

El Salvador

El Salvador is divided into fourteen *departamentos* and further subdivided into 262 *municipalidades* (C 1983, Art. 200). Decentralization, which began in 1992, has focused on the *municipalidades* (Bird 2001: 5).¹ The central government delegates authority to *departamentos* and appoints *gobernadores* (governors) (C 1983, Arts. 150 and 200).² We conceive *departamentos* as deconcentrated throughout the period.

Since 1932 El Salvador has witnessed numerous military coups, and in the process, the state has become highly centralized (Bird 2001: 150). From 1980–92 the country endured a civil war during which many subnational governments ceased to operate (Bird 2001: 153), and we reflect this in the scoring. The current constitution was enacted in 1983 and partially reformed in 2003.

Overall, *gobernadores* have little functional power (Bird 2001: 144, 156, 167). Their primary role is to represent the president in the territory (Decree 54).^β The *gobernador* also supervises local development, which he does in coordination with local *alcaldes* (mayors) (Decree 54, Art. 2); has responsibilities in sports, cultural, and educational activities at schools; manages public roads and bridges; and coordinates emergency aid.³

The Área Metropolitana de San Salvador (Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, AMSS) is made up of 14 municipalities. The Consejo de Alcaldes del Área Metropolitana de San Salvador (Board of Mayors of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, COAMSS) was created in 1987, in the aftermath of an earthquake that caused significant damage to the city and its surrounding areas in 1986, with the aim of coordinating municipal governments' reconstruction efforts (Andersson 2017, 72). The COAMSS then created a Planning Office of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (OPAMSS) in 1988. Until 1994, the COAMSS functioned as a voluntary inter-municipal association. That year, a decree issued by the national legislative assembly gave the COAMSS and the OPAMSS a specific basis in law (Decree 732, 1994). The decree states that the

¹ The *municipalidades* have municipal councils which hold town meetings (*cabildos abiertos*). The councils appoint representatives to advisory local commissions, and they can issue local ordinances and regulations. A 2018 General Decentralization Bill kept decentralization measures focused on municipalities and proposed no changes to *departamentos*.

² During times of military dictatorship, military officers served as department *gobernadores* (Bird 2001: 150).

³ Ministerio de Gobernación. "Funciones del Gobernador."

http://www.gobernacion.gob.sv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=89&Itemid=151. Accessed August 14, 2019.

COAMSS's functions are those "that the Municipal Councils that make it up entrust to it" (Art. 7). The COAMSS continues to be made up of the mayors of each member *municipalidad*; the mayor of San Salvador acts as the board's coordinator (Art. 8). We therefore code the AMSS as having a non-deconcentrated general-purpose administration (institutional depth = 2) since 1994. Decree 732 also grants the COAMSS specific authority over urban planning, land use regulation, building permits, and inter-municipal coordination in connection to public safety and waste management, among other economic policy matters (Art. 6), so it scores 1 on policy scope. We code the COAMSS as an indirectly elected regional assembly. However, the COAMSS has no fiscal or borrowing autonomy, it does not have an independent executive, and it does not have any shared rule mechanism.

Primary References: El Salvador

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Self-Rule in El Salvador

		Institutional Depth	Policy Scope	Fiscal Autonomy	Borrowing Autonomy	Representation		Self-Rule
						Assembly	Executive	
Departamentos	1950-1979	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1980-1992	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1993-2018	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Área Metropolitana de San Salvador	1994-2018	2	1	0	0	1	0	4

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