



PROJECT MUSE®

Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries

Edward L. Gibson

World Politics, Volume 58, Number 1, October 2005, pp. 101-132 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2006.0018>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/200278>

BOUNDARY CONTROL

Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries

By EDWARD L. GIBSON*

Our universe is not local.
—Brian Greene¹

INTRODUCTION

THE corpulent governor beamed with self-confident delight as he clasped the raised hand of his equally beaming (but not yet self-confident) successor. José Murat, master and governor of the Mexican state of Oaxaca for over five years, had just orchestrated a theoretically anachronistic practice of Mexican politics. He had, without impediment, unilaterally anointed the presumptive future governor of the state of Oaxaca. In the synchronized rituals surrounding such events, local newspapers displayed advertisements by Oaxacan unions, business groups, political luminaries, and even restaurants and shoe stores, paying homage to the governor's heir designate and wishing him well. Governor Murat had just pulled off a *dedazo*, a practice officially dropped in much of the country by the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) during Mexico's slow passage to democratization in the 1990s. In February 2004, however, the PRI's traditional practices of executive succession were alive and well in Oaxaca.

* I thank my Northwestern colleagues Michael Hanchard, James Mahoney, Will Reno, Ben Ross Schneider, Kathleen Thelen, and Jeffrey Winters for helpful comments on earlier versions of this article. I am also very grateful to Jenna Bednar, Ernesto Calvo, Horacio Cao, Teri Caraway, Tulia Falletti, Judith Gibson, Anna Grzymala-Busse, Blanca Heredia, Scott Mainwaring, Robert Mickey, María Victoria Murillo, Hector Schamis, David Seitzer, Julieta Suárez Cao, Enrique Zuleta Puceiro, and, most of all, Eduardo L. Gibson. A grant from the George A. and Eliza Howard Foundation provided a sabbatical leave that made research on this project possible. Research was also supported by Northwestern University and a National Science Foundation CAREER grant (SBR-9702735).

¹ Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality* (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 2004), 81.

The governor's candidate would go on to win the April 2004 gubernatorial election. However, the election was not the ritualistic episode many had expected. Victory was achieved by a narrow margin amid reports of widespread fraud. In the run-up to the campaign, Oaxacan civic organizations, energized by one of most authoritarian governors in recent memory, called upon opposition forces to unite against the PRI. Their calls were heeded by the national leaders of the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) and the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD), who compelled the weak and reluctant local branches of their parties to forge a united opposition front for the gubernatorial race. Intervention by national actors had crystallized the first multiparty opposition challenge to the PRI in the state's history and, also for the first time in history, had put the continuity of local authoritarian rule in the balance.

Meanwhile, in the arid and impoverished northern Argentine province of Santiago del Estero, Governor Mercedes Aragonés de Juárez was presiding over the collapse of a half-century-old provincial authoritarian regime. She was the wife and longtime political partner of Carlos ("Tata") Juárez, a Peronist caudillo and the province's virtual political owner since he first assumed the governorship in 1949.² In 2002 the provincial legislature ordered the Juárez couple's images placed on provincial postage stamps and issued a resolution proclaiming them "Illustrious Protectors of the Province."

By early 2004, however, things had changed dramatically for the Illustrious Protectors. The murders of two young women, linked to members of the provincial elite and security services, sparked massive local mobilizations that attracted scrutiny from the national press and the central government. The dirty little secrets that had been no secret at all to provincial residents for decades were now a matter of national debate. Conflict in Santiago del Estero had escaped the parochial confines of the *Juarista* political system. It was now nationalized.

In early April 2004 President Néstor Kirchner invoked the federal government's powers of intervention and ordered the removal from office and arrest of Nina Aragonés and Carlos Juárez. He appointed a federal "interventor" to govern the province. The president's delegate announced the dawning of a new democratic age in provincial politics, courtesy of the central government.

Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero reveal much about the dynamics of "subnational authoritarianism" in nationally democratic countries—how it persists and how it can unravel. The cases reveal an enduring

² "Tata" is a paternalistic nickname, used by children in reference to a grandparent.

feature of politics in authoritarian provinces: the struggle between local incumbents and oppositions to control the scope of provincial conflict. Incumbents prevail when the scope of conflict is localized and oppositions are cut off from allies and resources in the national polity. Incumbents are threatened when provincial conflict becomes nationalized. This insight reveals a strategic dynamic that gives rise to varied territorial tactics by incumbents and oppositions that are played out in local and national arenas. Continuity or change in subnational authoritarianism is thus driven not by local causes alone but also by interactions between provincial politics and the national territorial system in which they are embedded.

The political situation addressed in this article is an authoritarian province in a nationally democratic country.³ The article explores strategic contexts in which subnational authoritarian leaders (in this article, governors) perpetuate provincial authoritarian regimes, as well as political mechanisms that can undermine such regimes.⁴ The article focuses on the strategic dimensions of continuity and change rather than on structural or endogenous factors (such as local levels of socioeconomic development) that might explain subnational variations in democratic institutionalization. While this focus reflects the constraints of space limitations, it also reflects the article's theoretical concerns. The existence of a democratic national government alongside a provincial authoritarian government within the nation-state creates a situation of regime juxtaposition. Two levels of government with jurisdiction over the same territory operate under different regimes, understood as the set of norms, rules, and practices that govern the selection and behavior of state leaders. This creates strategic challenges for subnational authoritarian elites (and opportunities for local oppositions) that do not exist when national and subnational regime types coincide. In these contexts political pressures from actors in the national territorial system are ongoing potential catalysts for subnational change. They can spark local regime change independently of endogenous pressures. As such, the study of democratization can benefit from an exploration of strategic dimensions of continuity and change in subnational authoritarianism as a first step toward understanding how democracy spreads (or does not spread) *within* the nation-state.

³ I use the term "province" in general discussions. When discussing country-specific politics I employ the term ("state" or "province") used in that country.

⁴ Subnational authoritarian regimes can exist at other jurisdictional levels. City governments or rural municipalities are two nonprovincial examples.

This article is organized as follows. Section I addresses the issue of subnational authoritarianism—how democratization scholarship has shed limited light on the phenomenon and what the relationship is between subnational democratization and territorial politics. Section II focuses on theory development, starting with an abstract theory of conflict in authoritarian provinces and then thickening the theory with a framework for the analysis of “boundary control” by subnational incumbents. Section III applies this framework to the study of recent conflicts over provincial democratization in Oaxaca, Mexico, and Santiago del Estero, Argentina. The implications of the patterns revealed in the case studies for theory and future research will be addressed in the concluding section of the essay.

I. SUBNATIONAL AUTHORITARIANISM, TERRITORIAL POLITICS, AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Subnational authoritarianism is a fact of life in most democracies in the developing and postcommunist world.⁵ It was also a massive fact of U.S. political life until the unraveling of hegemonic party regimes in the South in the middle years of the twentieth century.⁶ A look at democratic countries around the world will thus reveal the unevenness of the territorial distribution of the practices and institutions of democracy within the nation-state. This unevenness can be slight, with no more than minor differences from jurisdiction to jurisdiction in the transparency of electoral procedures or the rule of law. But it can also be dramatic, with full-blown authoritarian regimes depriving provincial inhabitants of rights and liberties enjoyed by citizens of other provinces

⁵ This fact has been discussed in a number of studies, including Guillermo O'Donnell, “On the State, Democratization, and Some Conceptual Problems (A Latin American View with Glances at Some Post-Communist Countries),” Working Paper, no. 193 (Notre Dame: Kellogg Institute, April 1993); Jonathan Fox, “Latin America's Emerging Local Politics,” *Journal of Democracy* 5 (April 1994); Frances Hagopian, *Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Fernando Luis Abrucio, *Os Barões da Federação: O poder dos governadores no Brasil pós-autoritário* (São Paulo: Editora Hucitec/Universidade de São Paulo, 1998); Wayne Cornelius, Todd A. Eisenstadt, and Jane Hindley, eds., *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* (La Jolla: University of California Press, 1999); Rebecca Bill Chavez, *The Rule of Law in Nascent Democracies: Judicial Politics in Argentina* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004); and Kelly McMann, *Economic Autonomy and Democracy: Hybrid Regimes in Russia and Kyrgyzstan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁶ The classic study of authoritarian political systems in the U.S. South is V. O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1949). For a recent theoretically driven study of transitions from authoritarian rule in the region, see Robert Mickey, “Paths Out of Dixie: The Decay of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944–1972” (Manuscript, Department of Political Science, University of Michigan, 2005).

in the same nation-state.⁷ Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero are but two of hundreds of authoritarian provincial “enclaves” that dot the landscapes of democracies around the globe. However, the political processes that feed or starve subnational authoritarianism are still largely a mystery in the comparative literature on democratization.

