

Subnational Authoritarianism: Territorial Strategies of Political Control in Democratic Regimes

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Abstract: This paper explores dynamics of change and continuity in subnational (provincial) authoritarianism in nationally democratic regimes. Borrowing from theories of territorial politics, it provides a framework for analyzing the strategic context in which incumbent authoritarian elites and local and national opponents pursue strategies of territorial control and opposition. Subnational authoritarianism must be understood not as a local issue but as an outcome of broader dynamics of national territorial governance in democratic regimes. Conflicts between incumbents and opposition are played out across multiple territorial arenas in the national political system. In nationally democratic regimes, incumbent authoritarian elites will pursue three types of strategies across territorial arenas: the parochialization of power, the nationalization of influence, and the monopolization of national-subnational institutional linkages. Subnational democratization, when it occurs, will result from intervention by actors in national political arenas. To this end, a distinction is made between two “modes” of subnational political change: “party-led” transitions and “center-led” transitions. The paper concludes with case studies of two recent conflicts over subnational democratization: the state of Oaxaca in Mexico, and the province of Santiago del Estero in Argentina.

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I. Introduction

The corpulent and imposing governor beamed with a habitually self-assured delight as his raised hand clasped that of his equally beaming (but not yet self-assured) designated successor. José Murat, lord, *cacique*, and PRI governor of the Mexican state of Oaxaca for over five years, had just pulled off a traditional but theoretically anachronistic practice of Mexican politics. He had, without political or legal impediment, anointed his party's gubernatorial nominee and the presumptive future governor of the state of Oaxaca. Governor Murat had just pulled off a *dedazo*, the unilateral anointing of PRI chief executives by their predecessors--a practice officially dropped by the PRI throughout the country during Mexico's slow passage to democratization in the 1990s.

In February 2004, however, the practice and associated rituals of the PRI's traditional method of executive succession were alive and well in Oaxaca. The nomination was accompanied by another time-honored but theoretically disappearing tradition of Mexican politics—*la cargada*, the “stampede” of public displays of loyalty and support for the designated successor by state unions, municipal presidents, party leaders, and party-affiliated social organizations. In an additional sign of the governor's sway over Oaxacan political life, the *cargada*'s “*búfalos*,” (as the ritual's participants are known) went beyond the usual members of the Oaxacan political establishment. Newspaper ads in the days after the unveiling also featured public displays of support from construction firm owners, car dealerships, tire dealerships, dry cleaning stores, restauranters, pharmacists, and shoe-store owners.

Governor Murat was not without his challengers, however. Local grassroots and civic organizations, energized by their opposition to one of most authoritarian governorships in recent memory, cried foul and called upon opposition forces to unite against the PRI. This was accompanied by unprecedented action at the national level by leaders of the national organizations of the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN), the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD), and *Convergencia*, a movement/party of PRI dissidents. These national party organizations launched an effort to force the reluctant local branches of their parties, some coopted by the state governor, to forge a united opposition front against the PRI in the gubernatorial elections. Their efforts succeeded in putting together the first multi-party opposition movement in the state's history. For the first time, the PAN, and important sectors of the PRD, joined forces in a coalition against the PRI.

In spite of this unprecedented party mobilization, however, the election ended as “traditionally” as it began. The PRI candidate was declared the victor by a small majority amid widespread denunciations of fraud and campaign irregularities, as well as massive popular protests. The Oaxacan Electoral Institute sanctioned the electoral results despite opposition protests. Top federal government officials remained silent and abstained from intervening.

¹ Brian Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos* (2004: 81).

The Oaxacan PRI had defeated a national party-led effort to democratize state politics. The exiting governor José Murat could thus be forgiven for savoring publicly his successful consolidation of authoritarian rule in Oaxaca. In a nationally democratizing country, Murat had defiantly sailed against the tide. The future looked bright for the continuity of *Muratismo* in his state, and for his own prospects as a leader in national politics.

In the hot, arid, and impoverished northern Argentine province of Santiago del Estero a very different scenario was unfolding in early 2004. Governor Mercedes (“Nina”) Aragonés de Juárez was presiding over the final months of a collapsing half-century old provincial authoritarian regime. She was the 77 year-old wife and long-time political partner of Carlos (“Tata”) Juárez, a Peronist *caudillo* and the province’s virtual political owner since he first assumed the governorship in 1949. Carlos Juárez had served as governor five times. The *juarista* regime ruled a province where 87 percent of the economically active population lived off government salaries and where over 90 percent of the provincial government budget was financed by central government transfers. Elaborate clientelistic networks guaranteed electoral majorities, provincial intelligence networks sowed terror among political opponents, and the press, business interests, judicial officers, and state and national legislators owed their prosperity to the provincial *caudillo*. In 2002 the provincial legislature ordered the Juárez couple’s images to be placed on provincial postage stamps, and a congressional resolution proclaimed them “Illustrious Protectors of the Province.”

By early 2004, however, the Juárez couple had run out of luck. The bodies of two murdered young women were discovered in an abandoned field, and their deaths were linked to members of the provincial political elite and intelligence services. The discovery unleashed local protests and a cascade of national investigations that revealed pervasive patterns of corruption, cronyism, and murder. The dirty little secrets that had been no secret at all to provincial residents for decades were now a matter of national record.² Key members of the national government took an interest in the province and allied with an overmatched local opposition against the Juárez power structure. Conflict in Santiago del Estero had escaped the parochial confines of the *juarista* political system. It was now nationalized.

In early April 2004 President Kirchner, eager to move against a provincial political elite whose loyalty as national allies he distrusted, invoked the federal government’s powers of intervention and ordered the removal from office and the arrest of Nina Aragonés and Carlos Juárez. He dissolved the provincial legislative and judicial branches, appointed a federal “interventor” with an initial term of 6 months. The president announced the dawning of a new democratic age in provincial politics, courtesy of the central government.

These contrasting cases reveal much about the dynamics of “subnational authoritarianism” in nationally democratic regimes--how it persists, and how it can unravel. Even the most casual look at national politics in almost any democracy in the world will reveal that the territorial distribution of the practices and institutions of

² A correspondent for the daily *La Voz del Interior* (2003), published in neighboring Córdoba province, delighted in the governor’s plight: “How will Mercedes Aragonés de Juárez, the *excelentísima señora* “Nina,” governor of Santiago del Estero, be able to step out of her house now that the entire country is observing every detail of what is happening in her province?”

democracy within the nation-state are uneven. 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. It can also be dramatic, with full-blown authoritarian regimes depriving inhabitants of entire regions of rights and liberties enjoyed freely by inhabitants of other regions in the same nation-state. The demarcations between democratic and non-democratic areas can be blurry, as is often the case in unitary states, where the reach of authoritarian centers of power fades as one moves across territory. They can also be clearly defined, as in many federal countries, where a traveler stepping across the imaginary line separating one province from another crosses into an entirely different universe of political governance.

Subnational authoritarianism, which for the analytical purposes of this paper will be limited in scope to provinces (or “states”) in federal systems,³ is thus a fact of life in most democracies in the developing and post-communist world.⁴ Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero are but two of hundreds of authoritarian provincial “enclaves” that dot the landscapes of democracies around the globe. Subnational authoritarianism was also a massive fact of U.S. political life until the unraveling of single-party state regimes in the south in the middle years of the 20th century. However, in spite of growing evidence of its enduring compatibility with democratic national governments, we know little, theoretically, about the determinants of continuity and change in subnational authoritarianism.⁵ A number of authors have noted its existence, and have flagged it as an important issue in the study of the problems and practices of contemporary democracies.⁶ However, the political processes that feed or starve it are still largely a mystery in the comparative literature on democratization.

There are many reasons for this, some of which lie in theoretical or methodological limitations of democratization theories. These have been driven by a “whole-nation bias,” which sees democratization processes through the perspective of national institutions, actors, and movements.⁷ Furthermore, subnational authoritarianism (or subnational democratization) concerns the territorial dimension of democratization, and this has been perhaps the least developed dimension of democratization theories. As I have argued in another work, democratization studies have tended to analyze political

³ For the sake of semantic clarity I will tend to use the term “province” during theoretical discussions. When discussing country-specific politics empirically (say, Oaxacan and Mexican politics), I will tend to employ the term (“state” or “province”) used in that particular country.

⁴ Subnational authoritarianism can, of course, exist at many levels of spatial resolution. City machines or rural municipal fiefdoms are two examples among many of subnational authoritarianism that operate at non-provincial levels.

⁵ For an interesting subnational comparative study of the state of the “rule of law” in Mendoza and San Lu s provinces in Argentina, see Rebecca Bill Chavez (2003). For Chavez, party competition is a key determinant of effective rule of law. One of this paper’s objectives is to explore the conditions under which competitive party politics can emerge in authoritarian subnational contexts.

⁶ See, for example, O’Donnell (1993) and Cornelius (1999). In what would seem to be an exception, Robert Dahl, in his classic work, *Polyarchy*, writes that “a full description of the opportunities available for participation and contestation within a country surely requires one to say something about the opportunities available within subnational units” (p. 12). However, the subnational units Dahl has in mind tend not to be territorial (e.g. provinces or municipalities), but organizational and social—“particularly private associations” such as businesses, unions, or other civil organizations.

⁷ See Snyder (2001b) for discussions of “whole nation bias” in the field of comparative politics.

processes along non-territorial lines of conflict (Gibson, 2004). These have included 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 collective actors. These conflicts lie in the realm of “territorial politics,” which, paraphrasing Sidney Tarrow’s (1978, 1) succinct formulation, is not *about* territory, but about how politics is fought out *across* territory.

When it comes to national politics we now know a great deal about how democratization struggles are fought out across political institutions and economic classes. However, we know little about how democratization struggles are fought out across territory. Understanding how this takes place in a nationally democratic country thus requires an understanding of the political, institutional, and economic “topographies” of the democratic state, and how these constrain and empower political actors in their territorial strategies of political control.⁸ Any theory of subnational democratization, therefore, must be rooted in theories of territorial politics.⁹

The main objective of this paper is to develop theoretical ideas that help us explain the persistence or instability of provincial authoritarianism in nationally democratic regimes. The framework I develop borrows freely from prior scholarship on territorial politics, including pioneering works on center-periphery and intergovernmental politics in comparative politics, theories from political geography, and recent scholarship on “subnational” politics, decentralization, and federalism.¹⁰ By incorporating such theories into contemporary democratization debates I hope to move us towards a better understanding of key interactions between political territoriality and democratic development.

Space constraints in the paper preclude me from addressing institutional variables that explain important variations in the maintenance and transformation of subnational authoritarian regimes. Instead, I will focus on the general strategic context—the logics and territorial arenas of political action that affect patterns of continuity and change in authoritarian states and provinces. The paper is organized as follows. Section two addresses some connections between “territorial politics” theories and subnational democratization. Section three provides a framework for analysis for subnational political change. Section four provides generalizations about specific patterns of continuity and change in provincial authoritarian enclaves. Section five applies these theoretical ideas to the study of two recent cases of conflict over subnational

⁸ I borrow the term “topographies” for this context from Catherine Boone’s (2003) remarkable book, *Political Topographies of the African State*.

⁹ As Guillermo O’Donnell (1993) has noted, democratization theory has also advanced little in incorporating theories of the State (one notable exception is Linz and Stepan (1996)). One key dimension of the “state” concept is its territorial dimension, namely the exercise of political control throughout a territory. Without attention to territorial theories of the state it is difficult to develop territorial theories of democratization. They are two sides of the same coin.

