Hybrid Regimes within Democracies

Fiscal Federalism and Subnational Rentier States

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Hybrid Regimes within Democracies

From the racially segregated "Jim Crow" US South to the many electoral but hardly democratic local regimes in Argentina and other federal democracies, the political rights of citizens around the world are often curtailed by powerful subnational rulers. *Hybrid Regimes within Democracies* presents the first comprehensive study of democracy and authoritarianism in all the subnational units of a federation. The book focuses on Argentina, but also contains a comparative chapter that considers seven other countries including Germany, Mexico, and the United States. The in-depth and multidimensional description of subnational regimes in all Argentine provinces is complemented with an innovative explanation for the large differences between those that are democratic and those that are "hybrid" – complex combinations of democratic and authoritarian elements. Putting forward and testing an original theory of subnational democracy, Gervasoni extends the rentier-state explanatory logic from resource rents to the more general concept of "fiscal rents," including "fiscal federalism rents," and from the national to the subnational level.

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PART I

DESCRIPTION: THE ANATOMY AND EVOLUTION OF SUBNATIONAL REGIMES

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Defining and Measuring Subnational Regimes*

As scholars of democracy turn their sights to subnational regimes, a first and basic challenge is that of conceptualization and measurement. How do we determine whether a province is democratic, authoritarian, or "hybrid"? The pioneering studies on "subnational authoritarianism" (Cornelius 1999; Snyder 1999; Gibson 2005) helped put the topic on the research agenda and provided valuable descriptions of some of the least democratic subnational units in national democracies around the world, but they generally did not provide an explicit conceptual definition and set of indicators needed to classify these and other units as authoritarian.

There is, however, a long and solid literature on the operationalization of regime types at the national level. Indices of democracy covering most countries in the world have been available for decades (e.g., Bollen 1980; Coppedge and Reinecke 1991; Alvarez et al. 1996; Vanhanen 2000; Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2014; Freedom House 2016), as well as several region-specific indices (for Latin America see Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán 2001; Bowman, Lehoucq, and Mahoney 2005; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2013). The measurement of national regimes has given rise to a sophisticated methodological debate (Bollen 1993; Bollen and Paxton 2000; Munck and Verkuilen 2002; Goertz 2006; Treier and Jackman 2008; Munck 2009; Coppedge 2012) that has led to a better understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the extant indices, and has provided guidance on how to design measures that maximize validity and reliability. Since 2000, several works have proposed novel cross-national indices that – using new conceptualizations, new data and/or new statistical methods – improve on the previous ones (Paxton 2000; Coppedge, Alvarez and Maldonado 2008; Treier and Jackman 2008; Pemstein, Meserve and Melton 2010; Coppedge and Gerring et al. 2011;

* Portions of this chapter were published previously in Gervasoni (2010b, 2016a).

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Boix, Miller, and Rosato 2013). The young subfield of subnational regimes is, by comparison, light-years behind in conceptual clarity, measurement rigorousness, and data richness.

The earliest studies I am aware of which define and measure democracy systematically in all (or most of) the regions of a country are those conducted by Hill (1994) for the United States, Hernández Valdez (2000) for Mexico, and McMann and Petrov (2000) for a large subset of the regions of Russia. More recently, scholars have used objective institutional or electoral indicators to construct indices that measure subnational democracy or subnational electoral contestation (an important dimension of democracy) in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, India, Mexico, and the United States (Beer and Mitchell 2006; Borges 2007; Goldberg, Wibbels, and Mvukiyehe 2008; Gervasoni 2010a; Giraudy 2010, 2015; for an exception using subjective indicators for the cases of Russia and Kyrgyzstan, see McMann 2006; for an index that combines both types of indicators, see Saikkonen 2016a[1]). These operationalization efforts go in the right direction, but still pale in comparison to their national counterparts.

Given this state of affairs, before tackling the problem of explaining variance in subnational regimes (Chapters 4–6), this book dedicates considerable space to operationalizing its dependent variable – the degree of subnational democracy[2] – and to providing a comprehensive description of the Argentine provinces in terms of this variable (Chapters 2 and 3). Chapter 7 compares the level of subnational democracy in eight countries.

In terms of conceptualization I make two consequential decisions: (1) focusing on the "level of democracy" rather than on the "quality of democracy," and (2) using a thick and multidimensional definition of democracy.[3]

With respect to measurement approaches, I draw on the two existing national traditions – objective and subjective – to design two alternative instruments to assess provincial regimes in Argentina, plus one more general objective index that I apply to several comparative cases (Chapter 7). Using five objective indicators, I developed the *Subnational Democracy Index* and applied it to all the Argentine provinces from 1983 to 2015 (Chapter 2). I also developed several subjective indices of different aspects of subnational regimes on the basis of the data produced by the Survey of Experts on Provincial Politics (SEPP) which I carried out during 2008 (Chapter 3). This operational strategy is much more costly in terms of resources and time, but is likely more valid and surely thicker

[1] Saikkonen uses an index that combines objective electoral data with an unpublished expert rating of Russia's regions compiled by Petrov and Titkov (2013).

[2] I do not use the expression "subnational regime type" because it implies that there are only two or a few types, such as democracy and authoritarianism. As the rest of this chapter makes clear, regimes in general (and subnational regimes in particular) are more appropriately positioned on a continuum that goes from more to less democratic than in discrete categories.

[3] Few works have focused on the conceptualization of subnational regimes; for an exception see Giraudy 2013.

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than the objective approach. Many different aspects of democracy were measured, which resulted in a large number of indicators and indices. The temporal scope of the survey, however, is limited to the period to which the questions refer (2003–7). As objective and subjective indicators possess complementary strengths and weaknesses, using both to look into the provincial regimes of Argentina allows for a deeper, fuller, and better understanding of them.

1.1 THE BACKGROUND CONCEPT: DEMOCRACY

Following Adcock and Collier (2001) in this and the next two sections I review the first three levels in the definition and measurement of concepts: the background concept, the systematized concept (including its disaggregation into dimensions and subdimensions), and the indicators.[4]

Few concepts have been more politically contested than democracy. In the second half of the twentieth-century the word "democracy" became so prestigious and legitimizing that all types of political philosophies and regimes tried to appropriate it. One or another "model of democracy" has been advocated both by a long tradition of liberal thought – from John Locke, Baron de Montesquieu, and James Madison to Friedrich Hayek and Robert Nozick – and by the later socialist school, from Karl Marx to Nicos Poulantzas and Crawford B. Macpherson (Held 1987). Likewise, both capitalist countries with multiparty elections and communist nations ruled by single parties have claimed to embody the principles of democracy.

Influential and well-founded conceptions of democracy give priority to significantly different values, for example popular rule, prevention of tyranny, human development, and political community (Katz 1997). Moreover, alternative democratic values are often at odds with each other, as illustrated by the clear tension between the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

To derive a clear, systematized concept of democracy from this noisy background I follow two guidelines: (1) taking into account its etymological meaning, and (2) considering the sense in which the word is generally used in influential social sectors outside academia (for example in the realm of practical politics, the media, etc.).[5] Democracy was originally conceived by the ancient Greeks as a type of *krátos*, or rule, and still today most citizens, politicians, and academics think of it as a characteristic of governments or regimes (as opposed to the society or the economy). The types of *krátos* that can be characterized as democratic are those based on the *dēmos*, the people.

[4] Adcock and Collier's fourth and last level, the scoring of the cases, is explained in Sections 2.1 (where the objective *Subnational Democracy Index* is explained in detail) and 3.1 (where the methodology of the Survey of Experts on Provincial Politics is presented).

[5] These criteria privilege "resonance" (Gerring 2001, 52–4), which in turn facilitates communications with people who are not scholars (like policy makers and journalists).

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In its travel from classical Athens to the contemporary world, democracy picked up two important elements. The first, originating in its marriage with liberal ideas, was freedom. The second, emerging from the impossibility of applying direct democracy to large states, was representation. Therefore, I understand democracy as a political regime in which rulers are periodically chosen in competitive elections by the people and, once in office, exercise power in a limited way, respecting political rights and civil freedoms. This conceptualization avoids the extremes of maximalist and minimalist definitions (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 9–12): it does not include attributes beyond a strictly political concept of democracy, but it does not leave out the liberal element, which I consider critical while some prominent political definitions do not.[6]

From this point of view, a regime is undemocratic (or authoritarian) when it does not conduct elections (or conducts uncompetitive, unfair, or exclusionary elections) or when, even if headed by popularly elected leaders, the power of the state is used to kill, incarcerate, exile, or otherwise punish citizens for political reasons.

This political definition means that democracy is a characteristic of national, subnational and supranational regimes, not of the economy, the society, or the mass culture. Democracy can (and does) coexist with high income inequality, hierarchical social organizations, and politically apathetic citizens. None of these is desirable, but none of them makes a country less democratic. Cuba is economically more egalitarian than Brazil, but infinitely less democratic. Good things do not always go empirically together. Putting them conceptually together does not help improve the world, and it most certainly hinders our attempts to understand it.

1.1.1 Level or Quality of Democracy?

An alternative "background concept," that of "quality of democracy" (Diamond and Morlino 2004), has vigorously emerged in the last 20 years, in part as a way of dealing with new democracies that conform to standard definitions, but remain somehow unsatisfactory from a normative point of view. I find three problems that make the use of this concept unadvisable for my goals. First, there is no agreement on whether the quality and the degree of democracy are the same thing. Some authors posit that "quality" is different from "degree" (e.g., Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002, 87), while others use those words interchangeably (e.g., Lijphart 1999, 276). Second, even accepting that quality is different from degree, it is often unclear whether the term "quality" refers only to democracy, or both to democracy and to governance (Plattner 2004). In the latter case, the concept becomes too wide and incoherent as there

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[6] Joseph A. Schumpeter (1975 [1942]) and Alvarez et al. (1996), for example, also propose strictly political definitions, but they emphasize electoral contestation, downplaying the liberal dimension.

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are democracies with good and bad governance, and autocracies with good and bad governance. Third, standard definitions of the "quality of democracy" often extend their reach to areas that are strictly speaking not political, in the sense of not being directly related to the government or the regime. This is well illustrated by items included in audits of democratic quality, such as "a climate of opinion that rejects all types of bigotry and discrimination," the proportion of "individuals who are unemployed" (O'Donnell 2004, 43 and 63), or the "democraticness" of the political culture (Proyecto Estado de la Nación 2001, 31).

In summary, the young concept of quality of democracy seems to be still too fuzzy, broad and/or demanding to be useful for the goals of this book. I focus on a different variable, the *level of (subnational) democracy*. The next section defines this variable.

1.2 THE SYSTEMATIZED CONCEPT: LIBERAL REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

In this section, I define the "systematized concept" (Adcock and Collier 2001) that I will use in the rest of the book. I call it here "liberal representative democracy," which is a type of political regime in both national and subnational polities.

The definition I choose is relatively thick,[7] complex, and multidimensional. Even in a strictly political sense, liberal representative democracy has several dimensions and subdimensions. For example, the specifically democratic component – popular sovereignty – and the liberal component – individual rights and limited power – are conceptually different, historically independent, and sometimes empirically uncorrelated (as is the case in "illiberal democracies", see Zakaria 1997). This "thick" conception contrasts with an important "thin," Schumpeterian[8] definitional tradition that deliberately wants "to define 'democracy' narrowly" as "a regime in which those who govern are selected through contested elections" (Przeworski et al. 2000, 15).

Finally, I understand democracy as a continuous variable (as opposed to a dichotomous or ordinal one). Both for theoretical and empirical reasons, I follow those who think of democracy in terms of levels or degrees (Coppedge and Reinicke 1991), including a well-established tradition of measurement of democracy.[9] However, authors who advocate a dichotomous definition (e.g., Alvarez et al. 1996), make an important point: a regime – however

[7] I follow Coppedge's (1999) recommendation to combine "thick" conceptualizations, typical of the qualitative tradition, with a rigorous operationalization amenable to subsequent quantitative analysis.

[8] See note 6.

[9] Such as the indices proposed by Freedom House 2016, the Polity IV project (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2014), Vanhanen 2000, and the Varieties of Democracy project (Coppedge et al. 2018a, b).

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liberal – cannot be called democratic if rulers are not chosen in competitive elections. Therefore, democracy here is conceived as a largely continuous concept once the dimension of contestation reaches a minimum threshold: the existence of meaningful multiparty popular elections. This threshold sharply divides polities with elective rulers from monarchies, military dictatorships, single-party totalitarianisms, and other types of regimes in which decision-makers are not chosen through competitive elections.

Democracy is a type of political regime, which in turn is defined by a set of (formal or informal) rules that determine the type of actors who can occupy the main positions of government, the accepted methods to obtain those positions, and the way in which public-policy decisions are made (Schmitter and Karl 1991, 77; Munck 1996). More succinctly, a regime is a set of rules that regulate: (1) how government positions are filled, and (2) what government officials can and cannot do. In the case of democracy, the first set is anchored in the principle of what Katz (1997) calls *popular sovereignty* – which finds institutional expression in popular, competitive, free, and fair elections – while the second derives from the principle of *limited government* – implemented, for example, through the institutions of separation of powers, checks and balances, and constitutionally protected individual rights – akin to Katz's "tyranny prevention" principle, to Held's (1987) "protective democracy," and to Riker's (1982) liberal justification of democracy. Efforts to measure national democracy have yielded similar dimensions: Bollen and Paxton (2000, 59–60), for example, argue that liberal democracy is a political system characterized by both "democratic rule" and "political liberties." In summary, these dimensions correspond to the strictly "democratic" and the "liberal" dimensions of modern representative regimes.

Liberal democracy, then, is defined by the combination of competitive elections and limited power. If rulers are competitively elected but exercise power with few limitations, the regime is an illiberal democracy (Zakaria 1997; Diamond 1999, 42–49) or a *democradura* (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 9). Alternatively, unelected rulers may exercise power in a limited fashion, which results in liberal autocracies (Diamond 1999, 4) or *dictablandas* (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 9). Finally, when rulers are not elected and power is exercised without limits, the regime is authoritarian.[10]

The foregoing discussion leads to a first general definition of liberal democracy:

Liberal democracy is a type of political regime in which the top government positions are filled directly or indirectly through contested elections, and in which government power is divided among different branches that check each other, and limited by

[10] Using the word "authoritarian" in a broad sense, including both Linz's (1975) authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

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constitutionally or legally mandated (and de facto respected) political and civil liberal rights and freedoms.

Once the concept of liberal representative democracy is fleshed out into dimensions and subdimensions (see Section 1.2.2), this definition can be expanded into a thicker and more complex one by adding the details that go into the definition of each of these dimensions.

