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FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

In this issue, we again feature a more topical article and a symposium devoted to an important development in the literature on democracy and democratization. The featured article, by David Patel and Valerie Bunce, looks at the phenomenon of the regional diffusion of democracy. The authors propound a theory of critical cases whose impact go beyond national politics and become exemplars of the possible for

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SUBNATIONAL COMPARATIVE RESEARCH ON DEMOCRACY: TAKING STOCK AND LOOKING FORWARD,

Eduardo Moncada, *Rutgers University*
Richard Snyder, *Brown University*



What has the recent turn toward subnational analysis in comparative politics contributed to knowledge about democracy? A decade ago Snyder argued that the subnational comparative method, that is, the systematic analysis of a small number of territorially-defined subnational cases, such as cities, provinces, states and regions, offered a powerful tool both for getting beyond the “whole nation bias” in the field of comparative politics and for avoiding some of the methodological pitfalls that routinely arise in “small-N” research.¹ At that time a first generation of studies that had appeared over the course of the 1990s was leveraging the subnational comparative method to shed light on a broad set of questions with important implications for the study of democracy. Since then, the use of the subnational comparative method has increased notably and the range of questions addressed with

1. Richard Snyder, “Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36 (2001): 93-110. On “whole nation bias” see Stein Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties: Approaches to the Comparative Study of the Processes of Development* (New York: David McKay Company, 1970).

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TURNING POINTS AND THE CROSS-NATIONAL DIFFUSION OF POPULAR PROTEST,

David Patel, *Cornell University*
Valerie J. Bunce, *Cornell University*



It is far easier to explain why protests against authoritarian rulers erupt in one country than to explain why, in a few cases, these anti-regime mobilizations spread to other countries in the same region. While both processes require ordinary citizens and oppositions to surmount the familiar obstacles to collective action, which are particularly formidable in the case of authoritarian regimes, the second one introduces an additional constraint. If oppositions and their allies are emboldened by the protests that have erupted in neighboring countries, so authoritarian leaders are quick to draw lessons from these dangerous precedents and take preemptive action.¹ Just as these leaders have significant resources at their disposal to block diffusion, so they have strong interests in doing so because their jobs, financial interests, legacies and even lives are at stake.

1. See Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow, “Double Diffusion: The Co-Evolution of Police and Protest Behavior with an Application to Transnational Contention” Unpublished manuscript, 2010.

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Editors/Moncada and Snyder**FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD, CONTINUED***(continued from page 1)*

neighboring countries. They explore the logic of this across three different periods of regional diffusion – 1989 in Eastern Europe, the color revolutions in Eurasia, and the current episode of regime changes across the Middle East. The symposium concerns the emerging literature on subnational democratization. We are again lucky to have a nice mix of established and emerging scholars addressing this important new literature. Pieces by Eduard Moncado

and Richard Snyder, Agustina Giraudy, Tomila Lankhina, Aseema Sinha, and Daniel Berger cover a number of important topics including a survey of the research of this nature and its major findings, what subnational research contributes to our understanding of democratization processes, how it differs from and complements cross-national research, and what kinds of inferential advantages and pitfalls research of this nature offers. Thanks are due to my

co-editor Bryon Moraski who recruited the authors and coordinated the symposium.

On behalf of the Editorial Committee,

Michael Bernhard

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**Moncada and Snyder, CONTINUED***(continued from page 1)*

this method has expanded.² Moreover, a second generation of subnational comparative research on democracy has now emerged, distinguished by its focus on a new set of substantive questions, its use of mixed research designs that combine qualitative and quantitative methods, and the notable presence of scholars based in the global south. In this article, we take stock of how the subnational comparative method has produced insights about key factors that fortify and, alternatively, challenge our knowledge about democracy. We also consider the opportunities and difficulties that spatially complex and unbound phenomena pose for future research on democracy using the subnational comparative method.

The First Generation of Subnational Comparative Research on Democracy

Ten years ago, scholars had already started to open the “black box” of national-level analysis by focusing on subnational political units.³ As

2. Lily Tsai and Daniel Ziblatt, “The Rise of Subnational and Multilevel Comparative Politics” *Annual Review of Political Science* (forthcoming).

