁵ Martín, Eduardo Vásquez et al. “Demandan que se detenga la acción militar en Chiapas.” *La Jornada*, 11 February 1995.

⁴⁶ Ballinas, Víctor. “Alto a la guerra en Chiapas, pide la Asamblea de Barrios.” *La Jornada*, 11 February 1995.

⁴⁷ Barros, Cristona. “Por una verdadera paz social.” *La Jornada*, 12 February 1995.

⁴⁸ Barros, Cristona. “Por una verdadera paz social.” *La Jornada*, 12 February 1995.

⁴⁹ Aponte, David. “Rotundo rechazo a la guerra por parte de miles de manifestantes.” *La Jornada*, 12 February 1995.

⁵⁰ Corro, Salvador and Julio César López. “La CND preparará la insurgencia civil ante un fraude electoral; los radicales son minoría: Alvarez Icaza.” *Proceso*, 8 August 1994.

(CND), commemorating the 1914 gathering of social and political leaders during the Mexican Revolution.⁵¹ Between 6,000 and 7,000 delegates arrived in the Lacandona Jungle from all over Mexico for the CND. “They have come from all over the country... colony leaders, politicians, leaders of peasant movements, worker representatives, academics, Marxists, national and international journalists, students, members of voter organizations, lesbians and gays, writers, businessmen, activists from the PRD, and militants from the left of the left.”⁵²

The convention attendees established concrete goals for how to implement the Zapatista agenda after the convention. Among these goals, the attendees wanted to “fight for a government of transition to follow the elections, to establish a Constitutional Congress to produce a new constitution and to warn that if there is fraud in the elections, there will be a renewed threat of peace.” They also called upon all eligible Mexicans to participate in the electoral process and threatened to retaliate against fraud with civil resistance that would stop the country.⁵³ In the end, the delegates concluded that there should be strict vigilance against fraud, so they initiated the *Week for Democracy* before the election for observation and participation in the process.⁵⁴

2.3 Democracy:

Considering the low satisfaction with democracy throughout phase one, one would expect that there would be high civil mobilization for Zapatismo. Above, I showed that perceptions of Mexican democracy were very negative throughout phase one and also that the mobilization was

⁵¹ Correa, Guillermo et al. “En un paraje de la selva, el Arca de Noé, la Torre de Babel, el barco de Fitzcarraldo, el delirio del neozapatismo, el navío pirata...” Proceso, 15 August 1994.

⁵² Monsiváis, Carlos. “Crónica de una Convención (que no lo fue tanto) y de un acontecimiento muy significativo.” Proceso, 15 August, 1994.

⁵³ Correa, Guillermo, Salvador Corro, Julio César López and Ignacio Ramírez. “En un paraje de la selva, el Arca de Noé, la Torre de Babel, el barco de Fitzcarraldo, el delirio del neozapatismo, el navío pirata...” Proceso, 15 August 1994.

⁵⁴ U. Matilde Pérez. “Por acuerdo de la Convención Nacional Democrática, inicia la *Semana por la democracia*.” La Jornada, 10 August 1994.

thus high. In the press, the high mobilization is justified by the need to change Mexican democracy. In the articles relating to responses to violence, democracy is particularly relevant in the demands of civil society. It is reported that, while peace in the short term is a necessity, ending the violence will be a huge step towards Mexico's democratization.⁵⁵ The fight is put into context as the end of satisfaction with the undemocratic institutions of the PRI.⁵⁶ Instead, they wanted real democracy, and this was the chance for civil society to take the reigns of government.⁵⁷ Similar demands for democracy arose in the aftermath of the surprise Zedillo offensive of 1995 even though the image of the Zapatistas had changed drastically from a belligerent to a negotiating group. In a letter to the editor, a group of citizens demanded that the military action stop in Chiapas because "we refuse to accept how the Mexican president only responds to situations in context without a sincere willingness to act democratically and peacefully."⁵⁸ Citizens did not only consider the military violence as an attack on Chiapas, but as a hostile government's attack on all of Mexico and Mexican democracy. Eduardo Montes wrote, that "It's clearer today than it was on February 5th: More important than different policies was the necessity for a social and political movement that will bring peace, democracy, social justice, and Mexican sovereignty."⁵⁹

The low satisfaction with democracy also revealed itself in the CND, in which the Zapatistas might have summoned civil society to discuss the election specifically, but the conversation became a broad discussion of democratic ideals.⁶⁰ The ex-Chancellor of UNAM

⁵⁵ Fernández, Ignacio Ovalle. "Valoración de la política." La Jornada, 12 January 1994.

⁵⁶ Merino, Mauricio. "Los Cambios." La Jornada, 13 January 1994.

⁵⁷ Pinchetti, Francisco Ortiz. "La hora de Chiapas puede ser la del alumbramiento del México democrático: Enrique Krauze." Proceso, 17 January 1994.

⁵⁸ Vásquez, Eduardo, et al. "Demandan que se detenga la acción militar en Chiapas." La Jornada, 11 February 1995.

⁵⁹ Montes, Eduardo. "No hay solución militar, solo política." La Jornada, 11 February 1995.

