Varieties of Authoritarianism: The Organization of the Military State and the Evolution of Federalism in Argentina and Brazil *

Tulia G. Falleti
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Pennsylvania
falleti@sas.upenn.edu

Abstract: While much has been written about democracy and democratization; far less attention has been paid to the institutional organization of authoritarian regimes. Scholars have focused on the causes, economic policies, societal support, intra-elite conflicts, or human-rights violations of authoritarian regimes. More recently, political scientists have also studied the role of elections and legislatures on the survival of authoritarian regimes. However, the very different ways in which authoritarian regimes, and military regimes in particular, organize the government, occupy the state apparatus, and modify the country’s political institutions have gone largely under-theorized. This essay fills in that void by analyzing how the last military regimes of Argentina (1976-1983) and Brazil (1964-1985) organized power within the state and the legacies of such organization on the institutions of federalism. The essay argues that variation in the organization of the state under the military regimes accounts for the divergent origins of post-developmental decentralization, which in turn explains the contrasting evolution of intergovernmental relations in each country. The article contributes to the recent literature on electoral authoritarian regimes by showing that elections and legislatures matter not only to regime survival but also to policy outcomes.

Keywords: military regime; electoral authoritarianism; federalism; decentralization; Argentina; Brazil.

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To Jorge Julio López, looking forward to his reappearance

The problem is not to seize power but to make power, to mobilize groups into politics and to organize their participation in politics. (Huntington 1968, 144)

In the early hours of Sunday June 28, 2009, the Honduran military forced President Manuel Zelaya out of the presidential palace and into exile to neighboring Costa Rica. Hours later, the Speaker of Congress, Roberto Micheletti, was appointed acting president of Honduras. The military coup followed a power struggle among the branches of government over President Zelaya’s plan to call a referendum to reform the constitution so that he could run for a second term in office. The coup plotters, which included members of Congress and the Supreme Court, saw the coup as a preemptive measure against the radicalization of a government that was becoming increasingly leftist and populist and similar, in their minds, to those of Venezuela, Bolivia, or Ecuador. Advocates and critics of the coup, domestically and abroad, were soon asking: Was this a legal “civic-military” coup seeking to restore democracy? Or was it, instead, a “military” coup, alike those of the 1960s and 1970s in the region that deposed popular democrats and replaced them with authoritarian regimes?

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1 Jorge Julio López, retired construction worker, is the first disappeared person since the return to democracy in Argentina in 1983. He was illegally detained and tortured during the Argentine dictatorship of 1976-1983 and was a key witness in the 2006 trail and conviction of former police officer Miguel Etchecolatz. On September 17, 2006, the day after he testified against Etchecolatz, Jorge López, 78 years of age at the time, was disappeared. He has not yet been found.

2 After the coup, media outlets around the world described it as a “civic-military” coup (or golpe cívico-militar) to distinguish it from the strictly “military” coups of the 1960s and 1970s in Latin America. Two days after the coup, The Washington Post, published an editorial stating that democracy had to be restored in Honduras and making it explicit that this coup was not similar to those of the 1960s. In fact, the editorial fell short of justifying the coup. It read: “… had the generals merely allowed events to proceed according to the rule of law, the president could have been legitimately deposed or isolated. The fear of further intervention by Mr. Chávez may have prompted the rash action; the Venezuelan strongman has made it quite clear that he is eager to meddle in the country's affairs, and he has even threatened military action.” (June 30, 2009, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/29/AR2009062903702.html last accessed on July 6, 2009, emphasis added)
The debate over the legality of the Honduras’ military coup, Micheletti’s government, and the restricted presidential elections of November 29, 2009, underscores the fact that while much has been written in political science about transitions to democracy and democratization processes; far less attention has been paid to the institutional organization of authoritarian regimes—and military regimes in particular.3 In the case of Latin American authoritarianisms, studies have centered on the causes, economic policies, societal support, intra-elite divisions, or track-record of human-rights violations of authoritarian regimes. Different classifications have been proposed to define and group the authoritarian regimes of the region. The military regimes of the 1960s and 1970s, for example, have been labeled “bureaucratic-authoritarian” (O’Donnell 1986 [1973]), “neoconservative” (Schamis 1991) or “national security doctrine” (Ansaldi 2004), depending on the commonalities emphasized—such as the characteristics of their commanding elites, their economic programs, or their relations with international powers. More recently, political science scholars have focused attention on political regimes that, while holding elections, fall short of the minimalist definitions of liberal democracy or polyarchy. These regimes have been labeled hybrid regimes (Diamond 2002), electoral authoritarianisms (Schedler 2006), or competitive authoritarianisms (Levitsky and Way 2002). An interesting and promising line of research has also emerged on the role of elections and legislatures for the survival of authoritarian regimes (e.g., Brownlee 2009; Remmer 1999; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Magaloni 2008).

However, the very different ways in which authoritarian regimes, and the regimes commanded by the military in particular, have organized government, occupied the state

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3 The literature on transitions to democracy and democratization processes is copious. Among the best-known works are Huntington (1991), Linz and Stepan (1996), Moore (1966), O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), Przeworski et al. (2000), and Rustow (1970), just to name a few.
apparatus, and modified the pre-existing political systems have largely gone under-theorized. In fact, as political scientist Barbara Geddes (1999, 121) wrote a decade ago:

… different kinds of authoritarianism differ from each other as much as they differ from democracy. They draw on different groups to staff government offices and different segments of society for support. They have different procedures for making decisions, different ways of handling the choice of leaders and succession, and different ways of responding to society and opponents.

Despite these recognized important variations among authoritarian regimes in terms of access to power, staffing of offices, sources of support, decision-making processes, succession rules, and interactions with civil society and opposition; most scholars have prioritized access to power when studying authoritarian regimes. Geddes, for example, classifies authoritarian regimes according to how dictators access and retain office, distinguishing among military, single-party, personalist, and mixed-type authoritarian regimes (Geddes 1999, 121-25). Similarly, Magaloni (2008, 731) distinguishes between party autocracies, military dictatorships, and monarchies according to the dictators “launching organization.” And Hadenius and Teorell (2007, 146), considering the “modes of maintaining political power,” distinguish between authoritarian monarchies, military regimes, and authoritarian electoral regimes.

Of special interest here is the military regimes’ type, about which a high degree of definitional convergence exists. Geddes (1999, 121) defines military regimes as those in which a group of officers decides who will rule and exercise some degree of control over policy; Magaloni (2008, 731) as those in which “the locus of power remains within the military;” and Hadeniurs and Teorell (2007, 146), following Nordlinger (1977, 2), define military regimes as those “in which military officers are major or predominant political actors by virtue of their

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4 For recent exceptions regarding Latin American authoritarian regimes, see Ansaldi (2004) and Desposato (2001).
actual or threatened use of force.” This is to say, in military regimes, directly or indirectly, the military rules.

