From the ¡Ya Basta! to the Caracoles: Zapatista Mobilization under Transitional Conditions

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This study draws on the literature on political opportunity structures to investigate the effects of local and national factors on the Zapatista cycle of protest from 1994 to 2003. A cross-sectional, time-series, negative binomial model for event counts is used to analyze the ebb and flow of Zapatista protests across the 111 municipios (municipalities) of Chiapas during this 10-year period. The results show that while all types of demands appear to have been significant triggers of protest activity, Zapatistas concentrated their protest events in larger and more closed localities that had a history of protest activity, stable elite alignments, and a larger military presence. Openings in the political system at the local and national levels lessened protest activity in the more democratic scenarios. These results suggest that the curvilinear relationship between the structure of political opportunities and protest mobilization posited to explain social movements in well-developed Western democracies does not explain the development of the protest cycle of a new social movement in an emerging electoral democracy.

INTRODUCTION

On January 1, 1994, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN, or Zapatista Army of National Liberation), claiming to fight for the basic rights of indigenous people, took up arms in seven towns in...
Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico. The Mexican government, pressured by an outpouring of national and international support for the poorly armed indigenous guerrillas, declared a cease-fire after only 12 days of fighting. For their part, the Zapatistas agreed to return to their headquarters in the Lacandon jungle. Nevertheless, a strong social movement subsequently emerged, and peace talks soon began. The EZLN uprising inspired a cycle of protest, especially in the state of Chiapas, launched mainly by existing peasant organizations sympathetic to the EZLN. Between 1994 and 1996, peace talks continued, with phases of progress punctuated by periodic breakdowns. From 1997 to 2000, the talks ceased entirely in response to the Mexican government’s decision not to honor the San Andrés Accords reached in 1996 because of their alleged unconstitutionality. Finally, in 2001, all attempts at reconciliation hit an impasse after the Mexican Congress passed a diluted version of the Indigenous Rights Bill. This legislation had been drafted by the Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación (COCOPA, or Commission of Concord and Pacification) following the signing of the San Andrés Accords five years earlier. Thus, the context in which the Zapatista cycle of protest between 1994 and 2003 took place simultaneously afforded opportunities for the movement to advance its demands and for the government to impose repressive measures, such as strengthening the military presence in the state of Chiapas.

In the meantime, Mexico was taking its first steps toward a democratic transition, motivated in part by the social pressure on the national political system exerted by the EZLN’s uprising and other social movements and in part by electoral reforms designed by the ruling elite. The transitional conditions in which the Zapatista cycle of protest developed make it an intriguing phenomenon to study. First, these circumstances provide an opportunity to investigate how electoral openings might offer opportunities for a social movement to survive during a democratic transition. Second, this situation allows exploration of how domestic political factors can continue to affect a movement that is considered to be transnational and subject to international factors. This study will explore that possibility...
by drawing on insights from the political opportunity approach and applying them to the Zapatista movement, which developed within transitional political opportunities. I have controlled the study of these factors by incorporating into the analysis variables from the other two main theoretical approaches to social movements: resource mobilization and framing of demands. An event-count model is used here to analyze the local and national political conditions, preexisting peasant organizations, and demands made during Zapatista protests from their first public appearance in 1994 through 2003, when the group formally set up regional bodies of autonomous authority, the Juntas de Buen Gobierno (Councils of Good Government) in five areas of Chiapas.

The findings reported here constitute two contributions to the comparative study of social movements. First, in analyzing political opportunities, this study shows that the proposed curvilinear relationship between the structure of political opportunities and protest activity that was designed to explain mobilization within well-established democracies does not explain social movements that appear and develop within democratic transitions. In the case of the Zapatista movement, electoral openings for the opposition had a dampening effect on mobilization, rather than promoting it as predicted by the curvilinear model (Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978) and suggested by scholars of democratization (Alvarez and Escobar 1991; Foweraker and Craig 1990; O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Zdravomyslova 1996). The process of democratization in Mexico was not evenly distributed across localities and levels of government, and the federal government responded inconsistently with repression and procedural concessions to Zapatista claims. Consequently, political conditions there created the opposite of the expected effect. Zapatista protest activity increased in those localities that remained closed and repressive and decreased in the more democratic ones. Thus, electoral openings, as the first signs of democratic change and procedural concessions to the movement, helped to reduce protest activity by giving the protesters hope of more institutional opportunities for advancing their demands. But, after 10 years of protests, repression, and failed negotiations, these changes did not translate into substantive opportunities. The Zapatistas therefore abandoned protest activity and concentrated their organizing efforts on constructing the Juntas de Buen Gobierno, their vehicle for autonomous authority.

Second, this study offers the first systematic quantitative analysis of Zapatista protest mobilization. As such, it differs from other studies of the Zapatista movement that have looked at its influence on the indigenous movement in Mexico (Higgins 2004; Mattiace 1997; Velasco 2003), the complexities of the region that motivated the uprising (Collier and Quaratiello 1994; Harvey 1998; Hernández 2001; Legorreta 1998; Leyva
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and Ascencio 1996; Stephen 2002; Viqueira and Ruz 1995), and the movement’s role in the democratic transition (Johnston 2000; Yashar 1999). While international attention and support networks have been recognized as crucial factors in sustaining the movement’s resistance campaign (Collier and Collier 2005; Hellman 1999; Moksnes 2005; Schulz 1998), this study will suggest that, in considering the movement’s local protest activity, it cannot be hypothesized that the use of these more sophisticated tools helped mobilize local protesters. Zapatistas relied instead on local factors as much as on political and economic demands to sustain their mobilization efforts (Estrada 2005; Leyva 2001). These findings also suggest that Zapatista demands concentrated on achieving recognition of the right to autonomy and additionally that the Zapatista autonomy frame was composed of an array of political, economic, and peace demands, all of which resonated equally within the cycle of protest.

THE ZAPATISTA CYCLE OF PROTEST

In its declaration of war, the EZLN stated, “We honest free men and women believe that the war we are declaring is our last hope and that it is just and necessary. For many years, dictators have engaged in an undeclared genocidal war against our people. For this reason, we ask for your participation and support in our struggle for jobs, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy, and justice and peace. We will not stop fighting until these basic demands are met and a free and democratic government rules in Mexico” (Ponce de León 2001, p. 15). This communique did not inspire other rebellions in the country, as intended, but it motivated widespread mobilization in the state of Chiapas.