¹⁰ Some of the more important works in political science (at least for my work) are Rokkan (1983) and Tarrow (1977 and 1978), who swam against the tide of the national-level and non-territorial political economy studies of the 1970s and early 1980s. Recent works in political science that have brought territoriality back into political science include Snyder, 2001a, 2001b; Hagopian 1996; Gibson 1997 and 2004; Eaton 2002 and 2004; Montero 2001; Herbst 2001; Falletti, 2003; Samuels, 2003; and Boone 2003.

democratization: the state of Oaxaca in Mexico and the province of Santiago del Estero in Argentina.

II. Territorial Politics and Subnational Authoritarianism: Some theoretical connections

The political situation this paper is concerned about is an authoritarian province in nationally democratic country.¹¹ The objective is to uncover the strategic contexts in which subnational authoritarian leaders (in this paper governors) perpetuate provincial authoritarian regimes (their strategies and the political conditions that empower them), as well as key mechanisms through which such regimes can be weakened or dismantled.¹² I will focus on elite strategies of territorial control that are played out across three arenas of political action in any large-scale system of territorial governance: subnational arenas, national arenas, and the institutional links between them.

A. 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 and power building are thus never limited to any single arena. They may involve strategies that are specific to certain arenas (e.g. local strategies of political control), but the final outcome, the success or failure of these strategies of territorial control, hinge on the interconnections between all levels of the national territorial system. As political geographer Ronan Paddison notes, the state, viewed in territorial terms, is indeed a “fragmented state” (Paddison, 1983). It is fragmented horizontally, divided spatially between jurisdictions in a national territory, and it is fragmented vertically, between levels of government with different scopes of territorial jurisdiction. This is not, however, an atomized fragmentation, but an interdependent fragmentation.

These observations have a number of implications for the study of territorial politics. First, any study of national political outcomes viewed through the lens of territorial politics must place particular emphasis on linkages—linkages between levels of government, and linkages between territorially organized actors. How these linkages are organized, and how actors at different levels of the territorial system manipulate them, is crucial to how power is organized and distributed spatially within a state.

Second, the entangled nature of the territorial system calls for consideration of the functionality and interdependence of relationships between different levels of government and the implications this has for power and political outcomes. Literatures on center-periphery dynamics often stress the subordination of the “periphery” (whether defined as a subnational government or as a backward region), to the “center,” (whether

¹¹ That is, “democratization” of the national government has already taken place.

¹² This analytical starting point, post-national democratization, distinguishes the temporal scope of this paper from the most important contemporary scholarship on subnational authoritarianism: Richard Snyder’s books and articles on subnational authoritarian regimes in Mexico. Snyder studies the time period prior to the end of national PRI rule. However, the intellectual debt owed by this paper to Snyder’s work will be obvious to most readers, and many of the insights he provides are crucial to the study of national-subnational political processes, regardless of national regime type.

defined as a central government or a core economic region).¹³ Thus, Stein Rokkan sees center and periphery in terms of “a spatial system of authority and subordination.” (Rokkan, 4). However, the stress on subordination can obscure the importance of the periphery for a number of tasks and ‘functions’ of territorial governance. The periphery may “need” the center for many things, but the center also “needs” the periphery for vital tasks, including the maintenance of political order throughout the national territory, the delivery of votes, or the provision of services.¹⁴ It is thus more fruitful to look to the mutual interdependence of center and periphery than to assume the ‘peripherality’ or subordination of the periphery. As Sidney Tarrow suggests in his theoretical discussion of territorial politics in industrialized nations, 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?” (Tarrow 1978, 2). These are useful questions around which to organize explorations into territorial dimensions of political power.¹⁵

Third, we must pay particular attention to the variety of ways in which political elites pursue territorial strategies, and the ways in which territorial strategies are means toward other objectives in the national political system. In his book, *Human Territoriality*, political geographer Robert Sack defines territoriality as “a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area” (Sack 1986, 1). “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. Mastery of politics at the subnational level often requires not only prevailing in the local political context, but also in controlling the linkages between levels of territorial organization. Thus, controlling power locally means not only overpowering local opponents, but also closing off local politics to outside actors that could ally with local opposition or tilt the local balance of power against incumbent elites.

Controlling power locally also often requires pursuing national-level strategies, either by occupying or controlling positions in the national government (legislative, executive *or* judiciary) or by forming part of national coalitions that support the national executive. Success in these national strategies enhances local elites’ ability to extract resources from the center, and to prevent the center from intervening in local affairs. Similarly, “controlling area” is an important means for building national power. In the interconnectedness of a national system of territorial governance, subnational power is a prerequisite for national power and a buttress for national power-holders. It provides a springboard for aspirants for national office and a base of support once they are in national office.

In a federal territorial regime governors are crucial actors in this process. More than any other political official in a federal system, they straddle the hierarchy of arenas in a territorial governance system. They control vital levers of local political control, key

¹³ In another version I will go into some definitional issues with the “center-periphery” dichotomy that cause problems for the study of territorial conflict. For a first stab at resolving some of these issues, see Gibson and Falleti (2004).

¹⁴ Jeffrey Herbst (2001) provides an interesting discussion that contrasts the relative importance of “peripheries” for state formation and governance in Europe and Africa, although his portrayal of the relative unimportance of African peripheries seems somewhat at odds with Catherine Boone’s (2003) assertion of the importance of center-periphery linkages to African state formation.

¹⁵ See Gibson (1997) and Gibson and Calvo (2001) for analyses of these functional regional interrelationships and their effects on party politics and economic reform in Argentina and Mexico.

institutional links between national and local governments, and they often play an important role in the politics of national coalition building.

This brings us to the question of subnational authoritarianism. In order to understand why local authoritarianism persists in nationally democratic polities, we must first understand that it is not a local issue. All states or provinces are embedded in a larger system of territorial governance. Such a system is characterized by institutional interconnections between levels of government, mutually assigned constitutional responsibilities, flows of information and resources between center and periphery, and symbiotic or strategic relationships between actors located at different levels of the territorial system. It is also marked by separate patterns of conflict in subnational and national arenas that often come into contact with one another and jointly affect political outcomes.¹⁶ If subnational authoritarianism persists in a nationally democratic country, it is due not only to local conditions, but also to broader dynamics of national territorial governance in democratic regimes.¹⁷

III. Territorial Strategies and Subnational Political Change: A Framework for Analysis

In a nationally democratic or democratizing country the preservation of subnational authoritarianism is largely a product of territorial strategies pursued by local political elites.¹⁸ In response to the challenges (or opportunities) provided by national democratization, subnational authoritarian elites pursue strategies that maximize the following values: control, autonomy, and leverage—that is, control over provincial political actors, autonomy from national influences, and leverage over national political

¹⁶ As Richard Snyder (2002: 58) writes in his analysis of subnational authoritarianism during the years of PRI national hegemony in Mexico, “this case underscores the importance of a multilevel analytic perspective that treats subnational regimes as complex products of internal and external factors, rather than reducing them to mere outgrowths of a hegemonic, all powerful center.” Nor, in our particular case of decentralized nationally democratic systems, should we treat subnational outcomes as purely local phenomena.

¹⁷ It is tempting to look to the international system for analogies to subnational democratization processes, and recent scholarship on transnational dimensions of democratization only enhances the temptation (for important recent examples, see Sikkink and Keck (1998) and Thomas (2001)). However, international system analogy offers little in the way of insight for understanding subnational democratization. For one thing, sovereignty matters. In a national system the central government intervenes *regularly* and *substantively* in the affairs of provincial governments. In the international system we find very few cases of this type of regular and substantive international intervention in the domestic politics of a sovereign nation, especially over long periods of time.

¹⁸ There are, of course, underlying ‘structural’ forces at work—the well known social, cultural, and economic “pre-requisites” that increase the probabilities of democratization over time. Their local presence or absence must form part of any long-term explanation of subnational political change. The fact that most authoritarian provincial “enclaves” are poor and underdeveloped in comparison to other parts of the country is no accident, and strongly supports the notion that subnational authoritarianism, at its root, is a result of the uneven spatial distribution of democratic “pre-requisites” in a national territory. However, pressures for subnational democratic change can also come whether local pre-requisites are present or not, especially in a context where the national government is democratic. Of interest here are the strategies pursued by subnational leaders in response to such pressures.

leaders. These are values pursued by incumbent peripheral elites in any context of center-periphery relations, whether those elites are authoritarian or democratic. They are values that reflect the balance of power between center and periphery. There are many strategies peripheral elites can use in pursuit of these values, but here I will identify three broad and interacting strategies operating at different levels of the national territorial system: *a) the parochialization of power, b) the nationalization of influence, and c) the monopolization of national-subnational linkages.*

A. The Parochialization of Power: Boundary Control and Subnational Arenas:

In *The Semi-Sovereign People*, E.E. Schattschneider lays out a logic of political action that captures beautifully the underlying logic of local strategies of subnational territorial control (Schattschneider, 1960). Schattschneider notes that in any situation of political conflict between two unequally matched parties the stronger party's main incentive is to keep the conflict as isolated and 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, on the other hand, 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 localized conflict, therefore, have an interest in what Schattschneider called the "socialization" of that conflict (or, in territorial politics terms, the "nationalization" of that conflict). This captures the different incentives facing incumbents and opposition in authoritarian provincial politics.

The leaders of a provincial authoritarian regime, therefore, will be engaged constantly in strategies of "boundary control."¹⁹ These are strategies aimed at maximizing local political control by minimizing outside involvement in provincial conflicts. They include direct strategies of boundary control, such as blocking information flows from the center, controlling local media outlets, or preventing the installation of federally controlled agencies or monitors in the province. They can also include indirect strategies of boundary control, such as hindering the formation of local groups that could become interlocutors with the center, or by co-opting local parties or ruling party factions that could become allied with national actors.

While provincial authoritarian incumbents seek to parochialize power, the local opposition will often be doing just the opposite, looking for ways to breach provincial borders, bring in outside allies, and put their local conflicts into the national spotlight. The outcome of this struggle is vital to patterns of subnational political change. Stein Rokkan's observations about center-periphery conflict are thus very relevant to the study of continuity and change in subnational authoritarian regimes: "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

¹⁹ I borrow this notion from Stein Rokkan's (1983) study of center-periphery politics. Rokkan sees "boundary control" as an important strategy by peripheral elites to protect their areas from center encroachments. In his book, Rokkan focuses mainly on *cultural* boundary control, whereby elites seek to strengthen and protect local cultural identities against the barrage of cultural flows from the center and the cultural homogenization of the national territory. However, he theorizes the concept to include political and economic flows, and it is also a very useful concept for exploring elite responses to potential pressures from the center for local democratization or increased local political competition.

such inquiry we have to distinguish between boundary-opening and boundary-strengthening groups or agencies within the periphery” (1983, 4).

B. The Nationalization of Influence: Territorial Strategies in National Arenas:

In a nationally democratic country successful subnational authoritarian leaders are players on the national stage. They can be low-key national players, who occupy or control important national arenas for the sole purpose of buttressing their control at the provincial level. These can be ex-governors serving time in the senate, either to ensure the passage of legislation favorable to their provinces or to control fiscal appropriations to their provinces. In many cases, such stints in the national congress are merely holding patterns for an eventual return to their states as governors.²⁰ They can also include governors who control the province’s delegation to the national congress, and thus pull key strings to bring benefits to the province. These national strategies are central to maximizing the value of subnational *leverage* over national political actors. This leverage is critical to the success of local territorial strategies of political control.

However, such leaders can also be actors whose participation in national arenas reflects national ambitions. That is, they view both their local political control as well as their access to national arenas as key to fulfilling aspirations to become national leaders. This can be as members or organizers of gubernatorial coalitions in support of presidential candidates, or it can be as brokers or actual candidates for high office (the vice-presidency or the presidency itself). In federal systems governors are uniquely positioned to use local power as a springboard to national office,²¹ and in recent decades, authoritarian provincial governors have had more than their fair share of bids to capture the presidency of their formally democratic national governments.²² Complacency about the territorially contained effects of “backwater” provincial politics on democratic rule in a country can thus often be shattered when the periphery catapults its authoritarian progeny to the pinnacles of national power.