However, as I will show in this article, *how* the military rules is an important aspect of military regimes. I will show that even *within* the type of military regimes institutional differences exist that are consequential for policy and political outcomes. Legislatures and elections in military regimes not only result in longer survival rates, as several scholars have recently shown, they also introduce important policy variations. The main goal of this article is thus to shed light on the often overlooked and under-theorized institutional differences that exist in the organization of the state within military regimes. More specifically, I will analyze how the institutional organization of the state in two Latin American military regimes, those of Argentina (1976-1983) and Brazil (1964-1985), affected the process of post-developmental decentralization and, in turn, the institutions of federalism in each country.

The selection of these two military regimes cases rests on several factors. First, Argentina and Brazil have federal structures of government, which are relevant to the decentralization policy processes analyzed in this article. Second, because these two military regimes are in the same region and were (largely) contemporaneous, they have been the focus of previous studies and comparisons and this article builds upon those previous studies. Third, the two military regimes vary significantly in the main explanatory variable of interest. While the military regime of Brazil largely allowed for elections and legislative politics, the military regime of Argentina suppressed all partisan activity and closed down the legislature. Finally, and as I will show next, the cases vary along the dependent variable: the evolution of the intergovernmental balance of power.

The remainder of the article is organized in five sections. The next section analyzes the evolution of intergovernmental institutions in Argentina and Brazil from the late 1970s to the late 1990s. The third section compares the organization of state power under the last military regimes
in both countries. The subsequent two sections explain why and how different types of decentralization (administrative decentralization in Argentina and political decentralization in Brazil) were first implemented and their legacies on the balance of power among levels of government. The final section concludes by summarizing the main findings, highlighting the implications of this research for the study of electoral authoritarianism and democratization, and warning about the use of periodizations according to political regimes.

1. The Dependent Variable: the Evolution of Federalism in Argentina and Brazil

Although Argentina and Brazil vary in size and population,\(^5\) both countries have federal systems of governments and are among the most decentralized of Latin America.\(^6\) Argentina has 24 provinces and 2,216 local governments. Brazil has 27 states and 5,561 municipalities.\(^7\) Both countries have presidential political systems with bicameral national Congresses. In periods of democratic rule, governors and state legislators are popularly elected. There are also elected mayors and mayoral councils in both countries, but whereas the electoral system of Argentina is close-list, the electoral system of Brazil’s is open-list.\(^8\)

Also in both Argentina and Brazil, the processes of post-developmental decentralization began during the last military regimes and continued throughout their transitions to democracy. But whereas the Argentine military imposed an administrative type of decentralization on the provinces, the Brazilian military initiated the process of decentralization with a political decentralization reform. By post-developmental decentralization, I refer to the set of policies that

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5 Brazil is roughly four times larger than Argentina. Argentina has almost 40 million inhabitants in a territory of 2.7 million square kilometers, while Brazil counts with 188 million people and a territory of 8.5 million square kilometers.

6 Mexico and Venezuela are the other two Latin American federations, but in them power has historically been much more centralized.

7 In both countries, the capital federal district is included in the province or state count.

8 The open-list electoral system gives Brazilian political candidates greater autonomy from the party leadership at the same time that contributes to the weakening of the political parties.
transferred responsibilities, resources and authority from national to subnational levels of
government after the demise of the developmental state.\footnote{Some authors call this process “neoliberal” decentralization. I prefer the term “post-developmental decentralization” because in some Latin American countries, such as Brazil, there was a significant time lapse between the crisis and end of the developmental state (most often dating to the late 1970s, after the second world oil crisis) and the enactment of neoliberal economic policies (such as privatization of public enterprises, deregulation of trade, and flexibilization of labor, which in Brazil, for example, did not took place until the mid 1990s). For a concise definition of the developmental state in Latin America see Schneider (1999).} Temporally, these processes started in the
context of the first government or administration that moved the state away from intervention in
the economy and that adopted free-market economic policies. In the case of Argentina, the first
administration to implement these economic policies was that of Jorge Rafael Videla (1976-1981);
and in the case of Brazil, it was the last military president, João Figueiredo (1979-1985), who
veered the economy away from developmentalism.

Building on prior multi-dimensional definitions of decentralization (Montero and Samuels
2004, 8; Manor 1999, 4-12; Parker 1995; Penfold-Becerra 1999, 90-91; Schneider 2003), I
distinguish among three types of decentralization policies: administrative, fiscal, and political
decentralization; two of these types (administrative and political decentralization) are particularly
relevant to this article. By \textit{administrative decentralization} I refer to the policies that transfer the
administration and delivery of social services (such as education, health, social welfare, or
housing) to subnational governments. Administrative decentralization can be funded or unfunded
depending on whether the fiscal resources necessary to afford the newly transferred services are
passed down or not. By \textit{fiscal decentralization} I refer to those policies that increase the revenues or
fiscal autonomy of subnational governments. Finally, \textit{political decentralization} consists of the set
of constitutional amendments and electoral reforms designed to open new—or activate existing,
but dormant or ineffective—spaces for the representation of subnational polities, and the policies
designed to devolve electoral capacities to subnational actors.
It is worth noting that depending on their contents, different types of decentralization policy reforms are likely to have varying effects on the degree of autonomy of subnational officials. Hence, national and subnational political and social actors will exhibit different preferences with regards to the types of decentralization. Administrative decentralization provides national authorities the opportunity of cutting the size of the national bureaucracy and, if it is unfunded, also the fiscal deficit (both appealing reforms in a neoliberal state context). Administrative decentralization is thus the type of decentralization that national-level authorities will prefer the most. On the other hand, subnational political and social actors will prefer political autonomy from the national authorities (i.e., a political decentralization) first and foremost, so they will be able to advance their own agendas without fear of political retaliation from above. Subnational-level actors will hence prefer political decentralization to other types of decentralization reforms. As we will see below, these preferences are important to understand the first decentralizing decisions that the military regimes of Argentina and Brazil made.

Prior to the last military regimes, both Argentina and Brazil were among the most decentralized countries of Latin America. Table 1 compares the evolution of the distribution of power between national and subnational governments from the late 1970s to the mid-to-late 1990s. Five dimensions relating to intergovernmental institutions are used to assess the power of subnational officials vis-à-vis national officials at the beginning and end of this period. These are: (1) the subnational share of revenues (SSR), which records the total amount of resources collected at the subnational levels of government (state and local); (2) the subnational share of expenditures (SSE), which is the total amount of monies that are spent by the subnational governments; (3) the distribution of policymaking authority in the education sector (PMA), which measures the distribution of authority between levels of governments regarding the curricula, teachers’ training, evaluation of the sector, management of schools, decisions to hire,
fire, and relocate teachers, and teachers’ salaries;\textsuperscript{10} (4) the type of appointment of subnational officials (ASO), which indicates whether governors and mayors are elected or not; and (5) the territorial representation of interests (TRI) in the national legislatures, which scores the average level of overrepresentation of the subnational member units of the federation in each chamber of Congress.\textsuperscript{11} It is worth noting that while other (or even more) variables could be selected to describe intergovernmental relations; the five dimensions proposed here are both comprehensive and relevant. They are comprehensive because they characterize the fiscal, policy-making, and political arenas of intergovernmental relations. Moreover, these five dimensions are relevant in that they record important aspects of intergovernmental relations, such as the available resources, the policy-making authority, and the political leverage of subnational governments. Hence, together they provide an accurate representation of the intergovernmental balance of power in the two countries of interest.

