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Book Review: Fox, J. (2007). *Accountability Politics: Power and Voice in Rural Mexico*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press

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Comparative Political Studies 2009 42: 578 originally published online 7

November 2008

DOI: 10.1177/0010414008327424

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As the limits of elections for transforming state and society have become clearer, political scientists have struggled to articulate alternative frameworks for studying politics in the developing world. Attempting to move beyond the narrow frame of electoral politics, scholars are currently fixating on patron–client relations and the state. Yet those embarking on this new research agenda would do well to take a close look at Jonathan Fox’s recent book on politics in rural Mexico. This is because Fox arrived at the same conclusion well over a decade ago (Fox, 1994) and has spent the intervening years carefully articulating his own framework for studying the intersection of regimes, states, and patron–client relations—a framework grounded in what he calls “accountability politics.” Fox’s insightful book is most usefully read as a set of closely related essays on the theory and practice of this new framework.

Accountability politics, according to Fox, is the study of “conflict over whether and how those in power are held publicly responsible for their decisions. Accountability politics involves challenging who is accountable to whom, as clients become citizens and bureaucrats become public servants” (pp. 1-2). This approach, in short, seeks to conceptualize and explain variation in the creation of institutions and organizations capable of holding leaders accountable and, in doing so, “to capture the process of dynamic interaction in which weak actors gain leverage” (p. 53). Building on the state-in-society scholarship (e.g., Migdal, 2001), Fox’s approach entails careful observation of how and why collective actors in disempowered arenas of society form and enter into coalitions with actors from other arenas to support new proaccountability organizations. It is, at its core, a classic coalitional approach to explaining institutional capacity.

Fox’s argument in this book can be boiled down to six propositions. First, accountability is not the same thing as democracy. Second, democracy is neither necessary nor sufficient for accountability to exist. Third, institutional reforms alone cannot improve accountability. Fourth, for institutions and organizations to create accountability, they must be supported by coalitions forged between reformers in the state and participatory organizations in civil society. These coalitions constitute the “social foundations of accountability.” Fifth, such coalitions can be constructed even in authoritarian contexts and where civil society has been historically weak. Sixth, the process of constructing accountability can be usefully compared to a “transition to democracy.”

On the first and second points, Fox is convincing. He observes that the study of democracy has become synonymous with the study of competitive electoral politics and the institutional framework that surrounds them. Yet we all know that elections are not the only mechanism through which citizens may become empowered to hold

the state accountable (and in fact, they are often not very good at it). As such, Fox suggests that we separate the study of accountability from the study of democracy: Like Mazzuca (2002), Fox recognizes a “broad conceptual distinction between the political *regime*—the set of public institutions that determine *who* governs—versus the *state*—the set of public institutions that govern society and the economy *in between elections*” (p. 7). Accountability politics, he maintains, should focus on the latter. This distinction between democracy and accountability is critical for Fox’s larger argument: If accountability politics is not simply a subset of competitive electoral politics, a different set of concepts and theories may well be required to understand it. And it is the task of this book to provide that set of concepts and theories.

Fox provides considerable evidence that accountability politics can be analyzed as distinct from the politics of competitive elections. He transcends the “widely accepted proposition that electoral democracy is not sufficient for public accountability” (p. 12) and goes on to document how processes of constructing accountability “tend to unfold outside the realm of national elections and political parties” (p. 1). For example, Fox demonstrates that regime change has not led to improved accountability for rural Mexican voters, who still cannot depend on their ballots being secret (pp. 134-137). Fox also shows how social movements that are good for regime change may be antithetical to improving accountability: “Social movements can often have democratizing *impacts* [without] being *internally* democratic” (pp. 17, 79). Democracy and accountability, for Fox, do not march hand in hand. The foundations of accountability, therefore, must be found elsewhere. Although these points have been made before in various forms, Fox’s added contribution is to integrate them effectively as foundations of this new framework for studying accountability.

On his third, fourth, and fifth points, Fox is also convincing. Throughout the book, he implicitly reacts against a general argument that accountability can be improved by institutional changes designed and implemented by actors outside those groups that the new institutions intend to empower. This makes little sense to Fox, for whom the very possibility of accountability depends crucially on the sustained participation of those very groups in the process of institutional reform: “the construction of public accountability is driven by cycles of mutually reinforcing interaction between the thickening of civil society and state reformist initiatives” (p. 1). Accountability, according to Fox, is not lifelessly generated by institutional change; it is actively created by individuals who organize themselves and their peers into new constituencies and enter those constituencies into new types of proaccountability coalitions. More specifically, Fox argues that institutional reforms can improve accountability only when they result from coalitions between reform-minded state officials and organized constituents who become endowed—formally or informally—with power over the new institutions. Indeed, this is what Fox means when he recurs to the language of “the social foundations of accountability.”