⁶⁰ Latapí, Pablo. "Votos y pasamontañas." Proceso, 15 August 1994.

claimed to be “sure that the discourse of Subcomandante Marcos and the approach of the EZLN was for the convention to express the deepest thoughts of our country and our time for a democracy with justice and liberty.”⁶¹ People wanted to discuss what democracy meant in Mexico, and the EZLN capitalized on their disappointment. “When civil society looks at Marcos, they do not see a guerrilla, which we would see as unfeasible and undesirable even as a last resort, but rather they see the incapacity of the government to value the law, to respect the dignity of the citizens, to bring us justice. In him [Marcos] they share a common disagreement... [They share] a faith that democracy should bring solutions to everyone in all the plurality and differences that make up the Being of Mexico.”⁶²

⁶¹ Correa, Guillermo et al. “En un paraje...” Proceso, 15 August 1994.

⁶² Boullosa, Carmen. “A media Convención.” La Jornada, 9 August 1994.

3.0 Phase Two: 1996-1998

In phase two, it seems that there is an increase in satisfaction with democracy. In a poll from November 1996, when asked to compare the levels of democracy in various Latin American countries, most voters described Mexico as the most democratic (38.3% thought that Mexico was the most democratic, and the second highest alternative was Cuba with 13.4%).⁶³ A poll from the Office of the President affirms that satisfaction and dissatisfaction in 1997 might have been nearly even. Approximately 40% are found to be very satisfied or regularly satisfied (9.6% very satisfied, 29.9% regular), and a little over 50% are found to be hardly satisfied (30.1%) or completely unsatisfied (22.4%) with the level of Mexican democracy. This contrasts against the previous phase in which satisfaction was much lower, hovering just above 30%.

3.1 Violence:

According to John Ross in War Against Oblivion, President Zedillo sent the army into the Zapatista communities in September 1996. However, according to Ross, civil society was too distracted over the EPR's emergence that they did not notice. The way Ross describes it, "By the 10th, fighters on both sides stood just a thousand meters apart, eyeball to eyeball through their rifle sights... The Sup fired off three letters to Señora Civil Society, asking plaintively if she still remembered him... But the truth was that no one was paying much attention anymore."⁶⁴

However, neither La Jornada nor Proceso published these letters, and there were no articles about the violence.

⁶³ Oficina de la presidencia de la república Mexicana. *Gira del Presidente Zedillo a Chile/VI Cumbre Iberoamericano* (Mexico D.F.: BIIACS, 1996) <<http://hdl.handle.net/10089/1052>>. p 18

⁶⁴ Ross, John. *War Against Oblivion: Zapatista Chronicles 1994-2000* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2000), p 196.

3.2 Conventions:

The second phase featured one major convention, the Intergaláctica. The general theme of the Intergaláctica, or the First Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in Oventic, was to create a “new world in which all worlds fit.”⁶⁵ In other words, the meeting was for those groups who felt oppressed and abused by globalization as the indigenous in Southern Mexico felt. However, the oppressed minorities were not the focus of the press; instead, the press emphasized the overwhelming majority of foreign delegates. La Jornada covered the event by describing how the foreigners from 42 different countries reacted to Zapatismo. La Jornada, for example, noted that there were 1,600 foreign delegates present, but “from Mexico, against wind and so on, civil committees come from 31 states of the Republic and that is all. Minus Nayarit. So what.”⁶⁶ Photographs depicted the Zapatistas with their ski masks and bandanas in blatant contrast with the tall, blonde, guitar-playing foreigners in polos and tied shirts.⁶⁷ This was an effort for the EZLN to get to know their international supporters, but the press did not seem to look at the event positively. In a rare instance that mentions Mexican civil society, one journalist pointed out that Mexican supporters provided the transportation for the foreign visitors from San Cristóbal de las Casas to Oventic.⁶⁸

As for productivity, one article (not an editorial) asserted that, “if everyone hadn’t been so calm this would be a political meeting, but no. It is more like a song by U2, even if it sounds snobbish to say that.”⁶⁹ The delegates discussed all sorts of themes concerning the economy,

⁶⁵ Pérez, Matilde et al. “EZLN: construyamos un mañana de tolerancia donde quepan todos.” La Jornada, 28 July 1996.

⁶⁶ Bellinghausen, Hermann. “En Chiapas, al asalto de las rendijas que quedan.” La Jornada, 28 July 1996.

⁶⁷ Fotos by Duilio Rodriguez and Frida Hartz. La Jornada 29 July - 4 August 1996.

⁶⁸ Avilés, Jaime. “Nuevo hito en la Guerra de la razón contra el absurdo.” La Jornada, 28 July 1996.

⁶⁹ Bellinghausen, Hermann. “En Chiapas, al asalto de la rendijas que quedan.” La Jornada, 28 July 1996.

globalization, drugs, and women's rights without coming to any real conclusions.⁷⁰ Instead, the delegates were particularly concerned about the supposedly unfair structure of the talks. La Jornada discusses an absurd debate about whether or not the women's table should be a stronger priority in the discussion.⁷¹

3.3 Democracy:

According to the polling data, satisfaction with the democratic process increases through phase two. Arguably, this leads to the low levels of mobilization in the second phase. Unlike the first phase, there is no discussion of democracy between the Zapatistas and civil society between 1996 and 1997. This is particularly surprising with regard to the convention in which the purpose was to create the kind of pluralism that was supposedly not present in the political system. However, instead of admiring this as an example of democracy, the press identified the inefficiencies of such excessive plurality. Indeed, it was called an "enormous Tower of Babel" because there were too many languages present for the participants to understand each other.⁷² Furthermore, the offensive in September was very similar to that of the February 1995 offensive, but did not yield any public outcry. Civil society failed to mobilize for peace and democracy, and the left-leaning press did not take notice.