Local strategies of political control are thus closely entwined with strategies in national political arenas. Without such strategies local elites will lack the leverage necessary to influence decisions of importance to their province, and, by extension, to maximize the values of local control and provincial autonomy. Paradoxically, the parochialization of power requires the nationalization of territorial strategies by provincial political elites.

So far I have stressed that becoming players in national politics is a source of strength and leverage for subnational authoritarian leaders. However, it is important also

²⁰ Much has been written on this pattern in Brazil. See, especially, Samuels (2003) and Abrucio (1998). It has also been a tradition since time immemorial in Argentina, and V.O. Key (1949) documents it extensively for the U.S. South.

²¹ In fact, if you want to be president in Argentina, Mexico, or the United States today, you had best do it via prior governorship of a state or province.

²² A few quick examples: Fernando Collor de Melo, ex-governor of the peripheral northeastern state of Alagoas in Brazil, was elected president of Brazil in 1989, and presided over a notoriously corrupt government until his impeachment in 1998. Carlos Menem, long-time governor of the peripheral province of La Rioja, became president of Argentina in 1989, and brought his unique, and some thought (for a while at least) quaint authoritarian practices to the presidency. Today Néstor Kirchner, by most accounts a thoroughly authoritarian governor in his Patagonian province of Santa Cruz, is president of Argentina. In Mexico Roberto Madrazo, the legendary authoritarian governor of Tabasco, has been (and continues to be) a major presidential contender, and today is president of the PRI.

to note that such a national presence is a double-edged sword. Ironically, while it is a pre-requisite to effective local control, it is also the Achilles' tendon for subnational authoritarian regimes. The reason is quite simple. It is captured in the old Argentine saying, "*la política es como una pampa... levantás la cabeza y te la vuelan.*" Loosely translated: 'acquiring too high a profile can get your head blown off.' When provincial political leaders become national leaders they will also become embroiled in the conflicts of national politics. At times these conflicts will have nothing to do with provincial 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 of eliminating them as national rivals is to undermine the local power structure that supports them. This creates strong incentives to breach the boundaries so carefully defended by subnational authoritarian elites. It opens opportunities for local oppositions to find national allies suddenly willing to embrace their cause against the local *caudillo*. The impetus for subnational democratization can thus often be national conflicts totally unrelated to the local conflicts of authoritarian provinces. The virtuous cycle of subnational democratization can be set in motion by nothing more than a vile political dispute between national leaders.

C. Monopolization of National-Subnational Linkages

"Linkages" between the arenas of a national system of territorial governance are crucial to the functioning of the system and to the organization of power at all levels of territorial organization. However, "linkage" is not easy to operationalize. It is somewhat undenotative as a concept. We might understand what we mean when we say it, but defining it (or 'reifying') it is not easy. By my count, *Oxford English Dictionary* has over 20 definitions (plus many sub-definitions) for "link" as a noun (and I am not counting those relevant to golf, sailing, or hockey). The one that I like 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" (2001, vol. VIII, 995, emphasis added).

Allowing that a "link" can be 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 different arenas of a national territorial system. Sidney Tarrow (1978), while not giving an outright definition, describes these links as "networks of exchange" between center and periphery. This is consistent with the more abstract *Oxford English Dictionary* definition, and captures both the complexity and interactive nature of the linkages between levels of government. Such linkages can thus include institutions established to regulate inter-provincial and national-subnational governmental relations, institutions or persons to monitor provincial activities and expenditures (executive, legislative, or judiciary), or institutions to organize the representation of provincial interests before the center. They can include regular revenue flows from center to periphery, communication flows, or different forms of technical assistance or service delivery between levels of government. They can also include relationships whose strength varies from case to case—between national parties and local parties, between national and local unions, non-governmental organization, and churches. And finally, they can involve formal and informal practices for nominating local

representatives to national institutions, whether legislative institutions or other institutions in the national bureaucracy.

The main point to be made here is that a key objective of any political stratagem of local control by authoritarian elites is the monopolization of national-subnational linkages, or the neutralization of potential linkages that could benefit local opposition forces. This is a vital component of the parochialization of power, but it is also vital to the provincial incumbent's ability to extract benefits from the center and maximize their political payoffs locally for leaders of the subnational authoritarian government. In any context of center-periphery relations control over these linkages is an ongoing object of struggle between political actors at all levels of the political system. In territorial politics, whoever controls linkages controls power.

IV. Some Generalizations about Patterns of Continuity and Change in Provincial Authoritarian Enclaves

A. National Democratization and Subnational Authoritarianism: a symbiotic relationship

One of the massive yet largely unremarked facts of the "Third Wave" transitions to democracy was that with national democratization often came the consolidation of subnational authoritarianism. In order to understand why this happened, it helps to understand the differential effects of political transitions on national and subnational arenas. Democratic transitions, while transforming politics at the national level, create very little pressure for subnational democratization. In fact, they often hinder it.

The weakening of authoritarian rule during the transition period was often accompanied by a shift in the balance of power between center and periphery. There are many things about transitions that cause this, but here I will mention two: new opportunities for subnational political mobilization caused by weakening central control, and the effects of electoral competition during "founding elections," which enhance the powers of subnational elites.

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 hastened democratization. Oppositions mobilized openly and local conditions permitted local party competition. Democratic "oases" in nationally authoritarian countries thus emerged. In authoritarian local contexts it had the reverse effect. In many peripheral backwaters local elites were able to isolate their provinces from the democratizing trend, and to resist pressures for democratization from executives managing the national transition.²³ In these cases authoritarian "enclaves" in nationally democratizing countries emerged. Thus, in Mexico the "decentering" of national politics unleashed democratizing trends in many states, but it freed local *caciques* in other states to make

²³ For reasons of space I cannot address patterns of subnational governance during the pre-democratization period, although these are crucial to understanding the democratization period. See Hagopian (1996) and Samuels and Abrucio (2000) for Brazil, and Snyder (2001a) and Cornelius et al. for Mexico. On Mexico, see also Alan Knight's insightful 1998 essay on the division of labor between national and local governments in the administration of repression under PRI rule, with subnational authorities carrying out much of the 'dirty work' of coercion for the more 'benevolent' national leadership.

full use of local clientelistic networks, economic resources, and political machines to consolidate provincial authoritarian projects.²⁴

The increase of national party competition also had the ironic effect of facilitating local “re-authoritarianization” projects. Provincial party leaders now had more opportunities to use the “defect” card as a way of gaining leverage against the ruling party.²⁵ In addition, during the “founding elections” of the transition period subnational political leaders often became important regional allies of the national parties vying for power in national elections. This increased their leverage and also put concerns about the authoritarian nature of the local interlocutor on the back burner of the national party’s agenda. Thus, in Argentina leaders of the “renovador” faction of the Peronist party, touted as a new enlightened face of Peronism, gleefully allied themselves with whatever provincial *caudillos* came their way.²⁶

Provincial Authoritarianism after the “Founding Elections”:

The initial consolidation of provincial authoritarianism during the transition period was then usually reinforced during the early democratic period, as provincial elites became important support groups to national democratic leaders eager to consolidate their power. During the early years of a democratic regime elected presidents have a lot of issues on their agenda. Subnational democratization, however, is seldom one of them. Fragile national governments want many allies and few enemies. The consolidation of vital national agendas, ranging from exercising effective political control throughout the national territory, to winning elections, to carrying out major political and economic reforms, requires building viable national coalitions. In these contexts, authoritarian provincial political elites, with their abundant supplies of voters and legislators, exercise considerable leverage. To democratically elected central governments, even those normatively committed to a total democratization of their countries, the costs of challenging peripheral authoritarians often far outweigh the benefits. In fact, in the early phases, consolidating national democratic governments may require empowering subnational authoritarian governments. Thus, in spite of constitutional powers available to him, and his widespread use of decree powers during his presidency, Argentina’s Raúl Alfonsín did not carry out a single central government “intervention” against provincial authorities during his presidency.²⁷ In Brazil, constitutional presidents, from Sarney to Cardoso, relied on broad regional coalitions of provincial bosses to win elections and to govern.²⁸ And during the early years of Vladimir Putin’s presidency in Russia, the

²⁴ Thus, Wayne Cornelius (1999) characterizes Mexico as a “mosaic” of democratizing states and subnational enclaves.

²⁵ The use of the “defect” card by local PRI leaders against President Zedillo was well known (in essence, “if you keep pressuring me to abide by local electoral outcomes I do not like, I will bolt to the PRD and you will lose the state”). But in other contexts local leaders could play the reverse game, offering support to a national democratic candidate to forestall action against them. In 1983 Raúl Alfonsín happily accepted the support of provincial conservative parties and did little to challenge them after the election.

²⁶ The most famous of provincial *caudillos* was Carlos Menem, governor of La Rioja province, who became a major national figure in the Renovación movement.

²⁷ And this was a period of major consolidation of provincial authoritarian fiefdom’s, including Carlos Menem’s administration in La Rioja, the Saadi family’s grip over Catamarca, the Juárez feudal regime in Santiago del Estero, and the non-Peronist Pacto Autonomista-Liberal cartel in Corrientes.

²⁸ See, for example, Abrucio (1998) and Samuels and Abrucio (2000).

president essentially built national power by giving it away to regional “oligarchs” who became key members of his national coalition.²⁹

B. Local Patterns of Subnational Politics: Authoritarian Provinces, Plural Cities

One socio-demographic pattern seems to predominate in peripheral provincial politics. Cities are the sites of social diversity and political competition, while rural areas tend to be the bastions of tradition and authoritarian rule. This is, of course, a mirror of national patterns, but it is particularly significant when we move down to the study of subnational political dynamics. By and large, authoritarian governors control provinces because they, or their political machines, control the rural vote. They also often possess vast urban machines, and urban clientelism is as vital a political strategy as is rural clientelism.³⁰ However, it is the cities where the local challenges to provincial authoritarian rule are likely to exist. It is not unusual to see provinces governed by authoritarian elites while the capital city is governed by the opposition.³¹

The “plural cities” problem for incumbent elites tends to be dealt with in a variety of ways. The multi-layered strategies described earlier, which isolate urban oppositions from national allies and resources is critical to neutralizing urban opposition.³² However, local institutional devices also serve to give incumbent elites with strong rural bases the edge in state-wide electoral contests. Incumbent parties tend to have overwhelming advantages over oppositions in the extension of party networks, and the attendant clientelistic machines, throughout provincial rural areas. The combination of state resources available for patronage activities and the wide geographic extension of party networks to render those state resources politically effective, usually means that rural districts ‘belong’ to the ruling provincial party.³³

Furthermore, incumbents avail themselves widely of another institutional device: the overrepresentation of rural areas in local elections, either through the territorial overrepresentation of rural districts in the provincial legislature or other means of party overrepresentation that enhance the organizational advantages of incumbent parties at the district level throughout the province.³⁴ The importance of single-member districts, as well as the territorial division of the province into several municipalities, most of which are rural, also gives incumbents major advantages in the control and administration of provincial politics.

²⁹ For one account of the regional strategies of Vladimir Putin, see Solnick (n.d.).

³⁰ As we are learning from Susan Stokes’ current research on machine politics in Argentina.

³¹ In Mexico this has spurred a scholarly literature on the dynamics of “juxtaposed” state governments.

³² Calvo and Miccozzi (2004) also point out another strategy: the deliberate isolation of local electoral cycles from national electoral cycles, which also hampers coordination between national and local opposition parties.

