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Latin America's New Turbulence

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THE STRUGGLE FOR
SUBNATIONAL DEMOCRACY

Jacqueline Behrend and Laurence Whitehead

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In recent decades, many countries have transitioned toward democracy, yet democracy's spread *within* nation-states remains uneven. In many countries that are democratic at the national level, the degree to which citizens' rights are respected may vary markedly from one subunit to another. This can be so not only in federal polities with legally autonomous subnational units, but also in countries that are unitary on paper but in which variances in the extension of democratic rights persist anyway.

Building on Guillermo O'Donnell's discussion of "brown areas," recent scholarship has described the problem of "subnational authoritarianism."[1] Yet that label is too narrow, for even when fully authoritarian subnational regimes are absent, what we call "illiberal structures and practices" can hang on at the subnational level widely and stubbornly enough to challenge national-level democracy.[2] By studying the unevenness of democracy not only in Latin America (the region with which we are most familiar), but also in the Philippines, Russia, and such longstanding and well-institutionalized democracies as India and the United States, we hope to provide comparative insights that can shed light on the paths that countries can take in order to make democracy's writ run throughout the full extent of the national territory.[3]

If political democracy is about equal rights for all citizens, then the uneven distribution of such guarantees *within* large and formally democratic political regimes matters at least as much as any "large-N"

classification of nations by regime type. As of 2015, three of every five humans lived in one of just a dozen countries.[4] Ten of these are on the Freedom House (FH) list of "electoral democracies," while only two (China and Russia) are rated by FH as "not free." (Four are rated "free" and six are rated "partly free.") Thus in formal terms at least, the world's largest countries—each has more than a hundred-million nationals—are predominantly democratic. Yet most also feature large degrees of internal variation with regard to political rights and freedoms.

For example, "partly free" Mexico with its 125-million people living in 31 states plus the Federal District of Mexico City is a fairly typical large federal democracy. Yet the variation in citizen security and public accountability from state to state within the Mexican federal system is at least as great as the range of performance among nations within the Western Hemisphere. Similarly, massive India is another federal republic and one of the four "free" countries listed above. Without a doubt, its odds-defying democratic achievements over its nearly seven decades of independence are most impressive. Yet inside India's vast and diverse national political system, citizens' experiences with government can vary hugely, and some (though not all) of these variations reflect territorial divisions.

Federalism may be more prone to permit democratic unevenness, yet formally unitary regimes are not free of the problem either. Geography and history can conspire to produce wide territorial variations in political responsiveness and the protection of citizens' rights. Neither Indonesia nor the Philippines is a federal polity, yet each is a vast archipelago with numerous islands that are in many cases physically, socially, and economically isolated and marginal. The concerns of political elites in Jakarta and Manila seldom match those of large populations in multiple far-flung locations.

Similar patterns of territorial unevenness can also be found in smaller countries. These may be federal republics (Argentina) or nonfederal states that are divided by geography (mountainous Colombia and Peru) or race (South Africa). For this reason it is imperative to track the global advance (or retreat) of democracy not merely by counting how many countries are national-level democratic polities, but also by measuring and tracing subnational variations.

There are good reasons why researchers have long focused on the first rather than the second type of measurement. Classifying national-level regimes is an old and well-tested procedure; devising and applying standardized, transferable concepts (with agreed-on indicators) to subnational situations is not. Recent work on "subnational authoritarian regimes" is useful, but it covers only a portion of what O'Donnell had in mind. It applies neither to the "brown areas" in nonfederal polities nor to the porous and partial barriers to full democratic citizenship that cause

most of the territorial unevenness in many federal democracies.

We submit that it is not full-blown subnational authoritarianism but rather the broader category of subnational "illiberal structures and practices" that accounts for most of the uneven application of democratic rights and guarantees in the world today. There are measurement challenges to overcome—it is unclear, for instance, whether federal versus unitary polities or homogeneous versus divided societies should all be subject to the same criteria. Nonetheless, this wider, lower-threshold notion of what constitutes significant illiberalism better captures the historical realities and social dynamics that are so often at play inside nation-states that have achieved formal democratic status but with significant democratic challenges left to resolve.