⁷⁰ Avilés, Jaime. "Acuerdan crear una red civil mundial contra medidas liberalizadoras." La Jornada, 31 July 1996.

⁷¹ Avilés, Jaime. "Molestia de mujeres porque sólo se les acordó una submesa." La Jornada, 29 July 1996.

⁷² Pequero, Raquel. "Ni recetas ni modelos; venimos a sonar juntos otro mundo posible." La Jornada, 29 July 1996.

4.0 Phase Three: 1998-2000

Neither the Office of the President nor the Cabinet of Opinion give relevant polling information during the third phase. The only source is Latinobarómetro. According to this source, there is a noticeable drop in satisfaction between the second and third phases. Latinobarómetro cites a 45% satisfaction rate in 1997. During 1998, that rate falls to 21%. In the first months of 2000, however, 35% of Mexicans were satisfied with the level of democracy. Presumably then, the level of satisfaction was slowly on the rise during 1999.⁷³

4.1 Violence:

The front page of La Jornada on January 13, 1998 featured a photo of the Mexico City Zócalo filled with Mexican citizens demanding peace in Chiapas.⁷⁴ This level of mobilization on behalf of Zapatismo had not been seen since the EZLN entered the national scene. This time, approximately 300,000 people demanded justice for the massacre in Acteal.⁷⁵ The massacre occurred weeks before when a paramilitary group killed forty-five Tzotzils (mostly women and children) from las Abejas, an organized indigenous group devoted to nonviolence.⁷⁶ It was commonly accepted that the paramilitary group was supported by the government and that the attack was meant to deter alignment with the Zapatistas. According to Proceso, “the federal government cannot pretend to be innocent.”⁷⁷ Photos showed caskets surrounded by mobs,

⁷³ Payne, J. Mark, Daniel Zovatto G., and Mercedes Mateo Díaz. *La Política Importa: Democracia y desarrollo en América Latina* (Washington, D.C.: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, 2006) p 313.

⁷⁴ Photo by Valtierra, Pedro. La Jornada, 13 January 1998.

⁷⁵ Ross, John. War Against Oblivion: Zapatista Chronicles 1994-2000 (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2000).

⁷⁶ It is not obvious as to whether this event should belong to the second or third phase. While the massacre occurs in late 1997, public mobilization is highest in early 1998. This is not particularly problematic because phase three depends on polling data from Latinobarómetro which does not provide specific dates of questioning anyway. Thus, for this paper, I consider Acteal to be between the phases and associate it with Latinobarómetro's data between 1997 and 1998. The space between these years shows a drastic decline in satisfaction with democracy.

⁷⁷ Sarre, Pablo Latapí. “Rectificar.” Proceso, 28 December 1997.

thousands of raised fists in the Zócalo, and men with ski masks alongside the protesters.⁷⁸ They were described as a group of Mexicans as well as foreigners who “converged in a massive, powerful, and pluralistic way to repudiate the extermination of the indigenous.”⁷⁹

The protests that followed the attack on Acteal featured a powerfully mobilized civil society that was disappointed by the false promises and false peace of its government.⁸⁰ “With its decision to use the army in order to antagonize and humiliate the indigenous communities, and its tolerance of the dirty war by the paramilitaries to attack the indigenous communities they [the Mexican government] have provoked the people’s hatred.”⁸¹ They cried out against the government, “Enough is enough! Stop the slaughterers of the civilians, the relocation, the hijackings, the imprisonment in Chiapas! You must disarm the paramilitaries! You must respect the San Andrés Accords and return to the negotiating table! You must construct a free indigenous community associated with the nation!”⁸²

In contrast, there was next to no mobilization to repudiate the military violence in Amador Hernandez in August 1999, a region just outside Zapatista territory. The government built a road there, and many believed that they built it so that the military could have easier access to the Zapatista community. For weeks in late August, there were daily updates of instances of military violence against the community and the weak attempts by the government to disassociate itself from the attacks.⁸³ At least one editorial called the persecution “intolerable,” and “hopes that the Chiapas authorities will stop making disproportionate and unfair claims that

⁷⁸ Photos by Carlos Ramos Mamahua Alfredo Estrella, José Carlo González, Pedro Valtierra, and Abraham Paredes. La Jornada, 13 January 1998.

⁷⁹ Editorial. “Chiapas: Tres Actitudes” La Jornada, 13 January 1998.

⁸⁰ Fernández, Paulina. “Del 12 de enero al 22 de diciembre.” La Jornada, 12 January 1998.

⁸¹ Sarre, Pablo Latapí. “Rectificar.” Proceso, 28 December 1997.

⁸² Sicilia, Javier. “Hay que respetar los Acuerdos de San Andrés.” Proceso, 28 December 1997.