As can be appreciated in Table 1, in the early 1980s the institutions of intergovernmental relations of Argentina and Brazil looked very similar. In their fiscal systems, the subnational shares of revenues (21\% in Argentina and 25\% in Brazil) and of expenditures (27\% in Argentina and 32\% in Brazil) were at comparable levels. In policy-making schemes, all responsibilities in the education sector were concurrent, this is to say, they were shared between the national and subnational levels of government. The governors were (mostly) appointed in each country during the dictatorial regimes. And the average levels of representation of territorial interests in both

\textsuperscript{10} I choose the education sector over other policy areas (such as health or poverty alleviation) because in most Latin American countries education was the first sector to be decentralized. In Brazil, however, important changes in the health sector predated those in education.

\textsuperscript{11} A value of 1 in this variable indicates perfect proportionality in the distribution of seats according to population among the states. The greater the value is over 1, the more skewed is the distribution of seats in favor of some of the subnational units.
Congresses were about the same.\textsuperscript{12} The main difference in the intergovernmental institutions of each country was that whereas the military regime appointed the mayors in Argentina, the majority of the mayors were elected in Brazil.

However, by the mid to late 1990s, the intergovernmental institutions of Brazil and Argentina no longer looked alike. By then, Brazil’s subnational governments collected significantly more revenues than their counterparts in Argentina (33\% versus 19\%) and spent slightly more as well (43\% compared to 41\%). Regarding the distribution of authority in the education sector, all the policy domains considered were in the hands of either states or municipalities in Brazil, while in Argentina more authority stayed with the national ministry of education. Also, due to constitutional and territorial changes (such as the creation of new states), the territorial representation of interests in Brazil (particularly in the Senate) increased more than in Argentina. How can we account for the fact that both countries initiated their post-developmental decentralization processes with similar intergovernmental institutions but that by the end of the 1990s those same institutions looked significantly different?

Previous works have proposed that the sequence in which different types of decentralization reforms (i.e. administrative, fiscal, and political) take place is largely responsible for the resulting balance of power between national and subnational executives (Falleti 2005, 2010). Hence, the fact that Argentina followed a sequence of decentralization after the collapse of the developmentalist state that started with administrative decentralization (1978), continued with fiscal decentralization (1988), and ended with political decentralization (1994); whereas Brazil’s sequence of reform was the opposite: starting with political decentralization (1980-2), continuing with fiscal decentralization (1983-8), and ending with administrative

\textsuperscript{12} In Brazil, governors were directly elected in 1965 and after 1982, as I explain below. In Argentina, the scores of overrepresentation in deputies and the Senate correspond to the first year of democratic government (1983) because, unlike Brazil, Congress was closed during the military regime.
decentralization (mid to late 1990s), accounts for the different outcomes. However, this statement begs the question of why, although both countries were in the midst of military regimes when their processes of post-developmental decentralization started, Argentina began with an *administrative* type of decentralization reform (as one would have expected from an authoritarian regime in which national level interests prevail), while Brazil began with a *political* decentralization reform (which defies theoretical expectations)?

2. The Main Causal Mechanism

**Types of Military Regimes: Seizing versus Creating Power**

Previous studies of authoritarian regimes distinguished among them according to how rulers accessed power. Yet, the very important differences that existed in the organization of the state and the political systems of military regimes are only briefly mentioned or glanced over in these studies. Geddes (1999, 124, 128) for example, groups Brazil and Argentina under the same category of military regimes. Linz and Stepan (1996) distinguish between military regimes (hierarchical and non-hierarchical) but only according to the features of the military as an institution. And when describing the characteristics of the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes Schamis (1991, 204) does not take into account the fact that, at least in Brazil, elections were held at the local level and for the legislatures. Instead, he writes: “By suspending elections, the voice of the popular sections is silenced and thus is deprived of its most powerful tool, universal suffrage.” None of these earlier studies on comparative authoritarianism paid systematic attention to the organization of the state in military regimes.

In conceptualizing the organization of power within the state during military regimes, I follow Alfred Stepan’s (1978) conceptualization of the state, which says that: “The state must be considered as more than the ‘government.’ It is the continuous administrative, legal, bureaucratic
and coercive systems that attempt not only to structure relationships between civil society and public authority in a polity but also to structure many crucial relationships within civil society as well.” (Cited in Skocpol 1985, 7) As we will see in what follows, this definition of the state sheds a significant amount of light on the ways in which the military regimes divided power within government, between the state and the political opposition in civil society, and whether the military state directly intervened in the organizations of civil society. In fact, I propose to classify military regimes in a continuum that goes from those where the military completely seizes the state, usurps its institutions, and fills them with military personnel, at one extreme; and regimes in which the military creates new political rules of the game, keeps some form of political representation of interests, and allows civilians to fill many of the government’s posts, at the other. In this continuum, the military regimes of Argentina (1976-1983) and Brazil (1964-1985) are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. In what follows, I argue that the way in which the military regimes occupy the state apparatus (and in the process of occupying the state, the ways in which military regimes also intervene in the main political and social institutions of society) helps to account for the type of the post-developmental decentralization policy first implemented. Such type of policy, in turn, has consequences on the posterior evolution of intergovernmental relations institutions and the evolution of the balance of power among levels of government.

2.a. The Argentine Proceso: Seizing State Power

After the military coup of 1976, all political activity was suppressed in Argentina. The president was removed and a three-member junta (formed by one officer from each military force: the army, the navy, and the air force) presided over the country. All members of the national cabinet were removed and replaced by military personnel (with the exception of the
ministries of education and economy that were eventually left in civilian hands). The national Congress was closed down. In its place, a nine-member council called the Military Legislative Council (Comisión de Asesoramiento Legislativo, CAL) was formed with three members from each military force. The CAL prepared the bills presented to the executive. All provincial legislatures and city councils were also closed down. The members of the Supreme Court of Justice, the Provincial Tribunals, and the Attorney General were removed.¹³ All the governors were replaced by military officers. The mayors were removed and replaced with either military or police personnel, or civilians sympathetic to the military cause. Political parties were banned. The media, the universities, the workers’ mutual health associations (obras sociales), the unions, and the business and professional associations were intervened by the military.¹⁴ They seized power; they occupied the state in virtually all of its offices. In a monographic study of the organization of the state during the military period, Marta Castiglione (1992, 37, my translation) writes that there was “a massive presence of the military personnel in all levels of the national and provincial public administrations, in the decentralized organisms of the central administration, and in the public enterprises.” Or as Alain Rouquié (1987, 295) puts it:

“…officers were everywhere in the central administration, the provinces, the decentralized organisms (including even the organization of the world soccer football championship in 1978—Ente autárquico Mundial 1978—and the Industrial Pension Fund). Never in any preceding regime had there been such an invasion—yet another distinguishing feature of the bloodiest military dictatorship in the history of Argentina.” Rightly so, the military called this period the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (the National Reorganization Process).