There are several reasons for the theoretical neglect of subnational authoritarianism in the democratization literature. Some of these reasons derive from theoretical or methodological limitations of democratization theories, limitations that have been driven by a whole-nation bias that sees democratization from the perspective of national institutions, actors, and movements.⁸ Furthermore, this topic concerns the territorial dimension of democratization, which arguably has been the least developed dimension of democratization theories. Democratization studies have tended to analyze political processes along nonterritorial lines of conflict, including struggles between social classes, partisan forces, social movements, and economic interests. Less well analyzed have been the geographic dimensions of conflict—conflict between center and periphery, levels of government, and regionally organized actors. These conflicts lie in the realm of “territorial politics,” which, building on Sidney Tarrow’s succinct formulation, is not *about* territory but is about how politics is organized and fought out *across* territory.⁹

We know little about how democratization struggles are fought across territory. Understanding how this takes place in a nationally democratic country requires studying the political topographies of the democratic state and how these constrain and empower political actors in their territorial strategies of political control.¹⁰ Any theory of subnational democratization, therefore, must be rooted in theories of territorial politics.¹¹

⁷ To avoid mission creep in this article, I do not classify the national regimes as diminished subtypes of democracy. I simply analyze subnational authoritarianism as a problem of governance in national democratic regimes. For a critique of the trend toward creating typologies, see Ariel Armony and Hector Schamis, “Babel in Democratization Studies,” *Journal of Democracy* 16 (October 2005).

⁸ The concept of “whole nation bias” is taken from Stein Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties: Approaches to the Comparative Study of the Processes of Development* (New York: David McKay Company, 1970). See also Richard Snyder, “Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36 (Spring 2001).

⁹ Sidney Tarrow, “Introduction,” in Tarrow, Peter Katzenstein, and Luigi Graziano, eds., *Territorial Politics in Industrial Nations* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 1.

¹⁰ I borrow the phrase “political topographies” from Catherine Boone, *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹¹ “Territorial politics” is an interdisciplinary field that has risen and fallen in popularity in political science. Some of the more notable works in comparative politics, which swam against the tide of “whole nation” political economy studies of the 1970s and 1980s, include Stein Rokkan and Derek Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of West European Peripheries* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage

ENTANGLED INSTITUTIONS: CONFLICT ACROSS TERRITORIAL ARENAS

All conflict in national polities takes place in a hierarchy of territorial organizations and arenas. In any large-scale system of territorial governance political institutions are entangled across space. Strategies of political control are thus never limited to any single arena.

These observations have a number of implications for the study of politics. First, we must pay attention to the variety of ways in which political elites pursue territorial strategies and to the ways in which local territorial strategies are used as means toward other objectives in the political system. Political geographer Robert Sack defines territoriality as “a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area.”¹² “Controlling area” in subnational politics often means monopolizing power in the local political arena, but it also means manipulating levers of power in other arenas as well. It requires controlling linkages between levels of territorial organization as well as exercising influence in national political arenas.

Second, the entangled nature of the territorial system calls for consideration of the functional nature of relationships between levels of government and the implications this has for power and political outcomes. As Sidney Tarrow suggests, we must ask “first, what tasks does the periphery perform for the center of the political system. . . ? Second, what are the uses of the center for the periphery?”¹³

These are helpful questions around which to organize explorations of territorial dimensions of power. Literatures on center-periphery dynamics often stress the subordination of the periphery to the center. Thus, Rokkan and Urwin see center and periphery in terms of “a spatial system of authority and subordination.”¹⁴ However, the stress on sub-

Publications, 1983); and Tarrow, Katzenstein, and Graziano (fn. 9). Recent works include Richard Snyder, *Politics after Neoliberalism: Reregulation in Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Jeffrey Anderson, *The Territorial Imperative: Pluralism, Corporatism, and Economic Crisis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Edward L. Gibson, “The Populist Road to Market Reform: Policy and Electoral Coalitions in Mexico and Argentina,” *World Politics* 49 (April 1997); Kent Eaton, *Politics beyond the Capital: The Design of Subnational Institutions in Latin America* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004); Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Tulia Falleti, “A Sequential Theory of Decentralization: Latin American Cases in Comparative Perspective,” *American Political Science Review* 99 (August 2004); Boone (fn. 10); and Daniele Caramani, *The Nationalization of Politics: The Formation of National Electorates and Party Systems in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹² Robert Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1.

¹³ Tarrow (fn. 9), 2.

¹⁴ Rokkan and Urwin (fn. 11), 4.

ordination can obscure the importance of the periphery for a number of tasks of territorial governance. The periphery may “need” the center for many things, but the center also “needs” the periphery for vital functions, including maintaining political order throughout the national territory, delivering votes, or providing services. It is thus more fruitful to look to the mutual interdependence of center and periphery than to assume the subordination or marginalization of the periphery.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIZATION AND SUBNATIONAL

AUTHORITARIANISM: AN INTERDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP

One of the unremarked facts of the third wave transitions to democracy was that with national democratization often came the consolidation of provincial authoritarianism. Democratic transitions, while transforming politics at the national level, create little pressure for subnational democratization. In fact, they often hinder it.

To understand why this happens, it helps to bear in mind the differential effects of transitions from authoritarian rule on the national and subnational arenas. In cases where the center had exercised tight control over subnational officials, the weakening of the center in transitional periods empowered local actors and reduced their accountability to center elites. In plural local contexts this often hastened democratization, leading to the emergence of democratic “oases” in nationally authoritarian countries. In authoritarian local contexts it often had the reverse effect. Local elites isolated their provinces and resisted democratization pressures from the center. In these cases authoritarian “enclaves” in nationally democratizing countries emerged.¹⁵ Furthermore, during founding elections subnational political leaders often became important regional allies of national parties. This increased their leverage and helped put concerns about the authoritarian nature of the local interlocutor on the back burner of the national party’s agenda.

During the early years of a democratic regime, presidents also have many issues on their minds. Subnational democratization is seldom one of them. Authoritarian provincial political elites, with their abundant supplies of voters and legislators, can be important members of national governing coalitions. Thus, democratically elected central governments may find that the costs of challenging peripheral authoritarians outweigh the benefits because the authoritarian periphery serves

¹⁵ Thus, Cornelius characterizes Mexico as a “mosaic” of democratic and authoritarian states. Wayne Cornelius, “Subnational Politics and Democratization: Tensions between Center and Periphery in the Mexican Political System,” in Cornelius, Eisenstadt, and Hindley (fn. 5).

the democratic center in tasks vital to national political governance. If subnational authoritarianism persists in a nationally democratic country, therefore, it is because it often meets important strategic needs of national democratic governments.

II. BOUNDARY CONTROL: A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SUBNATIONAL POLITICAL CHANGE

In his critical study of American Democracy, *The Semisovereign People*, E. E. Schattschneider lays out a general logic of political conflict that can be applied fruitfully to the study of subnational territorial control.¹⁶ Schattschneider notes that in any situation of political conflict between two unequally matched parties, the main incentive of the stronger party is to keep the conflict as private as possible. The unequal power match between the two is thus maintained in this situation, and the stronger party will likely prevail in the conflict. The weaker party, by contrast, has every incentive to expand the number of participants in the conflict. Bringing in third parties, expanding the scope of the conflict, alters the balance of power between the two original parties. Weaker parties in a private conflict, therefore, have an interest in what Schattschneider called the "socialization" of that conflict.

This logic is applicable to territorial politics. In authoritarian provinces, incumbents have an interest in keeping conflicts localized, whereas oppositions have an interest in nationalizing local conflict. The leaders of a provincial authoritarian regime, therefore, will be engaged constantly in strategies of "boundary control," maximizing incumbent influence over local politics and depriving oppositions of access to national allies and resources.¹⁷ The opposition will be doing just the opposite, looking for ways to breach provincial borders and bring national actors into the local conflict. The outcome of this struggle is vital to patterns of subnational political change. The process is displayed schematically in Figure 1.

This abstract model provides the basis for building a more detailed theoretical framework that situates provincial conflict in a national territorial system. Boundary control in a large-scale system of territorial governance is played out in three spheres of political action: subnational arenas, national arenas, and the institutional links between them. Here

¹⁶ Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

¹⁷ I borrow this concept from Rokkan and Urwin's (fn. 11) study of center-periphery politics, which examined "boundary control" primarily as a peripheral defensive strategy against cultural encroachments from the center.

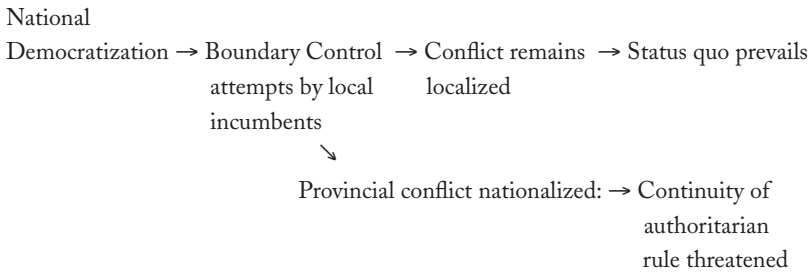


FIGURE 1

CONFLICT CONTROL AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN AUTHORITARIAN PROVINCES
WHERE NATIONAL POLITY IS DEMOCRATIZED

I will identify three common strategies of boundary control: (1) the parochialization of power, (2) the nationalization of influence, and (3) the monopolization of national-subnational linkages.