Fox is skeptical that competitive elections make these types of coalitions more likely. This position is supported by the bulk of the book’s empirical material, which focuses on attempts to construct accountability in rural Mexico under authoritarian

rule. Indeed, Fox argues that “Mexico’s political opening” in 2000 helped improve accountability “more because of modest improvement in freedom of association and access to information than because competitive elections allowed the rural poor to hold political parties accountable” (p. 355). It is the freedom to organize civil society—not the freedom to compete formally with the government—that makes possible the proaccountability coalitions Fox seeks. Given that some degree of freedom of association is more likely to be conceded by authoritarian regimes than the freedom to run for office (almost by definition), “even small increments of freedom of association can matter a great deal” (p. 13). With this argument, Fox effectively buttresses his earlier claim that democracy is neither necessary nor sufficient for accountability. More important, however, he suggests that accountability politics is usefully compared across regime types; scholars of accountability politics should not limit their cases to democratic regimes.

Although Fox is convincing throughout much of the book, it is on his sixth point that he risks some conceptual trouble. He argues, in short, that “The concept of ‘transitions to accountability’ can help formulate questions that would address the extraordinary variation in the degree to which proaccountability institutions actually manage to limit political power and to sanction its abuse” (p. 11). Although “transitions to democratic regimes are distinct from ‘transitions to accountability’ involving the rest of the state” (pp. 12-13), he suggests that the accountability approach nonetheless may be rooted in a conceptual universe parallel to that of “transitions to democracy.” Now it is surely true that “the study of ‘transitions to accountability’ is today where the analysis of transitions to democracy was in the late 1970s or early 1980s—still lacking comprehensive, dynamic explanatory frameworks” (p. 10). Yet it is by no means clear that this concept of transitions is the most useful conceptual or analytic starting point for this ambitious new research agenda.

In fact, the study of accountability politics would do well to avoid some of the intellectual cul-de-sacs that plagued the scholarship on regime transitions, which dragged the discipline through a tortuous two-decade debate over conceptualization, teleology, and the relationship between ideal types and real-world practice (see, e.g., Carothers, 2002). It is fortunate that other possible framings exist: Fox himself suggests a distinction between rights and empowerment (pp. 334-336). One can also imagine a scholarship on the “varieties of accountability” that seeks to describe and explain different configurations of who is (and is not) held accountable by whom, under what conditions, and by what institutions. Indeed, a focus on such configurations seems intellectually closer to arguments about the social foundations of democracy, on which Fox often appears to model his work (e.g., p. 12).

Regardless, these types of questions are to be expected when one seeks to articulate the conceptual foundations of a new and important research agenda. And indeed, the book raises many more questions than it answers. Yet *Accountability Politics* introduces a new analytic framework that takes valuable steps toward recapturing aspects of politics in the developing world that have been overlooked by far too many for far too long. As such, it would be unfortunate if Fox’s work were read only

by those interested in Latin America or the rural poor—its potential application is far wider.

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DOI: 10.1177/0010414008327425

The Gulf War of 1991 and the American invasion of Iraq have brought the tension between the Middle East countries and their respective Kurdish communities into greater prominence than at any time before. As these countries struggle to control their current borders, they resort to strategies ranging from outright suppression to autonomy and from democratization to institutional arrangements. The impacts of these strategies as well as efforts to form national identity continue to spark considerable interest in the field of comparative politics (Ibrahim & Gürbey, 2001; Rear, 2008).

Metin Heper's examination of the relations between the Turkish state and its Kurdish citizens is motivated by his dissatisfaction with "the present paradigm," which, in his view, is based on a number of unsubstantiated assertions: (a) that the Turkish state has relied on forced assimilation of ethnic elements, including Kurds; (b) that Kurds have resisted the state's efforts to force assimilation; and (c) that in response to the rebellious elements, the state has used suppression. This paradigm also asserts that the founders of modern Turkey shared the vision of one ethnic community in Turkey—that is, the Turkish ethnic community—and that as a result, all other ethnic communities, the largest of which is the Kurds, have been disregarded and overlooked. This paradigm holds that these reasons lie behind the uprisings of Kurdish population at varying times throughout the republic.

Heper argues that although this paradigm of assimilation-resistance-suppression has been used to explain state-Kurds relations for every decade of the republic, analysts often ignore the fact that "both in the early 1920s, the 1990s, and later, the state