3. These studies stood on the shoulders of earlier subnational comparative works, such as Seymour Martin Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1950 Saskatchewan*

shown in Table 1, the first generation of subnational comparative research focused on a diverse range of subjects. Despite their different substantive foci, these studies shared a fundamental, though often implicit, assumption: major outcomes of interest, including democracy, governance, economic reform, and violence, are territorially uneven phenomena whose causes and effects vary significantly at the subnational level. Consequently, making valid causal inferences and, in turn, building strong theories about these spatially uneven phenomena require a focus on the subnational level.

Subnational Authoritarian Regimes

A prominent early line of research in the first generation of subnational comparative analysis explored the tensions between national-level efforts to consolidate democracy and the

(Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1950); Juan J. Linz and Amando de Miguel, “Within-Nation Differences and Comparisons: The Eight Spains” in Richard L. Merritt and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Comparing Nations: The Use of Quantitative Data in Cross-National Research* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966): 269-319; Atul Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press 1987). See also Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds. *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

persistence of non-democratic political practices at the local-level. O’Donnell called attention to the presence of “brown areas” – territorial zones within formal democracies that lacked both effective state bureaucracies and the rule of law and where the “circuits of power” ran on corruption and clientelism.⁴ Others pointed to the existence of full-fledged subnational authoritarian regimes, such as Fox’s finding that authoritarian enclaves in Mexico threatened the country’s democratization.⁵ Snyder explored how different types of subnational authoritarian regimes, defined in terms of the varying coalitional support bases of state governors, the nature of governors’ ties to national-level elites, and their styles of leadership, emerged across Mexico.⁶ Analysis of subnational

4. Guillermo A. 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), 1350.

5. Jonathan Fox, “Latin America’s Emerging Local Politics” *Journal of Democracy* 5 (April 1994), 106.

6. 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, CA: The Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1999a): 295-341.

Table 1: Two Generations of Subnational Comparative Research on Democracy: An Inventory of Key Findings

First Generation		Second Generation	
Area of Research	Key Findings	Area of Research	Key Findings
Subnational Authoritarian Regimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reach of the central state is territorially uneven. Subnational authoritarian regimes can thrive in countries with national-level democracy. 	Clientelism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The incentives politicians face to engage in clientelism are a function of local socioeconomic and political conditions.
Social Capital, Governance and the Quality of Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social capital and democracy are mutually reinforcing. Public-private collaboration at the local level facilitates economic development. 	Participatory Policy Reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local political institutions have a crucial impact on the intensity and quality of political participation.
Decentralization and Neoliberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decentralization and neoliberal economic reforms are territorially uneven processes. The effects of decentralization and neoliberal economic reforms on the quality of representation, public policy and service delivery depend on subnational variation in the power of political elites and societal actors. 	Recentralization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subnational financial distress can jeopardize national economic stability and, in turn, catalyze recentralization efforts. The political fortunes of recentralization depend on the incentives and power subnational actors have to oppose or support it.
Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subnational political units are potentially autonomous policy jurisdictions. 	Intergovernmental Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical relations between governments at distinct levels of the political system, as well as horizontal relations across governments at the same level, have a powerful effect on citizen security, democracy, and development.
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cities, not just rural areas, can breed political and ethnic violence. Associational networks at the local level strongly affect the likelihood of violence. 	Micro-dynamics of Violence and Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local violence is often driven by cleavages and rivalries that are quite distinct from the "master cleavages" that divide national actors.

authoritarian regimes, in turn, helped explain the slow and territorially uneven progress of democratization.

Social Capital and Governance

Putnam’s landmark study of sharp and puzzling variation in subnational government performance across a dozen policy areas between the Northern and Southern regions of Italy launched a research program on “social capital.” According to Putnam, the North’s higher level of associational life, or social capital, enabled it consistently to outperform the South.⁷ Tandler’s

research on the Brazilian state of Ceará found that collaboration between civil society organizations and government bureaucrats across several public-service policy domains explained good government performance. Her work helped set a fruitful research agenda on how “synergistic” cooperation between public and private sectors influences local development and democracy.⁸

Decentralization and Neoliberalism

The twin waves of political

8. Judith Tandler, *Good Government in the Tropics* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); See John Ackerman, “Co-Governance for Accountability: Beyond ‘Exit’ and ‘Voice’” *World Development* 32 (March 2004), 449-50. For a set of studies on synergy – many with a subnational focus – see the special issue of *World Development* (Vol. 24, No. 6, 1996) edited by Peter Evans.