1.2.1 The Other End: Authoritarianism or Hybrid Regimes?

> The last decade of the twentieth century saw the rise of a great number of regimes that cannot be easily classified as either authoritarian or democratic but display some characteristics of both.
>
> (Ottaway 2003, 3)

Although the theoretical range of the variable regime type goes from democratic to authoritarian, the real range in given empirical domains may be narrower. Despite the relatively common use of concepts such as "authoritarian enclaves" and "subnational authoritarianisms" to describe some regional regimes in federal democracies (Fox 1994; Cornelius 1999; Diamond 1999; Gibson 2005; Gel'man and Ross 2010), even the least democratic Argentine provinces do not meet the conventional definition of authoritarianism, and the same seems to be true in other third-wave democratic federations, such as Brazil, Mexico, and Russia during the 1995–2004 period, when regional governors were elected. Subnational units in these contexts are generally far from being the kind of repressive and closed regimes that the Polity IV database codes as "autocracies" and Freedom House labels as "not free." These regimes have elections (often reasonably free), real opposition parties, minority representation in the legislature, nontrivial levels of freedom of speech, and so forth. One does not find in the Argentine provinces bans on political parties, incarcerated dissidents, or significant media censorship. Because they are embedded in a national democracy, subnational leaders are constrained in the extent to which they can restrict political rights. Given that at the national level democracy is widely accepted as "the only game in town," and that the Constitution empowers national authorities to guarantee democracy in the provinces,[11] there are strong incentives for self-interested provincial rulers to avoid blatantly authoritarian practices such as jailing opposition leaders or massively

[11] The most powerful instrument in this respect is the removal of provincial authorities via federal intervention, an attribution given by the national Constitution to congress and the president. Sustaining democratic institutions ("guaranteeing the republican form of government," in the nineteenth-century language of the Constitution) is one of the few legal justifications for interventions. Since 1983 four provinces were intervened six times: Catamarca (1991), Tucumán (1991), Corrientes (1991 and 2000), and Santiago del Estero (1993 and 2004). All of them except Tucumán had doubtful democratic credentials.

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rigging elections. Such visible actions easily attract attention from the national media, hurting the chances of the perpetrators in national politics and increasing the likelihood that national authorities will take corrective measures.

The less-democratic provincial regimes, then, combine democratic institutions that are not just a façade with practices that are clearly, if subtly, authoritarian. They are well conceptualized by the literature on (national) hybrid regimes (Karl 1995). The definitional traits of "semi-democracies" (Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1995; Mainwaring, Brinks and Pérez-Liñán 2001), "illiberal democracies" (Zakaria 1997), "competitive authoritarianisms" (Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010), "semi-authoritarianisms" (Ottaway 2003), and "electoral authoritarianisms" (Schedler 2006) describe the less-democratic Argentine provinces more accurately than the traditional concept of "authoritarianism" (Linz 1975). Moreover, the causal logic at work seems to be similar: just as national hybrid regimes exist largely because of the need to avoid overt authoritarianism in the face of strong international pressures for democratization, subnational leaders with authoritarian projects come under intense national pressure to sustain at least minimal levels of democracy. For these reasons, the concept of hybrid regimes (or related concepts such as "electoral authoritarianism") has been used in the past decade to characterize the least democratic regions of several third-wave federations (McMann 2006; Gervasoni 2010a; Borges 2016; Saikkonen 2016a).

Whether a subnational unit qualifies as authoritarian or hybrid is, of course, an empirical question. The measurement strategies outlined in Section 1.3 are able to identify all types of regimes, from roundly democratic to clearly authoritarian. The evidence presented in Chapters 2 and 3, however, supports the idea that the actual empirical range of contemporary provincial regimes in Argentina runs from democratic to hybrid. Therefore, I refrain from using the concept of subnational "authoritarianism" to characterize the least democratic provinces, using the expression "hybrid regimes" instead. They surely contain elements of authoritarianism, but these elements do not necessarily make them authoritarian given that they are combined with elements of democracy, and in particular with real multiparty elections.

1.2.2 The Dimensions and Subdimensions of the Concept

The proposed definitional perspective decomposes the concept of democracy in two dimensions[12], a strictly democratic one (Katz's "popular sovereignty"), and a liberal one ("limited government"). These dimensions are conceptually different, even if theoretically and empirically related (Diamond 1999, 4–5).

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[12] What I call dimensions and subdimensions corresponds to what Munck and Verkuilen (2002) call "attributes" and "components," respectively.

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1.2.2.1 The Democratic Dimension: Contested, Inclusive, and Effective Elections

This dimension expresses the "democratic" side of "liberal democracy." Drawing on Dahl (1971), Hadenius (1992, 49–51), and Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (1995, 6–7) I identify three subdimensions: contestation, inclusiveness (Dahl's original dimensions), and effective elections. I define them, conventionally, as follows:

CONTESTATION. The extent to which individuals and groups can effectively oppose the incumbent authorities and participate in regular elections that are competitive and, therefore, reasonably likely to lead to the defeat of the incumbent. Once the minimum threshold of contestation is achieved (i.e., once rulers are chosen in reasonably free multiparty elections), there may be higher or lower levels of contestation depending on many and diverse factors, such as the level of barriers to entry of political parties, the rules of campaign financing, the degree of media plurality, the prevalence of patronage, and so forth.

INCLUSIVENESS. The proportion of the adult citizenry who enjoy, legally and factually, the rights associated with political competition, especially the rights to vote and run for office. Given current democratic standards, a polity is considered fully inclusive only if all, or practically all, adult citizens enjoy these rights.

EFFECTIVE ELECTIONS. A key condition for democracy is that elected officials are not subordinated to unelected ones (Schmitter and Karl 1991, 81). Elections are not "effective" if "elected organs are limited in their decision-making by instances which, for their part, have no democratic support" (Hadenius 1992, 49). There are several polities in the world in which elected officials have to yield, at least in some policy areas, to monarchs, generals, theocratic elites, or unelected legislators.

1.2.2.2 The Liberal Dimension: Institutional Constraints and Individual Rights

Liberalism is grounded in the tradition of Western thought that emphasizes individual rights (Locke), institutional constraints on state power (Montesquieu), limits to state intervention in people's lives (Constant), and protection against the tyranny of the majority (Hamilton, Madison, and Jay; J. S. Mill). The overall principle is to protect freedoms, both those strictly necessary for effective contestation, usually known as political rights (freedom of organization, assembly, speech, etc.), and those not strictly political but still important for individual autonomy, usually known as civil liberties (freedom to choose place of residence, freedom of movement, religious freedom, and so forth).[13]

[13] Even in attempts at measuring democracy that do not include indicators of liberal rights, there is a recognition that they are part of the definition (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2014, 14) or that they have been historically associated with the concept of democracy (Alvarez et al. 1996, 4).

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How are these freedoms protected? The answer to this question defines the two subdimensions of the liberal dimension of democracy:

INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS. Classic liberals proposed the separation of powers, so that different aspects of government would be in different hands. Montesquieu's idea of "checks and balances" finds institutional expression in all contemporary democracies which, to different extents, separate executive, legislative, and judicial functions in different bodies. Moreover, additional "agencies of horizontal accountability" (O'Donnell 1999a) operate in democracies to control and limit the excesses of the executive (e.g., anticorruption offices). This dimension is typically given less consideration than competitive elections and political rights in existing conceptualizations and operationalizations of democracy.[14]

INDIVIDUAL LIBERAL RIGHTS. A second liberal artifact to limit state power and maximize individual freedom is the legal protection of political rights and civil liberties. Explicit and clear laws about the freedoms that are granted to individuals make it more costly for the state to violate them, and easier for the courts to protect them. These rights can be seen as a third dimension implicit in Dahl's two classic ones (Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1995, 6–7). Of course, the fact that these freedoms are written in constitutions or statutes and formally protected by courts does not mean that they are factually respected. The extent to which they are, then, is a central component of the liberal dimension of democracy.

The five proposed subdimensions resemble those defined by some mainstream conceptualizations in political science. For example, Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán (2001) identify four characteristics of democracy: (1) free and fair competitive elections, (2) inclusive adult citizenship, (3) civil liberties and political rights, and (4) actual governing by elected authorities. These correspond almost perfectly to my contestation, inclusiveness, liberal rights, and effective elections subdimensions, respectively. The main difference is that I include a fifth subdimension, institutional constraints.

Figure 1.1 presents the structure of the concept of democracy elaborated so far, going from the highest level of abstraction (the *genus)* to the lowest (the *subdimensions*).

1.2.2.3 Components and Subcomponents of Democracy

The "thick" conceptualization of political regimes adopted in this book implies that there are many specific aspects of democracy into which each subdimension

[14] The Polity IV indicator "executive constraints" or "institutionalized constraints on the decision-making powers of chief executives" (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2014, 24) is a very important exception. Interestingly, this indicator is highly correlated with the Bollen, Freedom House and Vanhanen indices of democracy, and it "virtually determines the democracy and autocracy scale values" of the Polity scores (Gleditsch and Ward 1997, 379–80).

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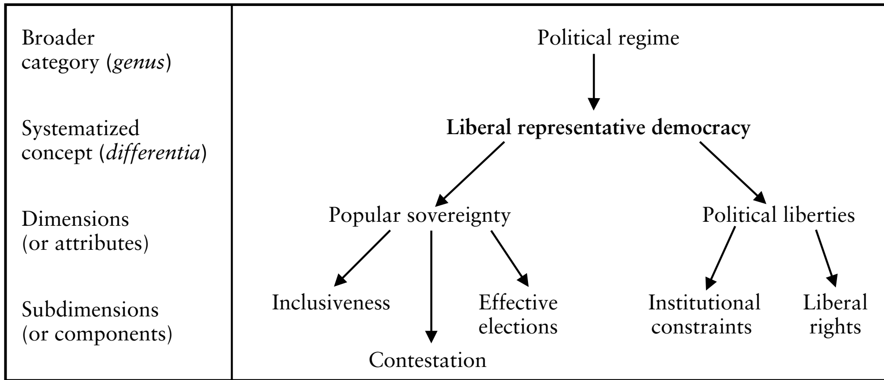

FIGURE 1.1. *Genus, differentia, dimensions, and subdimensions of democracy*

of democracy is disaggregated. Table 1.1 is a systematization of the dimensions (column 1) and subdimensions (column 2) defined so far, plus the components (column 3) and subcomponents (column 4) of each subdimension. Columns 1 through 4 should be interpreted as general categories applicable to the elective subnational regimes of any polity, while the indicators used to measure each of them have to be adapted to the context – in this case to the Argentine provinces – and to each particular province (e.g., survey items will be different for "presidential" and "parliamentary" regions). As the Comparative Subnational Democracy Index I introduce in Chapter 7 and the replication of the SEPP in Mexico[15] illustrate, some of the indicators proposed below for Argentina may be directly applicable to other countries, while others need to be adapted to their different institutional contexts.

Each of the twenty-two subcomponents listed in the last column of Table 1.1 is measured through one or more of the items (questions) contained in the SEPP (see Chapter 3). The objective measurement strategy cannot produce a similarly disaggregated set of indicators, so it will only operate at the level of the two main dimensions. The next section provides a detailed explanation of both types of indicators.

1.3 INDICATORS: OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE MEASURES OF DEMOCRACY

In this section, I go one level below the "systematized concept" to address the indicators that will be used to measure the concept of (subnational) liberal representative democracy.

[15] See Loza and Méndez 2016.

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TABLE 1.1. *Disaggregation of the concept of subnational democracy*

Dimensions	Subdimensions	Components	Subcomponents
Popular sovereignty or democratic rule	**Inclusiveness**	Extension of effective right to vote	Denial of right to vote
		Extension of effective right to run	Denial of right to run
	Contestation	Fairness of elections	Fairness of campaign
			Fairness of electoral act and vote counting
		Freedom of expression	Opposition leaders
			Critical journalists
			Politically relevant media
			Public employees
			General population
		Freedom to form/join organizations	Political parties
	Effective elections	Unelected local powers	Unelected local powers
		Elected national powers	Elected national powers
Political liberties or limited government	**Institutional constraints**	Legislature	Provincial legislature
		Judiciary	Provincial justice
		Agencies of Horizontal Accountability	Independence of agencies of HA
		Incumbent Party	Constraints of party on governor
	Liberal rights	Freedom of information	Right to alternative and diverse sources of information
			Access to information about government
		Personal freedoms	Physical security
			Privacy
			Alternative or minority lifestyles
			Academic freedom

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For several reasons, subnational regimes pose harder measurement challenges than national regimes. First, there are decades of experience in developing national indices of democracy. Over time, these indices have been subjected to scrutiny and critiques, and to the pressure of competition from alternative ones. As a result, newer and sounder ones have superseded older and weaker measures, and the methodological standards of the surviving ones have improved significantly.[16] Subnational measures of democracy are fewer, more recent, and have been applied only to a few countries.

The prevalence of hybrid regimes in subnational settings (see Section 1.2.1) pose two additional measurement problems. First, the range of regime variation is narrower at the regional than at the national level – because many fully autocratic national regimes do exist – which leads to weaker reliability.[17] Second, the mix of elements of democracy and authoritarianism that defines hybrid regimes inevitably increases measurement error: when a regime is homogenous, all indicators will yield similar scores; conversely, when the regime is heterogeneous, different indicators will yield different scores. Saudi Arabia will be coded as authoritarian regardless of the measure used, while Indonesia or Turkey will appear more democratic according to some indicators and less so according to others. The fact that the least democratic subnational regimes in Argentina and other countries are hybrid (as opposed to authoritarian) conspires against reliability.

Second, the quantity and quality of secondary sources to assess regional regimes is generally lower than that available to evaluate national regimes. Even the most important provinces of Argentina have been subject to few rigorous academic descriptions, and the information in the media about many of them is scarce, low quality, or biased.[18] This source of measurement error is especially relevant in smaller and less developed provinces, where secondary sources are especially wanting.

Figure 1.2 presents these measurement challenges graphically. The horizontal line represents the total range of regime variation, from fully autocratic to fully democratic (with four countries illustrating each pole). The gap in the line reflects the discrete threshold between regimes that do not hold multiparty elections and electoral regimes. A democratic province (Mendoza) and a less democratic one (Formosa) are placed on this continuum. The distance between them is considerably smaller than that between Cuba and Canada. The circles and triangles represent scores from repeated measurements (or from different

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[16] The Varieties of Democracy project is the clearest example of such improvement. See Coppedge and Gerring, et al. 2011, Coppedge et al. 2018a, b, and https://v-dem.net/en/.

[17] Reliability depends not only on the precision of the measurement instrument but also on the magnitude of the differences among the objects being measured (Traub 1994). A given level of measurement error may be small for objects that are far apart, but too great to distinguish objects that are closer to each other.

[18] As the indicators on press freedom in Chapter 3 will make abundantly clear.