¹³ Of all the Argentine authoritarian regimes (military and non-military), this was the only one that dissolved the Provincial Tribunals, showing how fine-grained was its usurpation and destruction of previous democratic institutions (Castiglione 1992, 30).
¹⁴ Some of the unions, like the Peronist “62 Organizations,” were outright banned due to their previous political leanings.
2.b. The Brazilian Revolução: Creating State Power

Unlike the military regime of Argentina that completely abolished elections, and banned all partisan activities, the Brazilian military regime (1964 to 1985) allowed for the maintenance of elected offices and for the interplay between two political parties. Mainly for this reason, scholars have preferred to describe Brazil’s military regime as an “authoritarian situation” (see Linz 1973) rather than an “authoritarian regime,” or as a case of electoral authoritarianism (Schedler 2002; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007) While the permitted amount of political activities should not mask the reality of political exiles, incarcerations, purging, and persecution of the opposition; the high efforts the military put into engineering the political system were consequential. The Brazilian military did not simply seize power; it sought to create power by changing the rules of the game in order to achieve electoral and political support.

After the coup, which the military denominated the Revolução of 1964 (the Revolution of 1964), elections for governors were held in October of 1965. The opposition won in four out of ten states. Looking ahead to the 1966 and 1970 gubernatorial elections, the military passed a measure--Institutional Act No. 3 (AI-3)—stating that the state assemblies would choose the governors (from a set of three candidates) after the military had approved the candidates’ nominations (Samuels and Abrucio 2000, 48; Abrucio 1998, 73-4). Through the nomination process, the military was guaranteed to have a direct say in who the governors would be.15 As a result, the number of governors with bureaucratic-technical or military backgrounds increased from two to seven (out of twenty-two) between 1966 and 1970 (dos Santos 1971, 126). But as these numbers also show, traditional elite políticos survived the coup and shared power with the

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15 Deputy João Gilberto (PMDB-RS) denounced that the military also exerted to the impeachment of opposition state legislators in the days leading to gubernatorial elections as a means of securing the majorities needed for the victory of officialist candidates (see República Federativa do Brasil, Diario do Congresso Nacional, March 18, 1980, 200).
The AI-3 also restructured the political party system. It created a bipartisan system in which only one government party, the National Renovation Alliance (Aliança Renovadora Nacional, ARENA), and one opposition party, the Brazilian Democratic Movement (Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, MDB), were allowed. These parties ran in elections for national and state legislators, mayors (with some exceptions), and city councilors. The mayors of state capitals and estâncias hidromineras were appointed by the governors (after the state legislators’ approval), and the mayors of Brasilia and of municipalities of national security importance were directly appointed by the President (see Constitutional Amendment No.1 of 1969). In the 201 municipalities with appointed mayors, the first direct mayoral election took place on November 15, 1985.

In 1972, through a constitutional amendment, President Emilio G. Medici extended the application of the AI-3 to the 1974 gubernatorial elections. Further changes were introduced in April of 1977, when President Ernesto Geisel closed down Congress and announced a series of constitutional reforms intended to strengthen the position of the officialist party ARENA in the forthcoming 1978 elections. All of the governors and one third of the senators would be indirectly elected by state electoral colleges that would include city councilors. The inclusion of city councilors, the military calculated, would give an advantage to ARENA’s candidates

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16 Estâncias hidromineras were cities with mineral water springs (Hagopian 1996, 108).
17 The proviso that state governors were free to choose the mayors of state capitals and of estâncias hidromineras was not new. It was already included in the 1934 (Article 13) and 1946 (Article 28) constitutions.
18 Other changes introduced by the the 1977 April package were that the number of federal deputies per state would be established according to the state’s total population instead of its number of registered voters (discriminating against the most politically active states of the south and southeast); a simple Congressional majority would be sufficient for the passage of constitutional amendments; and political candidates’ access to radio and TV would be made more stringent (Skidmore 1988, 373).
(Skidmore 1988, 373; Baloyra 1986, 32-3). Hence, through a well-crafted process of political engineering, the military guaranteed its control of the majority of the national Congress, as well as the majority of the governors and mayors, at least until 1978.

However, as the next sections reveal, the continuation of legislative politics and the direct elections of mayors (with the exceptions noted above), city councilors, and state-level senators and deputies allowed the Brazilian opposition to push forward a political decentralization reform in the context of a military regime. Hence, the direct election of governors was approved by Congress in 1980 and enacted in 1982. In Argentina, instead, because politics and the political representation of subnational interests were completely suppressed, when the first post-developmental decentralization reform took place, it reflected the most preferred options of an unchecked national executive: the offloading of administrative responsibilities without resources. Unfunded administrative decentralization was hence the first type of reform enacted.

3. Argentina: Administrative Decentralization under Military Rule

*Achicar el Estado es agrandar la Nación*20

On June 5 1978, as images of Buenos Aires were broadcast to the world during the World Soccer Cup, the national military junta passed two decrees (21,809 and 21,810) transferring all pre-schools and primary schools under the jurisdiction of the National Council of Education to the provinces, the Municipality of Buenos Aires, and the national territory of Tierra del Fuego.21

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19 According to Deputy Adhemar Santillo (PT-GO), the inclusion of city councilors in the electoral colleges allowed ARENA to keep four governorships—Acre, Amazonas, Rio Grande do Sul, and São Paulo—that would otherwise had been lost to the opposition in the 1978 elections (see República Federativa do Brasil, *Diario do Congresso Nacional*, March 18, 1980, 202).

20 “To shrink the State is to aggrandize the Nation.”

21 Prior to 1978 there had been two attempts at decentralizing primary education. The first attempt took place during the democratic regime of Arturo Frondizi (1958-1962), but it only succeeded in the province of Santa Cruz, which received 23 schools. The second attempt took place during the military regime of Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-1970). This time, 680 schools were transferred to the provinces of Buenos Aires, Río Negro, and La Rioja. Both decentralization reforms were accompanied by fiscal resources (see
Control over approximately 6,500 schools, 65,000 public employees, and 900,000 students (about one third of the total system of primary public education) was transferred to the provinces. The decrees had a retroactive effect from January 1st, 1978. Since that date all national education employees (teachers, administrators, maintenance, and supervision personnel) would join the provincial administrations and the provinces would be solely responsible for the expenditures involved in the provision of pre-school and primary education. No new revenues or fiscal capacities were transferred. The reform implied a cut of 207 billion pesos in national expenditures, which was the approximate equivalent of 20% of the total amount that the provinces received in revenue transfers from the national government (FIEL 1993, 148).