The standard rationale for classifying regime types is straightforward. Nation-states occupy bounded territories. Some, such as Grenada or Singapore, may be compact, with rapid internal communications and readily visible and easily supervised external boundaries. In such places, any "regime change" will be centralized and uniform. But most modern nation-states are larger, and their territories are less evenly integrated. International boundaries that look clear-cut on a map may be far more porous and contested on the ground. A change that occurs in the capital— even a narrowly procedural one—will not necessarily trigger immediate and uniform compliance across the whole political space. Any major shift (the move toward political and social democratization, for instance) will of course take longer to disseminate and may prove fitful over time and variable across space. For this reason, transitions to democracy that happen in "one shot" and immediately become irreversible are not the rule but the exception. The larger and less integrated—or more institutionally decentralized—a national polity is, the more uneven any process of regime change is likely to be.

Illiberal Structures and Practices

Subnational illiberal structures and practices in nationally democratic countries should not be conflated with the authoritarian national and provincial regimes that may have preceded overall democratization. These locally illiberal structures and practices occur *within* a framework of nationally democratic politics which, though flawed, nonetheless guarantees a series of rights and institutions that can potentially be activated to ensure minimum standards of democracy. Thus subnational democratization in nationally democratic countries is best understood under the rubric of democratic deepening rather than that of regime change.[5]

Scholarship on "subnational authoritarianism" and variations in subnational democracy tends to concentrate on formal institutions, especially elections. Our comparative analysis, by contrast, draws attention

to the informal counterparts that reinforce, or in some cases overwhelm, these narrower and basically procedural issues. Our concern is with lasting political structures and practices such as clientelism, discriminatory local-justice systems, or captive provincial media. Such subnational phenomena, where they hold sway, can choke off choice, debate, and participation tightly enough to negate the democratic principles proclaimed at the national level. Even if a true authoritarian regime is not present in a particular jurisdiction, democracy may nonetheless be badly compromised there.

Most illiberal structures and practices have an ambiguous, incomplete quality that keeps them well short of "regime-like" status. Instead, they must operate within the constraints of an overarching democratic order while vying with more open alternatives. Any clashes with national-level democracy will tend to be muted and indirect. Showdowns with central authorities will be shunned in favor of partial, fragmentary, and fluid tactics. For this very reason, illiberal practices also threaten to "fly below the radar" and go unnoticed when observance of constitutional standards is at issue. The center may apply pressure and even intervene, only to find illiberal practices persisting and even reproducing themselves as they keep working to "tilt the playing field" in defiance of democratic principles.

Both within and between countries, each local system for restricting democracy and thwarting citizen participation displays its own particular list of illiberal ingredients and entrenched informal powerbrokers. These can include, among other things, oligarchic families, tame media outlets, captured courts, and municipal-government machines.

Explaining Patterns of Subnational Variance

Subnational illiberal structures typically have multiple causes, with institutional (federal or unitary), economic, sociological, and partisan dynamics all playing a role. O'Donnell emphasized state incapacity and the persistence of traditional power relations in remote areas. Edward Gibson argues instead that subnational authoritarianism results from a country's territorial organization. Federalism may have helped to spread democracy in many places, he notes, but federal arrangements can also empower subnational authoritarianism by giving it a place in the country's legal and normative framework.[6]

Democratic unevenness, Gibson says, is not found solely in remote, lightly governed regions: It also occurs in highly institutionalized settings and can even be built into the territorial system as a consequence of the formal rules and institutions that govern the nation. The problem with federalism, in Gibson's view, is that it can be exploited by undemocratic subnational politicians who are able to claim "boundary control" under federalism's rules in order to keep the central government out of "their" strongholds. Gibson's work highlights the role that

the federal government can play in dismantling illiberal structures at the subnational level through direct intervention or by aiding the local opposition. Gibson and Desmond King also show how a more centralized federalism can enable the federal government to democratize authoritarian enclaves.[7]

Much of the evidence regarding subnational variations in democracy comes from Argentina and Mexico. The paradox in Mexico is that the dismantling of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) regime and the rise of the National Action Party (PAN) at the national level allowed old PRI elites to hold on to power at the subnational level.[8] Following Gibson, we can see this as a product of Mexico's federal design. State-level politics was first a help to democratization (the opposition won governorships) and then a hindrance to it (the PRI dug in). Durazo Herrmann argues that the persistence of illiberal practices in Mexican states such as Oaxaca and Puebla is what happens when institutional change occurs atop an unchanged social structure where neopatrimonial domination remains the norm.[9]

Nicolás Loza and Irma Méndez have found variations in democratic quality from one part of Mexico to another that are as striking as many of the variations found between the nations that make up Latin America.[10] In 2013, for example, 15 Mexican states were rated as having "low-quality" elections, while 11 had elections of "medium" quality and only 6 (including the Federal District) had "high-quality" elections. Seven were noted for election-day violence. And as is well known, some Mexican states and municipalities are plagued by large-scale criminal violence. In 2015, the federal government had to intervene in certain places to keep public order from collapsing.