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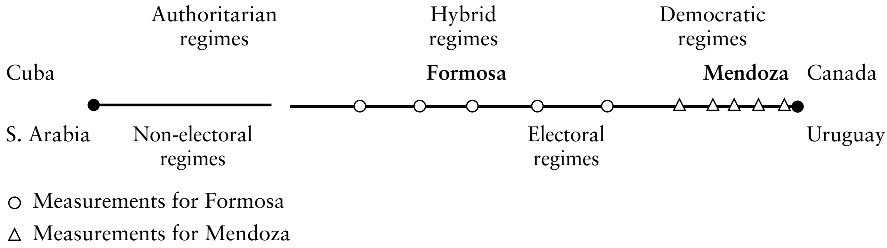

FIGURE 1.2. *A graphical representation of national and subnational regime variance and its measurement*

indicators) of democracy for Formosa and Mendoza, respectively. Notice that the scores for each province differ considerably – because measurement error is inevitable, and likely not small given the aforementioned measurement difficulties – especially for the case of Formosa because its hybrid nature makes it harder to measure. In fact, the most democratic circle is not far from the least democratic triangle.

In practical terms, this means that measurement has to be more careful and rigorous in the empirical domain of this book than at the national level. The scoring of a single indicator may be enough to accurately estimate the magnitude of the difference between Saudi Arabia and Uruguay. As the figure shows, the same is not true for Formosa and Mendoza: picking any pair of triangle and circle may lead to greatly under- or overestimating the regime differences between them.

Given the complexities of a "thick" concept such as democracy, and the additional difficulties posed by subnational regimes (as compared to national regimes), I tackle descriptive inference applying to the Argentine provinces both objective and subjective strategies that have been used in political science to measure national democracy (Bollen and Paxton 2000, 60).

The first approach measures democracy through *objective*, typically electoral and institutional indicators (well-known examples of objective indices of regime type are those of Alvarez et al. 1996 and Vanhanen 2000). These indicators are generally available from the historical record of many polities and years, and can usually be collected at a low cost in terms of time and money. An additional key advantage is that they involve little interpretation by the researcher (Vanhanen 2000, 255–7), which makes them highly reliable. Most of the time two independent coders will come to the same conclusion about whether a polity has multiparty elections or not, or what the vote share of the largest party was. The main disadvantages of objective indicators are that they tend to capture only one or a few "thin" (Coppedge 1999) aspects of democracy, and to do so with middling levels of validity.

Objective measures typically focus on the Schumpeterian "competitive elections" aspect of democracy (or the "contestation" subdimension in Table 1.1),

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leaving out key dimensions such as checks and balances ("institutional constraints" in my operationalization), or respect for civil rights ("liberal rights" in Table 1.1). As for validity, many objective indicators (such as electoral outcomes) partly reflect factors other than underlying levels of democracy. Whether or not there is rotation in power or the margin by which an incumbent wins an election may say something, not only about how democratic the system is and about the extent to which there is a level electoral playing field, but also about such factors as the performance of an administration and the electoral rules (Bogaards 2007).

The second tradition uses *subjective* or "perceptions-based" (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2005) indicators.[19] In this strategy, a researcher makes an informed judgment about a certain aspect of democracy in a given polity using secondary sources and/or consulting experts. Subjective operationalizations are behind well-respected and widely used datasets in many subfields of political science.[20] In fact, most mainstream national measures of democracy are based on subjective indicators (Bollen and Paxton 2000), including Polity IV (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2014), Freedom House's (2016) ratings of political rights and civil liberties, Coppedge and Reinecke's Polyarchy Index (1991), Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán's (2001) index for Latin American countries, and most of the Varieties of Democracy indices (Coppedge and Gerring, et al. 2011).[21]

In the subjective strategy it is easier to tailor indicators so that they are valid measures of the theoretical concept of interest. Instead of relying on whether there is actual rotation in power as a proxy for the extent to which elections are free and fair, which inevitably leads to miscoding some democracies as autocracies (Alvarez et al. 1996), scholars can consult secondary sources and experts to assess exactly what they need to know – i.e., the level of electoral fairness and freedom. Moreover, in this strategy the researcher need not limit her- or himself to indicators that tap contestation only, as she or he can develop measures for all the dimensions and subdimensions of democracy contained in her or his conceptualization.

Although the subjective approach is in principle more valid and thicker than the objective one, it is typically less reliable as different sources and experts may differ in their assessments of a given aspect of democracy in a given polity. This problem is compounded by the fact that perceptions-based indices are often vague regarding the procedures to convert information from

[19] The word "subjective" is often loaded with negative connotations. It is sometimes associated with normative biases or interested opinions. I use it in a straightforward, neutral way to describe a measurement process based on the informed and educated judgments of certain "subjects" (Mainwaring, Brinks and Pérez-Liñán 2001, 38).

[20] For example, the ideological positions of European parties have been estimated on the basis of several expert surveys (Hooghe et al. 2010).

[21] Bowman, Lehoucq, and Mahoney (2005, 940) make a strong case in favor of measures of democracy based on the judgments of experts with deep knowledge of the polities to be coded.

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secondary sources or experts into ratings. The Polity manual (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2014), for example, provides some guidelines to code the indicator "Constraints on Chief Executive," but it is easy to see how different coders may disagree about whether a given case should be coded as "substantial limitations," "intermediate category," or "slight to moderate limitations."[22] Further inter-coder reliability analyses revealed some significant disagreements among independent coders (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2014, 5–8). Likewise, Freedom House (2016) codes questions such as "are the electoral laws and framework fair?" on the basis of a number of subquestions that "are intended to provide guidance to the analysts regarding what issues are meant to be considered in scoring each checklist question." Different coders, however, may draw on different sources or give more or less weight to different subquestions. As Freedom House (2016) indicates, "an element of subjectivity is unavoidable in such an enterprise," but such an element is more troubling when the methodology provides little information about the specific sources used, the number of coders per country, and the levels of inter-coder reliability.

These shortcomings, however, can be improved taking a few, relatively simple steps such as listing the consulted sources, spelling out clear coding rules, having more than one person code each polity, and calculating and reporting measures of inter-coder reliability. This means that it is possible to benefit from the higher validity of subjective measures without having to pay a high price in terms of reliability, as illustrated by the SEPP introduced here.

Table 1.2 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of the objective and subjective measurement strategies. The complementarity is clear: one tends to be strong where the other is weak. I therefore use both approaches to describe Argentina's provincial regimes.

The operationalization decisions and the details of the methodological design of each of the two measurement approaches are explained in Chapters 2 (the objective Subnational Democracy Index) and 3 (the subjective indices derived from the SEPP)[23] so that any researcher can replicate the study – with

TABLE 1.2. *Advantages and disadvantages of objective and subjective indicators of democracy*

Criteria	**Objective indicators**	**Subjective indicators**
Secondary data availability	Usually high	Usually low
Cost of producing indicators	Low/moderate	Moderate/High
Reliability	High	Middling
Validity	Middling	High
Conceptual coverage ("thickness")	Typically low	Potentially very high

[22] These are three of the indicator's seven categories.

[23] See also Gervasoni (2010b) and Gervasoni (2016a).

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some adaptation to local political context – in any other country with elected and reasonably autonomous regional governments (the SEPP has already been replicated in Mexico, see Gervasoni, Loza and Méndez 2016). Hopefully, in the not-so-distant future, scholars will periodically produce estimates of regional regimes around the world which can be used to assess the causes and consequences of subnational democracy.

1.4 AGGREGATION: FROM INDICATORS TO INDICES OF SUBNATIONAL REGIMES

Aggregation – the procedure for combining multiple measures of the same underlying variable into an index – is often the weakest part of operationalization efforts in the social sciences. Rules of aggregation are seldom clearly justified and sometimes not even spelled out. This is actually the case for many and important national-level indices of democracy (Munck and Verkuilen 2002; Munck 2009).

I provide a detailed explanation and justification of the aggregation rules for all the indices introduced in the following chapters (see Sections 2.1, 3.1.1, and 7.2). I anticipate the main procedures here. The objective *Subnational Democracy Index* is a factor score, i.e., a weighted average of five correlated indicators, expressed as a standardized variable. The subjective indices derived from the SEPP are unweighted averages of conceptually related and/or highly correlated (and normalized) survey items. The objective *Comparative Subnational Democracy Index* introduced in Chapter 7 is the quadratic mean of three (normalized) indicators.

Aggregation choices imply a theory of the concept, that is, clear ideas on how its different elements relate to each other (Goertz 2006: Munck 2009). The critical decision in combining our indicators into an index is about *substitutability*, or the extent to which high levels on one indicator can compensate for low levels on other indicators. For example, using the maximum operator – an aggregation rule in which the index takes the value of the indicator with the highest score – implies *full substitutability* (Goertz 2006, 136): a polity with a single measure pointing in a democratic direction would be considered as democratic as another one with all indicators pointing in that direction. Conversely, the minimum operator implies *no substitutability*, as the worst-performing indicator determines the score of the index: a polity that does poorly on a single indicator would be considered as authoritarian as one doing poorly on all of them. Variants of the mean (such as the arithmetic, geometric, and quadratic means), on the other hand, imply partial substitutability: a low score on an indicator can be partially compensated by a high score on other indicators.

Indicators that are not substitutable are akin to necessary conditions. Given the conceptualization of democracy I offer, the only non-substitutable element of democracy is multiparty elections for the main government

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positions. This bare minimum is present in the empirical domain of this book: Argentina and the seven countries I analyze in Chapter 7 have electoral regimes in all of their first-level subnational units.[24] Therefore, some substitutability is present in all indices I propose. Full substitutability, however, is also incompatible with my conceptualization: there is no single element of democracy that can compensate for weaknesses in other elements. Even electoral rotation in the executive cannot make up for human rights violations or government censorship of the media. Therefore, all the indices I propose implement partial substitutability using some kind of (unweighted or weighted, arithmetic or quadratic) mean. I provide the details and justification of the aggregation rules for each index in Chapters 2 (Subnational Democracy Index), 3 (SEPP-based indices), and 7 (Comparative Subnational Democracy Index).

1.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the main operationalization decisions with respect to the dependent variable in this book – the degree of subnational democracy. Operationalization implies three "challenges" (Munck and Verkuilen 2002): conceptualization, measurement, and aggregations. First, I defined democracy and identified its dimensions, subdimensions, components, and subcomponents. One important conceptual decision was to focus on the *level* of (subnational) democracy, not the *quality* of (subnational) democracy, a fuzzier concept. I also made it clear that in the context of national democratic regimes (such as those of Argentina and other countries analyzed in this book) the least democratic subnational polities are typically not authoritarian, but "hybrid": complex mixtures of democratic and authoritarian elements. Second, I argued that measuring *subnational* democracy is especially challenging, and consequently introduced and justified two different measurement strategies, one objective and one subjective. Finally, I discussed alternative aggregation rules, that is, different ways of combining indicators of the same concept to form indices.

The next two chapters present the details and results of each of the two measurement strategies. Chapter 2 focuses on the objective *Subnational Democracy Index*, a measure based on five electoral and institutional indicators. Chapter 3 does the same with the subjective indices of different aspects of subnational regimes based on data from the SEPP. The first sections of these chapters provide the details of the indicators involved, elaborate on their validity and reliability, and explain and justify the specific aggregation rules used to produce the indices. The rest of Chapters 2 and 3 use these indices to provide a comprehensive description of Argentina's provincial regimes, of the differences among them, and of their evolution over time.

[24] Except in the rare cases when the national government removes local authorities and rules a region directly, as in Argentina's federal interventions (see above note 11) or India's presidential rule.

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The use of two different measurement strategies with complementary strengths and weaknesses allows for a description of subnational regimes of unprecedented breadth and depth. In fact, the next two chapters are, to my knowledge, the first effort to assess the level of democracy in all the subnational units of a country using both objective and subjective measures. Descriptive inferences contain an inevitable element of uncertainty, but when alternative measurement strategies arrive at the same conclusion – as it is the case for several Argentine provinces – our confidence in those inferences grows significantly.

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2

The Subnational Democracy Index

*Trends in Provincial Regimes (1983–2015)**

This chapter focuses on the objective *Subnational Democracy Index* (SDI). This index taps two core dimensions of democracy – contestation and power concentration in the incumbent. The electoral and institutional indicators that measure these dimensions, however, are empirically unidimensional. This unidimensionality has the advantage of simplifying the description of subnational regimes: a single summary measure provides an overall characterization of all provinces in all gubernatorial periods from 1983 (the year in which democracy was reestablished in Argentina) to 2015 (the year of the last gubernatorial election). A more comprehensive, multidimensional (and more valid) description of subnational democracy in Argentina is presented in Chapter 3 (dedicated to the Survey of Experts on Provincial Politics [SEPP]). That description, however, lacks the temporal component of the SDI, as the survey only measured the characteristics of provincial regimes for the 2003–7 period.

The first section of this chapter discusses the methodological design of the SDI. The second sections analyzes its results, both in terms of differences among provinces and of trends over time. The final section complements the SDI's quantitative results with qualitative evidence describing the undemocratic institutions and practices that differentiate hybrid provinces from the more democratic ones.

2.1 OBJECTIVE INDICATORS: THE SUBNATIONAL DEMOCRACY INDEX

Although the most popular indices of democracy at the national level, such as Polity IV and Freedom House, are subjective, the opposite is the case for

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the literature on subnational regimes. Probably because objective indicators on the existence and results of regional elections around the world are relatively easy to obtain, the few scholars who have attempted to systematically measure subnational democracy in a given country have typically used objective measures (Hill 1994; Hernández Valdez 2000; Beer and Mitchell 2006; Goldberg, Wibbels, and Mvukiyehe 2008; Gervasoni 2010a; Giraudy 2010, 2015; Borges 2016).

As explained in Section 1.2.1, the least democratic subnational units within national-level democracies – in Argentina and elsewhere – are better characterized as hybrid rather than authoritarian. The rulers of autonomous (but not sovereign) regional hybrid regimes are vulnerable to the threats of national political actors, from the media and public opinion to federal authorities. In this context, they have incentives to showcase a democratic institutional architecture, avoid openly authoritarian rules or practices, and rely exclusively on stealthy tactics to restrict political rights. Elections are held and ballots counted fairly, but incumbents massively outspend challengers; the local media is formally independent, but it is bought off to bias coverage in favor of the ruling party; dissidents are not jailed, just excluded from coveted public jobs.

This combination of democratic-looking electoral institutions with subtle and hidden violations of democratic principles makes hybrid regimes difficult to measure (see Section 1.3). A practical alternative is to focus on the effects of those violations on political outcomes, which are more amenable to empirical observation than the violations themselves. Scholars of regimes have generally (and reasonably) assumed that authoritarian practices within an electoral regime increase the probability of extended stints of single-party rule, unusually large electoral majorities for incumbents, overwhelming executive control of the legislature, no term limits, and so forth. None of these political outcomes defines the type of regime, but following the logic of "effect indicators" (Bollen and Lennox 1991), they should reflect changes in the underlying level of democracy. These indicators are correlated with the trait of interest because they are an *effect* of it (in the same way that physicians use symptoms typically caused by a disease as indicators of its presence). Scholars who state that "[d]emocracy is a system in which [incumbent] parties lose elections" (Przeworski 1991, 10), that "no country in which a party wins 60 percent of the vote twice in a row is a democracy" (Przeworski 1991, 95), and that "[c]ountries in which one party wins an overwhelming share of seats are not likely to be democracies" (Alvarez et al. 1996, 13) know that democracy is not about any specific electoral outcome. They also know, however, that certain outcomes are typical effects of its weakness or absence. If we agree with them that democracy requires "an opposition that has some chance of winning office as a consequence of elections" (Alvarez et al. 1996, 5), then provinces like Formosa, San Luis or Santa Cruz, where the same party has controlled the governorship for nine consecutive four-year terms since 1983 – often obtaining over 2/3 of the votes – are less democratic than

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Entre Ríos or Mendoza, where different parties have alternated in office, and where incumbents have seldom gained more than 50 percent of the votes.