The ensuing protests ranged from land invasions in 1994 and 1995, to meetings and marches supporting indigenous rights during talks between the EZLN and the Mexican government in 1996, and to sit-ins, roadblocks, and the seizure of buildings and towns during and after election campaigns in 1997 and 2000. Figure 1 presents the distribution of Zapatista protests across municipios in Chiapas. Most of the land invasions took place right after the uprising, in rural areas of what later became known as Zapatista territory, while marches, building seizures, and sit-ins predominated in urban areas across Chiapas during election years. Roadblocks targeted main access points of communication. Meanwhile, meetings urging dialogue and peace were being held in two locations, mostly during talks between the EZLN and the Mexican government from 1994 to 1996: in San Cristóbal de Las Casas (the cultural capital of
These varied forms of protest represented the Zapatista sympathizers’ responses to the way in which the peace talks were being handled. The talks started three weeks after the uprising, when the EZLN was recognized as a belligerent force capable of representing Zapatista interests. Meanwhile, protesters took advantage of the uprising’s surprise factor to invade numerous parcels of land. Subsequently, however, the Mexican government, landowners, and peasants all signed an agreement promising to resolve land invasions that had occurred up to April 14, 1994. In this agreement, the peasants promised to stop invading parcels of land and the government promised to compensate landowners for their lost land. This agreement helped stop land invasions, but protesters also had to change tactics in light of the major achievement of the initial period of talks in 1994: the creation of a Zapatista-controlled area extending from San Miguel, Ocosingo, to Guadalupe Tepeyac, Las Margaritas, where the Zapatistas maintained their headquarters. Protesters then began to organize meetings and marches. Meetings were especially popular in February 1996, when talks on indigenous rights and culture were being held.
between the national government and the EZLN in San Andrés Larráinzar. The resulting San Andrés Accords recognized the autonomy of indigenous peoples and communities, leading Zapatista sympathizers to lessen their protest activity in hopes that their demands would find a more institutional channel of representation. The Mexican government’s subsequent decision not to honor these accords brought the talks to a halt and made recognition of the accords the emblematic demand of all subsequent demonstrations in support of the Zapatista movement. Yet, following the government’s failure to honor these agreements in September, protest activity decreased, mostly on account of an increase in military presence in the region of conflict. Only after the Acteal massacre in December 1996, in which 45 Zapatista sympathizers (mostly women and children) were killed by anti-Zapatista villagers, did protesters take to the streets again, employing roadblocks, building seizures, and sit-ins to demonstrate for recognition of the San Andrés Accords and for an end to the violence.

While the cycle of protest consisted of a great variety of events (see fig. 2), all types of protest except marches exhibited the same pattern highlighted before by other scholars (e.g., Koopmans 1993): a peak of activity right after the initial insurgent event, followed by a decrease in protest mobilization, with resurgent periods of activity related to specific interactions between state and movement actors. This cycle of protest occurred within a process of democratization, and its openings as well as its closed and repressive characteristics, remaining from authoritarian rule, affected the development of the cycle. After 1994, the electoral arena began to allow room for other parties and the representation of other interests, and thus, potentially, for the representation of Zapatista interests. At the same time, the large military presence in Chiapas expanded after the uprising, and because the regime remained somewhat authoritarian, the army continued to represent a threat to the general population and to Zapatistas in particular (Hirales 1998).

The effects of structural changes at the national level and specific events on the movement can be deciphered in figure 2. Protest activity declined during the negotiating period from 1994 to 1996, reaching its lowest level at the end of 1997, after the massacre of Zapatista sympathizers by supporters of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, or Revolutionary Institutional Party) on December 22 of that year (Hirales 1998). Protests

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3 There is no risk of having different types of events aggregated in this analysis in such a way that would wash out the effects of political opportunities, as other scholars have warned (Jenkins, Jacobs, and Agnone 2003; Meyer 2004)—not even in the case of marches, which increased in 1999 and 2001. The results of this analysis did not differ from those of the analysis of the aggregated protest activity.
Fig. 2.—Zapatista protest events, 1993–2003
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then increased in the run-up to the 2000 national elections, spurred by the greater likelihood that the PRI might lose the Mexican presidency for the first time in more than 70 years. But in 2001, the Zapatista cycle of protest lost momentum after a diluted version of the Indigenous Rights Bill was approved by the Mexican legislature. Feeling betrayed again by the Mexican government, the Zapatistas concentrated their efforts on constructing their own autonomous ruling groups, the Juntas de Buen Gobierno, in their five regional capitals (the Caracoles).4

To analyze the effects of these and other factors on the Zapatista cycle of protest, the next section will review the literature on political opportunity structures and present the hypotheses drawn from it for this study. Selected arguments from the literature on the mobilization of resources and framing processes are incorporated as controls. Next, the methods and data employed to test these hypotheses will be described. Finally, the results and their implications for studying the Zapatista movement in particular and social movements in general will be discussed.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES

Political opportunities are defined in the literature on social movements as the institutional structures or informal power relations of a given political system that, if perceived as openings by social movement actors, will provide incentives for their efforts at collective action (Brockett 1991; Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1992; Rucht 1996; Tarrow 1994). When this approach emerged in 1973, Eisinger asserted that contentious political behavior exhibited a curvilinear relationship to the structure of political opportunities. Tilly (1978) built on this insight by analyzing protests over time and confirmed the inverted U-shaped model of protest activity vis-à-vis the political environment in which protests take place. Both of these studies highlighted the finding that protest activity was more likely to occur in environments having a mixture of open and closed political conditions, while very closed and very open environments were almost immune to protest events. Because these studies analyzed the effects of relatively closed and open political factors within well-established, pluralistic democracies, most of the ensuing literature focused on how

4 Initially, the five Zapatista regional capitals were named “Aguascalientes” by Subcomandante Marcos, after the revolutionary convention held by Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa in 1914 in the city of Aguascalientes, where the revolutionary leaders agreed to form an alliance. When the Juntas de Buen Gobierno were inaugurated on August 9, 2003, the new regional capitals were renamed “Caracoles” (meaning “snails”), because their function was to transmit messages from the communities to the outside and vice versa, recalling the ancient Indian use of marine snails as a means of communication.
open political environments facilitated mobilization, including protest activity (Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1995; McAdam 1982; Piven and Cloward 1977; Tarrow 1989, 1994). Other scholars, however, continued to examine how protests were mobilized despite closed and repressive political systems (Einwohner 2003; Goldberg 2001; Kurzman 1996; Loveman 1998; Meyer 1993; Noonan 1995; Rasler 1996; Stevenson and Greenberg 2000).

These varied studies endowed the concept of political opportunities with many different dimensions but reached no consensus on how many factors compose the structure of political opportunities or on the relationship between political opportunities and protest activity. Given this lack of consensus, Gamson and Meyer claimed that the concept was in danger of becoming “a sponge that soaks up every aspect of the social movement environment” (1996, p. 275). In response, McAdam (1996, p. 26) summarized the approach according to the four dimensions that appear consistent among these studies: the openness of the political system, the stability of elite alignments underlying the political system, the presence of allies, and the state’s capacity for repression. In 2004, Meyer and Minkoff offered a second revision of the concept of political opportunities, based on movements within well-established democracies. They proposed that the choice of measures of political opportunity should depend on the variable to be explained: protest activity, organization, or outcomes. For protest activity, they suggested looking at issue-specific measures rather than measures of general political openness. They found that the particular political parties within and the economic resources available to a given movement can encourage protest activity, whereas institutional access tends to diminish it. More recently, the theory has been refined to explain protest activity within democratic transitions. Almeida (2003) has suggested that in authoritarian regimes that start opening up, protest activity can be generated first by the appearance of political opportunities and second by a decline in opportunities, if the state responds with more repressive tactics or threats and reduces the already-gained opportunities.