³³ Only in situations of major investments by national opposition parties in local contests can local opposition parties hope to penetrate the rural strongholds of incumbent parties. In Mexico, for example, the PAN and the PRD have made important efforts to break into the traditional PRI rural strongholds, and they have often made rural contests more competitive. Nevertheless, these parties continue to depend heavily on urban voters for electoral victories against the PRI.

³⁴ Studies of provincial level malapportionment have been abundant in U.S. politics, but rare elsewhere. One excellent recent exception is Calvo and Miccozzi (2004) on Argentina, which notes the “large seat premiums” enjoyed by provincial incumbent parties and the strong “incumbent bias” that tends to result from provincial electoral reforms in Argentina. See Calvo and Miccozzi (2004).

This points us to a basic fact of provincial authoritarian rule: lose the city and you can still control the province.

C. The fiscal paradox: dependent provinces, powerful governors

Nearly all authoritarian provincial enclaves are massively dependent on the central government for their government budgets. In Oaxaca and Santiago del Estero, for example, close to ninety percent of provincial government budgets are supplied by transfers from the federal government, and this is representative of a much broader pattern.³⁵ What is interesting about this for us is how it plays into strategies of territorial control. The net effect, I argue, is to greatly strengthen possibilities for local authoritarian rule. It is true that this creates a dependence on the central government that makes local elites vulnerable to external pressure, but there are a variety of strategies provincial elites can pursue to mitigate that vulnerability.³⁶ If this problem can be controlled, the provincial fiscal dependence works to the great advantage of authoritarian incumbents.

In essence, under these conditions, the provincial “king” is not fiscally accountable to local economic actors. The fiscal accountability of government on local private actors, which has been the genesis of democratic rule throughout the ages, is absent in provincial politics. The local executive “extracts” its revenues from a source outside the local economy. In these contexts it is not the government that depends upon local economic actors for its prosperity, but quite the reverse. Local economic actors are often utterly dependent upon the state for subsidies, preferential treatment, and contracts.³⁷ How this fiscal reality interacts with local political economy dynamics and inter-governmental relations is a big part of any analysis of subnational political democratization.

D. Provincial Authoritarianism and the Hegemonic Party

Provincial authoritarianism in democratic regimes finds its most important institutional form in the hegemonic provincial party. This can range from outright single-party regimes, such as those that ruled over the American South after the end of reconstruction, to hegemonic parties linked to an important national party (such as the PRI in a number of Mexican states or the Peronist Party in a number of Argentine provinces), to provincial hegemonic parties without links to national parties, or to cartels of elite parties, linked together in formal alliances or local consociational agreements.³⁸

³⁵ See Gibson and Calvo (2000; 42) for figures for Argentina in the mid-1990s. The authors report that, for the nineteen provinces they categorize as “peripheral,” the average figure for the “percentage of provincial government revenues financed by the central government” was 78 percent.

³⁶ This includes sectional pressure strategies against the central government, or the negotiation of revenue transfer schemes that limit central government control over the use of the funds. I will get into these details in an expanded version of this paper.

³⁷ An interesting analogy, in terms of local democratic development, is that of “petro-states,” where democratic development is stunted by state monopolies over the primary sources of governmental revenue. See, for example, Karl (1997).

³⁸ A notable example that comes to mind of this latter type is the *Pacto Autonomista-Liberal*, a fusion of two oligarchic provincial parties in the Argentine province of Corrientes that ruled the province for most of the 20th century.

Hegemonic party rule is a crucial institutional resource for subnational elite strategies in all territorial arenas: it is vital to strategies of boundary control, it is vital to the projection of local elite power on to national politics, and it is vital to the monopolization of center-periphery institutional linkages.

The *local* importance of single party rule is perhaps the most apparent to casual observers. Single party rule is a perfect authoritarian resource in a context where elections must, for whatever reason, be held to legitimize incumbent power holders. In “small” political contexts (in the sense that Schattschneider was writing about) where powerful elites with access to provincial and federal patronage resources can overshadow their disadvantaged opponents, constructing conditions of party hegemony is not an incredibly difficult task. And once such systems are in place, with clientelistic networks to support them, they are extremely difficult to dislodge in the absence of outside intervention.

However, the hegemonic party’s significance extends well beyond the parochialization of power at the subnational level. Writing about U.S. Southern politics in the mid-20th century, V.O. Key wrote “the one-party system is purely an arrangement for national affairs” (1949, 16). What did he mean by that? Namely that the one-party state plays a critical role in facilitating local elite leverage in national arenas. This operates in a number of ways. It facilitates the monopolization of national-subnational linkages by creating only one provincial interlocutor for federal authorities (something that would be far more difficult, say if the mayor of the largest municipality were controlled by another party). It also makes it possible to maximize local incumbents’ leverage in the national congress, which enhances their importance to national political leaders. More congressional representatives that respond to the governor means more leverage for the governor over national politicians.

E. Two Models of Subnational Democratization: “Party-Led” Transitions and “Center-Led” Transitions:

The following statement follows from the discussions of the preceding pages: the democratization of subnational authoritarian provinces will not be brought about by local processes alone (this is a big contrast with tendencies of national democratization processes). Local pressures are important, but given the skewed local balance of power characteristic of authoritarian enclaves, political transitions will only occur when these local pressures are linked to political action from national arenas. *Provincial democratization is a result of the nationalization of subnational conflict.*

In this light, I suggest that there are two dominant modes of subnational transitions led by national actors: party-led transitions and center-led transitions. The first involves actions by national parties, the second by national governments. In the former case, national parties link up with local parties to orchestrate the electoral defeat of authoritarian incumbents. In the latter case central governments intervene directly, either to undermine authoritarian incumbents or to remove them from office altogether.

This distinction permits us to identify the distinct behaviors of institutional actors that are often conflated in theoretical literatures on territorial politics—national parties

and national governments.³⁹ Each has interests that are unique to them. Sometimes these can overlap, and at other times they can work at cross-purposes. Understanding the likelihood of intervention in subnational politics thus requires a better sense of how actors located in national parties and the national government are connected to other actors in the territorial system and under what conditions they will intervene separately or jointly. Keeping the distinction in mind will also permit us to trace how the interests of these institutional actors clash or converge in the course of conflicts in the multi-layered arenas of territorial politics.

V. Political Dynamics of Subnational Authoritarianism in Mexico and Argentina

Mexico: Authoritarian Restoration and a Party-Led Democratization Attempt in Oaxaca

Oaxaca is an interesting case of provincial authoritarian restoration in a nationally democratizing country. The rise of José Murat to the governorship of the state can be understood as a product of the shifting dynamics of territorial control by the ruling PRI during the late 1990s. The success of his authoritarian restoration project can also be understood in light of the election of the PAN's Vicente Fox to the presidency and its effects on center-periphery relations in the Mexican territorial system. The first national event, the transition process, created new opportunities for subnational challenges to the national PRI. The second event, the change of party control of the national executive, greatly enhanced possibilities for "boundary control" strategies by the newly empowered leaders of the Oaxacan state government.

The Parochialization of Power: The re-consolidation of authoritarian rule

The twelve years preceding the election of José Murat as governor of Oaxaca were characterized by a gradual pluralization of electoral politics in the state. During the gubernatorial term of Heladio Ramírez (1986-1992) the PRI responded to growing unrest in the state with classic PRI policies of "neo-corporatist" and "participatory" policies toward opposition forces as well as greater tolerance toward local electoral victories by opposition parties.⁴⁰ Governor Ramírez's successor Diódoro Carrasco (1992-1998) pursued his predecessor's overall approach, and the combined twelve-years of their gubernatorial terms was marked by considerable continuity of *equipo* and of gradual political acceptance of the state's growing political pluralization. During Carrasco's governorship the left-leaning PRD became the state's second party, and the PAN captured valuable municipal posts, including the coveted capital city of Oaxaca.⁴¹

Events taking place at the national level had a significant impact on the politics of succession in Oaxaca. In 1998 Mexico was in an open process of political transition.

³⁹ In the decentralization literature, for example, party variables and partisan motivations are major explanatory factors for political decentralization outcomes. For a critique of these approaches, see Falletti (2003).

⁴⁰ Richard Snyder (2002) provides a full and interesting account of the "neo-corporatist-participatory" subnational authoritarian regime under Heladio Ramírez. The period under study in Snyder's book covers the presidential administrations of Miguel De la Madrid (1982-1988), and Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994). For accounts of political conflicts in Oaxaca in the decades leading up to these periods, see Díaz Montes (1980), Martínez Vázquez (1990), Benitez Zenteno (1980), and Clarke (2000).

⁴¹ For a complete analysis of municipal election results in Oaxaca, as well as their interaction with political reforms carried out during this period, see Martínez Vázquez and Díaz Montes (2001).

President Ernesto Zedillo played a delicate balancing act between honoring his vow to allow the political transition to move forward and keeping faith with his party by minimizing losses at the state level. It was in this context that José Murat made the move that catapulted him to the governorship of Oaxaca. Murat had been a loyal player in PRI politics. He worked closely with Governor Ramirez. During that time he became an indispensable interlocutor with opposition parties, and showed considerable success at coopting opposition leaders or securing their cooperation with government initiatives. 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. In sum, Murat, by 1998, was a prominent player in PRI state and national politics, and was a clear contender for the gubernatorial nomination.

There was one problem, however. He was not an “insider” in Governor Diódoro Carrasco’s circles. His visible ties with local opposition groups, as well as with the national dissident “dinosaurio” wing of the PRI, made him an untrustworthy politician to most members of the *diodorista* inner circle. When Governor Carrasco’s selection of another candidate became known, Murat went directly to the President. He threatened to bolt to the PRD if he was not designated the PRI’s gubernatorial nominee in Oaxaca. Rather than face yet another high-profile defection and the loss of a PRI state bastion to the opposition, Zedillo relented.⁴² He instructed Carrasco to allow Murat to become the nominee, and compensated the dismayed governor with a promotion to the powerful *Secretaría de Gobernación* (Interior Ministry). For the next two years Diódoro Carrasco would be a determined factional enemy of Governor Murat from his powerful national perch in the Interior Ministry.

Upon his election as governor, Murat lost no time in consolidating his control over Oaxacan politics. In Oaxaca’s 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 eliminating “boundary opening” rivals within the ruling party as a first order of business. Defying a long standing norm of respect for “continuidad de equipo” (continuity in government posts of members of previous administrations), Murat purged the state government of officers linked to the previous Ramirez and Carrasco administrations. He also isolated state representatives to the national congress, both in the lower house and in the senate (all of whom had reached these positions during the previous administration).⁴³

The election of Vicente Fox and the strengthening of local authoritarian rule:
“The election of Vicente Fox strengthened Murat’s political control.”⁴⁴
Variations of this statement were made to me repeatedly in interviews with politicians

⁴² Zedillo was very sensitive to the potential for high level defections by PRI officials throughout the country. Shortly before Murat’s threat, Ricardo Monreal, a popular PRI state leader in the state of Zacatecas, had defected to the PRD after losing a contested internal struggle for the gubernatorial nomination. He went on to win the 1998 election in Zacatecas. His maneuver, known as the *monrealazo*, sent shock waves throughout the national PRI.

⁴³ Vicente de la Cruz, national congressman for Oaxaca, 1997-2000. Author interview. Mexico City, February 14, 2004.