Using levels of electoral contestation to operationalize democracy can also be justified because they are "causal indicators" (Bollen and Lennox 1991), that is, measures that correlate with the underlying trait of interest not because they are an *effect* of it, but because they are a *cause* of it. There is evidence that vigorous electoral competition leads, causally, to higher national and subnational government responsiveness (Besley and Burgess 2002; Griffin 2006; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008), and, in the case of the Argentine provinces, to democracy-enhancing independent judiciaries (Chavez 2003, 2004). If observable levels of electoral contestation are both a cause and an effect of underlying levels of democracy, then the former should be a reasonably valid indicator or the latter.

Some national indices of regime type include indicators of electoral competitiveness. Dahl's measures of polyarchy (1971, 238), for example, differentiate between competitive and partially competitive regimes using a threshold of 85 percent of legislative seats controlled by a single party. An explanation of Freedom House's indices states that "[t]he extent of democratic rights can also be empirically suggested by the size of the opposition vote. While on rare occasions a governing party or individual may receive overwhelming support at the polls, any groups or leader that regularly receives seventy percent or more of the vote indicates a weak opposition and the probable existence of undemocratic barriers in the way of its further success" (Gastil 1991, 29). Vanhanen (2000, 257) explicitly agrees with this 70 percent threshold, and one of the two measures of his index is a function of the percentage of votes won by the largest party.

Notice, however, that the authors cited above disagree in a very important respect: while some view any large electoral or legislative majority as less democratic, others only doubt democracy is fully at work when *incumbents* obtain such majorities. Both national and subnational indices differ on this key aspect. Vanhanen's (2000) *contestation* penalizes a large proportion of the vote for any party, incumbent or challenger, and so do many of the existing subnational measures of regime type, for example the adaptation of Vanhanen's index used by Beer and Mitchell, the various versions of the effective number of parties (ENP) (e.g., Hernández Valdez 2000; Giraudy 2010), or the margin of victory in gubernatorial elections (Goldberg, Wibbels, and Mvukiyehe 2008). On the other hand, the dichotomous index developed by Alvarez et al. (1996) rewards opposition landslides, as they constitute solid evidence that incumbent "parties lose elections." Examples of this approach at the subnational level are measures such as the vote share of the incumbent governor's party (used by Borges 2007; Goldberg, Wibbels, and Mvukiyehe 2008; Gervasoni 2010a) or the various measures of the incumbent's legislative strength (part of the indices designed by Borges 2007; Gervasoni 2010a; Giraudy 2010).

The SDI I introduce below adopts the "incumbent" criterion, not the "largest party" criterion. It considers, "in the spirit of Alvarez et al. (1996), that a

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handily defeated incumbent is an expression of healthy levels of democracy" (Gervasoni 2010a, 317, fn. 96). In practice, the distinction may be often irrelevant, as large electoral or legislative majorities are obtained much more frequently by incumbents than by challengers.[1] Conceptually the distinction is critical, and it may be empirically critical too in contexts in which strong showings of the opposition are more than an unusual quirk.

The SDI focuses on two key dimensions of democracy (out of the five identified in Section 1.2.2): contestation, which is central to all definitions (Dahl 1971; Alvarez et al. 1996), and power concentration in the incumbent (or institutional constraints on the power of the government), a critical component of liberal or "protective" understandings of democracy (Held 1987). Other important aspects of democracy, such as liberal rights or effective elections, cannot be incorporated because of the unavailability of comparable objective data for all provinces.

The index includes three indicators of (electoral) contestation – *Executive contestation*, *Legislative contestation, and Succession control* – and two indicators of power concentration in the incumbent – *Legislature control and Term limits*.[2] Measures of electoral contestation have been shown to be highly correlated with mainstream subjective indices of political rights and freedoms (Vanhanen 2000, 256; Coppedge, Alvarez, and Maldonado 2008). For example, for the period 1970–2000 Vanhanen's contestation indicator (100 minus the percentage of total votes cast won by the largest party) correlates at 0.89 with the Polity Index, at 0.86 with Freedom House's Political Rights and at 0.87 with V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Index.[3] It should be encouraging for our purposes that a single electoral contestation indicator, which does not even, distinguish whether the largest party is the incumbent or not, can quite accurately predict the level of democracy as measured by standard indices. A measure such as the SDI, that combines several indicators of this type and that focuses on the performance of the incumbent (not the largest party), should perform even better.

In the following paragraphs, I explain and justify the five indicators that constitute the *SDI*.

1. *Executive contestation* measures the extent to which there are real chances for the opposition to defeat the governor's party. It is simply the proportion of the valid vote won by the incumbent

[1] For example, Saikkonen (2016a), who uses the "largest party" criterion in her study of Russia's regions, indicates that 94.5 percent of "hegemonic" winners (parties wining the governorship with more than 70 percent of the vote) in her sample are incumbents (p. 270).

[2] Vote and seats figures are from the Dirección Nacional Electoral and the Atlas Electoral de Andy Tow (at www.mininterior.gov.ar/elecciones, and http://andy.towsa.com, respectively).

[3] My calculations using the Varieties of Democracy dataset "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v6.2" (Coppedge et al. 2016). All p-values <0.001. I used observations from 1970 to 2000 (the last year available for the Vanhanen data). Extending the data analysis to earlier years slightly reduces the reported correlations (to a 0.83–0.86 range) given the typically higher levels of measurement error present in V-Dem's estimates for regimes far back in time.

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party or coalition in the (first round of the) elections for governor.[4] The higher the incumbent's share, the lower the level of underlying competition. Very large electoral majorities for the incumbent typically reflect highly uneven playing fields in the preelection period. Alternatively, one could think that they reflect outstanding government performance, but this seems unlikely for the empirical domain under consideration: The Argentine provinces characterized by electoral hegemony are generally not especially well governed. Their economies do not develop faster than the rest of the country, their administrations are not particularly professional, and their rulers are definitely not less corrupt than the national-average.[5] The fact that sometimes electoral authoritarian regimes fail to obtain such majorities (Levitsky and Way 2002) should be interpreted as an effect of contingent events (e.g., an exogenous economic crisis hurting the incumbent) that introduce random noise but do not affect the indicator's systematic component. *Ceteris paribus*, very unfair political playing fields result in unusually good electoral outcomes for the incumbent. The inevitable measurement error introduced by contingent events is reduced both by their nonsystematic nature (which results in unbiased – if less precise – statistical inferences), and by the combination of the indicators into an index.[6]

2. *Legislative contestation* is the proportion of the vote won by the governor's party or coalition in the elections for the legislature (lower house in the case of bicameral provinces).
3. *Succession control* measures the extent to which the incumbent succeeds in keeping the governorship in a given election. It is coded "low" (=0) if the governorship is captured by the opposition, "medium" (=1) if the incumbent governor is succeeded by a co-partisan who is neither a relative nor a close political ally, and "high" (=2) if the governor is reelected or a relative or close

[4] Most provinces have a first-past-the-post electoral system. A few do conduct run-off elections.

[5] San Luis is often cited as an exception: It has made much progress since 1983 in terms of infrastructure and it has attracted – through a national industrial promotion scheme that favored it – significant manufacturing investment. It is not clear, however, that government performance is uniformly good. Corruption is generally considered very high, and much of the spending on infrastructure seems to be inefficiently assigned, in the sense that large showcase projects are given priority over less visible but more cost-effective ones.

[6] The ENP is often proposed as an alternative indicator of contestation (e.g., Giraudy 2010). However, it has significant validity problems, as uncompetitive party systems can have higher scores than competitive ones. For example, in a very competitive race between two parties with 50 percent of the vote each, ENP = 2, while in a clearly uncompetitive one in which one party gets 64 percent, and three other parties just 12 percent each, ENP = 2.21.

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political ally is elected. These scores reflect the idea that party rotation in power and, to a lesser extent, alternation within the ruling party, are likely to indicate a higher underlying level of democracy than continuous control of the governorship by a single person.[7]

4. *Legislature control* is the proportion of the (lower house) seats won by the party or coalition of the incumbent governor in a given election.[8] This figure is to some extent a function of *Legislative contestation*, but it also depends on partially endogenous electoral rules, which several supermajority-seeking governors have reformed since 1983 to produce large pro-incumbent biases in the vote–seat relationship (Calvo and Micozzi 2005; for details see Section 2.3).
5. *Term limits* assumes, in the same vein, that in less democratic districts governors will succeed in reforming provincial constitutions to scrap restrictions on their reelection (as described in Section 2.3).[9] This variable is coded zero if the constitution prohibits the immediate reelection of the governor, one if it permits only one immediate reelection, two if it allows two consecutive reelections, and three if it does not limit reelections.

All indicators are measured at the election that marks the end of every four-year gubernatorial term, that is, those of 1987, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015.[10]

To establish whether the conceptually independent dimensions of contestation and power concentration in the incumbent are also empirically independent, I factor analyzed the five indicators and found only one significant factor, which accounts for a much larger proportion of the variance than the second does.[11] Given this clear unidimensionality, the SDI is defined as the

[7] Executive rotation is a key element of Alvarez et al.'s (1996, 5) democracy index: "whenever in doubt, we classify as democracies only those systems in which incumbent parties actually did lose elections."

[8] The actual proportion of legislators belonging to the governor's bloc in the legislature would also be a reasonable indicator, but reliable data for all the provinces and terms involved are very difficult to obtain. *Legislature control* is just a proxy for the size of the incumbent's bloc, partly because in most provincial lower houses half of the deputies are elected every two years (so the size of the bloc depends on the previous election too) and partly because deputies can migrate among blocs.

[9] Immediate reelection was forbidden in all provinces in 1983; many have allowed it since then (see Corbacho 1998; Almaraz 2010; Lucardi and Almaraz 2017).

[10] A few provinces do not follow this electoral schedule. For example, gubernatorial elections took place in Santiago del Estero in 2008 and in Corrientes in 2009 (while they took place in 2007 in all the other provinces). The main reason for provinces to depart from the regular electoral schedule are federal interventions. In the case of the Federal Capital, the elections of 1996 and 2000 were off schedule because of its creation as an autonomous federal unit in 1996.

[11] Eigenvalues are 2.95 and 0.15 for the first and second factor, respectively. The factor loadings for the electoral indicators range between 0.87 and 0.91; for Succession Control and Term Limits they are 0.58 and 0.45, respectively.

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scores of the first factor (reversing signs to make higher values correspond to more democracy).[12] This also implies adopting a rule of aggregation (Munck and Verkuilen 2002), that is, an average that weights indicators proportionally to their correlation with the overall factor. The minimum value (−2.30) corresponds to the province of La Rioja in 1991, when, facing no term limits, the governor was reelected with 78.7 percent of the vote, while his party obtained 76.1 percent of the legislative vote, and fifteen of the sixteen seats at stake.

The sample includes observations for all twenty-four subnational units (twenty-three provinces and the *Capital Federal* [CF] in the city of Buenos Aires), and for each of the eight 4-year gubernatorial terms between 1983 and 2015. The actual number of observations is not 192 but 177, due to: (1) missing data for four observations,[13] (2) the impossibility of calculating the dependent variable for elections at the end of federal interventions[14] (which eliminates six observations from the sample), and (3) the fact that two districts enter the sample after 1983 (the former national territory of Tierra del Fuego[15] was made a province in 1990 and the Federal Capital – also known as Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, or CABA, since 1996 – was given political autonomy in that year), which means that five observations for these districts are missing.[16]

Observations are generated every four years, so the units of analysis are not province-years but province-terms. That is, instead of assigning the calculated score to each year (or quarter, or month) of the gubernatorial term, thus greatly but artificially increasing the number of observations, the score characterizes the term as a whole. Therefore, using the SDI as a dependent variable avoids the undue inflation of statistical significance associated with panel/Time-Series–Cross-Section (TSCS) data with more frequent (typically yearly) periods (Wilson and Butler 2007, 108).[17]

Because it applies to a relatively small number of institutionally similar polities, the SDI is more fine-tuned than the necessarily simple objective measures designed to cover all the world's countries over many decades (e.g., Alvarez

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[12] Factor scores have a mean and standard deviation of approximately 0 and 1, respectively.

[13] Incredibly, some of the electoral results needed to calculate the *Subnational Democracy Index* for four elections in three provinces are not available from any public source: San Juan (1987); San Luis (1991, 1999), and Santiago del Estero (2002).

[14] The absence of a provincial incumbent makes the calculation of four of the indicators impossible. For a list of the intervened provinces since 1983, see note 11 in Chapter 1.

[15] The complete name of this province is Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur. The denomination is politically important, as the "Islas del Atlántico Sur" include the Malvinas, Georgias del Sur and Sandwich del Sur, insular territories claimed by Argentina but de facto under colonial administration by the United Kingdom.

[16] For the CF the elections of 1987, 1991, and 1995, and for Tierra del Fuego 1987 and 1991. Tierra del Fuego had its founding elections in 1991, and the Federal Capital in 1996, but the Subnational Democracy index cannot be calculated for these elections, as is the case for the other twenty-two provinces for the 1983 elections.

[17] That is, extending the *Subnational Democracy Index* to the years before the electoral ones for which it is calculated would quadruple the number of observations without actually adding any real new information.

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et al. 1996; Vanhanen 2000). I illustrate this point by applying to the Argentine provinces the dichotomous index designed by Alvarez et al. (1996), which I will call the "ACLP Index" (because of its four authors, Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi and Przeworski; see update by Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010). All provinces have since 1983 been democratic in terms of the Index's three first rules: rule 1 ("the chief executive must be elected"), rule 2 ("the legislature must be elected"), and rule 3 ("there must be more than one party").[18] The test that some provinces fail is that of rule 4: incumbent parties must at some point lose power as a consequence of elections.[19]

For the exercise below, I use the less demanding interpretation of rule 4: if the incumbent party loses an election, then all past *and future* terms (assuming rules 1, 2, and 3 hold) are coded as democratic. This appears to be the interpretation closer to the original article, where the authors emphasize, "antecedent or subsequent events provide additional information" (Alvarez et al. 1996, 11).[20] They make it clear that information about whether incumbents are defeated or not is used *retrospectively* to code past terms. One could infer that it is used also prospectively to code as democratic future terms as long as there has been at least an alternation under identical rules.[21]

Table 2.1 presents the regime type of each province according to the ACLP Index. Seven out of twenty-four provinces (or 29 percent) are "dictatorships" because no incumbent has ever lost elections for the executive in the thirty-two years between 1983 and 2015 (which included eight gubernatorial contests

[18] There have been two types of exceptions: the two districts, Tierra del Fuego and the Federal Capital, that did not elect their executives until 1991 and 1996, respectively, and the provinces that at some point since 1983 have been under federal intervention (see note 11 in Chapter 1).