THE PAROCHIALIZATION OF POWER

The first obvious unit of analysis in the study of "area control" is the area actually being controlled. The "parochialization of power" thus refers to local strategies of political control. Where the unit of analysis is a province, such strategies seek to maximize gubernatorial hegemony over the subnational territorial system. This includes provincial institutions, such as the local executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as provincial party organizations. It also includes lower levels of government, such as municipalities and other jurisdictions. Control over opposition also requires management of subnational regional cleavages, which provide the basis for potential partisan alignments. Such strategies can acquire various institutional, coercive, and strategic forms. However, the specific mix of these will be conditioned strongly by the national political context in which the province is situated.

In nationally democratic countries, authoritarian provincial incumbents face two apparently contradictory tasks. They must exercise authoritarian control over the local polity while linking it institutionally to the national democratic polity. Local institutional forms of domination must therefore be compatible with national political institutions. To V. O. Key, one effective institutional mechanism for achieving these goals was the state-level single-party system. Based on his study of politics in the U.S. South, Key suggested that this institutional form was effective

not only for exercising local domination (thanks to “the extreme difficulty of maintaining an organized opposition”) but also as “an arrangement for national affairs.”¹⁸

This pattern can be generalized to other cases of provincial authoritarianism in nationally democratic countries. Where national party institutionalization is a reality, there are strong incentives to exercise local control through party institutions. This requires strategies to bend local institutional arrangements toward the goal of building and maintaining provincial hegemonic parties.¹⁹ Variations of the beast can include local hegemonic parties linked to a national party, such as those observed by Key in the United States, or more flexible arrangements, such as cartels of local elite parties. Whatever the actual form, subnational hegemonic parties are the most important institutional manifestation of provincial authoritarianism in nationally democratic countries.²⁰

THE NATIONALIZATION OF INFLUENCE

Successful subnational authoritarian leaders are players on the national stage. They can be low-key national players who occupy national positions for the sole purpose of buttressing their control at the provincial level. These can be former governors serving time in the senate to influence legislation or fiscal appropriations relating to their provinces. They can also include sitting governors who control the province’s delegation in the national congress. This national presence is central to subnational leverage over national political decisions affecting the province.²¹

¹⁸ Key (fn. 6), 16, 71–72.

¹⁹ Where national party institutionalization is weak, however, the parochialization of power could include such institutional alternatives as bureaucratic control. See Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

²⁰ V. O. Key employed the “single party” concept in his study, but as Giovanni Sartori suggests, it is problematic for subnational contexts where national party competition exists. Sartori distinguishes between “predominant parties” and “hegemonic parties”; Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976). In the predominant party system one party wins majorities on a regular basis, but as a result of free competition. In hegemonic party systems, hegemonic parties win by design—power holders, through legal and illegal means, ensure the victory of the dominant party; see, in particular, his discussion of Mexico’s PRI (pp. 232–35). This power scenario is closer to the subnational cases referred to in this article than the predominant party system scenario. Hence, the term “subnational hegemonic party” will be employed in this article in relation to subnational authoritarian contexts.

²¹ One of the most dramatic examples of such leverage was revealed in a remark made by U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt to black leaders seeking his support for federal anti-lynching legislation in the 1930s. Southern legislators, he noted, “are chairmen or occupy strategic places on most of the Senate and House committees. If I come out for the antilynching bill now, they will block every bill I ask Congress to pass. . . . I just can’t take that risk.” Quoted in Kari Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South: 1932–1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Richard F. Bensel provides extensive documentation of Southern national legislative strategies after 1880 in *Sectionalism and American Political Development, 1880–1980* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

However, such leaders can also be actors whose participation in national arenas reflects national ambitions. In federal systems governors are uniquely positioned to use local power as a springboard to national office. Complacent assumptions about the territorially contained nature of “backwater” politics can thus often be shattered when the periphery catapults its authoritarian progeny to the pinnacles of national power.²²

The subnational hegemonic party is also important to the nationalization of influence. As “an arrangement for national affairs,” it maximizes the leverage of local incumbents in the national congress. The greater the number of national legislators who respond to the governor, the more leverage the governor has over national politicians. It also increases the governor’s influence in factional competition within the national party. When more votes are delivered to particular national party leaders, the governor has more leverage in a national party faction.

Such a national presence, however, can be double-edged. While necessary for effective local control, it is also the Achilles’ heel for subnational authoritarian regimes. When provincial political leaders become national leaders, they will also become embroiled in the conflicts of national politics. Provincial leaders can thus become targets of national leaders who, while totally unconcerned about politics in their adversaries’ province, know that the only way to eliminate them is to undermine the local power structure that supports them. The virtuous cycle of subnational democratization can sometimes be set in motion by nothing more than a vile political dispute between national leaders.

MONOPOLIZATION OF NATIONAL-SUBNATIONAL LINKAGES

“Linkages” between the arenas of a national territorial system are crucial to the organization of power at all levels of territorial organization. However, “linkage” is somewhat undenotative as a concept. The one definition among many that seems to work best is: “A connecting part, *whether in material or immaterial sense*; a thing (occas. a person) serving to establish or maintain a connexion; . . . a means of connexion or communication.”²³

²² A few quick examples: Fernando Collor de Melo, ex-governor of the peripheral northeastern state of Alagoas in Brazil, served as president of Brazil from 1989 until his impeachment in 1992. Carlos Menem, longtime governor of the peripheral province of La Rioja, became president of Argentina in 1989. In Mexico, Roberto Madrazo, the authoritarian governor of Tabasco that President Zedillo unsuccessfully attempted to remove in 1995, became president of the PRI and a presidential contender in 2000 and 2006.

²³ *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), s.v. “linkage,” emphasis added.

Allowing that a link can be either material (an institution, for example) or immaterial (a relation, affinity, or communication flow) helps us get a handle on the actual objects of struggle between actors in a national territorial system. Linkages can include institutions established to regulate interprovincial and national-subnational governmental relations, institutions or persons to monitor provincial activities and expenditures, or institutions to organize the representation of provincial interests before the center. They can include revenue flows from center to periphery, communication flows, or service delivery between levels of government. They can also include relationships between national and local parties, between national and local unions, or between nongovernmental organizations. And finally, they can involve procedures for nominating local representatives to national institutions.²⁴ In territorial politics, whoever controls linkages controls power.

BOUNDARY-OPENING AGENTS IN PROVINCIAL POLITICS

Rokkan and Urwin write that “the degree to which the political, economic, and cultural boundaries of a periphery can be penetrated has important consequences for the internal structuring of the peripheral population. . . . In any such inquiry we have to distinguish between boundary-opening and boundary-strengthening groups or agencies within the periphery.”²⁵ In this spirit, it might be useful to follow the discussion of boundary control with a brief consideration of theoretical scenarios for “boundary opening” in authoritarian provincial politics.

A provincial conflict is “nationalized” when external actors ally with local oppositions, invest resources in the jurisdiction, and become participants in the local struggle for power. A first step in such a process is likely to be a local crisis in which provincial oppositions bring their conflict to the attention of national actors and succeed in linking the local conflict to the political or territorial interests of such actors.²⁶ Local actors are likely to include provincial opposition parties or civil society organizations. Internal factionalism in provincial hegemonic parties is also a likely source of organized challenges to incumbents.

Identifying potential *national* boundary-opening agents requires that the “center” be seen not as a unitary actor (as often happens when the

²⁴ Tarrow (fn. 9) describes these links as “networks of exchange” between center and periphery (p. 3).

²⁵ Rokkan and Urwin (fn. 11), 4.

²⁶ A reverse scenario is where national actors intervene unilaterally. However, odds for success are low without mobilized or institutionally capable local interlocutors. The contrast between the nineteenth-century “Reconstruction” in the U.S. and the twentieth-century “Second Reconstruction” provides telling evidence. See Richard M. Valelly, *The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

center-periphery dichotomy is employed) but as constellations of institutional actors with particular interests and preferences regarding territorial politics. Where local party conflicts coincide with national partisan interests, national party leaders can be important boundary-opening agents in provincial politics. But partisan interests of party leaders may conflict with bureaucratic or territorial interests of presidents, and the latter may conflict with the institutional interests of national legislative leaders. These conflicts may constrain action by particular actors or may spark intervention in unexpected ways. National interventions in subnational politics may thus not follow as predictable a pattern as those reading action off partisan affiliations might anticipate. Similarly, civil society organizations or national judiciaries can act independently of parties and presidents. Explaining patterns and sequences of national intervention in provincial politics thus requires a sense of how actors in national institutions are connected to one another and how these connections coincide with conflict patterns in subnational politics.