⁴⁴ “La elección de Vicente Fox fortaleció el control de Murat.” Quote from author interview with Vicente de la Cruz, former national PRI deputy for Oaxaca, Mexico City, February 14, 2004. Another interviewee

and political observers in Oaxaca. A look at the record clearly confirms this prevailing wisdom in the Oaxacan political elite. The change of government greatly relieved Murat of pressures from the center. First, it eliminated controls on his administration from a central government controlled by his own party. For Murat this represented a double bonus. It relieved him of the structural restraints that centralized party rule had traditionally exercised over PRI state governors.⁴⁵ But this was doubly significant for Murat, because those in control of the central government were his party rivals, and he must have observed their departure with considerable relief. In addition, the election of Vicente Fox put an inexperienced national government in place in a political context in which opposition parties controlled the national legislature and a majority of state governments. Thus, even if the Fox government's new administrators had known how to use the levers of the national territorial system against their state-based party rivals, they had few incentives to do so. Fox needed interlocutors in the opposition. He needed cooperative governors. He had pressing national agendas to pursue. Challenging authoritarian opposition governors was not one of them, and has not been to this day. As one Oaxacan politician (now 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."⁴⁶

José Murat had been governor for two years when the PRI lost control of the national government. Having purged most remnants of the old administrations from local government, he was now relieved by the national electorate of hostile PRI interventions from the central government. Undisputed master of the Oaxacan PRI, he could now turn his attention to consolidating his control over the rest of Oaxaca's polity.

A key element in the parochialization of power in Oaxaca was control over municipal politics. Murat was especially successful in this endeavor. The most blatant maneuver was to use a constitutional prerogative available to Mexican governors, the power of "intervention". Technically, this is a power only to be used in the event of civil disorder, violent conflict, or any other development that threatens governability in the municipality. The governor, in concert with the state legislature, is empowered to intervene in the municipality, remove local officials, and restore order by appointing new local officials. Murat's total control of the Oaxacan state legislature made these interventions quite easy to carry out.⁴⁷ 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 significant of these interventions took place in the most urbanized municipalities—many controlled by the opposition. Of the 140 interventions, 48 were in opposition controlled municipalities (Reforma 2003: 15).

The partisan consequences of these interventions were significant. After the 2001 local elections the opposition PRD controlled 36 municipios. By mid-2003 they

stated that: "El nicho de la alternancia lo ha favorecido mucho a Murat" (Victor Raúl Martínez Vazquez, political scientist, interview, Oaxaca, February 16, 2004).

⁴⁵ See, for example, Snyder (2001a) and Cornelius (1999) for descriptions of center-periphery controls during the era of PRI national hegemony.

⁴⁶ Juan Manuel Cruz Acevedo, former president of the Oaxacan legislature, interview with the author, Oaxaca, February 17, 2004.

⁴⁷ Control that was consolidated in the first years of his administration. Early on Murat engineered the election of Juan Díaz Pimentel as president of the Oaxacan legislature. Díaz Pimentel became Murat's virtual 'enforcer' in the congress (he was also a joint-owner with Murat of *El Tiempo*, a local newspaper acquired by Murat and several other partners early in his term).

governed 29—seven had been “intervened” by the governor. Similarly, the PAN had won in 29 municipios. By mid-2003 they only controlled seventeen. And the biggest proportional blow came to *Convergencia*, a political party/movement of ex-PRI leaders.⁴⁸ After the 2001 elections *Convergencia* controlled six municipalities. By mid-2003 it only controlled one—the capital city of Oaxaca (*Reforma* 2003:14).

Given his party’s control over the state’s rural municipalities, Murat’s frontal assault on the state’s urbanized municipalities effectively took care of the problems posed by the “plural cities, authoritarian states” situation of traditional authoritarian enclaves. Rural municipalities, and all the benefits from overrepresentation in the legislature that they provided, were largely his. And his assault on key urban municipalities mitigated the possibilities for opposition mobilization in those areas.

Monopolizing local-national linkages:

The Oaxacan’ state government receives close to ninety percent of its revenues from transfers from the federal government. Some of these funds come in the form of direct, unearmarked transfers to the state government, but a sizeable share comes through transfers that are earmarked to specific programs and activities and are monitored by government appointed federal “delegates.”⁴⁹ The federal delegates are a key linkage between national and subnational governments in the administration of Mexico’s territorial system. They are in touch with local needs and conditions, oversee the management of federally sponsored local programs, and serve as the center’s monitor of the local administration of federal funds. In the two years following the election of the Fox government, Murat replaced federally appointed delegates with delegates of his own liking. He did so with virtually no challenges from the federal government.⁵⁰ His successful neutralization of the federal delegate network in Oaxaca gave Murat free reign over the use of federal funds in his state. It also gave him control over municipal leaders, since a sizeable share of federal funds were destined to public works projects in the city. For opposition mayors this was particularly problematic. In the capital city of Oaxaca, which was governed by a particularly threatening opposition mayor, it put an effective

⁴⁸ *Convergencia* has become the vehicle of choice for dissident state-PRI leaders, who have often lost internal contests, to challenge local PRI rule after they have left the party. In many states it has become the most important institutional expression of factional strife within the PRI. While in the late 1990s the PRD had served this purpose, the practice came under increasing criticism, both within the PRD, which feared a *PRI-ización* of their party, and by dissident PRI leaders as well. *Convergencia*, founded by Dante Delgado, a PRI leader, has become a more “seemly” way for PRI splinters to reorganize their challenges to local PRI incumbents. *Convergencia* led governments are usually supported by non-PRI oppositions.

⁴⁹ 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 is fondly known by locals as “Margarita Ramos 33,” for her freewheeling distribution of federal funds to party loyalists.

⁵⁰ One instance of federal government capitulation to Murat’s pressure on federal delegates is captured by the rather 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 *Reforma*, online edition, August 22, 2002. “Aclaran Destitucion en Oaxaca.”

check on the mayor's freedom of movement, and gave the governor the opportunity to claim full credit for public works projects in the city.⁵¹

Another step toward the monopolization of local-national linkages lay in changing the composition of the state's national congressional delegation. By 2001 governor Murat had put together a solid block of *oficialista* deputies in the national congress. This enhanced his abilities to extract valuable appropriations from the congress for the Oaxacan government and, 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" (*Reforma* 2003: 17).⁵²

Control over federal funds, control over the national congressional delegation, and control over municipalities also meant control over much of the local electoral process. Press and official reports of the midterm elections of 2002 document widescale electoral manipulation, diversion of federal funds to partisan activities, fraud, clientilistic vote-buying, and cooptation and intimidation of the opposition.⁵³ Grouped collectively under the name "cochiner electoral" ("electoral pig pen"), these practices solidified *muratismo's* control over party politics. In the federal elections of 2003 the PRI swept to victory in all of the state's 11 congressional districts.

Thus was set in motion a vicious circle (or virtuous cycle, depending on one's perspective) that solidified gubernatorial control over the state—absolute majorities in the congress increased the governor's ability to control the municipalities. Absolute control of municipalities extended the government's control over the congress. Control over the congress led to the removal of congressional oversight over the executive branch. It also led to control over the judiciary, which did not challenge the government's use of funds, electoral practices, or trampling over municipal autonomy.⁵⁴

The Nationalization of Influence: Oaxaca in Mexican Politics

The governor's objectives in expanding his influence in national arenas went well beyond attracting national resources and support for provincial purposes. They were also part of a campaign to increase the governor's power in national politics, both in the

⁵¹ The mayor was Gabino Cué Monteagudo, a *Convergencia* politician (and close ally of Diódoro Carrasco), who would run for governor in 2004. One only had to visit the city of Oaxaca to see the enormous billboards throughout the city crediting the governor with bringing public works to the city's neighborhoods, and wresting any credit for local achievements from municipal officials. I was told by several individuals in Oaxaca that the Mayor is rarely invited to attend the inauguration ceremonies of federally-funded municipal public works programs.

⁵² Asked by that same reporter whether any of the money was diverted for partisan purposes, Ruíz Ortiz dismissed the allegations as pure "mythology" (*Reforma* 2003: 17).

⁵³ The federal *Instituto Federal Electoral* has published a full report of electoral irregularities in the 2002 election.

⁵⁴ In fact, the president of the state supreme court, Raúl Bolaños, was a prominent contender for the PRI gubernatorial nomination in 2004. Given that in Oaxaca the PRI nominee is designated unilaterally by the governor, the political "autonomy" of the head of the supreme court might be questioned by reasonable and dispassionate observers.

internal struggles of the PRI as well as in institutional strategies to influence national policy.

Murat's national strategies regarding the PRI have been quite straight-forward. He is closely allied to the national faction led by Roberto Madrazo, ex-governor of the State of Tabasco, current president of the PRI, and leader of the "dinosaurio" wing of the party. In a national context where governors are lynchpins of national coalition-building, Murat's control of state politics has made him a valuable ally of national factional leaders. Murat played a key role in the election of Madrazo to the presidency of the PRI. As the newspaper *La Jornada* noted in 2002, "he is considered one of the unquestioned leaders of the *cochiner* that took Roberto Madrazo to the presidency of the PRI" (*La Jornada* 2002).

"Murat's fate is linked to the fate of Madrazo."⁵⁵ 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 re-election of governors. They serve one six year term. This gives local territorial strategies key national objectives. The success of a governor opens paths to his or her promotion to top national executive positions. 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 solidifying regional bases of support.

This sheds light on some of the incentives for a politician like Murat to embark on an authoritarian restoration in his state. The more successful at eliminating rival PRI factions within the state, and the more successful at generating large electoral majorities for the national faction, the more leverage the governor will have over the national faction to which he is allied. Thus, ironically, the dynamics of increased national party competition create incentives for authoritarian strategies at the state level.

Governor Murat also played a key role in other national arenas. He was a founding member and leader of the *Conferencia Nacional de Gobernadores* (Conago), a national 'cartel' of governors that seeks to increase gubernatorial clout in national politics. Since the PRI controls seventeen of the nation's thirty two governorships, Conago has also served as an important forum for PRI control of the national executive. It has also worked to increase the powers and autonomy of governors in their own states.⁵⁶

Murat thus converted himself into a visible player on the national stage. He knitted networks of national alliances and became a critical ally of leaders in the dominant faction of the national PRI. However useful these developments were to Murat's national stature, they also put him squarely into some of the highest-stakes conflicts of Mexican national politics. As such, he became a target to national figures in the party establishment and the central government that saw the undermining of

⁵⁵ La suerte de Murat está ligada a la suerte de Madrazo." Victor Raúl Martínez Vazquez, interview with the author, Oaxaca, February 16.

⁵⁶ As the news magazine *Cambio* (which devoted a cover story to Conago) wrote in 2004, "the governors seek to increase their parcels of influence. They are going for more resources, more television coverage, and fewer federal delegates" (*Cambio* 2004: cover page).

muratismo in Oaxaca as an increasingly important objective in their struggles to control national politics.

The National backlash: Party-led efforts to democratize Oaxacan politics

Locally, Murat's rule galvanized grassroots and civil society organizations against the re-authoritarianization of Oaxacan politics. This, however, was not reflected in any major mobilization by the local branches of the opposition PRD and PAN, both of which had been brought to a low ebb by the cooptation and coercion of the Murat administration. Initially then, the main local partisan challenge to Murat's rule came from the legacy of PRI factionalism. And this was based in Oaxaca City, the sophisticated, increasingly cosmopolitan and politically diverse urban "jewel" of the state.

In 2004 Gabino Cué, the former PRI "Diodorista" politician who had breached the political "boundaries" built by the governor by winning the mayoralty of Oaxaca as an opposition leader, announced his plans to run for governor as a Convergencia candidate. The problem for Cué was that he would have to do so as head of a multi-party alliance if he had any hope of taking on the governor's impressive state-wide machine. And neither the local PAN nor the local PRD had any interest in forming part of such an alliance. First, they were reluctant subordinate themselves to a former PRI politician in new "multi-partisan" clothing. Second, there was the old "oil and water" problem—the conservative PAN and the leftist PRD agreed on very little other than their opposition to the PRI. Third, and most significant, the local parties were weak, starved for resources, and in many cases totally coopted by the state's governor.⁵⁷

Here is where the national parties stepped in. Both the national leaderships of the PAN and the PRD 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 PRD was anxious to expand its hold in the southern region of the country, one of its important (but beleaguered) regional strongholds. 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.