[19] Or, more precisely, even a regime that passes rules 1, 2, and 3 will be coded as not democratic if "the incumbents have ... held office by virtue of elections for more than two terms ... and until today ... they have not lost an election" (Alvarez et al. 1996, 14). The rule is actually longer and more complex (hence the several ellipses), but this simple version has all the relevant elements that allow to classify the Argentine provinces.

[20] José Antonio Cheibub, one of the authors of the measure, confirmed this interpretation. In answering a question about rule 4, he indicated that "[t]he rule does not say anything about when that alternation must occur. The assumption ... is that the behavior at one point in time is indicative of the behavior at other points in time" (personal communication, June 28, 2006). His restatement of rule 4 is "an alternation in power under electoral rules identical to the ones that brought the incumbent to office must have taken place" (Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, 2010, 69). As no specifics are given about the timing of the alternation, one can assume that an alternation in 1987 is enough to code as democratic a regime in 2015, as long as the electoral rules are the same (and rules 1, 2, and 3 still hold).

[21] The alternative interpretation is more literal: Regimes where incumbents "have ... held office by virtue of elections for more than two terms ... and until today ... have not lost an election" are not considered democratic. Taking the example of the province of Misiones, the UCR won the 1983 election for governor, but was defeated by the Peronist party in 1987. After that, the incumbent party was reelected (although changing names) in 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015. Therefore, the incumbent "has held office by virtue of elections for more than two terms and until today has not lost an election." In this interpretation, the 1987 defeat of the incumbent is superseded by the repeated reelection of the current incumbent.

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TABLE 2.1. *Provincial democracies and dictatorships according to the Alvarez et al. (1996) index (as of 2015)*

	Incumbent parties defeated and dates
Not democratic	
Formosa	None
La Pampa	None
La Rioja	None
Neuquén	None
San Luis	None
Santa Cruz	None
Santiago del Estero	None*
Democratic	
Buenos Aires	UCR 1987; FPV 2015
Catamarca	FCS 2011
City of Buenos Aires	AFP 2007
Corrientes	FT 2009
Chaco	PJ 1991; ACH 1995; UCR 2007
Chubut	UCR 1987; PJ 1991; UCR 2003; FPV 2015
Córdoba	UCR 1998
Entre Ríos	UCR 1987; PJ 1999; UCR 2003
Jujuy	FPV 2015
Mendoza	UCR 1987; PJ 1999; UCR 2007; FPV 2015
Misiones	UCR 1987
Río Negro	UCR 2011
San Juan	AB 1991; PJ 1999; ASJ 2003
Salta	PJ 1991; PRS 1995; PJ 2007
Santa Fe	PJ 2007
Tierra del Fuego	MPF 1999; PJ 2003; FUP 2007; PSP 2015
Tucumán	PJ 1995; FR 1999

*There was rotation in power, but not an electoral defeat of the incumbent. Rotation took place as a consequence of a federal intervention that removed the incumbent and called an election in which a different political party won (see details in paragraphs about Santiago del Estero in Section 4.1).

Note: AB: Alianza Bloquista; ACH: Acción Chaqueña; AFP: Alianza Fuerza Porteña; ASJ: Alianza por San Juan (a UCR-led coalition); FCS: Frente Cívico y Social (a UCR-led coalition); FPV: Frente para la Victoria (a PJ-led coalition); FR: Fuerza Republicana; FT: Frente de Todos; FUP: Frente Unidad Provincial (a UCR-led coalition); MPF: Movimiento Popular Fueguino; PJ: Partido Justicialista (or Peronista); PRS: Partido Renovador Salteño; PSP: Partido Social Patagónico; UCR: Unión Cívica Radical.

after the founding elections of 1983). In five of them, the undefeated incumbent is the Peronist party and in one a provincial party (the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*). In the remaining province, Santiago del Estero, a Peronist incumbent was removed by federal intervention in 2004, and in turn succeeded by an elected governor from a different party. This "alternation via intervention,"

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however, do not satisfy rule 4 because it is not electoral: the incumbent is not defeated at the polls, just removed by the federal government.

That electoral alternation has not happened in almost one third of the provinces over eight elections suggests that subnational regimes in Argentina are often less than democratic. By way of comparison, forty-nine of fifty US states had at least one rotation in the party controlling the governorship between 1983 and 2015 (the exception being South Dakota, continuously ruled by Republicans since 1979). As Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi, and Przeworski indicate, however, their measure systematically errs on the side of coding real democracies with dominant parties as dictatorships. This type of error seems likely in the cases under consideration, given that the seven "dictatorships" range from San Luis, where the same family has controlled the governorship since 1983 (and runs the only relevant local newspaper, see Section 2.3), winning elections with up to 90 percent of the vote, to Neuquén, where five different governors have been elected with a maximum of 61.2 percent of the vote and a minimum of 40.6 percent. Not surprisingly, San Luis has been described as authoritarian by countless academic and journalistic studies (Wiñazki 1995; Chavez 2004; Gibson 2012), while such a characterization has hardly been applied to Neuquén. The SDI does make graded differences between provinces dominated by one party within a reasonably democratic context and those in which a hegemonic party is a prominent expression of a low level of democracy.

2.2 RESULTS OF THE SUBNATIONAL DEMOCRACY INDEX

The SDI describes the regime in place during a gubernatorial term by measuring and aggregating five indicators at the election that marks the end of the term. Thus, for the typical province there have been, as of the writing of this book, eight measurement occasions: the provincial elections of 1987, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 (the founding 1983 elections are not considered, as there were no elected incumbents in office). Table 2.2 presents descriptive statistics for the SDI for all the provinces in the period 1983–2015, ordering them from the least to the most democratic on average in that period.

Readers familiar with Argentine politics will not be surprised to learn that the least democratic provinces since 1983 have been La Rioja, Formosa, Santiago del Estero, San Luis, and Santa Cruz. Provinces that experienced some periods of rather hegemonic rule (e.g., Catamarca under the Saadis in the 1980s, and again during part of the *Frente Cívico y Social* administrations after 1991) or extended periods of one party rule with lower levels of electoral domination (e.g., La Pampa) appear immediately after this group. At the other end of the spectrum, Tierra del Fuego, the Federal Capital and Mendoza appear as the most democratic districts.

Figure 2.1 displays a map of the Argentine provinces colored in five shades of gray, from those with the highest levels of democracy (lightest gray) to those with the lowest levels (darkest gray), according to the mean value of the SDI

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TABLE 2.2. *The Subnational Democracy Index: Summary statistics and temporal trends by province (from less to more democratic), 1983–2015*

	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max	Slope#	*N*
La Rioja	−1.68	0.48	−2.30	−0.86	–	8
Formosa	−1.14	0.84	−1.94	0.27	−0.073**	8
Santiago del Estero	−0.90	0.54	−1.58	−0.37	−0.047*	5
San Luis	−0.85	0.63	−1.62	0.10	–	6
Santa Cruz	−0.85	0.60	−1.80	0.05	–	8
Misiones	−0.31	0.83	−2.02	0.58	–	8
Catamarca	−0.24	0.25	−0.53	0.24	–	7
La Pampa	−0.12	0.20	−0.33	0.17	–	8
Jujuy	0.06	0.50	−0.53	0.77	–	8
Neuquén	0.09	0.43	−0.68	0.62	–	8
Salta	0.12	0.66	−0.98	1.16	–	8
Tucumán	0.16	1.18	−1.81	1.50	−0.087+	7
Chaco	0.16	1.07	−1.08	2.19	–	8
Corrientes	0.18	0.74	−1.09	1.19	–	6
Chubut	0.19	0.72	−0.90	1.09	–	8
San Juan	0.24	1.30	−1.07	2.30	–	7
Buenos Aires	0.27	0.46	−0.28	1.02	–	8
Santa Fe	0.28	0.44	−0.26	0.99	–	8
Córdoba	0.32	0.43	−0.14	1.19	–	8
Entre Ríos	0.36	0.50	−0.37	1.30	–	8
Río Negro	0.38	0.59	−0.20	1.59	–	8
Mendoza	0.88	0.78	−0.27	2.07	–	8
City of Buenos Aires	1.06	1.11	0.07	2.56	–	5
Tierra del Fuego	1.66	1.00	0.10	3.22	0.123*	6
Total	0.00	0.96	−2.30	3.22	−0.011+	177

(#) Slope of a simple OLS regression of the SDI over time (years); (−) Slope not significant; (+) Significant at 10 percent; (*) significant at 5 percent; (**) significant at 1 percent. The overall slope for the 177 observations was calculated using a fixed-effects estimator.

over the period 1983–2015. One quick inference to draw from this graph is that provincial regimes are not tightly clustered geographically. There is a tendency for the least democratic provinces to be located in the North and for the most democratic ones to be in the central region, but with important exceptions such as San Luis in the center of the country, and Santa Cruz, far in the Patagonian South. Likewise, it is possible to find bordering provinces with opposite types of regimes, such as the pairs Mendoza-San Luis and Santa Cruz-Tierra del Fuego.

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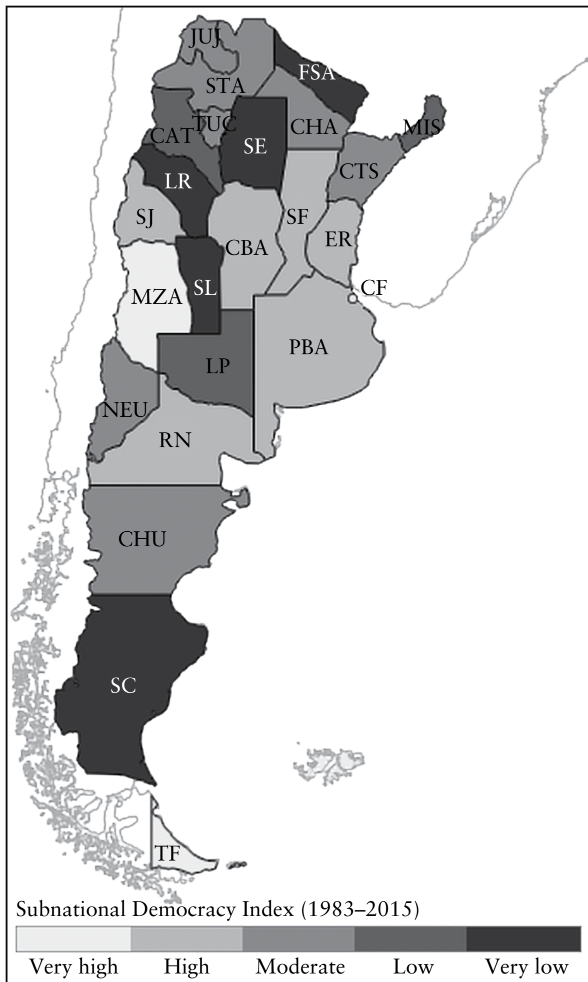

FIGURE 2.1. *Average Subnational Democracy Index (1983–2015) by province.* See note 13 in the Introduction.

2.2.1 Subnational Regime Variance: Cross-sectional and Temporal Components

The figures presented in Table 2.2 are averages for almost a third of a century and several elections. The first descriptive question to be tackled is how much of the variance is across provinces and how much over time. Estimates of the level of variance over time appear in the second column of the table (standard deviation): The *SDI* has actually varied significantly in provinces such as Chaco, San Juan, and Tucumán, while staying almost constant in Catamarca and La Pampa. Most provinces have experienced nontrivial changes in subnational

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democracy during the thirty-two years that followed the redemocratization of Argentina in 1983.

A more systematic analysis of the cross-sectional and times-series components of the variance in the SDI can be obtained via a decomposition of its overall standard deviation (=0.96) into a "between" component and a "within" component. For a total of 177 observations (corresponding to twenty-four provinces observed over an average of 7.38 elections), the "between" standard deviation is slightly larger (=0.72) than the "within" standard deviation (=0.67), which means, first, that the level of subnational democracy in Argentina varies by approximately the same order of magnitude across provinces as over time, and second, that cross-sectional variance contributes (marginally) more to the overall variance of the variable, a finding that is consistent with the rentier theory I propose in Chapter 5: as fiscal federalism rents vary much more across provinces than over time, it is expected that an important part of the overall variance of the SDI is also across provinces.

From the standard deviations in Table 2.2 we know, however, that "within" variance in turn varies from province to province. Moreover, standard deviations do not convey information about whether over-time variance in the SDI is random (as in a "saw" pattern) or systematic (as in an upwards or downwards trend). The latter type is descriptively important because it permits identifying provinces that have become more or less democratic since 1983. In the "Slope" column of Table 2.2, I present the regression of the SDI over time (that is, over the election years in which measurements were taken) for each of the twenty-four provinces. The last row shows that the slope for all the provinces together is negative and weakly significant (p-value = 0.078).[22] This evidence rules out the optimistic hypothesis of an *increasing* trend: the provinces of Argentina have not been becoming more democratic since national redemocratization in 1983. In fact, the slope estimate of −0.011 suggests that in the twenty-eight years between the elections of 1987 and 2015, provinces have lost almost 0.30 points in the SDI (which varies between −2.30 and 3.22, with a standard deviation of 0.96). This is not a dramatic deterioration of democracy, but it would be a worrying one if it were sustained over time. Assuming this trend is real (and not produced by sampling or measurement error): does it arise from a homogenous downward tendency among all provinces, or from a few provinces in which democracy deteriorated sharply in the last quarter century?

The results by province show that that most of them have nonsignificant temporal trends. This, of course, is in part related to the small N (typically 8) on which these slopes are estimated. In fact, only four provinces have temporal slopes that are significant at the liberal level of 0.1. Of these, however, three are negative, those of Formosa and Santiago del Estero (two of the least democratic

[22] Given the TSCS nature of the data, this slope was estimated using a fixed-effects estimator.

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provinces in the country, famous for their traditional bosses Gildo Insfrán, and Carlos Juárez and Gerardo Zamora, respectively) and Tucumán (a province that went from rather competitive in the 1980s and 1990s to quite hegemonic in the 2000s under governor Alperovich). The magnitude of these slopes is large. For example, the −0.073 coefficient corresponding to Formosa (which is the most highly significant) implies that over a 28-year-period Formosa lost a whopping 2.04 points in the SDI, that is, more than two standard deviations of the variable. The strong negative trend of these three provinces is partially compensated by Tierra del Fuego, the only one with a statistically significant democratizing trend over time. All in all, there is little evidence of a generalized trend toward less subnational democracy. A few provinces whose regimes have become sharply less democratic since 1983 drive the overall negative national trend.