decentralization and neoliberal economic reforms that swept the globe in the 1980s and 1990s sparked numerous studies that aimed to explain the spatially uneven implementation and consequences of these policy reforms for development and democracy. Willis et al. looked at bargaining between national and subnational political actors as a way to correct for the dominance of economic theories of decentralization and advance their alternative theory of its political determinants. The authors concluded that cross-national variation in patterns of fiscal decentralization was shaped by the degree of political party centralization across national and subnational governments.⁹ DeMelo’s study of intergovernmental fiscal relations in the context of decentralization across 30 countries highlighted how newly empowered subnational politicians could challenge national economic policies and, in turn, jeopardize national macroeconomic stability.¹⁰ Although decentralization was conventionally expected to improve local governance and, ultimately, democracy, by narrowing the gap between policymakers and citizens, subnational studies found that the consequences of decentralization depended on the nature of local-level informal institutions.¹¹ Snyder exploited striking subnational variation in institution-building across Mexican states to show how and why strategic

9. Eliza Willis, Christopher da C.B. Garman, and Stephan Haggard, “The Politics of Decentralization in Latin America” *Latin American Research Review* 34 (1999): 7-56.

10. Luis R. DeMelo, “Fiscal Decentralization and Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations: A Cross-Country Analysis” *World Development* 28 (February 2005): 365-80.

11. Alfred Montero and David Samuels, ed., *Decentralization and Democracy in Latin America* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); Guillermo A. O’Donnell, Jorge Vargas Culler, and Osvaldo Miguel Iazzetta, eds., *The Quality of Democracy: Theory and Applications* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

7. Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

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interaction between subnational politicians and civil society drove the politics of reregulation after neoliberalism.¹² Research on the unfolding of national-level political and economic reforms across subnational units thus showed how subnational forces can have an important impact on the fortunes of national political projects.

Federalism

Studies of federalism also zoomed in on subnational units. Remmer and Wibbels flipped the causal arrow in research on the politics of economic adjustment by looking at how variation in subnational fiscal policies affected national-level macroeconomic stabilization.¹³ Gibson and Calvo found that electoral overrepresentation of subnational political units in Argentina's federal system explained the public-spending strategies used by national executives to build support for economic reforms. National executives targeted public spending to "low maintenance" constituencies in overrepresented jurisdictions and shielded these groups from market-oriented economic reforms. By contrast, "high maintenance" constituencies in underrepresented jurisdictions located in the more urbanized and economically developed regions of the country saw reductions in public spending and bore the brunt of the economic reforms.¹⁴

12. Richard Snyder, "After Neoliberalism: The Politics of Reregulation in Mexico" *World Politics* 51 (January 1999b): 173-204; Richard Snyder, *Politics After Neoliberalism: Reregulation in Mexico* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001b).

13. Karen L. Remmer and Erik Wibbels, "The Subnational Politics of Economic Adjustment Provincial Politics and Fiscal Performance in Argentina" *Comparative Political Studies* 33 (May 2000): 419-51.

14. Edward L. Gibson and Ernesto Calvo, "Federalism and Low-Maintenance Constituencies: Territorial Dimensions of Economic Reform in Argentina" *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35 (Fall 2000): 32-55. See also Edward

Violence

Scholars also turned to the subnational comparative method to explore the challenges violence posed to democracy. Varshney's study of the relationship between associational life and Hindu-Muslim riots in eight Indian cities punctured the conventional view that political violence in India was mainly a rural phenomenon. Varshney showed instead that riot-related deaths were actually concentrated in several of India's urban centers and that the strength of local inter-communal associational networks explained cross-city variation in levels of violence.¹⁵ The proliferation of intra-state conflict during the post-Cold War era would make subnational comparative analysis an increasingly important tool in the study of the causes and consequences of violence.

The Second Generation of Subnational Comparative Research on Democracy

The second generation of subnational comparative research on democracy builds on its predecessor yet also breaks new ground in both substance and methods. Substantively, although important recent studies focus on topics that concerned the first generation, such as subnational authoritarian regimes and decentralization,¹⁶ the focus of much research has shifted

L. Gibson, ed., *Federalism and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

15. Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

16. Edward L. Gibson, *Boundary Control: Making and Unmaking Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (forthcoming); Robert W. Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944-1972* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming); Tullia Falletti, *Decentralization and Subnational Politics in Latin America* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

to new aspects of, and challenges to, democracy such as clientelism, participatory policy reforms, political recentralization, and intergovernmental relations. Methodologically, in contrast to the first generation of research, which seldom combined qualitative case studies and quantitative analysis, the second generation is far more likely to pursue mixed-method strategies, often by crafting a "nested" research design that combines small-N comparative case studies with large-N subnational quantitative analysis that situates the cases within the full universe of subnational political and administrative units in one or more countries.¹⁷ Finally, the second generation includes many scholars based in the global south, who are increasingly turning to subnational comparative analysis as a way to advance knowledge about politics in their countries.¹⁸ Because it offers a way to implement a comparative research design in one country, the subnational comparative method is an especially