The reform was imposed from above under the slogan “to shrink the State is to enlarge the Nation.” In the context of a military regime without any form of political representation, the national executive was able to impose on the provinces its most preferred outcome in terms of decentralization: unfunded administrative decentralization. The central government was interested in decentralization for several reasons. First, they saw the provinces as enclaves of conservatism, in which future right-wing political parties could develop. Second and more importantly, in the context of a neoliberal program of government (and with a rapidly growing foreign debt), the central government was interested in cutting the size of the federal bureaucracy and the national deficit (Filmus 1998, 68; Novick de Senén González 1995, 138). Third, an increase in the collection of revenues in 1977 (and consequently of the automatic transfers the provinces received under the system of revenue sharing) made for a favorable context in which to transfer expenditures (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación 1980). The 1978 post-developmental decentralization of primary schools comprised the first nation-wide transfer of social services and, unlike previous partial transfers, was not accompanied by fiscal resources.

22 Accounting for the antecedents of the 1978 transfer, a report by the national ministry of education said: “At the end of 1977, the national minister of economy [José Martínez de Hoz], considered that there had been an increase in provincial revenues, therefore, he decides to initiate a policy of transfer of social
primary education without the transfer of resources was an excellent opportunity to cut national expenditures and devolve responsibilities to the provinces. As a social analyst observed at the time:

In the last three years, the federal government in Argentina has embarked on a dramatic program of transferring federally provided public services … to the provincial governments. … This is part of the military regime’s efforts to reduce the predominance of the central government, cut federal expenditures and the size of the federal bureaucracy, and strengthen provincial governments as a potential power base for future political party development. (Harris 1983, 194)

Moreover, and quite paradoxically, the national government could justify the transfer and the national fiscal cut by appealing to the constitution. The 1978 national budget reads:

… a policy of transfer of services to the provinces has been implemented. The most important is the transfer of 6,564 primary schools, with 64,619 teaching and administrative appointments, 897,400 students and an approximate cost of $207 billion … With these transfers, not only did we try to lighten national state expenditures, but we also wanted the provinces to be responsible for the administrative aspects that take place in their jurisdictions, as it corresponds to a truly federal country. (Emphasis added, cited in Ministerio de Cultura y Educación 1980, Vol. 2, 224).\(^{23}\)

For the same reason that the national government was interested in administrative decentralization, basically to cut the national deficit, it was not interested in fiscal decentralization. The military government did not want to increase the participation of the services, among which is education.” (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación 1980, Vol. 1, p. 151). According to an Argentine scholar that studied decentralization of education, provincial revenues increased from 0.88% of the national GDP in 1976 to 1.56% in 1977 (Kisilevsky 1998, 55).

\(^{23}\) It is clear from this document that the military junta decentralized primary education with the goal of cutting national expenditures. It is paradoxical, however, that in doing so the military dictators appealed to the federal character of the constitution, whose guarantees had been suspended since the military coup on March 24, 1976.
provinces in the nationally collected revenues, nor did it want to increase the amount or number of taxes. Finally, political decentralization was unthinkable under the Argentine military regime, as elections would not be allowed at any level of government.

Although the governors were appointed, some voiced their concerns with the administrative decentralization measure of 1978. In their correspondence with the national executive and in the meetings of the Federal Council of Education (Consejo Federal de Educacion, CFE), governors and their representatives expressed their preference for a funded decentralization of education.

During 1976 and 1977, CFE assemblies met to discuss the transfer of the national schools to the provinces. In 1977, in the city of Posadas, Misiones, the CFE crafted a proposal that was passed to the national executive. In this proposal, governors expressed their support for the transfer of schools, which they considered would strengthen the federal system. They requested, however, that the transfer be gradual, at least in two stages: a first stage of coordination between the provinces and the national ministry of education on what and how to transfer, and a second stage involving the actual transfers. Governors also requested that the resources necessary to cover the costs of the national schools be transferred. (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación 1980, Vol. 1, pp. 38-9). They specifically asked for an increase in the percentage of automatic transfers to the provinces (a fiscal decentralization policy through changes to the revenue sharing system).

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24 Although it is worth noting that in 1979, 1982, and 1983, the military government delegated the fiscal authority to grant federal tax breaks to the governments of four provinces (those of La Rioja, Catamarca, San Luis, and San Juan). For analysis of these fiscal delegation of authority measures see Eaton (2001, 100-03; 2006, 15-16).

25 The Federal Council of Education, created in 1972, was a federal institution presided over by the national minister of education and formed by all the provincial ministers of education. Its main purpose was to coordinate the actions of the federal government and the provinces on educational issues. In 1979, the Council of Education merged with the Council of Culture, forming the Federal Council of Culture and Education (Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación, or CFCE). The CFCE still exists and it has been an important player in the negotiation and design of education reforms since the Federal Law of Education was passed in 1993 (see Falleti 2001).
and they requested that this increase be distributed among the provinces according to the proportion of schools and personnel to be received.\textsuperscript{26}

The national executive disregarded the CFE proposal. They decided to implement the transfer of schools in a single act and to do so to all provinces simultaneously. They also decided that the provinces could largely afford the total costs (due to the raise in revenue collection the prior year), and that a fund would be created to assist the provinces that could not afford the costs of the transfer. (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación 1980, Vol.1, p. 44). To that end, a fund named \textit{“Programa 050”} (Program 050) was created in 1978. However, this fund was transitory; the national government had discretionary power over its distribution, and the transfers were later discounted from the revenues that the provinces shared with the national level. It was not actually a program of fiscal decentralization, but rather a system of temporary advance payments that were later discounted from the provincial budgets. In no way did this mitigate the fact that, despite the provinces’ requests, the transfer of the schools was authoritatively imposed by the center without the transfer of fiscal resources. In other words, decentralization began with an administrative reform whose contents clearly corresponded with the interests of the national executive. As a result, the process of post-developmental decentralization in Argentina did not start with a transfer of power, but rather with an offloading of expenditure responsibilities.

4. Brazil: Political Decentralization Under Military Rule

On November 19, 1980, during the last administration of the military regime, the Brazilian Congress approved Constitutional Amendment No. 15 that reinstated the direct election

of governors and all members of the Senate (Skidmore 1988, 441-2).27 This measure revoked the Institutional Act No. 3 of 1966, the 1972 constitutional amendment that had extended it, and part of the “April Package” of 1977.