III. SUBNATIONAL DEMOCRATIZATION STRUGGLES: OAXACA IN MEXICO AND SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO IN ARGENTINA

Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero provided timely opportunities for tracing patterns of control and opposition in subnational authoritarian regimes. When research was initiated for this article in 2003, both were authoritarian provinces in countries that had experienced the prior democratization of the national government.²⁷ Over the next two years both also experienced major struggles in which the continuity of the authoritarian regime was in play. Incumbents prevailed in Oaxaca and succumbed in Santiago del Estero. However, the outcomes matter less for the analytical purposes of this essay (as important as they were to the participants) than the opportunity the open conflicts provided for observation of boundary-control and boundary-opening strategies in authoritarian provincial politics.

²⁷ This local authoritarian situation was confirmed prior to field research as a basis for case selection (based on close examination of the cases and local expert knowledge). As a selection rule, I considered the restriction of either of Robert Dahl's "polyarchy" dimensions, "contestation" or "inclusion," to distinguish authoritarian from democratic regimes. See Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971). I also considered observance of the rule of law as an additional criterion for classification. Systematic restriction of any of these conditions was considered sufficient to classify a provincial regime as nondemocratic. In Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero clear restrictions on political contestation sufficed to render a classification (the widespread violation of the rule of law and civil liberties also applied to these cases, as will be demonstrated below).

MEXICO: A PARTY-LED DEMOCRATIZATION EFFORT

THE PAROCHIALIZATION OF POWER IN OAXACA

The twelve years preceding the election of José Murat as governor of Oaxaca were characterized by a slow pluralization of authoritarian politics in the state. During the gubernatorial term of Heládio Ramírez (1986–92) the Oaxacan PRI responded to growing unrest with co-optation of civic opposition and tolerance of local electoral victories by opposition parties.²⁸ Governor Ramírez's successor, Diódoro Carrasco (1992–98), continued his predecessor's approach. In a context of hegemonic PRI rule, during Carrasco's governorship the left-leaning PRD became the state's second party, and the conservative PAN captured the mayoralty of the capital city of Oaxaca.²⁹

José Murat had been a visible player in the Oaxacan and national PRI. He worked closely with Governor Ramírez as an interlocutor with local opposition forces. He served stints in the national Senate and in the Chamber of Deputies, during which he also became connected to national networks of influence within the ruling party. By 1998 Murat was a clear contender for the gubernatorial nomination.

There was one problem, however. He was not an insider in Governor Diódoro Carrasco's circles. When Governor Carrasco's selection of another candidate became known, Murat went directly to the president. He threatened to defect to the opposition PRD if he was not designated the PRI's gubernatorial nominee in Oaxaca. Given the national competitive pressures on the PRI, Murat's threat was credible. The party had suffered prominent defections in other states, and rather than risk losing a PRI state bastion to the opposition, President Zedillo relented.³⁰ He compensated Governor Carrasco with a promotion to the national

²⁸ See Snyder (fn. 11) for Oaxacan politics under Governor Ramírez. For earlier periods, see Fausto Díaz Montes, *Los Municipios: La Disputa por el Poder en Oaxaca* (Oaxaca: Instituto de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1980); Víctor Raúl Martínez Vázquez, *Movimiento Popular y Política en Oaxaca, 1968–1986* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1990); Raúl Benítez Zenteno, ed., *Sociedad y Política en Oaxaca, 1980* (Oaxaca: Instituto de Estudios Sociológicos, 1980); and Colin Clarke, *Class, Ethnicity, and Community in Southern Mexico: Oaxaca's Peasantries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁹ PRI hegemony nevertheless characterized Oaxacan politics. In the municipal elections of 1995, the PRI received 60 percent more votes than its nearest competitor and won the mayoralties of 111 of the 160 municipalities where party elections were held. For municipal election trends between 1980 and 1998, see Víctor Raúl Martínez Vázquez and Fausto Díaz Montes, eds., *Elecciones Municipales en Oaxaca* (Oaxaca: Instituto de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2001).

³⁰ This version was confirmed by former governor Diódoro Carrasco, who asserted that "the designation of José Murat as PRI nominee was a decision by President Zedillo. He would regret it later."

Interior Ministry. For the next two years Diódoro Carrasco would be a determined factional adversary of Governor Murat from his powerful perch in the national government.

Upon his election as governor, Murat lost no time in consolidating his control over the Oaxacan polity. In a local context of hegemonic party politics, the most important threats came from rival PRI factions (namely, Diodoristas, who now had a powerful sponsor in the national government). Parochializing power thus meant neutralizing political actors with ties to national rival PRI factions as a first order of business. Defying a long-standing norm of respect for *continuidad de equipo* (administrative continuity), Murat purged the state government of officers linked to the Carrasco administration. He also replaced the leadership of the Oaxacan state congress with loyal Muratistas.³¹ In addition, he isolated the largely Diodorista Oaxacan delegation to the national congress.³²

THE ELECTION OF PRESIDENT FOX AND THE STRENGTHENING OF LOCAL AUTHORITARIAN RULE

"The election of Vicente Fox strengthened Murat's political control."³³ Variations of this statement were made repeatedly in author interviews with politicians and political observers in Oaxaca. There is an apparent irony in the observation, since the 2000 election concluded Mexico's long democratic transition by bringing a non-PRI president to power. However, the record confirms this prevailing wisdom. The change of government greatly relieved Murat of pressures from the center. It eliminated constraints on his administration from a central government controlled by his own party. This was doubly significant for Murat, because those in control of the central government were his party rivals.

In addition, the election of Vicente Fox brought forth an inexperienced national government in a political context in which the PRI dominated the national legislature and a majority of state governments. Even if the Fox government had known how to use the levers of the national

Author interview with Diódoro Carrasco, Mexico City, April 4, 2005. Shortly before Murat's threat, Ricardo Monreal, a PRI leader in the state of Zacatecas, defected to the PRD and went on to win the 1998 gubernatorial election. His defection sent shock waves throughout the national PRI.

³¹ Early on Murat secured the election of Juan Díaz Pimentel as president of the Oaxacan legislature. Díaz was also co-owner of *El Tiempo*, a local newspaper acquired by Murat and other partners early in his term.

³² Author interview with Vicente de la Cruz, national congressman for Oaxaca, 1997–2000, Mexico City, February 14, 2004.

³³ Ibid. Another local observer stated that "this period of party turnover in the national government has greatly favored Murat"; author interview with Víctor Raúl Martínez Vazquez, political scientist, Oaxaca, February 16, 2004.

territorial system against its state-based party rivals, it had few incentives to do so. President Fox needed interlocutors in the opposition. PRI governors were major power brokers in the new political context. The president had pressing national agendas to pursue, and challenging authoritarian governors was not one of them. As one Oaxacan politician (then in the opposition) lamented in early 2004, “There is a lack of interest on the part of the federal government in the democratization of the states.”³⁴

Unencumbered by central government controls and firmly in control of the Oaxacan PRI, Governor Murat turned his attention to hegemonizing other parts of the local polity. A key element in the parochialization of power was control over municipal politics. To this end, the governor freely used a constitutional prerogative available to Mexican governors, the power of “intervention.” Technically, this is a power to remove municipal authorities in the event of civil disorder or threats to local governability. The governor’s control of the Oaxacan state legislature, which must approve such interventions, made them easy to carry out. In the first five years of his administration Murat suspended or removed municipal authorities in 140 of Oaxaca’s 570 municipalities (25 percent of the total). The most politically significant interventions took place in urbanized municipalities controlled by the opposition. Of the 140 interventions, 48 were in opposition-controlled municipalities.³⁵

The partisan consequences of these interventions were significant. After the 2001 local elections the opposition PRD controlled thirty-six municipalities. By mid-2003 they governed twenty-nine—seven had been subjected to “intervention” by the governor. Similarly, in 2001 the PAN had won in twenty-nine municipalities. By mid-2003 they controlled only seventeen. The biggest proportional blow came to Convergencia, a political party/movement of ex-PRI leaders.³⁶ After the 2001 elections Convergencia controlled six municipalities. By mid-2003 it only controlled one—the capital city of Oaxaca. Given his party’s control over rural municipalities, which were strongly overrepresented in the state legislature, the governor’s assault on urban municipalities took care of key potential local challenges to his control of the state.

Control over the state legislature also gave the governor control over the state judiciary, which did not challenge the governor’s use of funds,

³⁴ Author interview with Juan Manuel Cruz Acevedo, former president of the Oaxacan legislature, Oaxaca, February 17, 2004.

³⁵ “Murat: retrato de un cacique,” *Reforma*, October 19, 2003, 15.