⁸³ La Jornada, 16-30 August 1999.

they are responsibly punishing the attackers.”⁸⁴ NGOs such as the Mexican Academia of Human Rights, verbally condemned the attacks.⁸⁵ While civil society hoped, they did not demand. There were a couple of marches by the indigenous groups in the area, but there were no mass protests.⁸⁶ The few pictures that showed protesters only reveal images of soldiers versus Indians.⁸⁷

4.2 Conventions:

In November 1998, the Zapatistas held a meeting with civil society primarily to discuss the upcoming consulta in March. The convention was well-attended; approximately 3,000 delegates arrived from all over Mexico and 18 other countries. The event was not covered heavily in the news, but the coverage was very positive. Indeed, one article likened the event to the beginnings of the Zapatista movement in terms of bringing young people into politics.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the stalled negotiations between the EZLN and the Mexican government had resulted in the formation of the group called Cocopa which was a group of legislators and politicians sympathetic to the Zapatista cause. At this point in the negotiations, though, many Mexicans had interpreted the Cocopa group as another example of corruption and inefficiency in Mexican politics who were slowly chipping away the EZLN accomplishments out of the San Andrés Accords in order to pass it into legislation. These negotiations were said to be filled with “storm clouds” and to concern “important people and big ideas.” In contrast to the political unraveling with Cocopa, the Zapatista convention was described as an admirable example of cooperation and productivity in which the civil society delegates represented all walks of life and

⁸⁴ Editorial. “Chiapas: Persecucion Intolerable.” *La Jornada*, 20 August 1999.

⁸⁵ Elizalde, Triunfo. “Condenan ONG las acciones en Amador Hernández.” *La Jornada*, 20 August 1999.

⁸⁶ Balboa, Juan. “Mil indígenas más refuerzan la protesta en Amador Hernández.” *La Jornada*, 25 August 1999.

⁸⁷ Foto Ap. *La Jornada*, 17 August 1999.

⁸⁸ Avilés, Jaime. “Son unos 3 mil los participantes en San Cristóbal; observadores de 18 países, en el acto.” *La Jornada*, 22 November 1998.

points of view in Mexico. They “demonstrated that in tolerance they can fit the country and the city, the urban movement, the student organizations, the workers to the bosses, the search for advice, and the learning of democracy.” They were said to be patient and thoughtful while the commission for the Cocopa was said to be intolerant and not understanding.⁸⁹ They were furthermore a very productive group. They met to discuss the upcoming consulta, and successfully planned the organization and voluntary participation necessary for the event. They readied five thousand volunteers (half women and half men) and decided where these delegates would administer the consulta.⁹⁰

4.3 The National Consulta:

In late March 1999, the Zapatistas held a consulta (the National Consulta for the Respect of Indian Rights and for the End of the Extermination War) with civil society. In the consulta, the Zapatistas dispersed questionnaires asking civil society how they believed the government should respond to the Indigenous Rights legislation. The Zapatistas had attempted similar consultas before with very little success. In August 1995, the EZLN conducted a consulta asking civil society if the movement should transform itself into a political organization. This seemed like an ideal circumstance for the press to applaud an instance of genuine, direct democracy as they did the previous year when the Zapatistas conducted a consulta among the indigenous communities. Indeed, the results of the indigenous consulta in June 1994 were very unpopular with the wide majority of civil society because the communities decided to reject the government’s compromise. Civil society was disappointed that a compromise was pushed out of

⁸⁹ Bellinghausen, Hermann. “Avanza el diálogo entre zapatistas y la sociedad civil.” *La Jornada*, 22 November 1998.

⁹⁰ Becerril, Andrea and Elio Henríquez. “Cinco mil delegados realizarán la consulta en el país, aseguran.” *La Jornada*, 21 November 1998.

reach, but they did not suggest that the Zapatistas reject the decision of the indigenous communities and sign off on the government negotiations. Instead, the extensive press coverage was largely of the opinion that the result of the consulta, though it did not represent the desires of civil society, was an admirable example of true democracy because it accurately represented those who the decision would influence.⁹¹ However, the 1995 consulta with civil society was dismissed with very little press coverage. An article in La Jornada defended this dismissal by saying that it would be difficult to appreciate the results of the consulta because Mexicans were not accustomed to such plebiscites or being asked their opinions. He pointed out that it was a rare occasion for the Mexicans to have such a consulta from the people and for the people.⁹² It is curious that civil society would interpret the 1994 consulta with the indigenous communities as a model of democracy but be suspicious of the 1995 consulta. This might have resulted because the Zapatistas were not experienced enough to deal with a consulta on such a massive scale; consulting local indigenous communities is a much more reasonable goal than consulting Mexican civil society. It is not discussed at all in the press how the Zapatistas organized the 1995 consulta, what kind of participation resulted, or how civil society was expected to know about the event and respond.⁹³

By 1999, the Zapatistas had learned from the past experience and tried again to distribute a consulta to civil society. In this case, they began planning five months in advance and managed the organization very carefully. Consequently, civil society mobilized very effectively by administering and participating in the consulta. Approximately five thousand organizers helped

⁹¹ Latapí, Pablo. "La logica del EZLN." Proceso, 20 June 1994.