The present study includes both structural and issue-specific measures to test their relative explanatory power for the development of a social movement during a democratic transition. It seeks to determine what combination of changes in electoral democratization, concessions, and increases in threats of repression served as opportunities for developing the Zapatista cycle of protest.

Given the authoritarian and corporatist structure of interest representation within the PRI in Mexico, I assume that the political system during...
its rule was generally closed to attempts by independent actors to articulate their interests. Thus, as marginal constituents, the Zapatistas had to resort to protest because the system in place offered no openings for mobilization (Meyer 2004; Tilly 1978). Under existing political opportunity theory, this interaction between social movement actors and political conditions would be expected to have changed in a curvilinear fashion as Mexico engaged in a democratic transition. If that proved to be the case, then, as the political system became more open, groups would have perceived opportunities for mobilization and contentious activities would have increased. However, I argue that the curvilinear relationship assumed in the literature on political opportunities does not hold for the study of the Zapatista movement, because the conditions in which this movement emerged and developed differed significantly from the conditions that the political opportunity structures approach was designed to study. In this case, protest activity began precisely because of the closed nature of the Mexican political system. Although the system became more open in electoral terms, openings were distributed unevenly across space and among different levels of government. In addition, the Mexican state responded inconsistently to the movement’s demands by making procedural concessions during the dialogues with the Zapatistas while also increasing threats of repression. Accordingly, protest and mobilization activity should be expected to decrease in the more open settings and to increase in the remaining closed and repressive ones. The next section will describe how each of the political opportunity hypotheses is applied to this study.

Relative Openness of the Institutionalized Political System

In an open and democratic scenario, analysts have assumed that the demands presented by social movement actors will succeed in being incorporated if the institutional channels of the political system are receptive enough to represent these demands and to change public policy accordingly (Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1992, 1995; Piven and Cloward 1977; Tarrow 1994). Thus, in pluralistic scenarios, political conditions can work as opportunities and promote mobilization by social actors. But in environments where pluralism is incipient or nonexistent, social movement actors will launch protests against the closed nature of the political en-

federación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM, or National Confederation of Workers), and the Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP, or National Confederation of Popular Organizations). These groups represented more of an attempt to ensure stability in Mexico than one to represent the people’s interests (Levy and Bruhn 2006).
The Zapatista movement fits this second strand of theory. It emerged in a closed and repressive political system. In the Zapatistas’ First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, (Ponce de León 2001, p. 15) their leader, Subcomandante Marcos, stated that the EZLN was launching its attack against “a dictatorship led by a clique of traitors who represent the most conservative and sellout groups” and thus should be overthrown. But conditions changed for the developing Zapatista movement as Mexico transitioned to democracy in the 1990s. In 1994, the 111 Chiapas localities were still dominated by the PRI, but in the 1995 elections, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN, or National Action Party) gained four municipalities, while the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD, or Party of the Democratic Revolution) won 18 municipalities. By 2001, the PRI had lost a total of 46 municipalities to other parties. At the national level, prior to the Zapatista uprising the PRI controlled 64.2% of seats in the Chamber of Deputies, the PAN had 18%, and the PRD, 8%. In 1997, the PRI lost its majority in Congress for the first time, with only 47.8% of the seats, while the PAN reached 24.2% and the PRD, 25%. In the 2000 elections, the PRI lost even more ground, winning only 42%, while the PAN reached 42.2% and the PRD, 10%. In 2003, the PRI finally recovered a little by winning 44.8%, while the PAN held 30.2% and the PRD, 19.4%.

Following the curvilinear model of political opportunities, one would expect to find that protest activity had taken off as the political environment in Mexico opened up (Almeida 2003; Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978). If more competitive elections opened opportunities for long-forgotten interests to be represented by opposition parties, these changes could have motivated Zapatistas to push their demands further and thus could have activated the Zapatista cycle of protest. However, I argue that in this case, openings at the local and national levels worked contrary to these expectations. Electoral openings for opposition parties actually reduced protest activity by holding out the promise of more institutional channels for the social movement’s demands.

Issue-specific openings did not prove to be beneficial for advancing the movement either, because they stopped at the level of procedural rather

6 Other scholars have emphasized this claim when explaining the emergence of the EZLN in the state of Chiapas (Collier and Quaratiello 1994; Harvey 1998; Legorreta 1998; Leyva and Ascencio 1996; Rus 1995).

7 These data were obtained through the Web sites of the Instituto Estatal Electoral de Chiapas (IEE-Chiapas, or State Electoral Institute of Chiapas [http://www.iee-chiapas.org.mx]) and the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE, or Federal Electoral Institute [http://www.ife.org.mx]), independent agencies in charge of organizing federal and state elections, respectively, in Chiapas.
than substantive concessions. The San Andrés Accords signed in February 1996 were not recognized by the Mexican government later that year, and the Indigenous Rights Bill passed in 2001 was only a diluted version of the one based on the accords, drafted by COCOPA. Yet these openings, however small, should have encouraged the movement to channel its demands institutionally (Rasler 1996), and therefore protest activity should have decreased. Thus, the following hypothesis is offered:

**Hypothesis 1.**—*Zapatista protests were more likely to occur within closed political environments and became less likely to occur as these environments opened up.*

**Relative Stability of Elite Assignments Underlying the Polity**

The literature has suggested that when the alignments of political elites become unstable, political opportunities arise for social movement actors (Jenkins, Jacobs, and Agnone 2003; Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1992, 1995; Piven and Cloward 1977). In such circumstances, the strength of a movement depends not only on its ability to gain the political parties’ sympathy but also on the political system’s flexibility in incorporating underrepresented social groups into the electoral arena. Thus, opportunities for protest activity are expected to arise when political competition is strong (Tilly 1978). If this were true for the Zapatistas, they would have increased their protest activity as they perceived electoral alignments becoming more unstable and greater chances arising for their interests to be incorporated by the electoral elites. But, as hypothesized in the previous section, because the movement was pressing for a more democratic scenario, protests were more likely to occur in closed settings and not in the democratizing ones. Hence, I expect that, as elite realignments became more unstable and elections more competitive, protest activity decreased, because the realignment of electoral elites represented the cracking of the closed political system. Zapatistas should then have decreased their protest activity in hopes that the new party system would address their demands. The following hypothesis summarizes this argument:

**Hypothesis 2.**—*Zapatista protests were more likely to occur when and where political alignments remained stable.*

**Presence of Political Allies**

Political opportunity theory suggests that movements grow when they have influential political allies (Cress and Snow 2000; Piven and Cloward 1977; Tarrow 1994). Accordingly, when alliances exist and endure, the movement gets closer to its goal of changing policy, and protest activity is expected to decrease (Jenkins et al. 2003; Minkoff 1997). On the other
hand, when such an alliance continues but is unable to promote the movement’s goals, having influential political allies actually empowers the movement to continue its struggle by contentious means (Della Porta and Diani 1999; Katzenstein and Mueller 1987; Kriesi et al. 1995). However, I argue that this alliance will continue only if the social movement does not perceive the failure to advance the movement’s goals as being due to treason or to its political allies’ unwillingness to push for such change.