Examining Argentina and its two-dozen provinces, Jacqueline Behrend highlights the large degree of economic control retained by a few families who conduct provincial-level "closed games." In backwater provinces with small populations and limited business opportunities, ruling families use provincial government to promote their economic interests and to control access to business opportunities through the allocation of subsidies, development schemes, industrial promotion, and the like. Political families may also control the local media and be embedded in institutions such as the provincial judiciary. Even when the federal government intervenes and elections unseat the old provincial authorities, the incoming oppositionists often reproduce many of the illiberal structures and practices that they had once denounced.[11]

Between 2003 and 2007, Carlos Gervasoni surveyed experts in order to assess differences across Argentine provinces.[12] Rating all provinces on multiple dimensions, his study placed them on a spectrum ranging from "democratic" to "hybrid." Some toward the latter end exhibited marked undemocratic practices, though in his view no province fit the

classic definition of authoritarianism. His most striking conclusion was that the different dimensions under study were not always correlated. Thus one province might rate particularly badly on media freedom, whereas another was worse on rule of law, and so on. Overall, therefore, provincial regimes seem to be complex and multidimensional—likely more so than national regimes. To explain variations in subnational democracy, Gervasoni cites the varying fiscal rents that flow from the center to the provinces. In places that rely on transfers from Buenos Aires more than on locally collected taxes, he argues, these transfers act like oil rents and produce similar—and decidedly counterdemocratic—rentier effects.

Building on Gibson's work, Agustina Giraudy explains the continuity of what she calls "subnational undemocratic regimes" by focusing on the strategic interaction between national and subnational rulers.[13] Citing election-related indicators from Argentine provinces and Mexican states, she contends that while local autocrats who are able to preserve unity and mass support can sustain "subnational undemocratic regimes" on their own, it has often also been the case that national presidents have acted to sustain such regimes "from above" in return for local autocrats' continued political support.

Important insights can also be drawn from the case of Brazil. In many of that large republic's 26 states, regional elites were able to exploit decentralization (in a context of federal-level democratization after 1985) in order to entrench their rule. This began to change toward the end of the 1990s: As André Borges shows, the advent at that time of the Workers' Party (PT) as a left-of-center option for voters undermined state-level political machines.[14] Yet Borges warns that party competition and alternation will likely do little to boost the liberal dimension of democracy in cases where unconstrained incumbents, weak checks and balances, and widespread rent-seeking dominate the political mix.[15]

In her study of the state of Bahia (population 14 million) on Brazil's east coast, Celina Souza shows how an illiberal regional elite linked to the old authoritarian regime held on to power until the PT finally won at the polls in 2006. She says that the PT's federalization of social policies gave voters more choices and the opportunity to reward or punish regional parties based on their policies.[16]

Examining pairs of regions within Russia and Kyrgyzstan, respectively, Kelly McMann argues that local economic structures go far in determining whether democracy or autocracy blossoms at the subnational level.[17] Where citizens can earn a living independent of local government, democracy has a better chance. Where local officials control livelihoods, autocracy is more likely. The time during the early 1990s when it seemed as if the Russian Federation might be democratizing was a very short one, but even so one can still de-

tect these differential effects, suggesting that the forces behind them were potent.

Explaining Democratic Reversal

The study of subnational politics in cases of failed democratization such as that of post-Soviet Russia can help to explain authoritarian reversals. Inga Saikkonen's work on that country highlights the risks of overlooking subnational variations in democratization. She shows how authoritarianism staged its national-level comeback by coopting subnational units into a unitary and authoritarian national regime. In Saikkonen's words, "The regional electoral authoritarian regimes that consolidated in the late 1990s and early 2000s form the backbone of the current Russian authoritarian regime."[18]