An alternative way of analyzing the extent to which subnational regimes persist is looking at the cross-temporal correlation (or autocorrelation) of the SDI. The Pearson correlation between the SDI at a given election and the SDI at the previous election is 0.52 ($N = 145$). When the same analysis is applied to each of the eight elections since 1983, the coefficients are all positive, ranging from 0.26[23] (for the 1999 election) to 0.71 (2015). These positive and generally sizeable correlation coefficients[24] indicate considerable inertia in subnational regimes. However, the fact that their magnitudes are not always very high means that there is room for considerable change in relative levels of subnational democracy from election to election.

To clarify temporal trends, Table 2.3 displays the mean and standard deviation of the SDI for each election. The first row excludes the provinces off-schedule, that is, those that because of federal interventions or other reasons did not conduct their elections on the same year as the rest. The second row reproduces the analysis only for the set of sixteen "on schedule" provinces for which elections were conducted and data are available throughout the period under consideration ("Full-data provinces").[25] This implies losing a few observations but has the advantage of avoiding temporal changes due to differences in the samples under consideration.

In terms of average levels of the SDI, neither series shows a clear trend toward less or more democracy over time. The low point for both sets of means is 2011, a year in which many PJ/FpV provincial governors that had been building hegemonic regimes in their provinces took advantage of the strong

[23] This is the only coefficient that is not statistically significant at conventional levels, p-value = 0.28.

[24] The correlations presented above are surely attenuated (i.e., they are underestimated) due to the effects of measurement error in the SDI.

[25] These are the sixteen provinces that existed since 1983 (unlike the City of Buenos Aires and Tierra del Fuego), were not federally intervened (unlike Catamarca, Corrientes, Santiago del Estero and Tucumán), and had no missing data (unlike San Juan and San Luis).

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TABLE 2.3. *The Subnational Democracy Index: Summary statistics over time*

	Election							
	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015
On-schedule provinces								
Mean	0.18	0.03	−0.09	−0.01	0.14	−0.02	−0.23	0.11
SD	0.64	0.77	0.85	0.99	1.07	1.20	1.08	0.97
N	21	19	21	21	22	22	22	22
Full-data provinces								
Mean	0.19	−0.06	−0.09	−0.17	−0.03	0.00	−0.35	0.01
SD	0.61	0.71	0.92	0.97	0.85	0.98	1.09	0.78
N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16

coattails of President Cristina Kirchner (reelected that year in a landslide election) to obtain especially good results in their own elections. However, the 2015 election, in which the PJ/FpV did relatively poorly and lost the presidency, helped return the average SDI to normal levels.

What about variance? The standard deviations reveal how close or far provinces are from the mean. Are provinces growing farther apart from each other? Such a pattern would imply that over time some districts become increasingly democratic while other become more authoritarian. In fact, the "on-schedule" provinces show a monotonic increase in interprovincial variance until 2007: the standard deviation grows an average of 0.11 points from election to election, almost doubling in twenty years. This trend, however, is partially reversed in 2011 and 2015. A similar trend can be seen in the comparison of the sixteen provinces whose index can be calculated for the eight elections, but in this case the standard deviation grows only up to 1999, following a nonsystematic pattern after that year. It is clear, then, that provinces did diverge in their levels of democracy during the first years after 1983, but they seem to have leveled off since then. As I will discuss in the next chapter, this pattern suggests that the causal effects that are at play behind differing levels of democracy in the provinces take time to make themselves fully felt. The structural causal factors that I put forward in Chapters 4 and 5 (as well as other structural factors) operate through actors, and actors need time to collect information, learn, make decisions, exploit opportunities, and implement policies. In a nutshell: it is reasonable to think that faced with resources that can be used to establish political hegemony (for example fiscal federalism rents) provincial incumbents take a relatively long period of time to effectively use them in their advantage. The fact that some of the most rentier provinces – e.g., Formosa and Santiago del Estero – started at average levels of democracy and declined over time (as shown in Table 2.2) lends credibility to this hypothesis about the temporality

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of rentier causal effects (or, alternatively, the temporality of other explanatory factors that take time to exert their effects).

2.3 DEMOCRATIC AND HYBRID PROVINCES: QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE ON REGIME DIFFERENCES

The SDI is based on the most easily observable manifestations of democratic and undemocratic provincial politics: whether there is meaningful contestation for executive and legislative offices and whether the power of the governor has some reasonable institutional limits. In provinces like Entre Ríos, Mendoza or Santa Fe, governors leave office because they are term limited, and incumbent parties become opposition parties because they lose elections. The governor is lucky if her or his party has a slight majority in the legislature, but often she or he has to make do with a plurality of the seats. In Formosa, La Rioja, San Luis, Santa Cruz or Santiago del Estero, on the other hand, incumbent parties (which typically did not win by landslides in the founding elections of 1983) never lose elections or fail to control a comfortable majority in the legislature. Governors often reform the provincial constitution to scrap term limits and get reelected many times (thus Gildo Insfrán has been in power in Formosa for thirty years, eight as vice-governor and twenty-two as governor). When they do leave – to become presidents like La Rioja's Carlos Menem in 1989, San Luis' Adolfo Rodríguez Saá in 2001, and Santa Cruz's Néstor Kirchner in 2003, or because of (infrequent) term limits, or because of poor health or death – they are often replaced by a relative (e.g., brother Alberto Rodríguez Saá and sister Alicia Kirchner are governors today) or a trusted ally. In some unusual cases, the successor may be an internal rival of the incumbent governor with her or his own power base (say the mayor of the capital city or the legislature's president). A few times these governors and their parties were removed from office by federal interventions (see note 11 in Chapter 1). What never happens in these provinces, however, is that incumbent parties lose office "as a consequence of elections" (Alvarez et al. 1996, 5).

A look at the politics of the least democratic provinces reveals that incumbent governors and parties are not only virtually undefeatable at the polls, but also in fact extremely powerful in a much broader sense: continuous and comfortable electoral victories are just one manifestation of the formidable political capacities of these incumbents.

One of the clearest manifestation of these capacities is the ease with which, in the least democratic provinces, governors change electoral rules at will to consolidate their hold on power (Calvo and Micozzi 2005; Gibson 2012; Giraudy 2015, 97–9). Although Argentina's highly autonomous federalism gives provinces ample power to decide their own electoral rules (Gibson 2012, 75–6), some of them take this autonomy to suspicious extremes. Provinces like Formosa, La Rioja, and Santa Cruz are heavens for students of "endogenous institutions": places where elites openly and frequently create, change,

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and abolish electoral laws to serve their interests.[26] Three classic instances of such institutional endogeneity are: (1) the elimination of term limits on the governor, (2) the introduction of electoral rules prone to producing legislative supermajorities for the incumbent party, and (3) the strategic adoption or discarding of the system of double simultaneous voting (known as *Ley de Lemas* in Argentina).

Santa Cruz epitomizes the first case. In 1983, no Argentine provincial constitution allowed for the immediate reelection of the governor (Corbacho 1998). Over the next few years, many provinces allowed one immediate reelection, but only five eventually instituted unlimited reelections: Catamarca, Formosa, La Rioja, San Luis, and Santa Cruz (Cardarello 2012). In Santa Cruz, the architect of the reform was Governor Néstor Kirchner, elected in 1991, and reelected in 1995 and 1999 (he did not run for reelection in 2003 because he was elected president that year).[27] During his first term, Kirchner was able to negotiate a constitutional reform (passed in 1994) with the opposition allowing one immediate reelection for the governor. Once he obtained a second term in 1995, he proposed a new constitutional reform, this time entirely scrapping term limits. This second reform, however, was *imposed illegally*. In 1998, Kirchner called a nonbinding referendum (an institution he had included in the 1994 Constitution) on the term limits issue. He then used his victory in the referendum – instead of the 2/3 vote in the legislature required by the provincial Constitution – to convoke a constitutional convention, which eventually approved a clause allowing the indefinite reelection of the governor (all opposition delegates withdrew from the convention in protest against the unlawful procedure). Of twenty-one provincial constitutional reforms implemented in the 1983–2003 period studied by Almaraz (2010), "the 1998 reform in Santa Cruz is the only case of a strategy of reform imposition, and it is not a minor detail that it was the indefinite reelection [of the governor] that was incorporated with this strategy" (Almaraz 2010, 220; author's translation). Implementing two constitutional reforms in four years allowed Kirchner to quickly do away with term limits, one of the main limitations on his power. The fact that one of these reforms was carried out violating constitutional procedures is indicative of the undemocratic nature of his regime, but it is not typical. All other reforms to relax terms limits were done legally, but a precondition that greatly increased the probability of success was the incumbent's control of a supermajority in the provincial legislature (Lucardi and Almaraz 2017). Therefore, producing such supermajorities (typical of hybrid regimes) is a critical goal for ambitious governors.

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[26] For advanced democracies, see the classic piece by Boix (1999) on the strategic choice of electoral systems, for the Argentine provinces see Calvo and Micozzi (2005).

[27] In the rest of this paragraph, I follow Almaraz (2010) and Degiustti (2011).

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La Rioja has been a textbook case of supermajority-inducing electoral legislation. In all elections since 1983 the ruling PJ has obtained more than 80 percent of the seats in the unicameral provincial legislature, and about half of the time more than 90 percent (Gibson 2012, 90–3). In 2011, for example, thirty-four out of thirty-six seats (or 94.4 percent of the total), belonged to Peronist legislators (Balinotti 2011a). These extraordinary, highly suspicious majorities are only partially based on the electoral performance of the PJ; they are to a large extent institutionally manufactured by a peculiar electoral configuration typically found in hybrid provinces: extravagant levels of legislative malapportionment combined with small district magnitudes. Provincial legislators are elected on single or small member districts (such as municipalities), with demographically small districts strongly overrepresented. Thus, many tiny, rural, patronage and clientelism-ridden municipalities in the interior of the provinces elect one deputy each, while the provincial capital (by far the largest city in all hybrid provinces, and often the most electorally competitive) also elects one (or a few) deputies. The city or La Rioja, for example, concentrates 50 percent of the provincial population, but in 2001 elected only five of twenty-three deputies, or 21.7 percent (Leiras 2007, 187; Gibson 2012, 90–3). The opposition typically wins one or a couple of seats in the capital, but the incumbent party (the PJ in most hybrid provinces) easily takes all the seats corresponding to the many small municipalities. Similar electoral systems – sometimes combined with proportional representation in a single provincial district for a subset of the legislators – are found in other hybrid provinces such as Catamarca, San Luis, Santa Cruz, and Santiago del Estero (Gibson and Suarez-Cao 2010; Gibson 2012, Chapter 4).

Since the early years of the current democratic period, provinces have tended to implement pro-majoritarian electoral reforms, with La Rioja leading the process: for the period 1983–97, it was the province with the highest majoritarian bias in its electoral system for provincial legislators, followed closely by Santiago del Estero (Calvo et al. 2001). During the 1983–2003 period, La Rioja implemented the largest number of electoral reforms in the country, and after each of them the pro-incumbent bias of the electoral system for the legislature rose or remained at the same (very high) previous level. Similar patterns are found in Catamarca, Salta, Santa Cruz, and Santiago del Estero (Calvo and Escolar 2005, Chapter 5). In democratic provinces, on the other hand, legislative supermajorities (and supermajority-inducing electoral rules) are practically nonexistent. In fact, the incumbent parties in the Federal Capital, Buenos Aires, Mendoza, or Santa Fe often control just a plurality, and sometimes even a minority, of the provincial legislators. In 2018, for example, Governor María Eugenia Vidal of Buenos Aires (PRO) and Governor Alfredo Cornejo of Mendoza (UCR) ruled with lower chambers in which opposition parties controlled 52 percent of the seats. In the same year governors Juan

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Schiaretti (Córdoba-PJ) and Miguel Lifschitz (Santa Fe-Partido Socialista) presided over coalitions that did enjoy majorities – of 57 percent and 56 percent of the seats, respectively – but these were short of the 2/3 needed for starting a constitutional reform process.[28]

Another hybrid province, Formosa, best illustrates the strategic use of the double simultaneous voting system, depending on the convenience of the incumbent. During his first three terms Governor Gildo Insfrán benefited from this system as the many factions and groupings within his party (the PJ) ended adding votes to his candidacy and his legislative lists. In the 2011 elections, however, three significant opposition candidates decided to join forces: UCR national Deputy Ricardo Buryaile, dissident Peronist and former PJ governor Vicente Joga, and Francisco Nazar, a Catholic priest who became prominent defending indigenous populations repressed by Insfrán. The three leaders converged in a *lema*, so that all the votes each of them obtained would be assigned to the one with the most. Such an alliance represented a potential threat to Insfrán. He immediately had the local legislature amend the electoral law to do away with the double simultaneous voting system, *only for the office of the governorship* (i.e., keeping it for legislative seats). It took the legislature half an hour to pass this reform (Serra 2011). Buryaile and Joga declined their candidacies in favor of Nazar, but even so the priest – with little political experience, few resources, and inadequate media coverage – obtained only 24 percent of the votes, against Insfrán's whopping 75 percent.

The examples of changes in rules regarding term limits in Santa Cruz, legislative elections in La Rioja, and gubernatorial elections in Formosa illustrate how, if institutions are always to some extent endogenous, in some Argentine provinces they are remarkably manipulable: incumbents routinely and easily tailor the rules of the electoral and political game to their interests, so that they become free of the constraints imposed by terms limits, hegemonic in the legislative arena, and virtually undefeatable at the polls.[29] As Giraudy (2015, 99) asserts in her case study of La Rioja, "periodic electoral and institutional engineering ... enabled autocrats to undermine the opposition's capacity to defeat incumbents." More generally, Gibson (2012, 73), concludes that "a wave of provincial constitutional reforms in several provinces since the 1980s has restricted democracy, as our nineteenth-century Tennessee legislator would have put it, 'in a perfectly legal way.'" As I will argue in Part II of this book, it

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[28] Data taken from the official websites of the provincial legislatures (www.hcdmza.gob.ar/web/institucional/bloques.html; www.hcdiputados-ba.gov.ar/index.php?id=bloques; www.legiscba.gob.ar/ and diputadossantafe.gov.ar/web, consulted January 17, 2018). In the cases of Buenos Aires and Mendoza legislators identified as belonging to the UCR, the PRO, the Coalición Cívica, or Cambiemos (the coalition of these three parties) were counted as members of the government. All other legislators were counted as members of the opposition.

[29] For additional details on how electoral institutions were manipulated to undermine democratic contestation in favor the incumbent PJ in La Rioja, San Luis, Santa Cruz, and Santiago del Estero, see Gibson (2012, 84–93, 97–101).

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is possible that all governors wish to rule under a democratic-looking but the facto hegemonic regime, but that only those of rentier provinces like Formosa, La Rioja, and Santa Cruz have the means to make their wishes come true.