At both the local and national levels, during the period studied, the Zapatistas enjoyed the sympathy of the PRD despite the EZLN’s refusal to recognize the party publicly as a political ally. Nevertheless, the PRD was a popular political option for Zapatista sympathizers because its candidates flirted with the Zapatista cause, positioning themselves as effective channels for the movement’s demands. Consequently, Zapatista sympathizers turned to the PRD in local and national elections. But when PRD candidates won elections, they proved to be ineffective, or unwilling, in the Zapatistas’ view, to advance the movement’s goals vis-à-vis the resilient PRI regime. The PRD’s inability or unwillingness to promote the Zapatista agenda led the EZLN to stop supporting the PRD as the party started winning positions at the local and national levels. Zapatistas and perredistas might have allied to continue a joint struggle by contentious means against the PRI, but once the PRD gained power and proved incompetent, the alliance would have broken down. To assess how the presence of allies invigorated the Zapatista cycle of protest, it is necessary to look at settings in which PRD support increased but was not significant enough for the party to win elections. By making this distinction, I can argue that Zapatista and PRD sympathizers in such settings would have allied to protest against the PRI-dominated political system without using the same measure to assess the relative openness of the political system and the presence of the movement’s allies. Accordingly, I offer the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3.**—Zapatista protests were more likely to occur in PRI-controlled localities with a larger PRD presence, and their likelihood increased as the PRD increased its national presence.

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8 An exception occurred in 1997, when the EZLN called for a boycott of local elections.
9 On June 19, 2000, Subcomandante Marcos stated that while the Zapatistas thought that the PRD was a political force needed to represent the left in the elections, they did not consider themselves perredistas (PRD supporters) and they would continue to criticize the political parties, whom they considered to be distanced from society and concerned solely with winning electoral victories, not with representing the people’s agenda once in power (Marcos 2000).
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State’s Capacity for Repression

According to the literature, a social movement is more successful when the state’s capacity for repression is weak and the state does not promptly repress confrontational mobilizations (Della Porta 1995; Earl, Soule, and McCarthy 2003; Moore 2000). However, other studies have shown that repression can also encourage protest activity (Francisco 1995; Khawaja 1993; Olivier 1990), especially when it or the threat of its use is applied inconsistently with concessions (Almeida 2003; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Rasler 1996).

In Mexico, the capacity of the state to repress the EZLN was unquestionable. The military presence in Chiapas was significant because the state had become strategically important in the early 1980s, when guerrilla movements erupted in the neighboring countries of Central America (Hirales 1998; Legorreta 1998; Leyva and Ascencio 1996). This military presence grew even larger after the Zapatista uprising, as the Mexican state sought to constrain the strength of the EZLN and the spread of the Zapatista movement.10 The poorly armed EZLN forces were incapable of fighting back, yet the Mexican government could not eliminate the insurgency against the strong pressure of national and international public opinion. As a result, the presence of the Mexican army in the region’s municipios worked more as a threat than as an active force of repression. Therefore, it should have led to an increase in protest activity (Almeida 2003; Goldstone and Tilly 2001). The literature also suggests that the relationship between protests and repression is curvilinear when both sides engage in a cycle of action and reaction, with protests continuing if repression is not strong enough to discourage them (Goldstone and Tilly 2001). Zapatista sympathizers have also made this claim. The following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothsis 4.—Zapatista protests were more likely to occur in municipios with a larger military presence.

PREEXISTING ORGANIZATIONS AND RESONANCE OF DEMANDS IN THE ZAPATISTA CYCLE OF PROTEST

This section incorporates specific arguments from theories on resource mobilization and framing processes that control for the relative effects of political opportunities on the Zapatista cycle of protest. Drawing on the literature on resource mobilization, I include the role of preexisting or-

10 Interview with Marco Antonio Bernal, 2002.
organizations in the region as a factor in mobilizing networks, and on the basis of the literature on framing processes, I test the resonance of demands within their autonomy-seeking frame to identify which demands were more successful in generating protest activity.

Preexisting Organizations

Preexisting mobilizing networks have been recognized in resource mobilization theory as a key resource that social movement organizations can rely on for their existence and success (Cress and Snow 2000; Piven and Cloward 1977). McCarthy and Zald (1977, 2002), Jenkins and Perrow (1977), Tilly (1978), and Snow, Soule, and Cress (2005) have all highlighted the role of such networks, especially in powerless groups. Because of their lack of resources, powerless groups must rely on external organizers and preexisting organizations to launch attempts at mobilizing insurgents. This was precisely the case in the Zapatista movement, especially in the period from its emergence in the early 1980s to the uprising in 1994.

As numerous scholars have indicated, the EZLN, in its early stages, took advantage of existing peasant organizations in the state of Chiapas and their fragmentation (Harvey 1998; Legorreta 1998; Leyva and Asencio 1996; Stephen 2002; and Estrada 2005). By exploiting major cleavages in peasants’ interests and redefining their long-standing grievances, the EZLN was able to build up support in the Lacandon forest before the uprising. By the time the first guerrilleros arrived in the Lacandon jungle in the early 1980s, preexisting organizations in the region had suffered effective measures of repression as well as significant divisions that had weakened their bases of support. Consequently, general frustration among the peasants began to fractionalize these indigenous organizations. Members of the EZLN took advantage of the weakening organizations to attract followers while using their already-developed or-

11 Other resources were surely at hand, but the insurgent nature of the EZLN made it impossible to track down other kinds of economic or material resources available to Zapatista protesters in the region. Given the lack of available data on contributions, membership figures, or the number of sympathetic organizations or sponsors, these categories of data are not included the analysis of the effects of other types of resources available to the Zapatistas.

12 These organizations included the Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos (CIOAC, or Independent Federation of Agricultural Workers and Peasants), the Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata (OCEZ, or Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization), the Unión de Uniones y Grupos Campesinos Solidarios de Chiapas (UU, or Union of Unions and Solidarity Peasant Organizations of Chiapas), and the Asociación Rural de Interés Colectivo (ARIC, or Collective Interest Rural Association).
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organizational skills and networks among communities and municipalities to launch Zapatista efforts at organizing.