⁹² Rodríguez Araujo, Octavio. "Después de la consulta." La Jornada, 13 August 1995.

⁹³ It is for this reason that the 1995 consulta was not discussed as a case in the first phase. Indeed, it seems that civil society was not particularly aware of the event or – at the article suggested – not sure how to react to such an event.

to administer the consulta.⁹⁴ Besides the organizers, another three million Mexican citizens chose to participate by responding to the questionnaire.⁹⁵ The participants were actively mobilizing because the consulta was, by definition, a demand to the government. La Jornada even ran an editorial asserting that the mobilization of civil society was the primary success of the event.⁹⁶ Indeed, the demands of the consulta were not limited to indigenous rights, but civil society demanded justice for all marginalized groups or for all Mexicans.⁹⁷ For instance, one article described the importance of the consulta by saying, “poverty and marginalization reach the whole country, and so the consulta is very important; it is a demand for the rights of the majority before the government.”⁹⁸

4.4 Democracy:

Though dates to track support for democracy in phase three are not concrete, there seems to be an increase in support. It follows that in the earlier events in phase three, democracy was again an important aspect in discussions of Zapatismo, and mobilization is higher than it was in the second phase. First, it was suggested that the massacre in Acteal occurred because of lack of democracy in Mexico.⁹⁹ Government violence was seen as evidence that democracy in Mexico was not functioning properly and perhaps never would. “Many people have the optimistic belief that democracy brings alternative that channel and gradually solves these injustices and deficiencies, but the more skeptical assure them that the greatest disorder and chaos is nearly

⁹⁴ Jiménez, Arturo and Angel Vargas. “La consulta abre un camino a la paz en Chiapas: Carlos Fuentes.” La Jornada, 22 March 1999.

⁹⁵ Olmos, José Gil. “Cerca de 3 millones de mexicanos acudieron a la consulta zapatista.” La Jornada, 22 March 1999.

⁹⁶ Editorial. “El éxito de la consulta.” La Jornada, 22 March 1999.

⁹⁷ Jiménez, Arturo and Angel Vargas. “La consulta abre un camino a la paz en Chiapas: Carlos Fuentes.” La Jornada, 22 March 1999.

⁹⁸ Olmos, José Gil. “Cerca de 3 millones de mexicanos acudieron a la consulta Zapatista.” La Jornada, 22 March 1999.

⁹⁹ Henríquez, Elio. “Política de paz sin dobles mensajes, demanda Conai.” La Jornada, 12 January 1998.

unsolvable.” Acteal brought people to see the shortcomings of democracy.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the “rebellion of the Mayan Zapatistas has located the essential problem of the country in the democratic transition... Zapatismo in particular brings out the basic contradictions of the nation state in reference to the deep social and economic and social polarization.”¹⁰¹ Next, the consulta (both the convention that planned it and the actual event) was described as an alternative exercise in democracy. Citizens did not widely think that the Mexican government was listening to their voices.¹⁰² By contrast, the consulta was presented as “a triple lesson in democracy that speaks to what should largely be a new era in politics: an exercise in truth, the capacity for imagination, and an exercise in the organization of the people.”¹⁰³ However, phase three ended with higher public satisfaction with democracy in the government. This corresponds with the minimal mobilization that resulted from the violence at Amador Hernandez. Moreover, there is no discussion of democracy in the press. The absence of such a discussion, which contrasts starkly with the overwhelming emphasis on democracy after the violence at Acteal, suggests that the approval with Mexican democracy prevented the mobilization.

¹⁰⁰ Saavedra, Alejandro Ordorica. “tercera llamada?” *La Jornada*, 13 January 1998.

¹⁰¹ López y Rivas, Gilberto. “Nación y zapatismo.” *La Jornada*, 13 January 1998.

¹⁰² Nadal, Alejandro. “Maíz: entre la Guerra y la consulta.” *La Jornada*, 22 March 1999.

¹⁰³ Sicilia, Javier. “Lecciones de la consulta zapatista.” *Proceso*, 21 March 1999.

5.0 Phase Four: 2000-2006

This stage begins in 2000 against a volatile national backdrop in which the Fox election persuaded 63% of Mexicans, a percentage dramatically higher than any of the other phases, that the country was democratic.¹⁰⁴ This optimism, however, was fragile. Political scientists predicted that if Fox did not live up to exceedingly high expectations, then the normally low satisfaction would return.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, by late 2001, the level of satisfaction collapsed back down to 26%.¹⁰⁶ By 2005, approximately 35% of Mexicans expressed satisfaction with democracy, and 60% described themselves as only slightly satisfied or completely unsatisfied.¹⁰⁷ These percentages are nearly identical to those in the year before the election of 2000. In the 2000 election, satisfaction seemed to increase with proximity to the election, and this seems to be the case in 2006 as well. In February 2006, 66% said that they believed the government (under Fox) was democratic while only 21% asserted it was not.¹⁰⁸ Though polls between 2001 and 2005 suggest that Mexicans are no more satisfied with the country's democracy after Fox's election than they were before, they seem to admit to an improvement when they directly compare the Fox presidency against the PRI government. In July 2005, 57% believed that Fox had brought

¹⁰⁴ Camp, Roderic Ai. "Citizen Attitudes toward Democracy and Vicente Fox's Victory in 2000." In *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p 38.