Like legislatures, the judiciary is a formally separate and independent branch of provincial governments, with constitutional review power and the capacity to investigate and control provincial officials. Plentiful evidence from the least democratic provinces attest to the ineffectiveness of courts as a constraint on the power of the executive. Unsurprisingly, some of the clearest examples of the lack of independence of provincial judges come from situations in which governors challenge term limits. Governor Gerardo Zamora of Santiago del Estero was elected in 2005 and reelected in 2009 (the provincial Constitution permitted one immediate reelection). Seeking a third term, one of the parties in his *Frente Cívico* alliance resorted to the provincial judiciary. A judge promptly found an argument in favor of the governor, and ruled that he had the right to run (a decision later confirmed by the provincial Superior Court). The opposition appealed to the national Supreme Court, which ruled against Zamora (he was succeeded by his wife Claudia Ledesma) (Clarín 2013). The case illustrates both the failure of local judges to limit the power of the governor by enforcing a (provincial) constitutional rule, and the key role that sometimes national authorities (in this case the federal Supreme Court of Justice) have in provincial politics. The lack of judicial independence in the least democratic Argentine provinces has been well documented, both by academic sources (e.g., for San Luis see Chavez 2003, 2004) and by media reports. Journalists have amply reported on manipulations of the judiciary by governors in provinces like Santa Cruz, where PJ Governor Kirchner (1991–2003) appointed several of his closest aides to the provincial Supreme Tribunal, illegally removed a provincial attorney general (Kirchner's successors ignored a 2009 national Supreme Court ruling against that decision), and appointed his niece as a provincial prosecutor in charge of key corruption investigations on government officials (Arias 2013). A special newspaper report on the state of judicial independence in the provinces found critical situations in Corrientes, La Rioja, San Luis, Santa Cruz, and Santiago del Estero (Sued 2004). Several interviews I conducted with analysts of Catamarcan politics largely agreed that, in the words on one source, "in the judiciary, everybody is friends with the Executive" (author's translation).[30] The governors of these provinces often remove critical judges and prosecutors through formal (impeachment) or informal (threats, blackmailing) means (Castagnola 2012), and regularly appoint relatives and political cronies to key judicial posts. The aforementioned legislative supermajorities found in most of these provinces are instrumental in such judicial manipulations.[31]

[30] My interview with Luis Reyes. Professor of Humanities, Universidad Nacional de Catamarca. San Fernando del Valle de Catamarca, July 14, 2006.

[31] Legislatures typically have the power to approve candidates to provincial courts proposed by the governor, and to remove judges, usually with special majorities.

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Governments, however, are not just controlled by the systems of checks and balances. The media is critical to democratic politics, so much that one of Dahl's (1971, 3) central elements of polyarchies is the availability of "alternative sources of information." As documented by the SEPP in the next chapter, levels of media pluralism and freedom vary significantly among the provinces of Argentina. In the worst cases, the main provincial media outlets are literally owned by the governor. For example, the only newspaper printed in San Luis – the somewhat ironically called *El Diario de la República* – belongs to brothers Adolfo and Alberto Rodríguez Saá, who have dominated the province since 1983. When Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación* (2017a) published, in reference to San Luis, an editorial informatively entitled "A province managed as a homestead" (author's translation), *El Diario de la República* (2017) published a reply that read: "San Luis is stupendous. It is, by far, the best province in Argentina. It enjoys a happy present that not even the most brutal of its enemies dares disacknowledge" (author's translation). If there were any doubts about the newspaper's editorial line, on September 9, 2012 its front page announced that its long-time director, Feliciana Rodríguez Saá (daughter of former governor Adolfo), would be replaced by Alberto Rodríguez Saá Jr. (son of current governor Alberto).[32] The provincial government directly or indirectly controls other mass media, such as a province-run public broadcast TV station, and two cable TV channels that are owned by Gualtieri, a construction company in charge of several of San Luis' public works projects.[33] There are, however, small spaces for alternative voices, for example radio stations. One of them belongs to the *national* University of San Luis (and is consequently independent from the provincial government), while some private radio stations feature independent journalists, critical intellectuals, and opposition politicians among their hosts and commentators.[34]

High officials of the ruling party also own the most important local media companies in other provinces, such as Jujuy (Eizayaga 2015). An academic study of this province's media system concludes that there is a relationship of mutual convenience between the provincial government and media companies (Arrueta 2005), which results in a "systematic process of informational distortion" (p. 173; author's translation). This distortion not only means a selectively favorable coverage of the incumbent administration, but also the "disqualification of opposition groups" (p. 175; author's translation). Arrueta, analyzing the early 2000s (before the UCR-led opposition was finally able to end, in 2015, thirty-two years of continued PJ rule), concludes that the level of collusion

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[32] See MDZ OnLine (2012).

[33] My interview with Juan José Laborda Ibarra, notary public and opposition politician. San Luis, August 3, 2006.

[34] My interviews with Omar Samper, historian and professor at Universidad Nacional de San Luis; San Luis, July 31 and August 4, 2006, and with Gloria Trocello, lawyer, political scientist, and professor and researcher at Universidad Nacional de San Luis; Villa Mercedes, August 1, 2006.

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between the government and the mass media was so serious that *jujeños* "live in a regime disguised as a democracy" (p. 178).

Things are not so transparent (or blatant) in other hybrid provinces as they are in the case of *El Diario de la República*. A more typical strategy of media control is using the provincial publicity budget in politically selective ways. Especially in small, rentier, state-dependent provinces, where private advertisers are few and small, government ads are critical to the profitability of media companies. Rulers in hybrid provinces have not only used this tool as a way of disciplining existing media, but also sometimes as a way of funding the creation and survival of media outlets started by cronies. Both strategies were used simultaneously, for example, by Governor Kirchner in Santa Cruz (Di Marco 2006; Arias 2015). Evidence on the selective use of the provincial advertising budget to punish or reward media companies depending on their political line exists for many provinces (Toller 2015), but the phenomenon is particularly intense in the less democratic ones, such as Formosa (Roberts 2017), Jujuy (Eizayaga 2015), La Rioja (Aiub Morales 2015), Misiones (La Nación 2006), San Luis (Trocello 2008, 270; Flores 2015), Santa Cruz (Arias 2015), and Santiago del Estero (Rodríguez 2015).

Open censorship is not common in any Argentine province, but there have been situations in which the public distribution of materials highly critical of rulers has been informally restricted. In Tucumán, a province that experimented a slump in its level of democracy during the administrations of Governor José Alperovich (2003–15),[35] a book containing an unflattering biography of him (Balinotti and Sbrocco 2011) was practically impossible to find in local bookstores. Distributors and storeowners mentioned many reasons, from "pressures from the government" to an alleged "anti-Semitic" undertone (Alperovich is Jewish) (La Nación 2011; author's translation). Everything pointed to the provincial government, especially given that such a book would have sold very well in Tucumán.[36]

Although not typical, journalists are sometimes deprived of their fundamental rights for reporting on matters inconvenient for provincial administrations. In late 2013 the director of an online news website in Santiago del Estero, Juan Pablo Suárez, was arrested by the provincial police, spent ten days in jail, and then faced a lawsuit, initiated by a provincial judge, for violation of the "anti-terrorist law" (a controversial statue passed by the Kirchner national administration). Suárez's sin? Filming and uploading to his website footage of a policeman who was beaten and arrested for demonstrating in the provincial

[35] Table 2.2 shows that Tucumán experienced, between 1983 and 2015, the second largest decline in the Subnational Democracy Index among all provinces, almost entirely explained by the low figures the province obtained at the end of each of Alperovich's three administrations: 2007, 2011, and 2015.

[36] The book in fact sold quite well in the rest of the country, reaching 4,500 copies in four editions, a very significant number for a book on provincial politics in Argentina. See http://zartucumano.blogspot.com.ar.

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capital in favor of higher salaries for the force, accompanied by his eight- and eleven-year-old daughters (Caminos 2014; Dapelo 2014).[37] Sometimes provincial rulers seem to hide their intimidating actions against journalists: in 2010 Adela Gómez, a radio journalist in Santa Cruz known for her critical investigations on the local PJ government, found her car burning in the middle of the night, after someone sprayed it with fuel and set it on fire (Arias 2010). There is no way to prove this attack was ordered by provincial authorities, but given how unfrequently cars suffer arson, and the profession and political line of its owner, such conclusion would not be far fetched.

This type of actions illustrates the most repressive side of provincial hybrid regimes. Although extreme forms of violence against opponents such as assassinations, disappearances, torture or incarcerations are very rare, the subtler practice of political espionage has been part of some of these regimes. The best-documented case took place in the province of Santiago del Estero under the Juárezes' regime (1983–2004).[38] The provincial police had an intelligence unit (*Departamento de Informaciones*) dedicated to gather information about politicians, journalists, business owners, bishops, and other politically important people. The chief of this structure was Antonio Muza Azar, a retired police officer who had committed many and horrendous human rights violations during the 1976–83 military dictatorship.[39] When the archive of the *Departamento* was eventually made public in the 2000s, more than 40,000 files turned up, in a province that by the 2001 census had barely 805,000 inhabitants (Dandan, Heguy, and Rodríguez 2004, 313–4; Dargoltz, Gerez, and Cao 2006, 62 and 74; Gibson 2012, 103). The spying was so comprehensive that it included files on the vice-governor, the president of the legislature, and some of the Juárezes' closest aides (Carreras 2004, 259).

There is also significant evidence of political spying for several other hybrid provinces. Informed sources in Catamarca describe the regime of Ramón Saadi (1983–7, 1988–91) and Vicente Saadi (1987–8) – son and father, respectively – as quite coercive, mentioning "black lists," police harassment of opponents, repression of demonstrations, and political spying.[40] Likewise, opposition

[37] The video can be seen at http://noticias.perfil.com/2014/05/12/aplicarian-la-ley-antiterrorista-contra-un-periodista (consulted January 10, 2018).

[38] Carlos Juárez and his wife Nina Aragonés ruled the province approximately ten years during this period, and he was a central provincial political figure even when other PJ leaders were governors. *Juarismo* eventually came to an end when a federal intervention removed Nina from the provincial executive in 2004. The aging couple was later prosecuted for human rights violations and corruption.

[39] Musa Azar was judged and sentenced to life prison in several cases involving murder, rape, and torture (El Liberal 2013). See also note 7 in Chapter 4.

[40] My interview with Luis Reyes. See note 30. My interview with Luis Varela Dalla Lasta. Catamarcan politician. One of the founders of the Frente Cívico y Social and Minister of Education under Governor Oscar Castillo (1991–9). San Fernando del Valle de Catamarca, July 15, 2006. See also Morandini (1991, 140–50).

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leaders and even "off the record" police sources in Tucumán report that the *Dirección de Inteligencia Criminal* of the provincial police conducted extensive espionage during Alperovich's years, infiltrating political, social, and cultural organizations to gather information about their leaders and their political activities. Such intelligence was reported directly to Alperovich's Secretary of Security (Ybarra 2012). Not surprisingly, Governor Insfrán of Formosa also appears to have a similar apparatus in the *Departamento de Informaciones* of the provincial police. The UCR (the main opposition party in the province) and leaders of small leftist parties have denounced systematic spying on political meetings, demonstrations, social activists and journalists, mostly hacking their email and social media accounts, and their phones (Merlo 2015). An in-depth article on Formosa's politics published by a mainstream Buenos Aires-based newspaper also reports widespread spying (Roberts 2017). One of the few instances in which the nature of Insfrán's regime became clearly visible was the repression of a demonstration by an indigenous people (the Qom) in 2010. One of the protestors, Roberto López, was killed by the provincial police, in an operation that had the assistance of national security forces and political support from the national administration of Cristina Kirchner (Sudestada 2013). Not surprisingly, the leader of the protesting Qom, Felix Díaz, appears to have been one of the main targets of Insfrán's espionage (Merlo 2015).

The pieces of evidence presented above on matters such as institutional manipulations to scrap term limits and manufacture legislative supermajorities, tactics to subdue the judiciary, actions to control the local media and intimidate journalists, and cases of political espionage, are just a sample of a much larger pool of instances in which provincial rulers, and in particular governors, resort to legal and illegal practices to concentrate power, undermine mechanisms of accountability, discourage dissent, and ultimately minimize the electoral chances of the opposition. Although difficult to prove systematically, it is clear that even if a few of these practices are also used in the more democratic provinces (the politically selective assignment of government publicity to local media outlets is a good example), they are much more common and much more serious in the provinces that have figured prominently in this section: Formosa, La Rioja, San Luis, Santa Cruz, and Santiago del Estero. The aforementioned priest Francisco Nazar has stated that "[i]n Formosa democracy has been kidnapped" (Cappiello 2011; author's translation), adding more recently that Formosans "live in a regime that behind a disguise of democracy hides a true dictatorship. There are no public freedoms, they persecute you, they threaten you" (La Nación 2017b; author's translation). Statements as strong as these are difficult to come by in most Argentine provinces. The undemocratic practices documented above have also been present in other provinces, such as Jujuy, Misiones and Tucumán, although in these cases, their prevalence is less widespread or has been associated with specific periods, such as the Alperovich administrations in Tucumán. In Section 6.3 I will present complementary qualitative case evidence geared

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not toward describing the undemocratic practices that characterize hybrid provinces, but toward documenting the causal mechanisms connecting the main explanatory factor put forward by this book – fiscal federalism rents – with those practices.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the objective *Subnational Democracy Index*, and used it to provide a first look at differences in levels of subnational democracy across provinces and over time. The statistical analysis of the index revealed significant levels of cross-provincial variance in democracy, and provided important information on temporal variance: provincial regimes do vary over time (almost as much as across space) and a few of them have experienced clear trends since 1983. Moreover, it appears that Argentina's provinces tended to diverge in terms of democracy since a national democratic regime was reestablished in 1983.

Some provinces (e.g., Formosa, La Rioja, San Luis, Santa Cruz, and Santiago del Estero) are much less democratic than others, and four provinces appear to have become significantly less (Formosa, Santiago del Estero, and Tucumán) or more (Tierra del Fuego) democratic over time. Strikingly, almost one third of Argentina's provinces have not experienced electoral rotation in the party controlling the governorship after more than thirty years of electoral politics both at the national and subnational levels. As I will show in Chapter 7, few federal democracies in the world feature such a high proportion of uncompetitive subnational regimes.

Qualitative evidence from several hybrid provinces documented how their rulers systematically concentrate power, disable checks and balances, restrict press freedom, spy on opponents, and ultimately slant the electoral playing field sharply in their favor. Although to some extent a few of these practices also take place in the provinces that the SDI identifies as democratic, they are much less serious and effective. Part II of the book introduces and tests a theory that accounts for the remarkable deficiencies of democracy in several Argentine provinces, a theory that emphasizes the regime effects of subnational rentierism fueled by federal fiscal transfers.

The SDI is a reasonably valid overall summary measure of the nature of provincial regimes, but it is "thin" and unidimensional. Chapter 3 turns to a thicker, more complex and highly multidimensional description of subnational regimes in Argentina, based on the analysis of the rich data produced by the SEPP.