President João Figueiredo introduced the constitutional amendment proposal (Proposta de Emenda a Constituição or PEC No.76/1979) that reinstated the direct election of governors. That the executive was the one to introduce the bill is not surprising considering that the executive branch had an active role in introducing bills and modifying laws throughout the military period.28 The measure was also part of a gradual and controlled liberalization process that Figueiredo had re-coined abertura (or opening), a continuation of the distenção (or decompression) started by the antecessor President Geisel in 1974. In the bill sent to Congress, Figueiredo explicitly portrayed the amendment as part of a larger democratization process that included previous measures such as the elimination of the extraordinary powers of the executive, the Amnesty law, and the party reform law, all of which had been enacted in 1979.29 According to several authors, by allowing the direct election of governors, the military’s intent was to control the liberalization process. The military calculation was that a certain degree of decentralization of power would strengthen the conservative elites of the northern and northeastern regions and foster a conservative transition to democracy (Kinzo 1988; interview with David Samuels, in Chicago, IL, April 20, 2006).

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27 At that time, one third of the Senators were indirectly elected by state assemblies. According to this constitutional amendment, vice-governors would also become directly elected, running together with the governors. See República Federativa do Brasil. Diário do Congresso Nacional. November, 20, 1980, 3428-31; and Diário do Congresso Nacional (Seção I) November 20, 1980, 14600.
28 Schmitter (1973) refers to the “progressive independence of the executive power” after the 1964 coup. He counted more than 10,000 decrees and decree-laws issued in the first four years of the regime, as well as twelve institutional acts, over 80 complementary acts, and one new constitution as of 1971 (1973, 190-1). For one of the few studies of legislators’ strategies vis-à-vis executive bills during the military period, see Desposato (2001).
The introduction of the bill by the executive, however, should not obfuscate the fact that there was a broad coalition in favor of the direct election of governors. This coalition grew and voiced its requests thanks to the continuation (though restricted) of partisan and electoral politics during the military regime. The coalition included legislators of the governing party (ARENA, later PDS) as well as legislators of the opposition (MDB, later PMDB, PTB, PT, PCdoB, and PP), and represented the interests of the lower levels of government.\(^{30}\) In the words of a ruling party deputy:

> This bill of President Figueiredo is a response not only to the work of the political opposition … but also of all those who have fought for [direct] elections ... [These are] legislators of the governing party … city councilors, mayors, and state deputies. (Antônio Dias, PDS-MG, República Federativa do Brasil, *Diario do Congreso Nacional*, August 23, 1980, 2063.)

Previous constitutional amendment proposals for the direct election of governors had been presented by legislators of the opposition and of the ruling party. Among those presented by the opposition were the bills introduced by Senator Franco Montoro (MDB/PMDB-SP). In 1978, Montoro presented two constitutional amendment proposals (PEC No.6/1978 and PEC No. 34/1978) for the direct election of governors, vice-governors, and senators.\(^{31}\) However, through control of the ARENA majority in Congress, President Geisel first and Figueiredo later were able to defeat both proposals.\(^{32}\) By the time the second Montoro proposal was defeated, in May

\(^{30}\) The political party reform of 1979 ended the bi-partisan system by dissolving the ARENA and MDB, and allowed the creation of new parties. PDS became the new government party and several parties emerged in the opposition: among them, the PMDB (direct political heir of the MDB), PT, and PCB. As the process of political reforms progressed, all these opposition parties would become strong supporters of the decentralization-participation binomial (Cardoso 1992, 293; Assies 1993, 46; Figueiredo and Cheibub 1982, 39).


of 1979, Senator Edison Lobão from the ruling PDS party introduced another proposal for the
direct election of governors and vice-governors (PEC 37/1979). Lobão was a well-respected
journalist from the northeastern state of Maranhão. According to the opposition legislators, the
government wanted a ruling party legislator be the author of the constitutional reform that would
lead to the direct election of governors. Interestingly, however, this bill would also be defeated.

Although Lobão’s proposal had been unanimously approved by a joint committee of
deputies and senators and endorsed by more than half of the Congress’ members (230 deputies
and 30 senators),33 by the time it reached the floor, President Figuereido ordered PDS legislators
not to vote in favor of it. Instead, Figueiredo introduced his own bill to Congress. Legislator
Edson Vidigal (PP-MA), a former member of ARENA, denounced the “heavy weight of the
closed decisions of the party of government”34 and other opposition members made similar
remarks:

The Franco Montoro amendment was defeated with a hideous maneuver. While the
[national] government asked the ruling party representatives to leave the House, it
collected signatures for the Edson (sic) Lobão amendment … The reinstatement of the
direct elections of governors had to be done by initiative of a government Congress
member, not by a member of the opposition. … If in the past, to be approved, bills had to
be proposed by a [ruling party] legislator, now they can only be initiated by the
executive, thus, the individual freedom of Congress representatives is nullified and this
branch is being ridiculed (Antonio Russo, PMDB-SP, República Federativa do Brasil,

This situation was also recognized by the few members of the ruling party who, defying President Figueiredo’s mandate, voted in favor of the Lobão amendment. Airon Rios (PDS-PE), for example, said:

My intelligence … doesn’t provide the [necessary] intellectual conditions to accept a terrifying and paradoxical coincidence: the [national] government and parliament both want direct elections, [however] when time comes to vote [on this measure, the government] orders parliament to deprive the country of direct elections (República Federativa do Brasil, Diario do Congreso Nacional, March 21, 1980, 259).

Why did the ruling party legislators who had endorsed the Lobão proposal in 1979 turn around and voted against it in 1980? The PDS legislators’ speeches during the debate of the bill are very telling of the position they took in relation to the executive. Deputy Bonifácio de Andrada (PDS-MG) said:

We believe in the leaders of our party in the executive, and we believe in the leaders of our party in the legislative. We, PDS, are Executive and Legislative. And, as Executive and Legislative, under the leadership of President João Figuereido, we will continue the process of political opening and improvement of our institutions, but according to our own political planning, according to our own script of partisan actions in the [different] stages to follow, and not in accordance with the planning, the script, or the strategy of the opposition. … Today, we do not vote against the direct elections, we vote instead according to the guidelines of our leadership … aware of our historic role as leaders, in the Executive and the Legislature, of the political opening process (República Federativa do Brasil, Diario do Congreso Nacional, March 22, 1980, 283-4).

Similar remarks were made by other PDS legislators, highlighting the importance of party discipline and alignment with the national executive in an electoral authoritarian regime:
No member of our party, neither of the national nor the regional level, can ignore the figure of the President of the Republic as Supreme Chief of Government and of the Party that gives him political support in the National Congress. In this regard, understanding and discipline must prevail and be considered relevant, transcending even the greater interests that we may question in light of the rights and duties imposed on us by the organic and disciplinary law of the political parties (Jorge Arbage, PDS-PA, República Federativa do Brasil, *Diario do Congreso Nacional*, March 21, 1980, 261)

Another member of the ruling party said:

I want [the opposition] to give credit to a President who sent to Congress the Amnesty Law, who emptied the prisons of political prisoners, who brought to [Brazil] our brothers in exile, a man who in such a short time has done so much. When our party decides to approve the President’s amendment proposal, we are recognizing his acts, and the fact that all the acts of democratic opening always came from the executive (Benedito Canelas, PDS-MT, *ibid*, 266).