¹⁰⁵ Camp, Roderic Ai. "Citizen Attitudes toward Democracy and Vicente Fox's Victory in 2000." In *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p 41.

¹⁰⁶ Payne, J. Mark, Daniel Zovatto G., and Mercedes Mateo Díaz. *La Política Importa: Democracia y desarrollo en América Latina* (Washington, D.C.: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, 2006) p 313.

¹⁰⁷ Oficina de la presidencia de la república Mexicana. *Encuesta Nacional de Actitudes / Noviembre 2005* (Mexico D.F.: BIIACS, 1997)

¹⁰⁸ Oficina de la presidencia de la república Mexicana. *Evaluación del Presidente Fox y de su gestión* (Mexico D.F.: BIIACS, 2006) <<http://hdl.handle.net/10089/10147>>. p 10.

more democracy and transparency to Mexico and made it a preferable government to that of the previous 70 years. Only 29% did not believe this to be the case.¹⁰⁹

5.1 La Marcha Zapatista:

La Marcha Zapatista was not a convention or an instance of violence, but rather another unique case that must be considered according to different standards. The purpose of the march was to meet with the Mexican Congress and present the new Cocopa legislation involving indigenous rights and autonomy. As the Zapatistas made their way to Mexico City, they were greeted and joined by the population. In order for civil society's role to be considered active, they would have to play some part in pushing their elected officials to accept the legislation.

On route to and upon arrival in Mexico City, the Zapatistas were treated as heroes and celebrities. Massive receptions of over 20,000 supporters greeted the EZLN along various stops in the journey.¹¹⁰ Thousands gathered in the Zócalo in Mexico City when the caravan arrived at the capital.¹¹¹ Pictures showed Marcos being hailed with flowers and gifts as he was greeted by dense crowds.¹¹² During the weeks surrounding the event, La Jornada filled its front cover with extensive coverage related to the Zapatistas. Proceso devoted substantial coverage to the march and its consequences all the way from mid February until late April. In terms of numbers of supporters, the caravan was a success of mobilization.

High attendance is not, however, equivalent to high mobilization. Mobilization depends on how willing the supporters are to take an active role. Judged by these standards, civil society

¹⁰⁹ Oficina de la presidencia de la república Mexicana. *Imagen del presidente* (Mexico D.F.: BIIACS, 2005) <<http://hdl.handle.net/10089/11937>>. p 99

¹¹⁰ Cuevas, Jesus Ramirez. "La industrial Orizaba, paralizada por el apoyo masivo a los zapatistas." La Jornada, 28 February 2001.

¹¹¹ Caption of photo. Mamahua, Carlos Ramos. La Jornada, 6 March 2001.

¹¹² Photos by Francisco Olvera, La Jornada, 28 February - 13 March 2001.

showed very low mobilization. The throngs of people waiting for the Zapatistas to arrive in the Zócalo are described as “saying hello” or “welcoming” the caravan.¹¹³ The most active crowd was in Juchitán where they pledged to struggle through the legislative process along with the EZLN, but La Jornada described them as a completely indigenous crowd.¹¹⁴ As the legislative battle actually occurred in the Mexican Congress, the press did not report a single push from civil society. In the end, Congress rejected the most important aspects of the Cocopa legislation, and the Zapatistas decided to surrender their most desired expectation for autonomy and go home. The crowds that welcomed the caravan to their towns did not push for more action, nor did they push for the government to accept the legislation.

5.2 Violence:

Reactions to violence are meant to indicate how civil society responds to an urgent call from the Zapatistas when they are in need. However, since Acteal there have been no massive responses to violence against the Zapatistas. There have been small attacks against Zapatista communities like the ones discussed in the introduction of this paper, and the military bases nearby have not been disbanded. Nevertheless, there has been no public outcry.

The Zapatistas have aligned themselves with other oppressed groups who suffer from government violence. For instance, they summoned international support behind the workers in Atenco in opposition to the government’s efforts to build an airport on their land.¹¹⁵ As the municipal police acted as federal soldiers to contain the disruption, many viewed the situation in Atenco as closely related to the Zapatista conflict because they were violently oppressed

¹¹³ Caption of photo. Mamahua, Carlos Ramos. La Jornada, 6 March 2001.

¹¹⁴ Cuevas, Jesus Ramirez. “Desbordante recibimiento en Juchitán.” 26 February 2001.