Other scholars have identified differing pathways and struggles that can exist simultaneously within a single democratic nation and may explain why some regions do better than others at embracing democracy. Twenty years ago, John Markoff pointed out that the drive for democracy could well originate from the periphery of an authoritarian regime rather than at the center. Around the same time, Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* contrasted northern with southern Italy, and suggested that much of the difference in the democratization experiences of these two regions might be traced back not just for generations but over many centuries.[19]

The Italian example confirms that problems of democratic variability may be found in unitary as well as federal states. Colombia and the Philippines are two other relevant cases. The latter has had competitive subnational elections for more than a century, and thus displays patterns of subnational variance that can be traced over a longer arc of time than the other cases provide. By comparing the Philippine provinces of Cebu and Cavite, John T. Sidel shows how much local economic control matters to the development of subnational illiberal structures. Where the local elite lacks such control and must rely on national politicians for protection, regulation, and patronage money, Sidel finds, multilevel politics will have more to do with determining whether illiberal provincial practices stay or go. On the island of Cebu in the central Philippines, as in many Latin American regions, political families play a big role. Where such dominant families control economic resources, their rule is tough to shake. In Cavite Province near Manila on the big island of Luzon, by contrast, this dynastic element is lacking, and thus intervention by the center has a better chance of working.[20]

Looking at Colombia, Kent Eaton and Juan Diego Prieto see something different when it comes to democratic unevenness. Even though Colombia's unitary structure limits the power of subnational autocrats, they argue, decentralization has buttressed unevenness.

Regional paramilitaries make local politics more violent in some areas, and ties between regionally based subnational autocrats are a problem as well. More than a third of Colombia's 102 national senators are estimated to have paramilitary ties, so when regional actors seek allies at the center they may contaminate the national regime as well.[21]

Subnational Pathways

Given that subnational democratic unevenness is a problem in many countries and that lingering illiberal structures and practices hamper democratization, can comparative analysis help? Can it show ways forward?

Subnational democratization should be understood as a process of convergence toward the democratic standards promised at the national level. This does not necessarily mean wiping out local variation, or reaching some absolute standard of perfection, but rather finding a realistic standard that the whole political system can attain. Since illiberal structures and practices can vary from one province to another, we should expect paths toward subnational democratization to vary as well. Because the entrenchment of illiberal practices at the provincial level often requires wider regional alliances and even national-level sponsors, when a subnational enclave is dismantled it can alter the balance of power throughout the entire system. So convergence toward a national standard of democratic performance may well consist of mutual adjustments, or protracted processes of reaccommodation among the different levels of government. All this makes for extended and multiple pathways rather than "one-shot" shifts.

The impetus for democratization can come from the national government, but can also come from "below." At play, typically, are the phenomena that we call "control/conditionality," "contagion," and "activation."

Control/conditionality: National authorities typically enjoy the power to impose conditions on—or even to control—what second-tier entities such as provincial governments can do. Unitary governments of course give the center the highest degree of control, but even in federal systems there are usually occasions when the federal government can intervene directly in provincial affairs. Conditionality is essential to any federal system, since without it the task of getting component units to work together and avoid untenable veto games becomes unachievable. The key issue here is how far conditionality and control regulate the political responsiveness of second-tier jurisdictions. Some degree of political regulation will be indispensable if the federation as a whole is to have democratic characteristics.[22] At the same time, the provinces or states must also have their guaranteed realms of authority and their

TABLE—PATHWAYS TOWARD SUBNATIONAL DEMOCRATIZATION

Control/ Conditionality	Contagion	Activation
Federal intervention	Successful contestation or mobilization in other localities	Judicial activism, activation of previously dormant accountability institutions
Supreme Court rulings	Diffusion effects: Extension of rights in other provinces sparks demands for similar rights	Local media start investigating corruption, rights violations, or other denunciations
Electoral monitoring	Institutional reforms that deepen democracy in one province are replicated by other provinces	Development of local activism or mobilization
Withholding federal transfers	Electoral monitoring practices in one province extended to other provinces	Development of opposition political parties or alliances
–	–	Local legal-reform initiatives

Source: Behrend and Whitehead, eds., *Illiberal Practices,* 310.

autonomous bargaining chips. So the politics of linkage and leverage is bound to involve a two-way interaction, with federal decision makers linked to the secondary units (via a senate, for instance) and vice-versa.