Thus, lacking support of the majority party in Congress, Lobão’s proposal was defeated. ³⁵ Eight months later, President Figueiredo’s proposal was voted on and approved by unanimity. ³⁶ It was the first time since the *Estado Novo* (1937-45) that a proposal passed by a unanimous vote in Congress. At least 55 Congress members said they were considering running for governor of their states. ³⁷

The party discipline and alignment with the President of the ruling party Congress members may seem an indication that elections and legislative activity during this period were merely political “window dressing.” However, without the operation of the political opposition

in Congress and their defeated 1978 bills on political decentralization, it is hard to imagine that the military regime would have unilaterally adopted this political decentralization measure. In fact, by 1980, although ruling and opposition legislators had voted differently in the previous proposals for the direct election of governors, in the context of a multi-party system that was becoming increasingly more competitive, all legislators became more attuned to societal and regional demands (Desposato 2001). Were there common interests among the ruling and opposition legislators regarding the direct election of governors? A close reading of the Congressional debates of the failed and successful bills reveals that a majority of the members of the ruling party were interested in strengthening regional governments. Members of the opposition, such as Franco Montoro, Mauro Benevides, or Ulises Guimarães, instead, not only sought to strengthen the autonomy of regional governments, but also conceived of this political decentralization measure as part of a larger program of transition to democracy that, if they could have had their way, would have also included the direct election of the president. In fact, opposition legislators sought to expand Lobão and Figueiredo’s proposals by including a wider set of political reforms, such as the direct election of the president, the direct election of mayors and vice-mayors of state capitals, the end of the terms of indirectly elected senators in 1982 (as opposed to 1986), the reduction of the presidential term from six to five years, and the elimination of the national electoral college.38 In other words, thanks to the elections and the operating legislature, the political opposition placed explicit demands in the government agenda to deepen the liberalization and democratization processes. Even if the timing and main features of these processes were largely controlled from above by the military, and through the majority

38 “O Congresso Aprova a Eleição Direta em 82,” in *Folha de São Paulo*, November 14, 1980. See also PEC’s No. 42 by Deputy Ailton Sandoval (PMDB-SP), 43 by Senator Orestes Quercia (PMDB-SP), and 44 by Senator Franco Montoro (PMDB-SP) in República Federativa do Brasil, *Diario do Congreso Nacional*, October 3, 1979, 2214-17.
party in Congress, the political opposition played an important role in pushing forward these issues in the reform agenda.

The November 1982 elections were the widest since 1962, encompassing the election of governors, state and national legislators, and mayors. With 41.5% of the vote, the government party, PDS, gained 12 of the 22 governorships, 15 of the 25 senators, 235 of the national deputies, and 52.8% of the seats in the electoral college. With 58.5% of the vote, the opposition won 10 governorships (9 went to the PMDB and 1 to the PDT), 10 senators (9 PMDB, 1 PDT), 244 federal deputies (200 PMDB, 23 PDT, 13 PTB, and 8 PT), 82 mayoralties of the 100 largest cities in the country, and city council majorities in 19 of the 23 state capitals (Selcher 1986, 61-2; IBGE 2003, Chapter 24, Tables 4 and 5). As Linz and Stepan (1992) write: “elections can create agendas, can create actors, can reconstruct identities, help legitimate and delegitimate claims to obedience, and create power” (Linz and Stepan 1992, 133). This was precisely the effect of holding subnational gubernatorial and mayoral elections prior to the introduction of nation-wide elections for the presidency. Governors and mayors could make a claim to electoral legitimacy that the president could not make, and grew increasingly independent of the central government.

Both at the state and local levels a self-reinforcing policy ratchet effect was unfolding: a group of supporters who will continue to push in the direction of further decentralization. According to Evelyne Huber and John Stephens (2001, 10) a policy ratchet effect operates when policy reforms create a “policy configuration” of supporters that makes it harder to shift away from those policies. A new “center of gravity” in the policy agenda is therefore defined by the innovations introduced in the early round of reforms. At the state level, “the rise of gubernatorial influence … combined with continued military control of the presidency during this time increased the importance of subnational actors and interests in national politics, to the detriment

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39 Municipal elections had been postponed from 1980 to 1982.
of national parties and national issues” (Samuels 2004, 79). The gubernatorial inaugurations in March of 1983 were widely regarded as the end of the absolute power of the military regime (Selcher 1986, 67). As then Minister of Planning, Delfim Netto, put it: “… there was enormous pressure right after 1982 … the government could no longer resist the pressure from the governors. It was a question of power. The authoritarian regime was finished in 1982” (quoted in Samuels and Abrucio 2000, 57). At the local level, mayors gained more autonomy and became more politically active. Through public demonstrations and organization in state-level municipal associations, mayors and local activists voiced their demands for more resources and services. In 1980, they formed a new municipal association, the National Confederation of Municipalities (Confederação Nacional de Municípios or CNM), to represent their interests. Although there was another association of municipalities in Brazil, the ABM or Asociação Brasileira de Munícipios, which had been founded in 1946, those who created the CNM understood that the ABM was too close to the military government and had ceased to voice the increasing needs of local governments.40

This self-reinforcing policy ratchet effect of political decentralization, namely the strengthening of subnational actors, would lead to the negotiation of the second type of decentralization reform that is most dear to the interests of governors and mayors (once political decentralization has taken place): fiscal decentralization. Furthermore, invested with electoral legitimacy, opposition governors coordinated the direitas já campaign, and entangled their demands of democratization with those of local participation and decentralization. Decentralization and democratization came to be seen in the public discourse as parts of the same process and this identification would be largely beneficial to subnational governments in all the negotiations leading to the 1988 constitutional reform (Souza 1997).

40 Interview with Paulo Roberto Ziulkoski, President of the CNM, on July 22, 2005.
Conclusion

In both Argentina and Brazil, post-developmental decentralization was initiated under military regimes. These two military regimes, however, were so radically different in the ways in which they organized power within the state that whereas Brazil started its process of post-developmental decentralization with a political decentralization type of reform, Argentina started the process with an administrative decentralization type of reform. As I argue in this article, the radically different occupation and organization of the institutions of the state during the last military regimes explain why a political decentralization reform was attainable in Brazil, but not in Argentina.