17. On "nested" research strategies, see Michael Coppedge, "Explaining Democratic Deterioration in Venezuela through Nested Inference" in Francis Hagopian and Scott P. Mainwaring, eds., *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 289-318; and Evan S. Lieberman, "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research" *American Political Science Review* 99 (August 2005): 435-52.

18. See, for example, Francisco Gutiérrez and Mauricio Barón, "Órdenes Subsidiarios: Coca, Esmeraldas: La Guerra y La Paz" *Colombia Internacional* (January-June 2008): 102-129; Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Palshikar, "Ten Theses on State Politics in India," *Seminar* 591 (November 2008): 14-22; Ralf Leitteritz, Carlo Nasi and Angelika Rettberg, "Para Desvincular los Recursos Naturales del Conflicto Armado en Colombia," *Colombia Internacional* (July-December 2009): 215-29; and Germán Lodola, "La Estructura Subnacional de las Carreras Políticas en Argentina y Brasil," *Desarrollo Económico* (July-September 2009): 247-86. For efforts by scholars based in the global south to explain why subnational undemocratic regimes persist despite national democratization, see Agustina Giraudy, "The Politics of Subnational Undemocratic Regime Reproduction in Argentina and Mexico" *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 2 (2010): 53-84; and Carlos Gervasoni, "A Rentier Theory of Subnational Regimes: Fiscal Federalism, Democracy, and Authoritarianism in the Argentine Provinces" *World Politics*, 62 (April, 2010): 302-340.

attractive tool in the face of resource constraints that can make fieldwork in foreign countries and cross-national research prohibitively costly.

Clientelism

Clientelism is a burgeoning research area where subnational comparative analysis plays a prominent role. Because clientelism is anchored in micro-level social and political ties and networks that are difficult to organize and exploit on a national scale, clientelism is especially well-suited to a subnational approach. Moreover, the observation and measurement of clientelistic practices is likely to be more feasible at a subnational-level. In her study of Argentine provinces, Stokes finds that political machines leverage their penetration of voters' social networks to mitigate the possibility that voters will use the secret ballot to renege on their commitments.¹⁹ Weitz-Shapiro uses a subnational comparative analysis across Argentine municipalities to explore variation in strategies of political survival, focusing on why some politicians choose clientelistic strategies whereas others do not.²⁰ Recent work on clientelism in India, Mexico and Russia also employs subnational comparative analysis to advance our understanding of the political underpinnings of clientelism.²¹

19. Susan Stokes, "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina" *American Political Science Review* 99 (August 2005): 315-25.

20. Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro, "What Wins Votes: Why Some Politicians Opt Out of Clientelism" Unpublished manuscript (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2010).

21. Tariq Thachil, *The Saffron Wave Meets the Silent Revolution: Why the Poor Vote for Hindu Nationalism in India*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Government, Cornell University, 2009; Beatriz Magaloni, Alberto Diaz-Cayeros and Federico Estévez, "Clientelism and Portfolio Diversification: A Model of Electoral Investment with Applications to Mexico" in Herbert Kitschelt and Stephen I. Wilkinson, eds., *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (Cambridge University Press, 2007): 182-205; Henry

The Participation Revolution

The last decade witnessed a tremendous proliferation of subnational institutions designed to expand local-level citizen participation in public policymaking. This, in turn, sparked a surge in studies of the origins and outcomes of participatory experiments. While municipal-level participatory budgeting is the focus of many works, scholars have also started looking at other participatory institutions. For example, Avritzer studies health councils in Brazil, concluding that successful participatory institutions result from cooperation between a robust civil society and a cohesive political society welcoming of increased participation.²² Tsai finds that informal institutions that hold local bureaucrats accountable play a central role in the provision of public goods across Chinese villages.²³ And Heller et al. conclude that local planning councils in India, or *panchayats*, provide spaces not only for participatory consultation but also for the *implementation* of development projects proposed and designed through

Hale, "Correlates of Clientelism: Political Economy, Politicized Ethnicity, and Post-Communist Transition" in Herbert Kitschelt and Stephen I. Wilkinson, eds., *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 227-50.