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.⁵⁸ Local PAN leaders also threatened to defect but were brought to heel by their national leaders.

⁵⁷ See, for example, "El PRD está en bancarrota." *El Imparcial* (Oaxaca). February 18, 2004, p. 3.

⁵⁸ This only furthered speculation that he had been "bought" by Murat, since his third party candidate would in effect destroy hopes for a "unity" opposition coalition. It was reported in the local press that in the months preceding the announcement of the alliance Murat actually financed publicity extolling Sanchez's qualities as a political leader. See "Renuncia Héctor Sánchez a sus cargos en el PRD," *Noticias*, February 20, 2004.

The party-led democratization attempt was also an outcome of factional conflict within the PRI that cut across territorial arenas. The leader of the coalition belonged to a splinter party from the PRI (Convergencia), which in its local incarnation was allied to anti-Madrazo factions in the national party. In a testament to the continuing hegemony of the PRI over Oaxacan electoral politics, it was the PRI factional struggle that helped to crystallize the “multi-party” alliance against *Muratismo* in Oaxaca.

For the moment, in spite of the victory of the Oaxacan PRI in the August 2004 election, it appears that the party-led effort against Governor Murat’s project of authoritarian control has brought about a major transformation of Oaxacan politics.⁵⁹ Yet the electoral results also point to the difficulties ahead for the opposition. The official PRI candidate won with approximately 48 percent of the vote, against 44 percent for the opposition coalition. At first glance this looks like a competitive party context in the state. However, a closer look at the results reveals the difficulties for the opposition and the strong potential for authoritarian continuity in the Oaxaca. Opposition vote gains were based strongly on urban districts, particularly the capital city. The superior territorial reach of the PRI, however, was reflected in the fact that the official candidate won in eighteen of the twenty five electoral districts of the state.⁶⁰ This territorial reach had its greatest impact in single-member district elections for the Oaxacan legislature, where the PRI won 18 of the 25 seats being contested in the election. Municipal elections scheduled for October, presage a similarly favorable outcome for the PRI thanks to the uncontested supremacy of its electoral organization in rural areas.

The new governor may have won with a four percent margin, but he will govern with virtual control over the other branches of state government and with loyal municipal leaders throughout the state. This ensures that the *status quo* of virtual PRI control over Oaxacan institutional life will continue under the governorship of Ulises Ruíz Ortiz. Thus, in order to get a clear understanding of contemporary “hegemonic” party politics in subnational contexts, we need to go beyond the state-wide vote totals as measures of subnational party competitiveness. The internal institutional “topographies” of state politics provide many opportunities for virtual single-party control even in contexts of competitive or semi-competitive state-wide electoral contexts.

In addition, the opposition can expect little help from the central government in its efforts to pluralize Oaxacan politics. Following the election, the national government remained aloof from the opposition’s challenges (legal and otherwise) of the legality of the vote. Amid massive popular demonstrations and legal challenges mounted by local and national opposition parties, the government of Vicente Fox praised the conduct of the August 1 state races nation-wide and refused to single out Oaxaca as a problematic case. With major pieces of national legislation pending in the final years of his term of office, President Fox seems far more interested in securing the cooperation of the Madrazo-

⁵⁹ This, at least is the optimistic diagnosis of a number of contemporary observers, including one participant in the opposition movement who, shortly after the election defeat, wrote the following post-mortem: “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...As Oaxacans we should feel satisfied that we were not mere actors in yet another masquerade. We should be grateful to the political parties that, overcoming their differences, and in response to demands from important sectors of the electorate, gave us an electoral contest that was ‘for real’.” (Martínez Vázquez, 2004).

⁶⁰ All electoral results provided are official tallies from the Instituto Estatal Electoral de Oaxaca (internet website: <http://www.iee-oax.org.mx>).

dominated PRI than in joining the fight to democratize Oaxacan politics. The policy and governing imperatives of central government authorities are not, at the moment, in harmony with the electoral imperatives of their own party.⁶¹

Santiago del Estero: Center-Led Dismantling of a Provincial Authoritarian Regime

Santiago del Estero is Carlos Arturo Juarez. I say it without vanity.
Carlos Arturo Juarez, 1983⁶²

On April 2, 2004, days after the federal government arrested “Tata” and “Nina” Juarez 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 (*La Nación*: 2 April 2004).” Thus one of the country’s most prestigious national newspapers captured the multi-layered 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” despite the periodic resistance of a vastly overmatched opposition. It collapsed when local politics became nationalized.

The beginning of the end seemed inconsequential. On February 6, 2003, in an area of abandoned fields about 30 kilometers from the capital known as “La Darsena,” a woman dragging a pull-cart braved the scorching heat to scavenge the fields for cattle bones. This was how she made her living, by finding bones and selling them. 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. One of the victims had died very recently, and bore fresh signs of the life-ending violence. The other was mostly a collection of bones now bleached by exposure to the sun. Soon thereafter, the murders were linked to prominent members of the Juarez political clique. This revelation, and the local public outrage that it generated, provoked national scrutiny by the federal government and the press that, one year later, would produce a successful center-led assault on the provincial authoritarian regime.

Origins of a provincial authoritarian regime:

In 1949, at the age of thirty two, Juarez won his first gubernatorial election (Clarín: 2004a). It was an auspicious time for Juárez to establish himself in control of provincial politics. Peronism was consolidating itself as a dominant force throughout the interior, and President Perón lost little time in buttressing his regional allies’ sway over

⁶¹ Several members of opposition parties expressed dismay at the Fox government’s aloofness. One columnist sympathetic to the opposition captured the dismay and offered this explanation: “It is surprising that, faced with so many evident irregularities the Secretary of the Interior of the Federal Government, Santiago Creel, declared the elections “exemplary”... The diligence of the Secretary of the Interior seems guided by an eagerness to compensate the *priistas* for doing the federal government’s dirty work. The reform of the Social Security law is still pending, and the Fox government must show its most favorable disposition towards those willing to sink their hands into the mud. The course of events shows that the *priistas* are not motivated by altruism, and they are ready to present the bill to President Fox, in advance, for the changes in the social security system... It would not be the first time that the federal government and the PAN leadership ignored such electoral plunder. In Oaxaca it should be no different if that is one of the demands made as part of the backroom deals of these new ‘*concertaciones*’.” (Musacchio, 2004).

⁶² Cited in *La Nación*, 2004a.

national politics. Among other measures, he increased their overrepresentation in the national congress, and put in place a highly redistributive revenue sharing scheme that persists to this day, and has become the primary economic sustenance for many provincial economies (Sawers 1996).⁶³

It was during this period that the contemporary authoritarian system in Santiago del Estero was consolidated: hegemonic party rule buttressed by a massive patronage machine funded largely by central government transfers. These transfers would become the primary fuel of the provincial economy. The clientelistic public employment machine it fed would dwarf all other economic activities as employer of the province's population. Carlos Juárez built this machine during his critical first term as governor, and, all through the turbulence of provincial and national politics over the next forty years, would be its most successful operator. He also worked assiduously to maintain himself as the key link between the Peronist national hierarchy and provincial power. He was, as one long-time observer of provincial politics wrote, "the puppet-master of the Santiago stage under military and civilian governments and the sole intermediary between national leaders and the parochial circles of provincial politics" (Carreras 2004; 56).

National Re-Democratization 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, Juárez was elected governor once again, and the *juarista* regime settled in for two decades of continuous authoritarian rule. During the first presidency of the new democratic era, subnational authoritarian elites were doubly blessed. The central government, preoccupied with national matters and seeking gubernatorial support, paid little attention to the types of regimes that were being consolidated at the subnational level. Indeed, in spite of the blatantly authoritarian and corrupt nature of many of these regimes, the Alfonsín government did not employ its powers of federal intervention a single time during its six years in office. Second, this was a time when national coalitions of governors, particularly a powerful coalition of Peronist governors of which Juárez was an active member, exercised considerable leverage. They extracted important fiscal and political concessions from the central government (see Falleti, 2003 and Eaton, forthcoming).

Thus, breathing room was granted to nascent provincial authoritarian governments by a non-interventionist democratic central government anxious to gain the cooperation of peripheral governors. This breathing room was enhanced by new fiscal autonomy and increased revenue flows. The founding years of Argentina's new national democracy were to become the golden age of Argentina's subnational authoritarian regimes.⁶⁴

⁶³ Since Perón's days military governments have expanded on the tradition of overrepresenting the more conservative interior provinces in the national chamber of deputies. The 1972 military government expanded the minimum number to three, and the departing military government of General Bignone increased that number to five in 1983. See Gibson and Calvo (2000).

⁶⁴ 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 Romeros in Salta, consolidated hegemonic party rule on similar clientelistic bases as those being re-built by Juárez in Santiago del Estero. In other

Boundary Control and the Re-consolidation of Juarismo in Santiago del Estero

Within a short time after his 1983 election, Juárez's parochialization of provincial politics was in place. The two most important components of the system were domination of provincial institutional life (of the ruling Peronist party, the local legislature, and the judiciary), and the provincial clientelism, which made the link between provincial employment, economic power, and *juarista* political domination complete.

Juárez's province-wide electoral victories were facilitated by the malapportionment of seats in favor of rural areas in the local legislature. With approximately thirty percent of the population, rural areas held seventy percent of the seats in the legislature. This was important, because the twin-city of Santiago-La Banda was the stronghold of the provincial Radical party, which had held the mayoralty of La Banda and had a small congressional delegation. Santiago-La Banda was also the geographical location of most opposition and organized protest against the regime. Thus, similarly to the Mexican State of Oaxaca, Santiago del Estero was characterized by the "authoritarian state-plural cities" dynamic described earlier in this paper.⁶⁵

Control over the party and the legislative branch also gave Juárez control over the local judiciary. This not only insulated the *juarista* network from judicial scrutiny, it 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.⁶⁶

The *juarista* control over the three institutional branches of government in the province was accompanied by control over a vast clientelistic apparatus that dominated provincial employment and was the heart of the province's economic activity. 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 a number of "guaranteed" votes that exceeded half of the voting population.⁶⁷ In a province in which

provinces non-peronist leaders of provincial parties, such as the Sapag family in Neuquén, the Romero Feris family in Corrientes, and the Bravo family in San Juan re-established local regimes of hegemonic party rule.

⁶⁵ However, unlike Oaxaca, the organized party opposition in Santiago was docile and underfunded by its national party leaderships. The province's opposition leadership, therefore, was 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 non-existent due to its fragmentation and cooptation by provincial power-holders (*La Nación* 2002; 8)."

⁶⁶ The most high-profile victim of this environment was the provincial media. One notable case involved the independent daily newspaper *El Liberal*, the oldest and largest circulation newspaper in the province. In 2002 the paper had taken an oppositionist stance and began reprinting critical articles from national newspapers. Nina Aragonés de Juárez unleashed hundreds of frivolous lawsuits with demands for monetary compensation that were filed by members of her *rama femenina* against the paper. These lawsuits were duly processed by local judges. Facing financial ruin, the newspaper abandoned its opposition and, most importantly, stopped reprinting national reports about provincial politics. The most important source of information transmission from national to provincial arenas had been silenced, and a key "boundary-opening" agent in the province was neutralized. See Carreras (2004; 68-71).