³⁶ Convergencia has become a vehicle of choice across Mexico for lapsed state PRI leaders to run against the PRI.

assaults on municipal autonomy, or electoral practices.³⁷ Press reports of the midterm elections of 2003 document wide-scale electoral manipulation, diversion of federal funds to partisan activities, fraud, clientelistic vote buying, and co-optation and intimidation of the opposition.³⁸ Grouped collectively under the name *cochinero electoral* (electoral pig pen), these practices solidified Muratismo's control over party politics. In 2003 the PRI swept to victory in all of the state's eleven congressional districts.

MONOPOLIZING LOCAL-NATIONAL LINKAGES

The Oaxacan state government receives over 90 percent of its revenues from the federal government.³⁹ Some of these funds come in the form of direct, unearmarked transfers to the state government, but a sizable share comes through transfers that are earmarked for specific programs and are monitored by federal delegates appointed by the national government. The federal delegates are a key linkage between national and subnational governments in Mexico's territorial system. In the two years following the election of the Fox government, Murat replaced federally appointed delegates with delegates to his own liking. He did so with virtually no challenges from the federal government.⁴⁰ His neutralization of the federal delegate network in Oaxaca gave Murat free rein over the use of federal funds in his state.⁴¹ It also gave him leverage over municipal leaders, most notably the opposition mayor of the capital city of Oaxaca, since a sizable share of federal funds was designated for public works projects in the city.

Another step toward the monopolization of local-national linkages lay in changing the composition of the state's national congressional delegation. Thanks to his control over local party nominations, Governor Murat put together a solid block of Muratista deputies in the national congress by 2001. This enhanced his abilities to extract valuable

³⁷ In fact, the president of the state supreme court, Raúl Bolaños, was a prominent contender for Murat's nomination as PRI gubernatorial candidate in 2004.

³⁸ *Reforma* (fn. 35).

³⁹ INEGI, *Finanzas Públicas Estatales y Municipales de México* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática, 1998).

⁴⁰ As captured by the abject statement by the federal secretary for natural resources after Murat removed one of his delegates: "We need federal delegates in the states that have a good working relationship with the governors, and this relationship was already very deteriorated." Quoted in "Aclaran Destitución en Oaxaca," *Reforma*, August 22, 2002, available at <http://www.reforma.com/>.

⁴¹ The main budgetary lines of federal transfers to the states are known as "ramo 33" and "ramo 28." In a colorful display of local political culture, Margarita Ramos, a Murat operative in the city of Juchitan was known by locals as "Margarita Ramos 33," for her freewheeling distribution of federal funds to party loyalists.

appropriations from the congress for the Oaxacan government and, of course, to advance the electoral fortunes of the ruling local party. National senator Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, who would later become Murat's designated gubernatorial nominee, was the coordinator for the PRI in the Oaxacan federal elections of July 2003. Later that year he remarked happily that "the work carried out by the Oaxacan deputies in the national congress and in the capture of budgetary appropriations was fundamental to the success of the PRI in Oaxaca. . . . Murat attracted considerable funding. . . . This was perceived by the population and it was reflected in its vote."⁴²

THE NATIONALIZATION OF INFLUENCE: OAXACA IN MEXICAN POLITICS

Governor Murat was closely allied to the national faction led by Roberto Madrazo, former governor of the State of Tabasco, president of the PRI, and leader of the "dinosaurio" wing of the party that had opposed President Zedillo's support of a democratic transition. In a national context where governors were lynchpins of national coalition building, Murat's control of state politics made him a valuable ally of national factional leaders. He played a key role in the election of Madrazo to the presidency of the PRI. As the national newspaper *La Jornada* noted in 2002, "He is considered one of the unquestioned leaders of the *cochinero* [pig pen] that took Roberto Madrazo to the presidency of the PRI."⁴³

"Murat's fate is linked to the fate of Madrazo."⁴⁴ This statement, made by a local political observer, captures the national objectives of Murat's local strategies of territorial control. In Mexico's political system there is no reelection of governors, who serve a single six-year term. This gives local territorial strategies key national objectives. The success of a PRI governor opens the way to his or her promotion to a top national executive position. While in the old days "success" usually meant administering the state in a manner pleasing to the president, in the current situation it means becoming politically useful to the factional leadership to which the governor is allied. This means several things—delivering votes in primaries, delivering blocks of legislators that support the faction, and strengthening local electoral machines for future national elections.⁴⁵

⁴² *Reforma* (fn. 35), 17.

⁴³ "Murat, un rostro del nuevo PRI," *La Jornada*, April 21, 2002, available at <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/>.

⁴⁴ Author interview with Víctor Raúl Martínez Vazquez, Oaxaca, February 16, 2004.

⁴⁵ Madrazo himself publicly recognized the national stakes of the 2004 gubernatorial contest in Oaxaca: "Oaxaca is strategic because whatever party wants to win the presidency of Mexico has to win the state. . . . In Oaxaca the next presidential administration is being defined." Quoted in Mica Rosenberg, "Power Politics: Oaxacan Style," *SIPA News* (December 2004), 23.

Increased national party competition thus provided perverse incentives to Governor Murat to strengthen local authoritarian rule. The more successful he was at eliminating local PRI rivals and the more successful at delivering large blocs of votes and legislators to his PRI patron, the more leverage he would have within the national faction with which he was allied. Thus, ironically, increased national party competition created incentives for authoritarian strategies at the state level.

THE NATIONAL BACKLASH: PARTY-LED EFFORTS TO DEMOCRATIZE
OAXACAN POLITICS

Governor Murat's authoritarian rule sparked little mobilization by the local branches of the PRD and PAN, both of which had been brought to a low ebb during his governorship. Initially then, the main local partisan challenge to Murat's rule came from PRI factionalism. And this was based in Oaxaca City, the sophisticated and politically diverse urban "jewel" of the state.

In 2001 Gabino Cué Monteagudo, a former PRI Diodorista politician, had breached the political boundaries built by the governor by winning the mayoralty of Oaxaca as a candidate for *Convergencia*, the preferred party vehicle of PRI dissident factions in Mexico. In 2004, supported by Oaxaca's most important independent civil society organizations, he announced his intention to run for governor as a *Convergencia* candidate. The problem for Cué was that he would have to do so as head of a multiparty alliance if he were to have any hope of taking on the governor's impressive statewide machine. Neither the local PAN nor the local PRD had any interest in forming part of such an alliance. The local parties were weak, starved for resources, and co-opted by the state's governor.⁴⁶

Cué therefore took his case to the national PAN and the PRD, both of which responded eagerly to his overtures.⁴⁷ The parties had a strong interest in seeing Murat's candidate defeated. Murat had become a major headache for the national PAN. He had not turned out to be the "interlocutor" among governors that Vicente Fox had hoped for. Furthermore, his rise as a major player in the PRI's national presidential strategies made him a target of the national leadership of the PAN. Similarly, the national PRD was anxious not to lose further ground in the southern region of the country, one of its important regional strongholds. Governor Murat, whose neutralization strategies had been particularly effective against the local PRD, threatened to close off a vital theater in the southern part of the country.

⁴⁶ See, for example, "El PRD está en bancarrota," *El Imparcial*, February 18, 2004, 3.

⁴⁷ Author interview with Jorge Castillo Díaz, manager of Gabino Cué Monteagudo's gubernatorial campaign, Mexico City, April 4, 2005.

The unprecedented electoral coalition that emerged against the Oaxacan PRI was thus a result of direct intervention in local politics from the national organizations of the PAN and the PRD. Furthermore, it was achieved over the opposition of the leaderships of the local branches of those parties. When the unity coalition was finally announced, Oaxaca's most important PRD leader refused to join the coalition and announced that he would run as an independent.⁴⁸ Local PAN leaders also threatened to defect but were brought to heel by their national leaders.

The party-led challenge to Governor Murat in 2004 left a mixed legacy for Oaxacan politics. The PRI victory was marred by charges of fraud and by large urban protests, none of which led to any official investigations of the results. Yet the nationalization of the electoral struggle by the opposition did change Oaxacan electoral politics by making the gubernatorial election truly competitive. The PRI candidate won the gubernatorial race with 47.5 percent of the vote, against 44.3 percent for the opposition coalition, a result that gave local opposition actors hope for future challenges.⁴⁹ However, this unprecedented competitiveness at the gubernatorial level masked a subnational institutional landscape that guaranteed continued hegemonic party control of the state. Opposition strength was found largely in urban districts. These constituted a handful of districts in a state that elects its officials in multiple districts that are dominated by the PRI. In April 2004 the PRI electoral machine delivered victories in eighteen of the twenty-five single-member districts that sent representatives to the provincial legislature. Furthermore, municipal elections held in October 2004 (monitored by PRI-controlled state election authorities) similarly yielded a major sweep by the PRI of mayoral races throughout the state.