22. Leonardo Avritzer, *Participatory Institutions in Democratic Brazil* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009). On the politics of participatory budgeting, see Gianpaolo Baiocchi, *Militants and Citizens: The Politics of Participatory Democracy in Porto Alegre* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Patrick Heller, "Moving the State: The Politics of Democratic Decentralization in Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre" *Politics & Society* 29 (March 2001): 131-63; Brian Wampler, *Participatory Budgeting in Brazil: Contestation, Cooperation and Accountability* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University, 2007); and Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Patrick Heller, and Marcelo K. Silva, *Bootstrapping Democracy: Transforming Local Governance and Civil Society in Brazil* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).

23. Lily Tsai, *Accountability Without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

participatory mechanisms.²⁴ These works offer a valuable window into state-society relations at the micro-level by using a subnational perspective to zoom in on the interaction among grassroots civil society, local government, and state officials.

From Decentralization to Recentralization

Decentralization still offers fertile terrain for theory-building, as seen in Falleti's work, which uses subnational comparisons in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico to develop a novel sequential theory of decentralization.²⁵ At the same time, a new focus has emerged on the politics of *recentralization*. Eaton and Dickovick show how subnational fiscal imbalances produce strong incentives for national executives to try to rein in subnational governments in Brazil and Argentina.²⁶ And while McMann's work highlights the patchwork nature of regime types across Russian provinces, Russia is now undergoing a far-reaching process of recentralization initiated under former President Vladimir Putin with complex political implications.²⁷ In China, Yang finds that the national government has largely succeeded in recentralizing

24. Patrick Heller, K.N. Harilal, and Shubham Chaudhuri, "Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India" *World Development* 35 (April 2007): 626-48.

25. Tulia Falleti, *Decentralization and Subnational Politics in Latin America* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

26. Kent Eaton and J. Tyler Dickovick, "The Politics of Re-Centralization in Argentina and Brazil" *Latin American Research Review* 39 (February 2004): 90-122.

27. Kelly M. McMann, *Economic Autonomy and Democracy: Hybrid Regimes in Russia and Kyrgyzstan* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Bryon J. Moraski and William M. Reisinger, "Eroding Democracy: Federal Intervention in Russia's Gubernatorial Elections" *Democratization* 14 (August 2007): 603-21; Gavril Bilev, *Checking the Boss: Legislative Autonomy and Executive Contestation in the Russian Regions, 1992-2005*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Brown University, 2011.

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fiscal policies that previously were decentralized to the provincial-level.²⁸ These and other studies show that recentralization, like decentralization, cannot be understood only through the prism of national-level politics: the varied political, economic and social resources available to subnational actors determine whether recentralization succeeds or fails and how it affects the quality of democracy.

Intergovernmental Politics

Research on intergovernmental politics using subnational comparisons has advanced on two fronts: first, the study of *vertical* relations between governments located at distinct levels of the political system, and, second, the study of *horizontal* relations across governments situated at the same level of the political system. A focus on vertical relations sheds light on the factors that produce conflict or, alternatively, cooperation between national and subnational governments on a range of crucial policy issues. For example, Sinha develops a multilevel framework to explain variation in economic development across Indian states that centers on the interactions among national decision makers and regional politicians.²⁹ Citizen security in the face of growing urban crime and violence across the global south also offers fruitful terrain for the study of vertical intergovernmental relations. Urban violence in Colombia has generated puzzling variation in city government responses, ranging from traditional, hard-line coercive measures to reformist, redistributive policies that target the socioeconomic and

29. Asema Sinha, *The Regional Roots of Developmental Politics in India: A Divided Leviathan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005).

political roots of violence. To explain this cross-city variation in responses to urban violence, Moncada proposes a theoretical framework that focuses on the pivotal role of local business in the urban political arena and also as a key force that mediates the impact of national government policies on city politics.³⁰ As cities try to seize new opportunities opened by economic globalization, local governments are increasingly bypassing national governments to forge autonomous roles in accessing foreign investment and securing markets for locally-produced goods and services. The subnational comparative method offers an important tool for understanding these changes and their implications for development and democracy.