¹¹⁵ Ramon, Rene. “Convoca el EZLN a lucha internacional por la liberación de los presos de Atenco.” La Jornada, 1 October 2006.

groups.¹¹⁶ But civil society did not rally behind the Zapatistas; instead, the alignment was considered to be a desperate attempt by the EZLN to continue fighting some “other attack, another fight, another grudge.”¹¹⁷ Even Marcos expressed disappointment with the lack of mobilization, complaining that civil society was not trying hard enough. “In the march from Chapingo,” he asserted, “we left with a thousand people, and we arrived with five thousand. Where did these four thousand leave from? They’re just local people who happened to be there.” In other words, civil society was not willing to put forth an effort to travel and struggle with the movement. “There were no protests of repudiation,” he continued.¹¹⁸

5.3 La Otra Campaña:

Though the Zapatistas were mostly silent throughout phase four, they took an active role in the presidential campaign of 2006. Arguing that the entire political system and all candidates were hopelessly corrupt, the EZLN traveled the country promoting *La Otra Campaña* with Subcomandante Marcos as the candidate. According to Marcos, “everyone is going to fall together sooner rather than later... *La Otra Campaña* is civil and peaceful; it is the only possibility in which the inevitable change will not be violent.”¹¹⁹ Despite the importance that Marcos attributed to his campaign, the mainstream press did not pay very close attention. Though Marcos held rallies in cities and towns throughout Mexico, the coverage in *La Jornada* is limited to a rally in Mexico City. The rally discussed too many agendas but never really brought

¹¹⁶ Olmos, José Gil and Rosalía Vergara. *Proceso*, 14 May 2006.

¹¹⁷ Cázares, Germán Martínez. “PRI y Marcos, R.I.P.” 28 May, 2006.

¹¹⁸ Bellinghausen, Hermann. “Entrevista con Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos: Los medios electrónicos tienen amarrados a los candidatos.” *La Jornada*, 9 May 2006.

¹¹⁹ Bellinghausen, Hermann. “Entrevista con Subcomandante Marcos: Los medios electrónicos tienen amarrados a los candidatos.” *La Jornada*, 9 May 2006.

solutions to any of them.¹²⁰ This supposedly was why *La Otra* never became a serious alternative for the election. “*La Otra* does not have an answer. Because Subcomandante Marcos prefers to denounce before he proposes. Because Subcomandante Marcos prefers to use grand rhetoric before thinking of even small solutions in reality. He prefers to speak of injustice and crime and repression before thinking how to solve them.”¹²¹ Proceso ignored the campaign except for three candid articles that discuss the Zapatista’s path from “a guerrilla movement to ridiculousness”¹²² or the route of Marcos’s “image as a hero converted to a man... the profile of someone who at one time had the word and now seems to be lost.”¹²³ Considering the left lean of this Zapatista supportive paper, the lack of coverage is crucially revealing.

5.4 Democracy:

The data from surveys indicated that phase four came with more positive perceptions of democracy. As a result, mobilization is particularly low despite high attendance in crowds. This follows with the data that suggests higher perceptions of democracy in Mexico. There are indeed instances of associating Zapatismo with democracy, but they are overlapped with undemocratic images related to a violent past. For the first time since 1995, Zapatistas are consistently armed in newspaper photographs. There is one particular photograph of the face of a young indigenous man staring straight into and pointing his gun at the camera.¹²⁴ This photo first appeared in Proceso’s very first article on the Zapatista uprising in January 1994. It seems interesting that the exact same image was used to mobilize civil society in 1994 and to scare them in 2001. One

¹²⁰ Bellinghausen, Hermann and Emir Olivares. “‘Hasta morir si es preciso’, reto de la otra campaña a ricos y poderosos.” La Jornada, 2 May 2006.

¹²¹ Dresser, Denise. “Piernas devaluadas.” Proceso, 28 May 2006.

¹²² Cázares, Germán Martínez. “PRI y Marcos, R.I.P.” Proceso, 28 May 2006.

¹²³ Dresser, Denise. “Piernas devaluadas.” Proceso, 28 May 2006.

¹²⁴ No photographer given. Proceso, 28 February 2001.

article states that the Zapatistas are “the insurgent forces in the democratic process,” and that this role is no longer relevant.¹²⁵

By the end of phase four, during *La Otra*, this perception of violence and antidemocratic emphasis had not changed. La Jornada stressed the line “Until death if necessary” as the mantra of the rally in Mexico City which produced an attitude of revolution similar to that which preceded the negotiations in 1994.¹²⁶ According to Proceso, the Zapatistas are no longer a relevant option for Mexicans because they “are hostile to the democratic route as a method of transferring power.”¹²⁷ Indeed, by now it seems that Mexicans see their government as being more democratic, and the Zapatistas represent the vigilante and anti-institutional past.

¹²⁵ Rosenmann, Marcos Roitman. “El EZLN y las luchas democráticas en América Latina.” La Jornada, 20 February 2001.

¹²⁶ Bellinghausen, Hermann and Emir Olivares. “‘Hasta morir si es preciso’, reto de la otra campaña a ricos y poderosos.” La Jornada, 2 May 2006.

¹²⁷ Cázares, Germán Martínez. “PRI y Marcos, R.I.P.” 28 May 2006.

6.0 Conclusion:

I was in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas during the summer of 2007, and I was shocked by the indifference with which people treated the movement even though the Zapatistas were so close to the city. This nonchalance contrasted starkly with the intense mobilization I had read about. In conversations with members of the Junta de Buen Gobierno in Oventic, the Zapatista officials told me that they depended on civil society to keep them alive in the constant struggle with the Mexican government. I did not even learn until weeks later that there was in fact a convention with Marcos just an hour from San Cristóbal. Despite reading the news regularly and keeping close attention to word of Zapatismo, I had not heard anything. In the end, I found out about the convention from a fervent supporter who attended but considered it to be a special event for the most loyal activists.