The new governor may have won with little over a 3 percent margin, but he went on to govern with virtual control over the state legislative branch, with loyal municipal leaders throughout the state, and with a compliant state judiciary.⁵⁰ The competitiveness of gubernatorial elections in 2004, admittedly an important breach of local boundary control,

⁴⁸ Héctor Sánchez's independent campaign siphoned off four percentage points from Cué's campaign. The PRI won by a 3.2 percent margin. Local press reported that Murat financed pro-Sánchez publicity in the local media. See "Renuncia Héctor Sánchez a sus cargos en el PRD," *Noticias de Oaxaca*, February 20, 2004, 15.

⁴⁹ One opposition supporter wrote the following: "For the first time in Oaxaca's history the elections for governor were genuinely competitive and provided the element of uncertainty that makes democracy real." Víctor Raúl Martínez Vázquez, "La contienda electoral en Oaxaca," *Noticias de Oaxaca*, August 4, 2004, available at <http://www.noticias-oax.com.mx/>.

⁵⁰ And possibly with a more compliant press. Oaxaca's independent newspaper, *Noticias de Oaxaca*, was repeatedly shut down as a result of government pressure during much of 2005; *New York Times*, July 18, 2005, 4.

nevertheless masked local institutional topographies that provided continued opportunities for hegemonic party rule over Oaxacan politics.

ARGENTINA: CENTER-LED DISMANTLING OF A PROVINCIAL AUTHORITARIAN REGIME

Santiago del Estero is Carlos Arturo Juárez. I say it without vanity.

—Carlos Arturo Juárez, 1983⁵¹

Days after the federal government arrested “Tata” and “Nina” Juárez and assumed control of all branches of the provincial government, the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación* made the following comment: “*Juarismo* sought to keep the province in a state of rigorous isolation . . . until at last the entire country became aware of the need to put an end to its domination.”⁵² Thus one of the country’s most prestigious national newspapers captured the dynamics that had sustained the regime and ultimately brought it down. The system of provincial power known as *Juarismo* thrived when it succeeded in keeping the province in a state of “rigorous isolation.” It collapsed when local politics became nationalized.

The beginning of the end seemed inconsequential. On February 6, 2003, in an area of abandoned fields known as La Dársena, a woman dragging a cart braved the scorching heat to scavenge the fields for cattle bones, which she sold to make her living. On that day the seeker of animal bones stumbled upon human remains. The bodies of two young women lay partially concealed in the tall grass. Soon thereafter the murders were linked to prominent members of the Juárez political clique. This revelation and the uproar that followed provoked a successful center-led assault against the provincial authoritarian regime one year later.

NATIONAL REDEMOCRATIZATION IN 1983 AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF SUBNATIONAL AUTHORITARIAN RULE

In 1983 the Argentine national polity made a definitive return to democratic rule. In Santiago, however, the *Juarista* regime settled in for two decades of authoritarian rule. Juárez, who had first been elected governor of the province in 1949 at the age of thirty-two, was elected governor once again. It was a propitious time to regain control of the province. During the first presidency of the new democratic era, subnational authoritarian elites in Argentina were doubly blessed. The

⁵¹ “El fin de un poder caudillista que duró más de medio siglo,” *La Nación*, April 2, 2004, 10.

⁵² “La intervención a Santiago del Estero,” *La Nación*, April 2, 2004, 20.

central government, preoccupied with national matters and needful of gubernatorial support, paid little attention to the types of regimes that were being consolidated at the subnational level. Second, this was a time when powerful coalitions of Peronist governors, of which Juárez was an active member, extracted important fiscal concessions from the central government, enhancing both their autonomy and revenue flows from the center.⁵³ The founding years of Argentina's new national democracy were a golden age for Argentina's subnational authoritarian regimes.⁵⁴

THE PAROCHIALIZATION OF POWER IN SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO

Within a short time after his 1983 election, Governor Juárez's parochialization of provincial politics was in place. The election gave him a solid majority in the provincial legislature and control over a vast patronage machine, funded by central government transfers, that dwarfed all other economic activities in the province. These incumbency advantages were strengthened over time by constitutional reforms sponsored by the governor and his legislative majorities in 1986 and again in 1997. The reforms expanded gubernatorial prerogatives over municipalities and the local judiciary. They also extended the Peronist Party's hegemony over the provincial polity.

This was particularly evident in the design of provincial electoral laws, which overrepresented the Peronist party in the legislature. In the 1997 constitutional reform, new electoral laws and redistricting measures expanded the proportion of seats won by the majority party and enhanced the overrepresentation of rural areas.⁵⁵ With approximately

⁵³ See Eaton (fn. 11).

⁵⁴ During this period such Peronist chieftains as the Rodríguez Sáa brothers in San Luis, the Menem brothers in La Rioja, the Sáadi brothers in Catamarca, and the Romero family in Salta consolidated hegemonic party rule on clientelistic networks similar to those in Santiago del Estero. In other provinces non-Peronist leaders, such as the Sapag family in Neuquén, the Romero Feris family in Corrientes, and the Bravo family in San Juan, reestablished local hegemonic party rule.

⁵⁵ The 1997 reform created two new districting formulas for electing the legislature's fifty representatives. The first formula made the province the electoral district and elected twenty-two representatives. Two-thirds of those were allotted to the first-place party, regardless of its vote total. The remaining third was distributed proportionally to the minority parties. This created a strong majoritarian bias that favored the Peronist Party. The second formula divided the province into six districts and elected twenty-eight representatives. Five largely rural districts were allotted four representatives, regardless of population. The one urban district that included the Santiago-La Banda twin cities (with over 60 percent of the province's population) was allotted five representatives. The underrepresentation of Santiago-La Banda, which tended to give a majority to the opposition Radical Party was compounded by the formula for allocating seats. In rural districts dominated by Peronists the formula gave 75 percent of the seats to the majority party. In the more contested urban district the formula gave 66 percent of the seats to the majority party. See Constitución de la Provincia de Santiago del Estero, and Ricardo Gómez Díez, "La oportunidad de una Constitución para el bienestar y el crecimiento" (Lecture delivered in Santiago del Estero, August 2004), www.gomezdiez.com.ar/files/seminarios/SantiagoEst.pdf (accessed November 15, 2005).

30 percent of the population, rural areas held over 70 percent of seats in the legislature. As a result, in the legislative elections of 2002, the Peronist party won 71 percent of seats with 38 percent of the province-wide vote.⁵⁶

Rural bias in electoral laws was important to Peronist hegemony, because the twin cities of Santiago (the capital) and La Banda were strongholds of the opposition Radical Party. However, electoral laws only compounded a situation of opposition vulnerability to gubernatorial institutional prerogatives. Radical politicians may have controlled the mayoralty of the capital city, but the governor controlled all fiscal transfers from the central government, including those destined to municipal governments. Radical mayors, therefore, were reduced to operating as de facto supporters of the Juarista system. As the national newspaper *La Nación* noted in 2002, "The opposition [in Santiago] is almost nonexistent due to its fragmentation and co-optation by provincial power holders."⁵⁷

Control over the party and the legislative branch also gave Juárez control over the local judiciary. Not only did this insulate the Juarista network from judicial scrutiny, but it also gave Juárez the means to create a hostile legal environment for local political opposition. On repeated occasions Juárez and his wife unleashed judicial action to intimidate opponents in the media and the political establishment.⁵⁸

Juarista institutional control was supported by its vast patronage system. Over 87 percent of the economically active population was employed by the provincial government. The electoral importance of the patronage system was captured in a brief analysis in the newspaper *La Nación*, which estimated that it provided the government with a number of "guaranteed" votes that exceeded half of the voting population.⁵⁹

Where institutional control and clientelism failed to neutralize opponents, outright repression filled the void. Most sinister and system-

⁵⁶ Ministerio de Justicia, Seguridad, y Derechos Humanos, *Informe Santiago del Estero* (República Argentina, 2003), 8.

⁵⁷ "Un régimen de miedo y terror manda en Santiago del Estero," *La Nación*, November 28, 2002, 8.

⁵⁸ One notable case involved *El Liberal*, the largest-circulation newspaper in the province. After the paper reprinted articles critical of Governor Aragonés that had appeared in national newspapers in 2002, government followers launched hundreds of lawsuits that were duly processed by local judges. Facing financial ruin, the newspaper stopped reprinting national reports about provincial politics. A key boundary-opening agent in the province was neutralized. Author interview with Oscar Jeréz, correspondent for *El Liberal*, Santiago del Estero, September 6, 2004. See also Sergio Carreras, *El reino de los Juárez: Medio siglo de miseria, terror, y desmesura en Santiago del Estero* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar, Altea, Taurus, Alfaguara, S.A., 2004).