The Micro-Dynamics of Violence

The study of the micro-dynamics of political violence is another burgeoning area where the subnational comparative method figures prominently. In his study of violence in villages during the Greek civil war, Kalyvas shows how the “master cleavage” dividing national political actors cannot explain variation in the dynamics of violence at the subnational-level, which is often driven by local political and personal rivalries.³¹ Focusing on two towns in northern Nigeria divided along religious lines, Scacco finds that community-level networks strongly shape the propensity of individuals to participate in violent demonstrations.³²

30. Eduardo Moncada, *Politics, Business and Violence: Urban Security in Colombia (1988–2008)* Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Brown University, 2011. See also Eduardo Moncada, “Toward Democratic Policing in Colombia? Institutional Accountability through Lateral Reform” *Comparative Politics* 41 (July 2009): 431–49; and Eduardo Moncada, “Counting Bodies: Crime Mapping, Policing and Race in Colombia” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33 (April 2010): 696–716.

31. Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

32. Alexandra Scacco, *Individual Participation in*

Subnational analysis has also facilitated the testing of competing theories of political violence, as seen in Humphrey and Weinstein’s appraisal of theories of individual participation in armed conflict using survey data drawn from ex-combatants and non-combatants in Sierra Leone.³³

Challenges for Future Subnational Comparative Research: Coping with Spatially Complex, Uneven and Unbound Processes and Flows

Future subnational comparative research on democracy faces two vital questions. First, what is a subnational unit? The definition of a city, for example, varies considerably across countries. This poses a significant challenge in terms of coding and ensuring unit homogeneity, especially when carrying out cross-national analysis of subnational units. Moreover, subnational political units often lack the hard borders conventionally attributed to nation-states.³⁴ For example, the boundaries of many cities in the global south are expanding, both strategically, as they absorb neighboring municipalities that harbor vital material resources, and in a haphazard and unplanned fashion, as demographic and economic pressures produce migration to the peripheries of urban centers. Likewise, regional level subnational boundaries are often unstable due to political manipulation, as evident in Africa and Russia, and this instability, in turn, may pose formidable challenges for the longitudinal study of subnational

Violent Demonstrations in Nigeria, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Columbia University, May 2007.

33. Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War” *American Political Science Review* 100 (August 2006): 429–47.

34. Of course, many putative nation-states also lack hard borders.

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politics.³⁵ These fluid and shifting subnational boundaries raise questions not only about the composition of the subnational unit. They also make it more difficult to determine precisely which actors, interests and institutions should command attention in research on democracy. For example, Moncada's work on urban violence and citizen security in Latin America shows that security politics in major cities is often dominated by rural, landowning elites who are based well outside cities yet nevertheless manage to hold sway in urban centers.³⁶

A second key issue concerns whether the phenomena we want to study adhere to the boundaries of subnational political and administrative units. Subnational elections may map more or less neatly

onto formal political boundaries. Still, many phenomena with key political implications, such as crime, public health problems, environmental degradation, and migration do not fit neatly inside the boundaries of subnational units.³⁷ Understanding these "unbound" processes and flows requires novel technologies for analyzing spatially complex phenomena. In conjunction with subnational comparisons, the use of geographic information systems (GIS) to generate spatially-coded data has proven fruitful in recent work on ethnic conflict and social-service provision.³⁸ Subnational research designs that combine comparative and spatial methodologies will provide a stronger foundation for understanding

the spatially complex, uneven and unbound processes and flows of the contemporary era.

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35. On how patronage politics has driven the creation of new districts in Uganda, see Elliot Green, "Patronage, District Creation, and Reform in Uganda" *Studies in Comparative International Development* 45 (March 2010): 83-103. On the political origins of reductions in the number of regions in Russia, see Bryon J. Moraski and William M. Reisinger, "Spatial Contagion in Regional Machine Strength: Evidence from Voting in Russia's Federal Elections" Paper presented at the 2010 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, September 2-5, 2010.

36. Moncada 2011.

37. On how variation in the spatial relationship between crime and the boundaries of subnational jurisdictions affects patterns of violence, see Richard Snyder and Angelica Duran-Martinez, "Does Illegality Breed Violence? Drug Trafficking and State-Sponsored Protection Rackets" *Crime, Law, and Social Change* 52 (September 2009): 253-73.

38. Melani Cammett and Sukriti Issar, "Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon" *World Politics* 62 (July 2010): 381-421; and Ravi Bhavnani, Dan Miodownik and Hyun Jin Choi, "Three Two Tango: Territorial Control and Selective Violence in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Forthcoming in October 2011).