After the uprising, the Zapatistas could have continued to rely on these organizations as mobilizing networks, especially because EZLN forces were confined by the national army to their headquarters in the Lacandon jungle. As the movement developed, these mobilizing networks should have proved helpful in organizing protests over time and across communities.

Resonance of Zapatista Demands

In explaining a given social movement’s success, framing theorists have stressed the importance of its discourse’s resonance with the larger mobilizing sentiments in the society. The resonance of a frame is what inspires participation (Snow and Benford 1988, 1992). In other words, the movement’s grievances and demands must resonate with the population’s larger needs in order to attract sympathizers, supporters, and members.

In the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, the EZLN called for the national government to attend to the most basic rights and needs of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas: land, housing, employment, education, fair salaries, food, and health care. Yet, in the Zapatista communiqués, these calls were always framed within broader demands for independence, democracy, liberty, and justice. As the movement and dialogue between its parts developed, the Zapatistas framed their claims within the search for autonomous rights for the indigenous people of Mexico (Velasco 2003). The demand for autonomy became the central theme of the movement, especially after the San Andrés Accords were signed. The rationale behind seeking the right to autonomy was that, as the originators of present-day Mexican culture, indigenous peoples should be recognized in the Mexican Constitution as agents of their own affairs (Aubry 2003). This autonomy frame transformed the Zapatista movement into a struggle for ethnic identity (Higgins 2004; Leyva 2005; Mattiace 1997; Stephen 2002), causing some sympathizers to argue that the Zapatistas’ sole demand was recognition of their autonomy rather than mere political power or economic compensations.13 After the San Andrés Accords were signed, however, Zapatista demands expanded to include peace and the withdrawal of the national army from the region. Thus, the demand for autonomy became

13 Interviews with members of the Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (FZLN, or Zapatista Front for National Liberation) in Mexico City, October 2002, and with members of the now-defunct Comisión Nacional de Intermediación (CONAI, or National Intermediation Commission) and Enlace Civil, a nongovernmental organization sympathetic to the Zapatista communities, in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, February 2003.
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all-encompassing as Zapatistas sought responses to economic and political grievances as well as the resolution of specific conflicts. Given this great variety of demands within a single framework, identification of the main grievances became blurred. By comparing the strength of political and economic demands and demands for peace, this study seeks to identify which demands were more successful as a rationale for taking action and also to show the array of demands that composed the autonomy frame without undermining its cause (Snow and Benford 1988).14

VARIABLES AND DATA COLLECTION

Dependent Variable

Zapatista protest activity is measured here by the number of protest events in a given municipio each year over a 10-year period. Thus, the unit of analysis is municipio per year; data were collected for each municipio and entered 10 times in the database, once for each year. Data on Zapatista protest activity were coded according to accounts of protests in local and national newspapers. That is, the selection criterion for defining a protest event was whether the event was mentioned as a protest in the newspaper sources used. Some of these events lasted for several days, but these were each coded as a single event to avoid data inflation.

Most of the newspaper accounts were collected from the national newspaper La Jornada. To control for problems with selection and description bias, sources were triangulated (Earl et al. 2004). The local newspaper El Tiempo, from San Cristóbal de Las Casas, was used for the years 1994–96,15 and I relied on the data set of Melel Xojobal, a social service organization founded by the Dominican Friars of San Cristóbal de Las Casas that archived a daily synthesis of information on the state of Chiapas from local and national newspapers for the years 1997–2003. By triangulating local and national sources, I garnered a broader coverage of events, and I included multiple accounts of the same events to check

14 Demands can be interrelated. For example, to win economic compensations, the group might also need to gain political power, or demands for conflict resolution might implicitly address political grievances. By untangling the resonance of the Zapatista movement’s different demands, I hope to provide a better understanding of how frames achieve resonance among an aggrieved population already willing to engage in collective action.

15 El Tiempo later became La Foja Coleta.
Explanatory Variables

*Relative openness of the political system.*—Measures of the relative openness of the political system generally refer to the state’s response to a given social movement’s demands. Analysts using this approach have focused on identifying the political system as either “open” or “closed” and “strong” or “weak” (Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1995), according to its political responses to pressure exerted by a given social movement. These authors have thus constructed a dichotomy of states. Other scholars have examined whether direct talks between the state and social movement actors took place, in order to identify the issue-specific openness of the political system (Van Cott 2001). These two methods of defining the

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16 Both selection and description biases are highly controversial topics among students of protest (Danzinger 1975; Fransozi 1987; McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1996; Olzak 1989; Snyder and Kelly 1977). McCarthy et al. (1998) have shown that although both national and local newspapers have strong filters in selecting which protest events to cover, the number of protest events reported in news media accurately represents the basic details of protest events, and robust results and conclusions can be achieved when studying protest activity. Thus, the use of newspaper reports of protest events is still considered a valid source of information about mobilizing activity within a given social movement. In the case of the Zapatista movement, the extensive media attention that the group has received since it went public makes the selection bias problem less difficult to resolve, at least in terms of the coverage of protest events conducted by and related to Zapatistas. Moreover, since the Zapatista uprising, the entire state of Chiapas has become an important topic in national and local newspapers. This is particularly true of the national newspaper *La Jornada* and the local newspaper *La Foja Coleta*, whose recognition as independent sources granted them the trust of indigenous communities across the state. (Interview with the late Amado Avendaño, director of *La Foja Coleta*, in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, March 2003.) The reporting team of *La Jornada* has been recognized by the media and scholars specializing in the region for its coverage of the movement and its pro-Zapatista inclinations.
openness of a political system are particularly useful for this study. The relative openness of the political system is measured by looking at the local party in power, federal transfers to local governments, and periods of specific openings and dialogue between the EZLN and the national government.

The variable assessing the local ruling party identifies the relative openness of the local political system, with the assumption that PRI governments are closed, especially to the Zapatistas. A dichotomous variable was constructed to differentiate priista (PRI) from non-priista governments.\(^{17}\) Data on parties in power were taken from electoral results available from the IEE-Chiapas.

Data on yearly budget allocations were used to assess the financial capacity of local governments to respond to demands. States with more capacity to convert demands into policies are considered more capable of responding to social movements and therefore more open (Kitschelt 1986). Herbert Kitschelt proposed looking at the public sector’s share of the country’s gross national product as one measure of this capacity. While, in the present case, these data are not available at the local level, this method allows me to assume that better-endowed local governments in Chiapas had a larger capacity to respond to social demands. If better-endowed governments responded to demands more thoroughly, a negative relationship should be observed between protest activity and wealthier municipalities. This effect should be observable in future protest activity. Therefore, a lagged version of this variable was included in the model.\(^{18}\)

Finally, a dichotomous variable was employed to identify periods of talks between the federal government and the EZLN, which were times of national openings for the Zapatistas. This variable also allows identification of specific time periods within the cycle of protest. The years 1995, 1996, and 2001 were identified as years in which talks took place.