Contagion: This occurs when something that happens in one political jurisdiction inspires spontaneous imitators in adjacent locations. In mid-2013, for example, anticorruption protests began in São Paulo and spread quickly throughout Brazil. In any open system, the ability of protests to "go viral" can be a powerful force for democratization. Other forms of diffusion may be more directed, as when measures to fight corruption or clean up elections are deliberately extended into the most recalcitrant jurisdictions.

Activation: Both spontaneous "demonstration effects" and more deliberate interventions can achieve lasting success only if they inspire a local response to back them up. Sometimes this can be a matter of existing but dormant or ignored rules, laws, and institutions undergoing what Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo call "activation."[23] If democratic institutions are already formally in place, subnational democratization may require only this, and it can come in the form of social mobilization, judicial activism, or the involvement of independent institutions acting on their own. Normally apolitical institutions such as schools and neighborhood associations may get involved; disbanded opposition structures may spring back to life; and normally ineffective institutions (police, the media, or accountability systems) may slip their bonds and act with unaccustomed energy. What Gibson calls party-led transitions can occur when these local initiatives are led by political parties acting in conjunction with national parties. But as multiple exam-

ples illustrate, many other actors and institutions can also be activated in favor of subnational democratization, especially where autonomous party structures have lost traction.

The Table above lists examples of these three pathways to overcoming democratic unevenness. Control/conditionality, contagion, and activation need not develop in isolation. Subnational democratization may be achieved by a combination of them, whether occurring at once or in sequence.

Consider Robert Mickey's discussion of the parallel but partly divergent routes by means of which, starting in the 1940s, legal racial segregation and the Jim Crow suppression of African American political rights were contested from below and eventually outlawed from above in the southern United States.[24] In Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina (the three states that Mickey studied), this process combined strong control and conditionality from above with activation mechanisms from below. It stands as one of history's most powerful examples of subnational democratization, with profound implications for the balance and quality of democracy at the national level. Mickey's account underscores the need to identify the precise dynamics that were at work in each locale examined, while also situating specific instances in their larger historical and normative setting. Every contentious episode belonged in a sequence with deep structural and historical antecedents, and the outcome in each state reverberated throughout the region and the country.

In these cases, Jim Crow can be labeled a subnational authoritarian system, although only one (black) section of the local community was being denied citizenship rights, while the enfranchised (white) population could maintain the belief that local political procedures were basically democratic. Mickey's work underscores the need for close attention to regional and local histories, and for caution when applying abstract classifications to complex and multidimensional conflicts, but it also provides a striking account of the transformative potential of subnational democratization processes.

More recent examples include Eaton and Prieto's comparison of the Colombian departments of Cesar and Magdalena. While both are still afflicted by major illiberal structures and practices (in these cases related to violent abuses committed by paramilitary forces) Cesar witnessed the activation of dormant political forces that promoted democracy-friendly alliance-building and compromises, while Magdalena remained trapped in a brutal deadlock. Activation amounted to little there, and although the governor was removed from office for having links with the paramilitary, a politician with close ties to him was subsequently elected, stifling hopes for democratic change.[25]

In Brazil, Borges and Souza have tracked the recent and significant

—albeit incomplete—emergence of more competitive and inclusive local politics in some initially unpromising northeastern states.[26] Here, activation of existing institutions charged with enforcing democratic accountability and checks and balances teamed with demonstration effects from the central government and from other states in the federation. As a result, state-level political machines lost ground and more competitive and pluralistic alternatives arose.

Subnational democratization has come to Argentina in a more fitful and fragmentary way. Behrend documents the mixed results of federal intervention in the provinces of Catamarca, Corrientes, and Santiago del Estero after the transition to democracy. In these cases, federal control or conditionality dismantled repressive structures and practices, spurring alternation in office (at least in the short run). But heightened contestation and improved checks and balances failed to arrive, and the domination of politics by a few elite families persisted. Some accountability mechanisms became activated, yet illiberal practices proved dismayingly resilient.[27]

Working along similar lines, Patrick Heller has traced the deep historical and structural dynamics through which "the procedural, effective, and substantive elements of democracy have evolved in a virtuous circle" in the southwestern Indian state of Kerala (population 35 million).[28] Maya Tudor and Adam Ziegfeld also cite long-term historical forces to explain the robustness of democracy in other major Indian states, while noting the contrast between these and sadder cases such as that of Kashmir.[29] Significantly, whereas Heller uses a socioeconomic reading of Kerala's political history of conflict and social mobilization as the basis of his explanation, Tudor and Ziegfeld stress the development of mass electoral politics channeled through the party system. As indicated above, different pathways may prevail in different contexts, so while both electoral politics and redistributive activism need to be assessed in all cases, a granular examination of each process is required to strike the correct balance.