⁶⁷ According to the newspaper, approximately 500,000 persons were registered to vote in the province. About 70,000 families depended on public sector employment. 55,000 additional families received patronage-dispensed work-related subsidies, and an additional 15,000 single mothers received social

86 percent of the economically active population depended in whole or in part on public sector salaries, and in which the province's budget represented 70 percent of the province's Gross Internal Product, control over public employment and a broad array of clientelistic services funded by the national government was crucial to generating consistent electoral majorities and disciplining the provincial political establishment.

It was also crucial for disciplining and shaping provincial economic actors. The economic shadow of the provincial government prevented the growth of an independent local business elite. Instead, business opportunities were to be made through lucrative contracts with the provincial government, in such areas as forestry development, construction, government contracting, supply and banking services, and receipt of government-granted monopolies for services financed through public sector payroll deductions. Juárez made and unmade fortunes for local business elites, playing them off one another and ensuring their political loyalty.⁶⁸ Access to big business support by any organized opposition party or group was unthinkable in Juárez's Santiago del Estero.

Where institutional control, clientelism, and economic domination failed to neutralize opponents, outright repression filled the void. The forms of repression that marked the Juárez regime ranged from the bizarre to the horrific. Close to the first end of the spectrum was Nina Aragonés's personal political movement, the *rama femenina*, or women's branch, of the Peronist Party. Ostensibly a women's movement within the party, the rama served as a ready-made political militia, goon-squad, and information-gathering network for Nina Aragonés when she was first lady and later governor of the province. Its members were fiercely loyal to Nina. According to one observer, the *rama*, led by Nina, was also "the most well-oiled electoral machine and shock-troop in the province (Carreras 2004a)."⁶⁹

More sinister and systematic 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 had headed up the provincial police during the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, and 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 regime victims during that period. A report prepared in early 2004 by

assistance from the party dominated provincial welfare office. Assuming that in each family two people on average were eligible to vote (voting is compulsory), and bearing in mind that the party's political brokers and provincial intelligence services monitored closely the party affiliation and political behavior of public employees and patronage recipients, the newspaper came to its "guaranteed" percentage of the pro-government vote (*La Nación* 2004a).

⁶⁸ At the time of Juárez's fall, the provincial economic tycoon with closest ties to the regime was Nestor Ick, who made his fortune in a variety of economic activities tied to the public trough. He owned a number of businesses privatized under Juárez, including the province's largest bank, as well as hotel, construction, gambling, and legal services (he was a lawyer). He also had a monopoly on insurance, credit card, utility services (water, electricity, cable t.v.) financed from direct payroll deductions on public employees. In addition, he was owner of the province's sole television broadcast station, as well as a radio station and cable T.V. channel, each of which served as willing government propaganda outlets. Prior to Ick, the favored local tycoon was Victorio Curi, a construction entrepreneur who financed the Juárez couple's 1976-1983 exile in Spain, and fell out of favor with the couple after 2000.

⁶⁹ Many of its members were also very well connected. They included judges and administrators of the clientelistic apparatus. Of the 35 Peronist legislators in the provincial legislature, 18 were members of the *rama femenina* in 2002 (*La Nación*, 2002)

the national Secretariat for Human Rights provided a full and chilling account of the extent of the intelligence system's activities. Referring to the directorate in public statements as a "provincial Gestapo," (*Clarín*, 2004b) the report's authors noted that, in a province of 800,000 people, the services had created over 40,000 secret files on the activities of politicians, judges, journalists, clergy, businessmen, and, mostly, ordinary citizens (see *Página 12*, 2004b).

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. 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.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Juárez's control of local party politics protected him 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.⁷¹ This removed an important source of national control over local institutional politics, and gave Juárez tremendous leeway in organizing the movement of top politicians (himself included) through the many territorial layers of the Argentine political system.

Juárez control of local-national linkages also extended to the fiscal and judicial realms. His discretion over central government revenue flows to his province-- the automatic revenue sharing system transfers, additional legislative appropriations, and discretionary transfers from the central government—was unchallenged. He even neutralized federal judicial oversight over his province, effectively coopting the chief federal judge appointed to his province in 1984.⁷²

The Nationalization of Influence: Santiago in National Politics:

Juárez himself also 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.

⁷⁰ See Jones and Hwang (forthcoming) for an excellent description of the prototypical "provincial party boss" in Argentina.

⁷¹ As Eaton (forthcoming) and Jones and Hwang (forthcoming) note, most provinces work with closed list candidate slates in multi-member districts (as did Santiago del Estero). With a closed-list slate the party determines which individuals are put on the list as well as their order on the list. The more votes the party gets, the more candidates on the list go to congress. This grants considerable power to party leaders over congressional delegations. The power to put together such closed-list slates is both a major object of struggle between provincial and national leaders and is also an important indicator of central control over provincial party politics.

⁷² Carreras (2004; 216-220) writes about the close personal and financial ties between the chief federal judge in the province, Angel Jesús Toledo, Carlos Juárez, and top business leaders tied to the governor in the 20 years of his judgeship in the province. He also details a series of formal complaints and requests by local parties for the Judge's removal that were elevated to the federal government and the federal Supreme Court because of the judge's behavior and alleged conflicts of interest in several legal cases. No action was taken by federal officials, and Judge Toledo remains in his post as federal judge to this day (although these days he carries out the instructions of a vigilant federal government bent on dismantling the *juarista* system).

There was thus little interest in upsetting his hold on Santiago's politics, or in attacking the elaborate 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 *Santiagoñazo*) during a provincial financial crisis in December 1993. At that time Juárez was serving a stint in the national congress. President Carlos Menem, who had been demanding provincial budgetary cuts, ordered a federal intervention of the province and the removal of top provincial authorities. The opportunity for a center led transformation of the provincial power structure seemed to be at hand. However, two years later, in 1995, Carlos Juárez would win the governorship in a landslide election.

The 'failed' federal intervention of 1993 puts into relief the local-national linkages that sustained the status-quo of provincial authoritarianism in Santiago del Estero. Juárez was a personal political ally of the President, and Santiago del Estero was a province delivered solidly Menemista majorities in national elections. The long-standing relationship between these two Northwestern *caudillos* was one of strategic cooperation in national affairs, and the President had little interest in dismantling a provincial power structure that served him well politically. From the beginning, therefore, the President characterized the intervention as a move to restore fiscal health and order. The leaders of the intervention focused largely on budgetary matters during their two year tenure.

Furthermore, from his seat in the national Senate Juárez had also supported the President in key political initiatives. He was, at that moment, a national supporter of the President's bid to reform the constitution in order to run for a second term in office. Thus, Juárez could be doubly useful to the President, as an influential national proponent of the President's re-election 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.

Carlos Juárez won the 1995 election for governor handily, with 65 percent of the vote. He pulled off the incongruous double feat of soaring to victory as defender of the province against the center and re-establishing himself as an unconditional gubernatorial ally of President Menem. The juarista regime settled in to a period of stability. In 1997 Juárez reformed the provincial constitution to permit his re-election.⁷³ He was duly re-elected in 1999. In 2002 Nina Aragonés assumed the governorship of the province.

Internal Crisis, External Intervention, and the Fall of the Regime:

The 2004 fall of the provincial authoritarian regime in Santiago del Estero resulted from the convergence of events at the provincial and national levels. Locally, a regime crisis evolved from the whirlwind of revelations following the discovery of the two corpses by the bone collector in the fields of *La Dársena*. Nationally, a new government came to power in 2003 that had few political ties to the Juárez regime, and was driven by policy and strategic agendas that were in tension with the continuity of the juarista control of the province. This coincident development in provincial and national politics opened opportunities for political actors in both arenas to establish connections,

⁷³ The constitution also strengthened gubernatorial prerogatives. The Catholic Church in the province protested its reform, and described the new constitution as "fascist." (*La Nación*, 2004e).

coordinate activities, and become allies in a center-led destruction of Santiago del Estero's provincial authoritarian regime.

Not long after the two murdered women were discovered, rumors and reports circulated throughout the province about the involvement of members of the provincial intelligence network and family members of the juarista political establishment. An organization named the *Madres del Dolor* (mothers of pain), which for years had pressured for investigations of unresolved deaths and disappearances, joined with the family members of the newest victims and organized a series of silent marches (“marchas del silencio”) throughout the capital city to call attention to the murders and the state of lawlessness in the province.

The protesters received crucial support from the Catholic Church of Santiago del Estero—one of the few local institutions with national linkages not controlled by the juarista government.⁷⁴ In 2003, the Bishop of Santiago del Estero provided logistical and moral support to the marches organized by the *Madres del Dolor*, advocated their cause before national Church authorities and government officials, and even headed a number of high-profile marches.

The local Bishop's high-profile involvement in the anti-Juárez protests inevitably drew the national Catholic Church into the conflict. Once this happened, the events in Santiago became increasingly a matter of interest to the national press and to the general national debate. The Church involvement also helped to make Santiago politics a matter of interest to key members of the national government. One of these was Gustavo Beliz, the new Minister of Justice of the recently-elected Kirchner government. Beliz met with the Bishop to discuss the provincial situation in mid-2003 (*La Voz del Interior*, 2003). Beliz was no ordinary Justice Minister. He was a devout Catholic with very close institutional ties to the Catholic Church. He was thus personally receptive to the Bishop's appeals, all the more given the Bishop's personal stature in his province. As Sergio Carreras writes: “in the absence of local political leaders who were either uncontaminated or uncoopted by Juárez, [the Bishop] was the only credible figure in the eyes of the national government. For Minister of Justice Gustavo Beliz, with known ties to the Church, the Bishop was the person to be listened to about what was taking place in Santiago del Estero” (Carreras 2004; 239).

In the once impermeable juarista universe of Santiago, an important boundary had been breached. A link between powerful local and national actors had been established, and lay beyond the control of the provincial government. The next step in the struggle against the local authoritarian regime was to convert that connection into a political alliance in common cause against juarismo.

President Kirchner was not fond of Carlos Juárez. Juárez had been a late convert to Kirchner's presidential candidacy, and was tarnished in the President's eyes for his long-standing support of Carlos Menem, Kirchner's bitter party rival. Furthermore, even though Juárez had publicly thrown his support to Kirchner, a majority of the province's voters voted for Menem anyway—in a province Juárez supposedly ‘owned.’ In the eyes

⁷⁴ This was probably not for lack of trying. The Bishop of Santiago del Estero from 1993 to 1998, Gerardo Sueldo, was a passionate and articulate opponent of the Juárez-dominated political system. He died mysteriously in a car accident one morning at 5 a.m. on a rural road while returning to the capital city. The accident's causes were never resolved by local authorities, although the federal government recently reopened investigations into the case.

of close presidential advisors, this constituted at best an act of negligence, and in greater likelihood an act of betrayal, by a provincial party boss expected to deliver the votes to his presidential ally.⁷⁵

Within the government, however, debates raged. As the clamor in the press and the political establishment for central government action grew, key cabinet members, worried about a backlash from other governors in a tense moment of presidential-gubernatorial relations, argued against moving against the provincial *caudillo*.⁷⁶ However, the Kirchner government's national policy and partisan agendas would trump anti-interventionist forces in the national government. At the policy level, the Kirchner government came to power with a strong commitment to putting human rights and the rule of law at the center of the national political agenda. With this goal in mind, he created a new "Secretariat for Human Rights" within the Ministry of Justice. The fight against corruption was also a top priority, and the Ministry of Justice became the institutional home for enforcing these agendas.

There is little evidence that either the president or his top advisors had provincial democratic governance in mind when they created the new Secretariat.⁷⁷ However, to the surprise of many, the Secretariat's leaders soon identified Santiago del Estero as a major problem of human rights and rule of law enforcement in the country. With a Minister of Justice in close contact with an oppositionist Catholic Church, Santiago del Estero suddenly found itself in the cross-hairs of top national governmental figures eager to expand their mandate into new arenas. The new linkages between local civil society organizations, the Catholic Church, and high federal government officials breached the boundaries of *juarismo*'s territorial fiefdom and sparked a bureaucratic response from the center. The newly created Secretariat for Human Rights was instructed to investigate the situation in Santiago del Estero. At the same time the secretary of Justice, Pablo Lanusse,⁷⁸ decided to make Santiago del Estero a showcase for the launching of the national impunity plan (*La Nación*, 2004c).