\(^{17}\) Local elections in Mexico take place every three years.

\(^{18}\) Information on budget allocation was gathered from the Sistema Municipal de Base de Datos (SIMBAD, or Municipal System Database) of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI, or National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information) (http://www.inegi.gob.mx).

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**TABLE 1**

Local and National Newspaper Articles on Protest Events (Selected Years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local and national newspapers ......</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local newspapers only ................</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although no talks occurred in 2001, it is considered an open year because the Indigenous Rights Bill was discussed in the Mexican Congress that year, after being introduced by President Vicente Fox as an executive initiative.

Relative stability of electoral alignments.—Electoral data, along with Taagepera and Shugart’s (1989) formula for electoral fractionalization, were used to assess the stability of local and national electoral politics, following other scholars’ work (Jenkins et al. 2003; Snow et al. 2005). This measurement helps identify fragmentation in the electoral arena and, therefore, the competitiveness of elections. The higher the electoral fractionalization index, the more competitive elections are. Data on local and national congressional elections were taken from the IEE-Chiapas and the IFE. At both levels, elections are held every three years. But while variation in local elections is cross-sectional as well as temporal, variation in national results is only temporal.

Presence of allies.—Electoral results are used again to assess the level of PRD support among localities in Chiapas (Snow et al. 2005). To differentiate this measure from the one used to identify the openness of the local political system, the percentage of the vote won by the PRD is considered a measure of the presence of political allies only when this percentage was not sufficient for the party to win power. Here again, variation at the local level occurs across cases and over time, while variation at the national level is only temporal.

State’s capacity for repression.—Yearly counts of military positions and checkpoints per municipio were used to assess this variable. These counts can be criticized as a poor measure of the state’s capacity to repress because the army is not the institution in charge of policing protest activity. Moreover, the data gathered come not from an official source but from a nongovernmental organization, which could introduce some bias. Unfortunately, police reports on protest events are not public information, nor are data on the number of military personnel and military or police expenses. Thus, they cannot be used as measures of repression in Mexico as they have been by scholars studying social movements in other contexts (Earl et al. 2003). Newspaper reports on Zapatista protest events rarely mentioned whether police or military personnel were present and thus cannot be considered a reliable source. Therefore, the information on

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Electoral fractionalization = 1 − ∑(vi), where vi is the proportion of votes won by each party.

Data were gathered from the Centro de Investigaciones Económicas y Políticas de Acción Comunitaria (CIEPAC, or Center for Economic and Political Research and Community Action). Maps of military positions and checkpoints created by survey teams were available in their publications (COMPAZ et al. 1997; Global Exchange and CIEPAC 1999) and on their Web sites.
military presence is considered to be the best approximation available and a good measure for repression, given that military presence in the region was intended as a threat that would reduce Zapatista strength. It is assumed that the effects of changes in the location and number of military checkpoints in the region could be perceived only in future Zapatista protest activity. Accordingly, a lagged military presence variable was included in the model and an additional model was run to analyze the timing effect of repression on future Zapatista protest activity.

Control Variables

Local preexisting organizations.—To count peasant organizations operating in the region prior to the public emergence of the EZLN in 1994, I relied on ResINF (Collier and Ugalde 1999), a database of social information on Chiapas from 1983 to 1993. This data set combines geographic information with coverage of agrarian-related events. It was derived from the Resumen Informativo, a monthly publication with contents culled from the press in Chiapas by the Centro de Información y Análisis de Chiapas (CIACH, or Center of Information and Analysis of Chiapas). Variation in this measure is cross-sectional only.

Demands.—The same newspaper accounts of protests were used to identify the demands presented by protesting groups. Demands related to gaining representation, recognition, and accountability were coded as “political.” They include resignations of mayors due to civil resistance to recognizing their authority, postelectoral conflicts, the freeing of political prisoners, and recognition of indigenous rights. Demands for economic compensation and benefits were defined as “economic.” They include demands for land, higher wages and better working conditions, services, credits, subsidies, and other kinds of compensation. Finally, “peace demands” include calls to resume talks, to stop hostilities, to withdraw the army from the region, to allow the return of displaced persons to their communities, and to protect human rights. Because protests often involved multiple demands, each type of demand was coded as 1 every time it was found in a protest event. As with protest events, demands were aggregated at the municipio per year. Thus, the total number of political, economic, and peace demands were summarized by municipality per year. The distribution of demands identified in Zapatista protest events per year is presented in table 2.

Grievances.—The deprivation index of the Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO, or National Council on Population) was included as a

11 The Center of Information and Analysis of Chiapas was incorporated into CIEPAC in 2001.
measure to control for the effects of socioeconomic grievances across Chiapas in promoting protest events. The deprivation index refers to municipio-based conditions of education, employment, and housing. A scale ranging from 1 to 5 is used to define the municipio’s level of deprivation, from very low to very high. Deprivation data were measured every five years, in 1995, 2000, and 2005.

Locality size.—To control for the higher risk of protest activity in larger and more populous municipalities, I used the size of the locality as the exposure variable in the model (Long and Freese 2006). Total population numbers for each locality were collected from SIMBAD by INEGI.22 Data were taken from the 1995 and 2000 national censuses. Hence, these data offer cross-sectional variation as well as temporal variation between the first six years (1994–99) and the last four (2000–2003).

Previous activity.—To control for the effects of previous protest activity on future protests, the lagged values of the dependent variable were also included in the model.

MODELING ZAPATISTA PROTESTS
Given that the dependent variable consists of counts of Zapatista protest events per locality per year, the most appropriate estimation procedure is an event-count model (Barron 1992; King 1989; Land, McCall, and

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22 No information on population density was available.
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Nagin 1996). Specifically, the model used is a pooled, cross-sectional, time-series, negative binomial model for event counts, using population size as the exposure variable to correct for the overdispersion of protest activity (Long and Freese 2006).

The number of protest events is reported as an incident rate of events over space and time. The average number of protest events in a municipio was 0.65 (with a variance of 6.93). In municipios with at least one protest in the time period, the average per year was 3.35 protest events (with a variance of 26.49). This finding means that protest events across municipios are overdispersed. While 27 localities were constant targets for protesters, with more than 10 events during the period of study, 31 experienced only one protest during the same time period, and 26 localities had no protests over the entire period of study.

This overdispersion of protest events across the state of Chiapas arose from three different sources. The first one is that Zapatistas did not protest outside their region of influence. Of the 26 localities with zero protests, at least 19 lie outside the region. The other seven are found inside the area of influence but are tiny and remote municipalities. The second source of overdispersion is presumably a strategic decision by Zapatista protesters that some localities are better targets for protest events because of their political and socioeconomic salience. Zapatista protesters logically would choose to protest in cities or towns where they could achieve the highest impact and attract the most attention from the public, the national government, and the media. Thus, larger cities with prominent political and economic structures would make better targets for protests. Using population size as the exposure variable, this potential source of overdispersion was eliminated, because the average number of protests in a locality per year became 9.8, with a maximum of 10 and a minimum of 2 protests.