⁵⁹ For how this percentage was calculated, see "Un poder de casi 40 años," *La Nación*, February 2, 2005, 6.

atic was the provincial intelligence system, which reported directly to Carlos Juárez. The Directorate of Information (known better by locals as “D-2”) operated under the direction of the provincial chief of police, Muza Azar. Azar is named in *Nunca Más*, the 1985 report by the National Commission on Disappeared Persons (Conadep) as responsible for the detention, torture, and disappearance of local residents during the 1976–83 military dictatorship. The authors of a report prepared in late 2003 for the national Secretariat of Human Rights referred to the directorate as a “provincial Gestapo.” The report noted that, in a province of eight hundred thousand people, the D-2 had created over forty thousand secret files on the activities of politicians, judges, journalists, clergy, businessmen, and, mostly, ordinary citizens.⁶⁰

MONOPOLIZING LOCAL-NATIONAL LINKAGES

As leader of the Peronist Party and governor of the province, Juárez enjoyed all the attributes of the provincial party boss—among the most important being control over local-national institutional linkages.⁶¹ He controlled party nominations for the national congressional delegations and commanded a hegemonic party whose comfortable electoral majorities assured large delegations to the national congress. Juárez also operated free from interference by national party leaders in the designation of candidate slates—in fact, the national Peronist Party played a negligible role in provincial party politics in general.⁶² As a journalist observed, “He was the puppet-master of the Santiago stage . . . and the sole intermediary between national leaders and the parochial circles of provincial politics.”⁶³

Juárez’s control of local-national linkages also extended to the fiscal and judicial realms. Close to 90 percent of Santiago del Estero’s provincial budget is financed by central government transfers.⁶⁴ The governor’s discretion over local disbursements of fiscal transfers to his province was unchallenged. Juárez also neutralized federal judicial over-

⁶⁰ Ministerio de Justicia (fn. 56).

⁶¹For a discussion of the prototypical “provincial party boss” in Argentina, see Mark Jones and Wonjae Hwang, “Provincial Party Bosses: Keystone of the Argentine Congress,” in Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo, eds., *Argentine Democracy: The Politics of Institutional Weakness* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2006).

⁶² Most provinces work with closed-list candidate slates (as did Santiago del Estero). The power to put together such slates is an indicator of subnational control over provincial party politics.

⁶³ Carreras (fn. 58), 56.

⁶⁴ Edward L. Gibson and Ernesto Calvo, “Federalism and Low-Maintenance Constituencies: Territorial Dimensions of Economic Reform in Argentina,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35 (Winter 2001), 42.

sight over his province, effectively co-opting the chief federal judge appointed to his province in 1984.⁶⁵

THE NATIONALIZATION OF INFLUENCE: SANTIAGO IN NATIONAL POLITICS

Juárez moved easily in the national sphere and made his influence felt as a visible though second-tier national figure. He was an important coalition member in national gubernatorial politics, delivering electoral and legislative votes to presidents at key political junctures and knitting personal ties with top national leaders. There was thus little interest in upsetting his hold on Santiago's politics or in attacking the provincial power structure that supported him.

At times the local opposition did manage to attract national attention to their province's plight. The most famous of these was a two-day urban riot (known as the *Santiagazo*) during a provincial financial crisis in December 1993.⁶⁶ At that time Juárez was serving a stint in the national Senate. President Carlos Menem ordered a federal intervention in the province to restore public and fiscal order. This did little to change the local political status quo, however. Santiago del Estero was a province that delivered solidly Menemista majorities in national elections. The president had little interest in dismantling a provincial power structure that served him well politically, even if he did not fully trust Carlos Juárez, its political owner.⁶⁷

Furthermore, after the intervention Juárez curried the president's favor by becoming a steadfast supporter of presidential initiatives in the Senate, particularly the bid to reform the constitution so he could run for a second term. This made him doubly useful to the president, as an influential national proponent of the president's reelection bid and as head of a provincial political machine that could deliver a solid Menemista majority when the election was actually held. Top-down reform of Santiago politics was thus nowhere on the agenda of the 1993 federal intervention, and the province soon returned to Juarista control.

Carlos Juárez won the 1995 election for governor with 65 percent of the vote. The Juarista regime settled in to a period of stability. The 1997 constitutional reform permitted his immediate reelection, and he was in

⁶⁵ For a description of personal and economic ties between the chief federal judge in the province, Angel Jesús Toledo, and Juarista political and economic elites, see Carreras (fn. 58), 216–20.

⁶⁶ For an account of the *Santiagazo*, see Javier Auyero, *Contentious Lives: Two Argentine Women, Two Protests, and the Quest for Recognition* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).

⁶⁷ Juárez had close ties to the governor of Buenos Aires, Eduardo Duhalde, Menem's chief party rival.

fact duly reelected in 1999. In 2002 his wife, Nina Aragonés, became governor of the province.

INTERNAL CRISIS, EXTERNAL INTERVENTION, AND THE FALL OF THE REGIME

Not long after the two murdered women were discovered, a provincial human rights organization named the Madres del Dolor (mothers of pain) organized a series of large silent marches (*marchas del silencio*) throughout the capital. The protesters received crucial support from the bishop of the Catholic Church of Santiago del Estero—one of the few local institutions with national linkages that Juárez had failed to neutralize.⁶⁸

The provincial bishop's involvement in the anti-Juárez movement drew the national Catholic church into the conflict. Once this happened, events in Santiago became a matter of interest to the national press and to key members of the national government. One of these was Gustavo Béliz, the new minister of justice. Béliz was no ordinary justice minister. He was a devout Catholic with very close institutional ties to the church and thus was personally receptive to the bishop's appeals. He met with the bishop to discuss the provincial situation in mid-2003.⁶⁹

In the once impermeable Juarista universe of Santiago, an important boundary had been breached, and a link between powerful local and national actors that lay beyond the reach of the provincial government had been established. The next step was to use that connection to spark central government action against juarismo.

This was made possible by important factional and policy shifts taking place in the national government. The Peronist president, Néstor Kirchner, was not fond of Carlos Juárez. Juárez had been a late convert to Kirchner's 2003 presidential candidacy and was tarnished in the president's eyes for his long-standing alliances with Kirchner's strongest Peronist party rivals, former presidents Eduardo Duhalde and Carlos Menem. Furthermore, even though Juárez had publicly thrown his support behind Kirchner, a majority of the province's voters voted for Menem anyway—in a province Juárez supposedly owned. In the eyes of close presidential advisers, this constituted at best an act of negligence

⁶⁸ This was probably not for lack of trying. The previous bishop of Santiago, an articulate Juárez opponent, died mysteriously in a 1998 car accident on a rural road. The cause of the accident was never determined by local authorities, although the federal government reopened the case in 2004. For essays on opposition struggles against the Juárez-dominated regime, see Raúl Dargoltz, Oscar Jeréz, Horacio Cao, and Josefina Vaca, *Santiago: El ala que brota* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Utopías, 2005).

⁶⁹ "Tiemblan los caudillos," *La Voz del Interior*, June 15, 2003, available at <http://www.lavozdelinterior.com/>.

(and at worst an act of betrayal) by a provincial party boss expected to deliver the vote to his presidential ally.⁷⁰ Furthermore, on a policy level, the president had just made human rights and the fight against corruption major national priorities. He created a new secretariat for human rights within Minister Beliz's Justice Ministry and expanded the ministry's anticorruption mandate. In late 2003 and early 2004 federal government officials made several "fact finding" visits to the province that resulted in damning reports to the president about the state of human rights and the rule of law in the province.⁷¹

As the local crisis in Santiago deepened, the leaders of the national Peronist Party publicly warned the president against undermining a Peronist provincial bastion and voiced their opposition to a federal intervention. However, on April 1, 2004, President Kirchner decided to act. He ordered a top official of the Justice Ministry to take control of the province and carry out a complete political reorganization. Shortly thereafter, the president's agent made the intervention's partisan objective clear: "The next governor should be of the same political color as the president."⁷²

The president's men in charge of the province were under clear instructions to make a democratic Santiago del Estero a base for the Kirchnerista faction of the Peronist Party.⁷³ However, their boss in the Presidential Palace, and especially the leadership of the national Peronist Party, would be sorely disappointed. In February 2005, ten months after the start of the federal intervention, elections for a new governor were held. President Kirchner's chosen Peronist candidate was defeated by the Radical Party mayor of the capital city of Santiago. Federal government bureaucrats had carried out their policy mandate to democratize the province a little too well. They provided the province with its first cleanly held election in generations, and local voters chose to remove the party that had won every gubernatorial election since 1949. National Peronist Party leaders were incensed at the president for losing a long-standing electoral bastion.⁷⁴ Their nightmare scenario had come true: democratization led by the central government had actually ended hegemonic party rule in Santiago del Estero.

⁷⁰ For a discussion of Juárez's missteps in the national presidential intrigues of 2002–3, see "Los malos pasos en la interna del PJ," *El Liberal*, April 1, 2004, available at <http://www.elliberal.com.ar/>.

⁷¹ See, for example, Ministerio de Justicia (fn. 56).

⁷² "Analizan prorrogar la intervención en Santiago," *La Nación*, May 29, 2004, 10.