Thus, by mid-March 2004 the Juárez regime's fate was sealed by a process of boundary-opening activities between center and province that been building for several months. In late 2003 and early 2004, the federal Secretary for Human Rights made several "fact-finding" visits to the province. During these visits he ordered the theretofore inactive federal judge in the province to reactivate pending cases against the Juárez clique, thus partially restoring the reach of the federal judiciary so effectively neutralized by the Juárez regime. He also offered the full support of the federal government to a provincial judge that faced local official pressure against her investigation into the double homicide of the women found in the *La Dársena* fields. Emboldened by this support, she redoubled her investigations and arrests. In addition,

⁷⁵ For an interesting discussion of Juárez's missteps in the national presidential intrigues of 2002-2003, see *El Liberal* (2004).

⁷⁶ The conflict within the government was evidenced when the Minister of the Interior, Aníbal Fernández, went so far as to publicize his opposition to an intervention in an editorial in the influential daily *La Nación* (Fernández). The editorial was published two weeks before President Kirchner ordered the intervention.

⁷⁷ In fact, President Kirchner's 'illiberal' management of his own province of Santa Cruz for nearly two decades would not lead one to assume that combating subnational authoritarian rule was at the top of his priorities for the new secretariat.

⁷⁸ The "Secretary" of Justice reports to the "Minister" of Justice—he heads one of many "Secretariats" in the Ministry.

federal officials established contacts clearly aimed at opening spaces for opposition political action, meeting conspicuously with opposition urban municipal leaders and politicians (theoretically the soft-underbelly of juarista domination) and seeking their cooperation in federal efforts to ‘clean up’ local politics.⁷⁹

In their final stand the Juárez couple responded in the traditional way. Deprived of the use of repression and intimidation (although not entirely) by the national spotlight on the province, they worked the institutional levers in local and national arenas at their disposal. They were strikingly successful in securing the institutional home front. Amid great celebration the provincial legislature rejected federal requests to strip the governor of her immunity from prosecution. With the provincial legislature closing off all provincial avenues for the impeachment or removal of the governor, local solutions for the removal of the juarista regime were exhausted.

On April 1, 2004, Pablo Lanusse, the Secretary of Justice that had helped spearhead the central government assault against the Juárez regime, assumed control as official federal interventor of Santiago del Estero. He dissolved all three branches of the provincial government, and was given a renewable mandate of 180 days to reform the province’s political and legal system. Criminal investigations of politicians, bureaucrats, judges, and police officers were initiated. Audits were launched of public finances and provincial administration, and purges made within the provincial clientelistic system. Lanusse also launched investigations into the financial relationships between the Juarista system and top business interests. He cancelled contracts between the provincial government the most important provincial tycoon, and threatened investigations and indictments against business allies of the Juárez couple. Leaders of the intervention also announced plans for a constitutional convention to design a new constitution. In sum, the intervention consisted of a complete takeover of provincial institutions by the federal government, with the clearly stated mission of radically reshaping the political and legal order of the province.

The center-led institutional transformation was soon followed by an overtly partisan intervention. Two months after Pablo Lanusse took control of the province, the national authorities of the Peronist party decreed an intervention of the Santiago Peronist Party. The move against the provincial Peronist party had a strong factionalist tilt to it. Lanusse made clear that the intervention of the Peronist Party of Santiago del Estero would result in a new alliance between provincial political actors and the current occupants of the national government. Speaking to local mayors he remarked that “this new party must be rebuilt so that it can demonstrate independence from Carlos Juárez as well as a certain affinity with the national government [“el oficialismo nacional].” And, to drive the point home, he expressed his intention that “the next governor be of the same political color as the President.” (Quoted in *La Nación*, 2004f). If the federal reformers of this authoritarian province in the heart of Argentina’s periphery are to have their way, a democratic Santiago del Estero will also be a *Kirchnerista* Santiago del Estero.

⁷⁹ The federal government officials’ political agenda of mobilizing action by municipal officials against the governor is clear in the following statements made by the Secretary for Human Rights on his visit to the province: “We believe that the municipalities are the ideal starting point from which to move forward to increase awareness and resolve the problems of human rights...The current Provincial Government is not supportive of the Human Rights goals being pursued by the national government, and for that reason we are working with civil society, municipal authorities, and some sectors of the legislative branch that are believe in this policy.” (Quoted in *El Liberal*, 2004a).

Conclusion:

In territorial politics there are few truly “local” conflicts. All territorial arenas, whether they be the town, the municipality, the state, or the national government are entangled with one another in varying ways. Certain parties to a particular conflict may strive to keep the fight localized, but other parties will not, and in the hierarchical structure of a national territorial system, actors in other arenas will often have an interest in what takes place in the local conflict. Understanding processes of local change, therefore, requires a systematic understanding of how the locality in question is enmeshed in a larger system of territorial governance.

In this paper I have advanced a number of ideas that help us understand change and continuity in provincial authoritarian regimes in nationally democratic countries. I have drawn theoretical inspiration for these ideas from the “territorial politics” tradition of comparative politics scholarship. Democratization at the subnational level is not something that can be explained with extant democratization theories alone, which tend to take the “whole” nation as the unit of analysis or focuses primarily on metropolitan political actors. It is a phenomenon that takes place within a larger national system of governance, and its conflicts are fought out “across territory” in that national system. Actors use explicitly territorial strategies of political control and resistance, and mapping the political and institutional landscapes in which these strategies are pursued is a first important step toward understanding how subnational authoritarian regimes persist or unravel. To this end, theories that have traditionally focused on “center-periphery” dynamics in the many struggles of state formation and territorial administration have a great deal to offer scholars studying the topic of subnational democratization.

In this paper I have focused on the strategic landscapes in which leaders of provincial authoritarian regimes and their local and national adversaries pursue strategies of political control and opposition. I have mapped out three arenas of political action: subnational arenas, national arenas, and the institutional linkages between them. I have argued that in a nationally democratic country the preservation of subnational authoritarianism is largely a product of territorial strategies pursued by local political elites. There are many strategies peripheral elites can pursue, but in this paper I have identified three interacting strategies that operate across levels of the national territorial system: a) the parochialization of power, b) the nationalization of influence, and c) the monopolization of national-subnational institutional linkages. The institutional configurations of the political systems in which these strategies unfold will vary, and analyzing these more extensively will help us get a more fine-grained understanding of variation across national contexts than I have provided in this paper. However, the key insight is that the struggle over local democratization is one that must be played out in multiple territorial arenas. In this multi-layered game subnational authoritarian elites build “boundaries” that minimize outside involvement in provincial politics, while oppositions struggle to breach those boundaries and turn parochial struggles into national political contests.

In the remaining lines of this conclusion I will address some insights provided by the two case studies presented in this paper, Oaxaca in Mexico, and Santiago del Estero in Argentina. A first point to be made is that the cases support the assertion made in the first part of the paper, which is that national intervention is a prerequisite to subnational

democratization in nationally democratic regimes. Successful boundary control by authoritarian incumbents, and the many governmental levers governors have at their disposal to perpetuate this boundary control, makes it extremely difficult for local oppositions to challenge the status quo without national allies. “Breaching” the boundaries imposed by incumbent elites is by definition an act of nationalizing local conflicts. At a policy or normative level, this should provide a measure of pause to enthusiastic advocates of decentralization in new democracies. The fact is that democratization throughout the national territory requires a central government or national institutions with the capacity to “penetrate” the periphery and establish their authority over local political processes. In many ways, what was “good” for state building may be similarly relevant to the continuing process of democratization within nation-states.

Returning to the process of subnational democratization, our cases also suggest that a necessary spark for intervention is a local crisis or significant local mobilization against provincial incumbents. These events tend to bring provincial politics into the spotlight, undermining local incumbents’ efforts to parochialize the political situation. National actors will perceive both pressures and/or opportunities to intervene in local politics. However, we also need a better understanding of the national dynamics that would make such an intervention likely.

To this end I have specified two sets of institutional actors in national arenas that are often conflated: central governments and national parties. Leaders of central governments and national parties (even when they are of the same political stripe) have interests that are unique to them—they can either operate in tandem or at cross purposes. In their relations with subnational political actors these differences appear often in full relief. I thus suggest that there are two dominant modes of subnational transitions led by national actors: “party-led” transitions and “center-led” transitions. Our two case studies were characterized by a different mode of transition (or attempted transition). In Oaxaca, it was national party leaders—factional leaders within the PRI bent on destroying a factional rival’s local power base, as well as national leaders of the PAN and the PRD—that joined the fight against Governor Murat and orchestrated a multi-party electoral coalition against him. The federal government, while providing token support to the party-led effort, remained aloof from the conflict, giving priority to national policy initiatives for which PRI support was crucial. The party-led effort ultimately failed, but it provided a major threat to the continuity of Murat’s project of PRI authoritarianism in his state. In Argentina the central government, motivated by policy priorities and the President’s factional agendas, took advantage of a local crisis and dismantled the juarista provincial regime while the political party establishment stood on the margins of the conflict.

This ‘modal’ distinction helps avoid mechanical assumptions about “party” affiliations of national actors as determinants of political behavior across territorial arenas. As we saw in our cases, partisan affiliation of central government officials bore little relationship to whether those officials acted against subnational governments.

Our cases also raised interesting questions about the dynamics of provincial hegemonic party rule (or single-party rule) in subnational political change. While the importance of single-party rule to the maintenance of provincial authoritarian power was well detailed by V.O. Key in his landmark study of U.S. Southern politics in the 1940s,

there are potentially important nuances that could be developed from the cases presented here. First, each of the two provinces under study were ruled by hegemonic parties—that is, the same party had ruled the province for several decades. Nevertheless, a look at aggregate vote totals for gubernatorial races gave a more competitive impression than “single-party rule” would suggest. Murat in Oaxaca won his 1998 race with 52 percent of the vote. His successor won with 48 percent of the vote. Similarly, in Santiago the Juárez’s gubernatorial vote totals rarely ranged from a low of 48 percent in 1983 to a high of 65 percent in 1995.⁸⁰ Thus, an observer would logically conclude that a competitive electoral situation existed in these provinces. However, we must look deeper into the institutional “topographies” of subnational electoral politics to understand how hegemonic party rule is actually practiced. Aggregate province-wide electoral totals mask the territorial fragmentation of subnational electoral politics, a fragmentation that, in municipal and local legislative elections, gives incumbent parties overwhelming majorities in provincial political institutions. In this context of massive electoral dominance *within* the provinces, engineering bare electoral majorities or pluralities in gubernatorial contests is all that is needed to ensure the continuity of authoritarian rule between elections.

This paper also points to the need for greater understanding of processes of change in hegemonic parties at the subnational level. Theoretically, the democratization literature is not of much help, since the few useful examples we have are at the national level. Theories of change in provincial single-party regimes, therefore, would be well served by analyzing them in light of territorial politics theories. In particular, we need to understand how the interactions between levels of territorial systems interact with variables traditionally addressed in the national-level literatures on factionalism and change in single-party systems. Furthermore, in democratic regimes, hegemonic provincial party rule at the subnational level coexists with multi-party competition at the national level. As our case study of Oaxaca suggested, this provides a complex strategic context for coalition-building and boundary control in the course of center-periphery conflicts over local democratization.

⁸⁰ These are official Ministry of the Interior figures.

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