Through political engineering, the Brazilian military profoundly changed the preceding political system. In the words of Huntington, the Brazilian military did not simply seek to seize power, they sought to make power. In doing so, the military kept the political system alive and respected some of its features, such as the maintenance (at large) of the electoral calendar. That the political opposition to the regime (though persecuted, repressed, and purged) could voice its demands in the national legislature and run in elections that as time went by became increasingly competitive, was key to the adoption of the political decentralization measure of 1980. This was the decision to resume the popular election of governors in 1982.

In Argentina, on the other hand, the military seized power, occupying the state at all levels and in a capillary way. The military suppressed all forms of political activity, contestation, and representation following the 1976 military coup. Hence, the first type of decentralization reform enacted in the post-developmental era was an administrative type of reform, which consisted in the unfunded transfer to the provinces of all the pre-school and primary-level schools until then in the hands of the federal government. The diametrically opposed beginnings
in the first measure that initiated the post-developmental decentralization process implied different evolutions of the institutions of intergovernmental relations during the democratic period. In Brazil, political decentralization in 1980-82 was followed by fiscal decentralization (in 1983) and subsequently by administrative decentralization (starting in 1988). This trajectory of reforms led to a high degree of devolution of resources and policy-making authority to subnational governments. In Argentina, instead, the administrative decentralization reform of 1978 was followed by fiscal decentralization (in 1988) and political decentralization only came about in 1994, almost as a residual reform. Due to the effects of this sequence of reforms, subnational resources and subnational policy-making authority remained practically unchanged in Argentina, while they were significantly devolved in Brazil.

This article constitutes an in-depth study of the organization of state power and the first post-developmental decentralization policies adopted by two military regimes. As such, the article does not test causal hypothesis. However, it does put forward an explanation for what I consider to be the most important causal mechanism—namely the organization of state power—that accounts for the divergent paths that military regimes may take when adopting intergovernmental reforms. The article advances a series of propositions regarding the organization of state power that could be tested on a wider set of military regimes, spanning both across time and space.

Moreover, in relation to the recent literature on electoral authoritarian regimes, the article confirms the claim advanced by Gandhi and Przeworski (2007) that elections and legislatures under authoritarianism are not simply “window dressing.” Cross-national comparative studies have shown that nominally democratic institutions such as legislatures and elections broaden the basis of support for autocrats (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007), divide the antigovernment forces (Remer

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41 For an analysis of developmental as well as posterior fiscal and administrative decentralization policies adopted by these (and other) military regimes, see Eaton (2006).
1999), and increase the likelihood that a successor government would be an electoral democracy (Brownlee 2009). One of the broader implications of this essay is that nominally democratic institutions also matter to policy outcomes. This article shows that under authoritarianism, political institutions such as elections and legislatures matter not only to regime survival, but also to the design, negotiation, and implementation of policy reforms, which, as in the case of decentralization, have consequences on the posterior processes of democratization. The organization of state power could indeed be the crucial intervening causal mechanism behind Jason Brownlee’s (2009) finding that electoral authoritarian regimes are more likely to be succeeded by an electoral democracy.

Related to this last point, it would be worth investigating the extent to which decentralization reforms undertaken under electoral authoritarian regimes are more likely to result in higher levels of devolution of autonomy to subnational governments than decentralization reforms undertaken under closed dictatorships. If the main intuition behind this paper is correct, through the legislative negotiating process, electoral authoritarian regimes should be more likely to introduce the political preferences of the opposition (which one would expect to be more closely aligned with the territorial preferences of subnational actors, since most authoritarian regimes tend to be centralizers) in the process of policy design.

Finally, the study of the differences among authoritarian regimes and their legacies also calls our attention to the importance of periodization and the definition of causally relevant contexts (Falleti and Lynch 2009). Due to their emphasis on regime change, many studies of democratization begin their narratives at the end of the old regime: with a significant event that led to its collapse or with the first free and fair election held. It is as if the political clock was reset to zero and everything started anew. 1983 in Argentina, 1985 in Brazil, and 1989 in most of Eastern Europe thus become uncontested starting points to study transitions to democracy and
democratization processes. But processes such as post-developmental decentralization, which were initiated in the context of authoritarian regimes and continued to unfold throughout democratic ones, underscore the importance of doing more research on the differences among military regimes. Not simply so we can be better distinguish among and properly classify authoritarian regimes (as Geddes proposed), but also so we can grasp the conditions, possibilities, and limitations under which institutions evolve in the subsequent democratic regimes. As Eaton (2006, 20) writes: “while many episodes of decentralization can doubtless be traced to democratization, fuller explanations of the decentralizing changes under way in developing countries must look to the predemocratic period.”

Besides decentralization, other processes that radically transformed Latin America such as privatization, deregulation of trade, flexibilization of labor, and the dismantling of welfare policies were also initiated under military rule. Paradoxically, even the process of universalization and municipalization of health care in Brazil began under the military regime (Falleti 2009). In all these cases, periodization with reference to the macro-economic model pursued by the state or to the underlying processes of policy reform (under military and democratic regimes alike) might prove more appropriate than periodization according to political regime. And because transformations in the state institutions, in the economy, in politics, and in society are not synchronic, the decision to choose regime change (which prioritizes the political dimension) as a starting point is not always appropriate, particularly if the meaning or significance of the process under study is largely determined by other dimensions of the social structure. Hence, greater attention to the organization of state power in authoritarian regimes, and in the case of Latin America in military regimes in particular, may prove useful for unlocking some of the current features of democratic politics and policy outcomes.
Table 1. The Intergovernmental Balance of Power in Argentina and Brazil, 1978-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subnat. Share of Revenues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(SSR)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subnat. Share of Expenditures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(SSE)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior</strong></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policymaking Authority (PMA)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricula</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ training</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School management</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire, fire, relocation</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PMA change (i.e.[After-Prior]/Prior)</strong></td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appointment Subnat. Officials (ASO)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governors</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayors</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASO change (i.e.[After-Prior]/Prior)</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Territorial Rep. of Interests (TRI)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overrep. deputies</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overrep. Senate</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRI change (i.e.[After-Prior]/Prior)</strong></td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. The Intergovernmental Balance of Power in Argentina and Brazil, 1978-1999 (cont.)

Notes to Table 1:

a SSR does not include transfers from higher levels of government (which are included in SSE).

b To increase the “robustness” of the fiscal observations prior and after decentralization, when information is available, I report three-year averages of subnational shares of revenues and expenditures. Although, with the exception of “Argentina prior,” very low variation exists within those three-year periods.

c PMA: N: National, C: Concurrent, S: Sub-national. PMA change value is 0 if level of authority did not change; 1, if authority moved from N to S; and 0.5, if it moved from N to C or from C to S.

d ASO: E: Elected, A: Appointed, A/E: only formally elected or with appointment of some offices. ASO change: value is 0 if type of appointment did not change; 1, if it changed from A to E; and 0.5, if it changed from A/E to E, or from A to A/E

References