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23 Event-count models measure the number of times an event occurs—in this case, the number of protest events per municipio in a year. The purpose of event history models, on the other hand, is to determine the likelihood that an event will happen. Given this study’s interest in analyzing the frequency of annual protests in localities and not the probability of future events, an event-count model is the more suitable choice.

24 One might also think that the data would fit a hierarchical linear model for repeated observations (level 1) because the same units (protest events per municipio) are measured on more than one occasion (yearly) (Goldstein 2003). But this would be the case only if, in this temporally structured multilevel model, the number and spacing of time points in which measures were captured for each municipio varied from case to case (Hedeker 2004, p. 215; Luke 2004, p. 8). When every case is observed at the same fixed number of time points (years, in this case), it is conventional to view the design as occasions crossed by cases over time (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992, p. 2). Moreover, variation of higher-level variables (level 2) is only temporal, and so all municipios are clustered within the same state and are not compared with municipios in other states. Thus, what could be considered level 2 predictors are the same for all cases and can be modeled with a fixed-effects approach (Luke 2004, p. 21).
Zapatista Mobilization

The third source of overdispersion is the effect of previous protest activity on future protest events. That is to say, municipalities that had experienced protest events in the past were more likely to have protest events in the future. To account for the fact that protest events in a municipio per year are not independent cases, the lagged values of the dependent variable were also included in the model.

To correct for possible heteroscedasticity and serial correlation, robust standard errors clustered by municipality were estimated. The results are presented in table 3 and discussed in the following section.

RESULTS

The results summarized in table 3 show that, after controlling for the overdispersion of protest activity among localities, those municipios with a previous history of protest activity attracted more Zapatista protests than less active localities ($P < .10$). This result is negligible, however, because an increase of one protest event upped protest activity by only 0.03 the next year. In addition, Zapatista protesters seem to have demonstrated more in localities with higher levels of deprivation. For an increase of one unit in the five-point deprivation scale, protest activity increased by 0.33 ($P < .01$).

The combination of local and national political factors offers a view of noteworthy effects on the Zapatista cycle of protest. These results suggest that Zapatista protesters targeted closed local governments ruled by the PRI, with lesser economic resources, stable electoral alignments, and a strong military presence. Electoral openings in the region, such as electoral fractionalization and greater support for the left, seem to have decreased protest activity. Preexisting organizations as mobilizing networks performed as expected, but without statistical significance.

The factor with the most influence on protest activity appears to be electoral fractionalization. An increase of 0.57 points (1 SD from the mean) in the local electoral fractionalization index (which goes from 0 to 1) decreased protest activity by 1.89 events ($P < .01$). PRI-ruled municipios, in contrast, were likely to experience 0.34 more events than non-priista municipios ($P < .10$), and the addition of one military checkpoint in the municipio increased protest activity by 0.06 ($P < .01$). An increase of 380,556 pesos (1 SD from the mean) in the local budget reduced future protest activity by 0.0005 protest events ($P < .05$). Thus, although the federal government increased general transfers to local governments by 8.99% between 1994 and 2003, the decrease in protest activity was almost negligible.

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In 1994 the revenues of all municipios in the state of Chiapas totaled 513,605,658.
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**TABLE 3**
Pooled, Cross-sectional, Time-Series, Negative Binomial Model for Yearly Zapatista Protest Events (Using Population Size as Exposure Variable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Protest Events per Municipio</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative openness of political system (PRI rule)</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative instability of elite alignments (electoral fractionalization)</td>
<td>−1.89***</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of allies (PRD support)</td>
<td>−.69</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State’s capacity for repression (military checkpoints) (lagged)</td>
<td>.06***</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative openness of political system: Dummy negotiating period</td>
<td>−.32*</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal transfers (lagged)</td>
<td>−.0005**</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative instability of elite alignments (electoral fractionalization)</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of allies (PRD support)</td>
<td>−.19***</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controls:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilizing structures (preexisting active organizations)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands’ resonance:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political demands</td>
<td>.08***</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic demands</td>
<td>.05***</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace demands</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deprivation</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of previous protest events (lagged)</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. — N of observations = 1,089; N of groups = 111; log likelihood = −763.61222; Wald $\chi^2 = 767.71$.
* $P < .10$.
** $P < .05$.
*** $P < .01$.

Openings at the local and national levels did not cause increases in protest activity in any case. As noted, when local electoral fractionalization increased, protest activity decreased. At the national level, the relationship between electoral fractionalization in congressional elections and Zapatista protests appears to be positive. It is not statistically significant, however. These mixed effects of local and national electoral fractionalization on Zapatista protest activity might be due to the protesters’ short-lived hopes that electoral democratization would create further institutional pesos. By 2003, they had increased to 5,708,873,860 pesos. Data from SIMBAD of INEGI.

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opportunities for incorporating Zapatista demands. Further research is needed to understand why the effects of these variables do not appear to be consistent.

The relationship between Zapatista protest activity and increased support for a potential Zapatista ally, the PRD, in local and national elections appears to be negative as well. As the PRD won more support locally and nationally, local Zapatista protest events tended to decrease. The effect is significant only at the national level, however, and its magnitude is small. For an increase of 18.75% (1 SD) in PRD seats in the national congress, Zapatista protests decreased by 0.19 protest events ($P < .01$). Here again, increased support for the PRD could have inspired greater hopes, but this alliance proved to be short-lived, because the PRD never committed fully to the Zapatista agenda.

Nor did specific political openings, such as the negotiating periods, function as opportunities for Zapatista protest activity. Activity decreased during periods of talks between 1995 and 1996 as well as in 2001, during deliberations over the Indigenous Rights Bill. In these years, 0.32 fewer protest events occurred than in other years ($P < .10$). Again, a possible explanation is that Zapatista protesters were waiting for the results of these issue-specific openings before resuming their protests.

Figure 3 further illustrates that the relationship between PRI-ruled localities and protest activity is positive and not curvilinear. Figure 4 shows how protests decreased as localities experienced a change in rule. Clear examples of this are Altamirano, which experienced only one protest event during the PRD rule from 1995 to 1998, compared to 10 events during PRI rule from 1999 to 2001, and Ixtapa, where only two protests were held during PRD rule but seven during PRI rule. This linear, positive relationship between the closed nature of PRI rule and Zapatista protest activity is consistent with the positive relationship between the location of military positions and Zapatista protest activity.

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26 This result should be highlighted because the government did not require the Zapatistas to hold protests to a minimum during those times. On the contrary, Zapatistas were encouraged to gather and hold meetings around the location of the talks to support the negotiations.