⁷³ Confirmed in several interviews with intervention officials, including Pablo Fontdevilla, chief of staff for the intervention, Santiago, February 14, 2005.

⁷⁴ Party leader Eduardo Duhalde called the intervention "a debacle for the party." "El Gobierno de Kirchner Respondió a las críticas de Duhalde," *El Liberal*, March 2, 2005.

IV. OPENING BOUNDARIES: UNDERSTANDING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN PROVINCIAL AUTHORITARIANISM

This article has addressed the phenomenon of subnational authoritarianism in nationally democratic countries. It explored center-periphery dynamics that contribute to provincial authoritarianism, strategies employed by incumbent governors to perpetuate provincial authoritarian regimes, and political mechanisms that can undermine such regimes. A basic theoretical insight is that provincial democratization is an outcome of the nationalization of subnational conflict. Local authoritarian elites strengthen boundaries that minimize outside involvement in provincial politics, while oppositions struggle to breach those boundaries and turn parochial struggles into national political contests. Controlling the scope of political conflict is thus a major objective of contenders in struggles over subnational democratization.

This insight provided the basis for developing a detailed theoretical framework that situated boundary-control strategies in multiple arenas of a national territorial system. In-depth case studies of Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero tested the framework's empirical usefulness and revealed specific dynamics and institutional patterns of control and opposition. In these concluding pages a comparison of patterns detected in the case studies will provide insights about continuity and change in provincial authoritarianism that could be suggestive for developing theory and future research agendas.

A first set of observations concerns local strategies of boundary control. Incumbents in both Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero resorted freely to such tactics as coercion, intimidation of opposition groups and the press, appropriation of public resources for clientelism and partisan activities, and electoral fraud. Just as important, however, were the design and use of *de jure* and *de facto* institutional arrangements, most of them legal, which strengthened hegemonic party rule over provincial politics. Design of the subnational electoral system and electoral laws, gubernatorial powers over mayors, and fiscal relationships with the center that concentrated economic resources in the governor's office were examples of formal institutional arrangements that enhanced the dominant party's sway over the provincial polity.

Consolidation of local hegemonic parties also strengthened incumbent influence in national political institutions and coalitions. This pattern confirmed the generalizability of Key's intuition, based on the U.S. case, of the importance of provincial hegemonic party rule for simultaneously organizing local domination and linking it institutionally to

national politics. Any study of subnational authoritarianism in democratic countries, therefore, must focus on the institutional strategies that are used to maintain local hegemonic party control, as well as on the variety of institutional characteristics that subnational hegemonic party systems can assume.

The two cases also shed interesting light on potential boundary-opening dynamics within subnational hegemonic parties. Party factionalism played important roles in undermining incumbent control. In Oaxaca local PRI factionalism provided civic organizations with the opportunity to mobilize behind an institutional alternative to the dominant party faction. It also opened the way for national party rivals of the PRI to intervene in the local contest. In Santiago del Estero the factional challenge came not from within the province but from a national faction of the incumbent party (the faction led by the president), which, taking advantage of a local crisis, intervened to remove a potential supporter of the president's national rivals.

These cases suggest that, given the local power asymmetries that exist between incumbent and opposition parties in authoritarian provinces, splits in the ruling party provide important boundary-opening opportunities for local and national oppositions. The cases also suggest that the somewhat forgotten literatures on national single-party or dominant-party regimes might be useful for the study of continuity and change in authoritarian provinces. However, those literatures are obviously national in their focus. The *subnational* hegemonic party is a different and overlooked phenomenon in the comparative party literature. Adding to the complication is that in democratic countries it often operates in a context of national multiparty competition. Future research agendas will thus need to combine insights of existing literature on national hegemonic parties with new theoretical insights about links between the subnational hegemonic party and the national party system with which it interacts.

The comparison of Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero revealed other potentially generalizable patterns about national boundary-opening agents. These differed in our two cases. In Mexico the most important national actors were party leaders—non-PRI party leaders and factional rivals within the PRI. The central government remained largely on the sidelines. In Argentina the national boundary-opening agents were central government officials. The national governing party was opposed to upsetting a provincial electoral bastion.

The cases suggest that it is useful analytically to disaggregate the behaviors of national institutional actors that are often conflated in com-

parative literatures on territorial politics—leaders of national parties and leaders of national governments, even when their partisan affiliations coincide. Each has unique territorial interests. Sometimes these can overlap, and at other times they can work at cross-purposes. Understanding the likelihood and nature of their intervention in subnational politics thus requires a sense of how actors located in national parties and national governments are connected to other actors in the territorial system and thus under what conditions they will act separately or jointly.

The consequences for subnational democratization of different combinations of national boundary-opening agents are intriguing subjects for additional research. While such agents could include institutional actors other than parties and central governments (such as national courts or civil society organizations), this study revealed two potentially distinct types of subnational transitions, party-led transitions and center-led transitions. A two-case comparison makes it inadvisable to generalize about the causal impact of either type of transition on democratic or authoritarian outcomes. Here, however, we can tentatively comment on a series of trade-offs between the two transition types that were revealed in our case studies.

Party-led transitions have the potential for linking civil society to political parties in common cause prior to the defeat of the incumbent regime. This can strengthen the underpinnings of democratic governance after the transition, or it can help institutionalize local-national party coalitions for future struggles if incumbents prevail in initial contests. But oppositions in party-led transitions must contest authoritarian incumbents on a provincial institutional landscape that has been crafted by the incumbents themselves. The party opposition in Oaxaca had to compete in local elections where judges and state election-monitoring agencies were controlled by incumbents, the governor was unrestrained in the diversion of public funds to the electoral campaign, and the patronage machine of the ruling party diligently discharged its assignments throughout the countryside.

In contrast, in Santiago del Estero the central government not only wrested the local power structure from its political owners but also supervised the gubernatorial elections when they were finally held. The local institutional terrain was therefore far more propitious for anti-incumbent forces in the gubernatorial contest. The trade-off, however, was that the victorious opposition leaders had been firmly co-opted months earlier by the provincial power structure. They inherited the government thanks to a central government intervention, not following a labor of coalition-building with a democratic civil society.

The case studies of Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero also shed light on subnational territorial cleavages and on how they shape boundary-control and boundary-opening strategies. Both cases exhibit what could be described as an “authoritarian province, plural cities” dynamic. While incumbent parties controlled the countryside, the cities were bastions of support for the opposition. In the gubernatorial elections studied in this article the leading opposition challengers were mayors of the capital cities. The capture of urban areas thus constitutes a major boundary-opening strategy for opposition groups. Control over institutional levers that manage municipal politics and over national financial flows to urban municipalities are, in turn, major boundary-control objectives of authoritarian governors.

Management of this territorial cleavage via the electoral underrepresentation of urban areas was a clear institutional strategy of territorial control in Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero. The territorial division of the province into several rural municipalities with locally elected governments gave incumbents major advantages in the administration of provincial politics and in elections for provincial offices. Furthermore, incumbents made full use of overrepresentation of rural areas in the provincial legislature to enhance the ruling parties’ hold over the legislative branch.⁷⁵

As a boundary-control strategy, institutional design helped incumbents extend hegemonic party control deep into the subnational polity, even in the face of competitive gubernatorial elections. Murat, in Oaxaca, won in 1998 with 52 percent of the vote. His successor in 2004 won with 47 percent of the vote. Similarly, in Santiago del Estero Juárez’s gubernatorial vote totals ranged from a low of 48 percent in 1983 to a high of 65 percent in 1995. Reasonable observers, coding the competitiveness of party politics according to aggregate vote totals for gubernatorial races, might thus be loath to classify these provinces’ party systems as “hegemonic.” However, we must look into control of the internal institutions of the local polity, not only those features easily observable from outside, to grasp how hegemonic party rule is actually exercised in provincial politics. It is in the dimly lit and paint-starved chambers of provincial legislatures, the dusty municipal offices, the unimposing local courthouses, and the dense text of oft-revised provincial

⁷⁵ Similar patterns of subnational institutional manipulation for partisan gain in several Argentine provinces are documented and analyzed in Ernesto Calvo and Juan Pablo Micozzi, “The Governor’s Backyard: A Seat-Vote Model of Electoral Reform for Subnational Multi-Party Races,” *Journal of Politics* 67 (November 2005).

constitutions that the authoritarian power of the provincial hegemonic party resides and is most visible.

The political topographies of subnational jurisdictions, however, are still largely the unexplored territories of comparative politics, particularly for developing and postcommunist countries. The study of democratization within nations has suffered considerably from this gap. Opening boundaries is thus not merely the task of opposition political actors. It is also a crucial methodological challenge for scholars. Without exploring and mapping the complex and hidden institutional landscapes of subnational politics—how they are constructed locally and how they are linked to the broader territorial system—we will fail to apprehend driving forces of political control and change in the democratic nation-state.