These studies show how subnational democratization can advance, but they should also drive home the point that no one should expect the process to be easy, automatic, or linear. On the contrary, there will often be obstacles and detours even in cases where much goes well.

Searching Below the Radar

Although we have cited current examples of nationally democratic regimes that display large subnational territorial variations, there are also democracies—including some governing geographically sizeable countries—that enjoy uniformly high standards of democracy across the national territory: Australia covers a continent, but suffers no democratic unevenness. There are also some well-regarded regimes that fall short

in some particular locale without major repercussions at the national level. An example might be the French island of Corsica, where the persistence of illiberal structures (such as organized-crime networks) and tensions over Corsican nationalism have at times degraded the quality of democratic governance. So "brown areas" are not invariably a major problem, and even where they have existed in the past, it may be possible for them to be contained and then perhaps eventually raised to the national standard ("democratized").

Unfortunately, scholarly preoccupation with the classification and study of national regimes—as well as with the doings of capital cities—has caused a neglect of the subnational paths that lead away from locally entrenched illiberalism. Cases of outright subnational authoritarianism, being easier to identify and analyze in the language of transition, regime change, and federal intervention, have drawn more notice, but the concept of "illiberal structures and practices" reminds us that the problem is much bigger. Such structures and practices can do much damage to the "intensity of citizenship" and the quality of democratic participation, even if they never morph into full-fledged local authoritarianism.

Cases in which illiberal structures and practices are put on the defensive (and perhaps overcome) tend to share three features. These are: 1) the activation of dormant channels of political expression; 2) a strong measure of complexity requiring activities on several fronts and a fair amount of time; and 3) a high chance of running into resistance and even threats of derailment, with progress coming in "fits and starts" amid frequent contentions.

Let us consider the matter of activating dormant political channels. We are talking about the overcoming of democratic unevenness within countries that have democratic constitutions: They hold elections and pledge allegiance to principles of open political expression and competition that are supposed to extend throughout the whole national territory. In practice, however, there can be multiple shortfalls in particular localities, even though both the formal promise of participation and the core institutions of representative government remain on the books. In subnational authoritarianism's most extreme form, such avenues of expression are directly suppressed so that the pathway of democratization must involve the reopening of closed channels. But in the more frequent case of illiberal structures and practices, such channels are to various degrees muffled or perverted rather than completely shut off.

Hence campaigns for democratization will focus on restoring, reinvigorating, and upgrading channels that exist, but only in a subordinate or dormant version. Campaigns of partial reform and improvement will be less blood-stirring than dramatic confrontations with repressive local potentates. The aim will be gradual victories against longstanding illiberal structures and practices rather than abrupt transformations. Setting up and backing up new practices—in the police and courts, the me-

dia, the voluntary sector, and among relevant elites generally—and then making these routine will matter just as much as what happens in the more obviously "political" arena of elections. To entrench democracy "from below" will take not merely nods from officialdom, but real support from society at large. Otherwise, the democracy-unfriendly local interests that keep formal institutions in thrall will preserve the sinews of illiberalism and thwart efforts at democratic activation.

Even the most successful long-run pathways out of subnational illiberalism and democratic unevenness are winding routes subject to roadblocks and barriers that must be sidestepped or overcome.

Second, most pathways toward subnational (and even more so, local) democratization are hard to see in detail during real time, and can only be observed from fairly "high up" and over extended periods of time. Even then, scholars in search of insight will need a thorough knowledge of the region in question, including its illiberal structures and practices and their historical roots, in order to objectively assess both the forces of reform and their opponents. Happily, there is a growing stock of high-quality case studies that confirm the historic potential of such processes. And yet, as we cannot emphasize enough, every case is different, with its own complexities and tangle of motives, outcomes, and strategies. No simple formula can apply across the board.

Third, even the most successful long-run pathways out of subnational illiberalism and democratic unevenness are winding routes subject to roadblocks and barriers that must be sidestepped or overcome. Contention is to be expected. Failure is always possible, and may serve to breathe new life into illiberal local establishments. "Solutions" can breed problems of their own, correcting one local democratic deficiency but exacerbating others, perhaps even replacing an old illiberal elite with a newer one that has many of the same vices. As has become painfully clear at the international level in recent years, democratization processes can be transformative, but they can also be disruptive. They are by no means guaranteed to always turn out well. All these sobering cautions apply at the subnational level as well.