Fig. 3.—Protests and PRI percentage of the vote

Fig. 4.—Changes in rule and average number of Zapatista protests in a municipio
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over time demonstrated in table 4. This pattern suggests that repressive scenarios with closed local governments and a larger military presence in the region, intended to prevent Zapatista protest activity, actually encouraged protests, as has been noted by theorists (Almeida 2003; Rasler 1996) and members of several nongovernmental organizations. Inversely, in more open scenarios, with electoral openings in the region and a larger national presence for the left, protest activity decreased. The enlarged PRD presence in the national congress could have aroused initial hope for representation of independent interests like the Zapatistas. As elections became more competitive in certain localities, the Zapatistas might have become less active in those areas and redirected their efforts toward the remaining closed political environments, especially the PRI-ruled localities with stable electoral alignments and a strong military presence.

Finally, political, economic, and peace demands triggered protests in a statistically significant way (in all cases). Yet the magnitude of the effect of political and economic demands was smaller than that of demands for peace: one more economic demand presented by protesters per year in a given locality increased protest events by only 0.05, and one more political demand triggered an increase of 0.08 protests, while one more peace demand led to an increase of 0.29 protests. While demands for peace appear to have been prevalent over the cycle of protest, all types of demands had a significant salience within the Zapatista autonomy frame. This finding is important because some movement sympathizers have denied that Zapatistas sought mere economic compensations, fearing that such a perception might discredit the cause of Zapatista autonomy. These results suggest that economic and political claims were influential in triggering protest activity, and therefore should be considered part of the autonomy cause without discrediting the movement.

Only in the last two years did the relationship reverse, showing a negative impact on future protest activities. A possible explanation for this turnabout is that national military presence in the region actually decreased in the last three years of the study. Newly inaugurated President Vicente Fox withdrew large numbers of army troops from the region to fulfill a precondition set by the EZLN for resuming talks. Talks were never resumed, however. Instead, the Indigenous Rights Bill was passed in Congress in 2001.

Interviews with staff members of CIEPAC, Enlace Civil, Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mexicanas por la Paz (COMPAZ, or Coordination of Mexican Organizations for Peace), and Servicios Internacionales para la Paz (SIPAZ, or International Service for Peace) in San Cristóbal de las Casas, March 2003.

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TABLE 4  
MILITARY CHECKPOINTS AND YEARLY  
ZAPATISTA PROTEST EVENTS IN CHIAPAS,  
1994–2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Protest Events per Municipio</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t - 3$</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t - 2$</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t - 1$</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t + 1$</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t + 2$</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t + 3$</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.—$N$ of observations = 441; $N$ of clusters = 111; log likelihood = −206.69; Wald $X^2 = 41.96$.  
* $P < .05$.  
** $P < .01$.

CONCLUSION

The results of this analysis suggest several significant contributions to the understanding of social movements generally and of the Zapatista movement in particular. First, this study has shown that local political factors contribute significantly to the mobilization of a movement even after it has gained national and international salience and the support of transnational social movement networks. The theory of transnational movements emphasizes the role of international factors. In particular, students of the Zapatista movement have focused on the role that sophisticated means of mobilization such as transnational networks and use of the Internet played in sustaining the Zapatista cause over time (Bob 2005; Bruhn 1999; Castells 1997; Collier and Collier 2005; Hellman 1999; Schulz 1998). The availability of these means of mobilization to the Zapatistas made the movement an icon for transnational antiglobalization and indigenous movements (Mattiace 1997; Higgins 2004; Van Cott 2001; Velasco 2003; Yashar 1999) as well as part of the transnational network literature (Brysk 1996; Foran 2003; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Moksnes 2005; Tarrow 2005). This study has shown that, when studying the protest activity of a movement, one needs to examine the local factors and demands that affect its cycle of protest.  

31 Use of the Internet and international support networks was indeed helpful in attracting attention and support and in providing the Zapatistas with a role in the antiglobalization movement and the national and regional indigenous movements. But it is difficult to sustain the claim that these innovative tactics helped mobilize protesters in remote areas of Chiapas that had little or no access to electronic media.
that political conditions operate as opportunities differently in different scenarios. In case of the Zapatistas, closed local governments with a larger repressive presence became the targets of a protest cycle. More significant appeared to be local and national electoral openings and specific openings to the movement, which helped to decrease protest activity where they occurred. Later, these openings proved not to be opportunities for representing Zapatista demands via institutional channels. The signing of the San Andrés Accords was a fiasco, and the Indigenous Rights Law fell short of fulfilling the expectations of the Zapatistas and the Mexican indigenous movement in general. These openings nevertheless momentarily relaxed the protest pressure on the political system. Zapatistas reduced their protest activity during these episodes while waiting for their results. Meanwhile, they concentrated on pressing for the opening of the remaining closed and repressive environments. But once the Zapatistas realized that the openings created by the alternation of parties in power were not going to translate into enlarged opportunities for the movement, they renewed their organizational efforts. A good example is the turn that the movement took in 2003, when the Zapatistas decided to focus their organizational efforts on creating their own structures of autonomous authority after the Mexican government failed to pass legislation that would accurately address their concerns.

These results are noteworthy because factors that have been considered as opportunities for protest activity in open pluralistic scenarios—such as realignments of the political elites underlying the established polity and the increased presence of potential political allies (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McAdam 1996; McCarthy and Zald 1977; 2002; Piven and Cloward 1977)—appear to have depressed protest activity in the case of the Zapatistas. This pattern might have emerged because the Zapatista cycle of protest occurred within a democratization process that these theoretical propositions were not designed to explain, but also because these democratic changes stopped at the electoral level and involved no major institutional changes that would have opened opportunities for incorporating dissident interests like the Zapatistas’ into the state’s agenda. This outcome explains why, despite the fact that the Zapatista uprising was of the catalysts triggering democratization in Mexico, the Zapatistas themselves benefited little from it (García de León 2005). Democratic transitions bring great uncertainty and are not homogenous processes (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Moreover, if such processes appear to be protracted and incomplete (Cornelius 2000; Eisenstadt 2000; Loaeza 2000), analysts should expect changing political conditions to have different and inconsistent effects as opportunities for a social movement.

This finding is central in suggesting that the curvilinear relationship existing between the structure of political opportunities and protest ac-
tivity in well-established democracies (Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978) does not apply to the study of protest mobilization in new social movements within democratic transitions that fall short of meaningful opportunities and substantial concessions. In such cases, the relationship appears to be linear and positive in places where the political system remains closed and potentially repressive but negative where the system has begun to open up, at least electorally. Similarly, specific openings will not become opportunities when such changes are not substantial.

Finally, this study asserts that the plethora of demands presented during the Zapatista cycle of protest went beyond the call for recognition of the right to autonomy. This finding is relevant because it illustrates that, contrary to previously expressed concerns, an array of claims within a frame does not undermine a movement’s cause.

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