The summary of data below visually shows the basic premise in this paper: that the level of dissatisfaction with democracy in Mexico follows the moments of high mobilization for Zapatismo. The data does not show that the relationship is causal, but the analysis of the press suggests this.

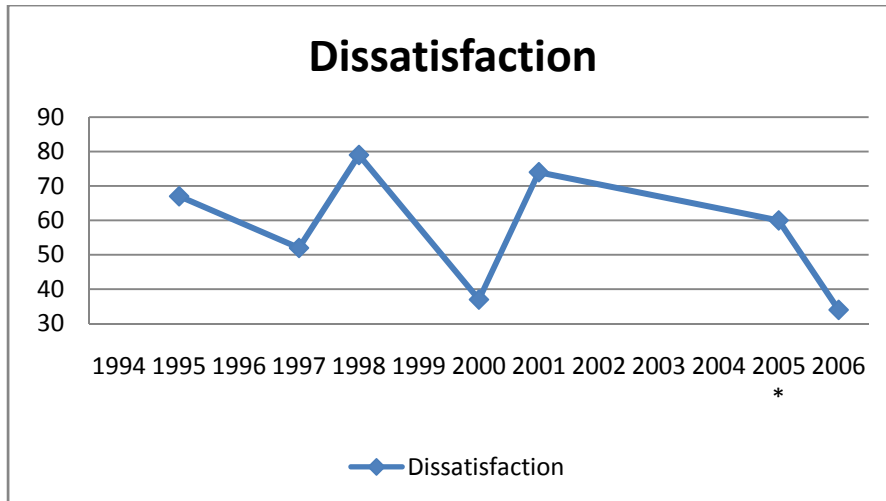


Figure 1 Dissatisfaction with Democracy *The above graph shows the mean level of dissatisfaction with Mexican democracy as indicated in the surveys. These percentages are determined from the question: "Are you satisfied with how democracy functions in your country?" It does not reveal answers to other questions. This is particularly notable in 2005 when Mexicans revealed high satisfaction of democracy under Fox in direct comparison to the PRI.

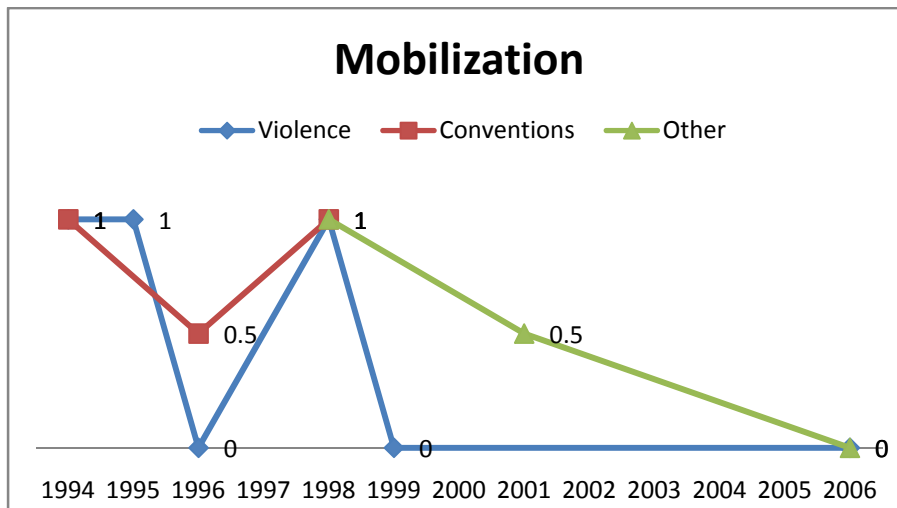


Figure 2 Mobilization for Zapatismo *The graph above assigns numerical values to the measurement of mobilization. The number 1 indicates high mobilization that involves a large crowd, heavy press coverage, and effective demand making. The .5 measurement indicates high attendance without effective demands. Events with 0 involve little to no attendance or press coverage.

For lack of polling data beyond 2006, research for this project ends after the election of Felipe Calderón. However, the movement continues outside the spotlight. Public support is high, but mobilization is minimal while the EZLN is still working to implement some of the most

fundamental aspects of their agenda. In this paper, I have sought to explain how a movement that inspired and mobilized civil society to such a high degree in the previous decade has lost so much influence. In the end, the capacity for the EZLN to mobilize civil society is not a smooth downward path. It fluctuates through the fifteen year history, and I argue that these fluctuations result from civil society's satisfaction with Mexican democracy. Active mobilization for the movement indicates dissatisfaction with democracy. This is revealed in polls and through the Mexican mainstream press.

Ultimately, the connection between democratization and social movements seems intuitively very clear, but it is largely unresearched. In further research, it might be interesting to see if mobilization for other social movements also indicates dissatisfaction with democracy. Another particular problem indicated by this research is that it is unclear what aspect of democracy civil society is unsatisfied with when they mobilize. They declare themselves to be unsatisfied with the level of democracy, and they demand change. My primary question for further research delves deeper into this problem. For developing democracies, it is important to know what aspects of the democratic system most highly impact society's satisfaction and result in mobilization.

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