These caveats notwithstanding, increased attention to subnational variations can do more than just enrich and deepen our scholarly understanding of the workings of democracy. It also can help to point out ways of extending democratic rights and liberties to hundreds of millions of people in countries that are democracies at the national level, but which nonetheless fail to guarantee the benefits of democracy to many of their citizens.

NOTES

1. See Guillermo O'Donnell, "On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems: A Latin American View with Glances at Some Postcommunist Countries," *World Development* 21 (August 1993): 1355–69; and Edward L. Gibson, *Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Federal Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

2. Jacqueline Behrend and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Illiberal Practices: Territorial Variance Within Large Federal Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

3. See Robert Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944–1972* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Kelly McMann, *Economic Autonomy and Democracy: Hybrid Regimes in Russia and Kyrgyzstan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Carlos Gervasoni, "A Rentier Theory of Subnational Regimes: Fiscal Federalism, Democracy, and Authoritarianism in the Argentine Provinces," *World Politics* 62 (April 2010): 302–40; Jacqueline Behrend, "The Unevenness of Democratization at the Subnational Level: Provincial 'Closed Games' in Argentina," *Latin American Research Review* 46 (2011): 150–76.

4. In order of population size, the countries are China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Russia, Japan, Mexico, and the Philippines.

5. See Leonardo Morlino, *Changes for Democracy: Actors, Structures, Processes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

6. Gibson, *Boundary Control*.

7. See Edward L. Gibson and Desmond King, "Federalism and Subnational Democratization in the United States: The South in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Behrend and Whitehead, eds., *Illiberal Practices*.

8. Richard Snyder, "After the State Withdraws: Neoliberalism and Subnational Authoritarian Regimes in Mexico," in Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd A. Eisenstadt, and Jane Hindley, eds., *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, 1999).

9. Julián Durazo Herrmann, "Social Heterogeneity, Political Mediation, and Subnational Illiberalism: Oaxaca and Puebla, Mexico," in Behrend and Whitehead, eds., *Illiberal Practices*.

10. Nicolás Loza and Irma Méndez, "De la calidad de las elecciones a la calidad de las democracias en los estados mexicanos, 2001–2012," *Revista Mexicana de Derecho Electoral* 4 (2013): 353–68.

11. Jacqueline Behrend, "Federal Intervention and Subnational Democratization in Argentina: A Comparative Perspective," in Behrend and Whitehead, eds., *Illiberal Practices*.

12. Carlos Gervasoni, "The Dimensions of Democratic and Hybrid Subnational Regimes: Evidence from an Expert Survey in Argentina," in Behrend and Whitehead, eds., *Illiberal Practices*.

13. Agustina Giraudy, *Democrats and Autocrats: Pathways of Subnational Undemocratic Regime Continuity within Democratic Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

14. André Borges, "Rethinking State Politics: The Withering of State Dominant Machines in Brazil," *Brazilian Political Science Review* 2 (December 2007): 108–36.

15. André Borges, "Subnational Hybrid Regimes and Democratization in Brazil: Why Party Nationalization Matters," in Behrend and Whitehead, eds., *Illiberal Practices*.

16. Celina Souza, "The Rise and Fall of Illiberal Politics in the Brazilian State of Bahia," in Behrend and Whitehead, eds., *Illiberal Practices*.

17. McMann, *Economic Autonomy and Democracy*.

18. Inga A.-L. Saikkonen, "Subnational Democratization and Electoral Authoritarianism in Russia: From Subnational Regime Diversity to Unitary Authoritarianism," in Behrend and Whitehead, eds., *Illiberal Practices*.

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26. Borges, "Rethinking State Politics" and "Subnational Hybrid Regimes;" Souza, "The Rise and Fall."

27. See Behrend, "Federal Intervention" and Victoria Ortiz de Rozas, "El *gran elector* provincial en Santiago del Estero (2005–2010). Una perspectiva desde adentro de un 'oficialismo invencible,'" *Revista SAAP* 5 (November 2011): 359–99.

28. Patrick Heller, "Degrees of Democracy: Some Comparative Lessons from India," *World Politics* 52 (2000): 484–519.

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