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3

Expert Survey Evidence

*The Many Dimensions of Subnational Democracy**

This chapter presents the methodological design and results of the Survey of Experts on Provincial Politics (SEPP). Unlike the Subnational Democracy Index (SDI) introduced in Chapter 2, which produced data from 1983 to 2015, the SEPP focuses almost exclusively on the 2003–7 gubernatorial period. This limitation, however, is more than compensated for by the strengths of the SEPP data in terms of validity and breadth: the unidimensional index based on indicators of middling validity in the previous chapter is complemented in this one by many highly valid indices of diverse dimensions of subnational regimes. These indices assess aspects of democracy as diverse and important as election fairness and inclusiveness, freedom of expression, checks and balances, and government repression and discrimination.

Section 3.1 describes the methodological design of the SEPP and the construction and content of nineteen indices that are derived from it. Section 3.2 uses these indices (and to a lesser extent the survey's individual items) to present a multidimensional description of provincial regimes in Argentina. Finally, Section 3.3 compares the SEPP-based indices with the SDI with the goal of showing to what extent both operational approaches – objective and subjective – yield similar results.

3.1 SUBJECTIVE INDICATORS: THE SURVEY OF EXPERTS ON PROVINCIAL POLITICS[1]

An effective and feasible operational strategy to deal with the particular difficulty of placing hard-to-measure subnational regimes (see Section 1.3) on

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* Portions of this chapter were published previously in Gervasoni (2010b, 2016a, 2016b).

[1] This section follows Gervasoni (2010b).

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the democracy–authoritarianism continuum is to assess the many aspects of democracy identified in Section 1.2.2 on the basis of the information provided by scholars, journalists and other people with deep knowledge of the politics of each province. This is precisely what the SEPP does.

The potential for bias in subjective operationalizations of democracy, especially that arising from biases in the judges and the information sources available to them, has been well documented at the national level (Bollen and Paxton 2000). The SEPP is likely to suffer *less* from these problems because: (1) the selected experts (unlike those analyzed by Bollen and Paxton) reside (mostly) in the polities evaluated and possess specific, first-hand expert knowledge about their politics, and (2) they are asked about clearly defined and factual aspects of the provincial regime, which reduces the margin for "halo effects" (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2005). Experts faced with concrete questions on specific topics about which they have direct knowledge are much more likely to answer them based on this knowledge than to make inferences from some other provincial characteristic, such as its perceived level of "overall democracy" or its level of development. On the other hand, the fact that judges are province-specific does have the potential disadvantage of introducing different biases in different provinces. This could be the case, for example, if the experts from a given province tended to have similar perceptual biases or relied on similar biased sources, which in turn were different from the biases of judges in other provinces.

There are to my knowledge only two precedents of measuring subnational regimes through expert surveys, carried out by Kelly McMann and Nikolai Petrov in Russia and Kyrgyzstan (McMann and Petrov 2000; McMann 2006).[2] The main methodological difference between these surveys and my own is that the former interviewed a group of experts who resided in the countries' capital cities and asked them to rank and rate all the regions (Kyrgyzstan) or the top ten and bottom ten regions (Russia) in terms of democracy, while the SEPP selected a smaller set of experts for each province with deep knowledge about its political system and typically resident in it. They could be realistically expected to possess the comprehensive information needed to accurately answer questions about each dimension, subdimension, component, and subcomponent of democracy in their specific provinces. Each strategy has complementary advantages and disadvantages. One cannot expect a single set of experts to have deep and detailed knowledge about each subnational unit, but to the extent that they do, they are more likely to apply the same standards to all of them. On the other hand, province-specific experts, especially those who live in the province they study, will command much more knowledge about it, but experts from different provinces may

[2] See note 9 in the Introduction.

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apply different standards or interpret questions in different ways. Given my choice to implement a "thick" operationalization for the Argentine case, the first option was not realistic: few experts possess the necessary familiarity with the politics of more than one province, let alone the twenty-four districts of Argentina.

The questions included in the SEPP are largely factual. Far from asking "your opinion about the level of democracy in this province," the items inquired about very specific aspects of the provincial political system. For example, item number 24 reads:

> Now I am going to ask you a few questions about the October 2007 provincial elections in which candidate XXX defeated candidate YYY. How clean was the counting of the votes on the part of electoral authorities? Do you think there were no, a few, some, quite a few, or many irregularities in the counting of the votes?

Of course, even in this type of question there is room for errors based on the expert's subjectivity. They may base their answers on incorrect or biased information, or different experts may interpret differently the meaning of words such as "few" or "many." The question, however, is clearly about establishing a fact, not about eliciting an opinion. If experts are, as the SEPP's methodology required, knowledgeable and reasonably impartial, their answers (and more so the average or several experts' answers for a given province) should be highly correlated with the underlying traits of interest.

Why consult experts instead of coding regimes characteristics based on academic or journalistic written reports? Experts are a more reliable source than secondary sources, in part because the latter lack the necessary level of detail, quality, and neutrality for several provinces, and in part because the subtle ways in which democracy is restricted in hybrid regimes calls for very specific pieces of information. Experts are more likely to know and report informal practices at odds with democracy than, for example, some of the short and biased newspapers published in several provinces. Moreover, while with documental sources one is limited to coding aspects of the provincial regime they cover, experts can answer questions about multiple aspects of democracy beyond electoral competition and inclusion, such as the effectiveness of legislative and judicial checks on the executive, the level of press freedom, the prevalence of human rights violations, and so forth. "Thickness" is better served by experts than by written sources.

In summary, given the characteristics of the cases to be scored, relying on province-specific experts is advisable because they are likely to grasp the subtleties of regimes that are partly democratic and partly authoritarian, and because they typically outperform the limited quantity, quality, and thematic coverage of secondary sources, especially for the smallest and least-developed provinces. The fact that the SEPP consulted several experts in each province and asked several questions about each aspect of democracy brings the additional advantages of

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reducing measurement error and of allowing for the estimation of its magnitude.[3] A disadvantage of consulting experts is that human memory limitations make the accuracy of their answers typically lower for periods farther back in time.[4] For this reason, the SEPP questions are largely about the immediate past.

The SEPP was conducted face-to-face during 2008 in each of Argentina's twenty-four first-level subnational units using a structured questionnaire[5] that included 146 close-ended and fourteen open-ended substantive items about the 2003–7 gubernatorial term.[6] Most of these items (ninety-two) measure the subcomponents of subnational democracy shown in Table 1.1.[7] A total of 155 experts, or an average of 6.46 per province, were interviewed (minimum=4; maximum=12). Respondents were politically independent social scientists and journalists with expertise on the province in which they resided. Appendix A contains details of the survey methodology.

The measurement strategy, then, is comparable to that of the widely used Polity IV dataset, which typically relies on just one coder per country, and a few coders for some countries to assess inter-coder agreement (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2014, 5–8), or to that of the Varieties of Democracy project, which uses about five experts per country and per aspect of democracy (Pemstein et al. 2017).

3.1.1 Aggregation: From Individual Responses to Provincial Indices

This section explains how the thousands of responses given by 155 experts to ninety-two survey items were aggregated to, first, obtain provincial estimates for each item and, second, produce provincial multi-item indices of different aspects of democracy.

Step 1: Aggregation from individual experts' scores to provincial scores. Under the assumptions of classical measurement theory (Traub 1994), each expert's response contains both the magnitude of interest and some random

[3] That is, multiple experts and multiple measures improve measurement reliability and permit estimating it.

[4] Objective indicators are superior to expert judgments in this respect.

[5] The questionnaire (in Spanish) is available in the online appendix at www.utdt.edu/profesores/cgervasoni.

[6] For two provinces off the regular electoral schedule, Corrientes and Santiago del Estero, the periods evaluated were different, 2001–5 and 2002–4, respectively. Three other districts were also assessed at different periods because of the resignation of a governor before the end of his term (the survey was about the administration of a given governor). These are the Federal Capital (2005–7, Chief of Government Jorge Telerman), Santa Cruz (2006–7, Governor Carlos Sancho), and Tierra del Fuego (2005–7, Governor Hugo Cóccaro).

[7] The survey contains, in addition, several "overall evaluation of subnational democracy" items about the current and past gubernatorial periods in the province, about a neighboring province, and about three national administrations (Raúl Alfonsín, Néstor Kirchner, and Carlos Menem), and items about the most and least democratic provinces in the country. See more details in Appendix A.

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measurement error. If so, the mean of all responses is an unbiased estimator of the regime trait under consideration.[8] An alternative to the mean is the median, which is an appropriate statistic for ordinal (and higher) levels of measurement (see note 8). One important way in which these measures differ is in how they treat experts who disagree with the majority: while the median ignores dissident minority responses, the mean gives all responses an equal influence on the provincial score.[9] Because I believe it is reasonable to consider every expert's opinion, all results in this book are based on mean (as opposed to median) provincial scores. Because both methods for aggregating individual expert judgments into provincial scores yield very similar results (i.e., the correlations between mean and median scores are very high for almost all items[10]), this decision should not have major effects on the descriptive and causal inferences made in this chapter and in Chapter 6, respectively.

[8] This reasoning assumes that variables are measured at the interval or ratio level, while most of the survey's items are ordinal (e.g., scales that range from "always" to "never," or from "all" to "none" with typically three or four intermediate categories). Although it is not unusual in the social sciences to treat such variables as if they were interval level, it is strictly speaking incorrect to calculate the mean (a statistic that assumes an interval or ratio level of measurement) for ordinal variables.

[9] The median is a "robust" measure of central tendency because it is less affected than the mean by extreme values. If four experts in a province answered "never" (code = 1) and the fifth answered "frequently" (code = 4), then the provincial score would be 1 using the median, but 1.6 using the mean. The median essentially plays down the opinions of one or a few (depending on the total *N* for the province) disagreeing experts. This can actually be a reasonable decision in situations like the example in which a majority of experts agree on an answer, and a single one strongly disagrees: the latter's opinion may be interpreted as containing a large amount of measurement error (perhaps the expert had an incorrect piece of information or misinterpreted the question; maybe the interviewer made a mistake in recording the answer). If so, disregarding this opinion can be sensible. The mean, on the other hand, treats this type of answer as a legitimate source of information. This is also defensible. It may be that the disagreeing expert has information that the others do not possess. Giving dissident opinions some weight in the provincial score appears especially reasonable when there are moderate disagreements: imagine that now three experts answered "never" (code = 1), a fourth "hardly ever" (code = 2) and a fifth "sometimes" (code = 3). The median and mean provincial scores will be, as in the previous example, 1 and 1.6, respectively. It seems reasonable to favor the latter, which reflects the information contained in the opinions of the fourth and fifth, slightly disagreeing, experts.

[10] The mean Pearson's r correlation between the mean and median versions of all regime-related items in the survey is of 0.90 (median correlation = 0.92). Moreover, the two items with the lowest correlation (on levels of state discrimination against immigrants from other provinces and against women; $r = 0.62$ and $r = 0.64$, respectively), turn out to have very low interprovincial variance: all provinces score very high on these items, and most actually have a perfect democratic score (all experts agreed that there is no discrimination). In the few provinces where one or a couple of experts did report some discrimination, the mean and the median differ, not by much in absolute terms, but considerably given the small variance of the variable. These two low correlations are outliers that depress the averages reported above (all other correlations are larger than 0.75, and most exceed 0.80). Without these outliers, the mean correlation is of 0.91 and the median correlation of 0.93.

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A final and important clarification: All questions in the survey offered a set of answers intended to cover the whole range of variation of a given trait. In most cases, that variation linearly maps the variation in democracy they try to measure. For example, question 24, about the cleanliness of the vote counting process, allows the answers: "[t]here were no/few/some/quite a few/many irregularities." In an item like this, movement in the scale implies going from more to less democracy. A few questions, however, have a nonlinear relationship with democracy. Take items 32a–32d: they ask about media bias in the coverage of the last gubernatorial election (for broadcast TV, cable TV, radio, and newspapers). Possible answers were: "1. Very biased in favor of incumbent candidate," "2. Somewhat biased in favor of incumbent candidate," "3. Balanced," and "4. Biased in favor of opposition candidates." In this case, the third and fourth categories imply that opponents have good media coverage and, therefore, that there are reasonable chances for the opposition to compete electorally with the incumbent.[11] In cases like this, I assigned the most democratic scores (=1) to all the categories that are compatible with democracy (i.e., both categories 3 and 4 were coded 1).[12]

Step 2: Aggregation from provincial items to provincial indices. The descriptive analyses in the next section emphasize indices (i.e., aggregate measures that combine several items) rather than individual SEPP items. There are two reasons for this, one practical and one methodological. The practical reason is that the amount of space needed to describe and try to explain the ninety-two survey items measuring specific regime characteristics would be enormous (the mean and standard deviation of all items can be consulted in Tables A.1 and A.2 in the online appendix, or obtained from the SEPP dataset[13]). As many items measure the same aspect of democracy and/or are empirically highly correlated, reducing them to a few indices allows for a much more manageable amount of data with little loss of substantive information. The methodological reason is that using multiple measures to gauge the same underlying variable increases reliability (DeVellis 1991), often dramatically when using political science indicators affected by high levels of measurement error (Ansolabehre, Rodden, and Snyder 2008). The reason

[11] It could be argued that the third category is more democratic than the fourth, but if one (very realistically) assumes that threats to democracy come mostly from the incumbent (in general, and clearly so in the Argentine provinces) then both categories 3 and 4 imply a fair, competitive playing field (for similar reasons when using objective measures, I interpret an electoral landslide for the opposition a clear indication of democracy; see Section 2.1).

[12] The same procedure was applied to the cases of questions 5a–5b, 40a–40d, and 41a–41b. For the item 5a responses 3, 4, and 5 are seen as equally and fully democratic, while for item 5b the democratic categories are 1, 2, and 3. In the case of items 40a, b, c, and d, I considered categories 1 and 2 ("More coverage" and "the same coverage," respectively) fully democratic, and therefore coded them with a 1. Categories 4, 5, and 6 in item 41a, and categories 1, 2, and 3 in item 41b were also all considered fully democratic.

[13] At www.utdt.edu/profesores/cgervasoni.

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is that each indicator adds to the index the actual magnitude one wishes to measure (the "signal") while the inevitable random measurement error contained in each of them (the "noise") tends to cancel out.

The process of creating indices from individual indicators proceeded considering both conceptual and empirical factors. When a measurement instrument (e.g., a questionnaire) purposefully includes several indicators of the same underlying variable, the creation of an index is justified purely on conceptual grounds. Even if these indicators are not highly correlated empirically, combining them into an index can be justified if they are considered "causal indicators" (Bollen and Lennox 1991), or indicators constitutive of the concept to be measured (Goertz 2006, 55–62).[14] This is, for example, what Vanhanen's (2000) Polyarchy Index does: its competition and inclusion indicators are not strongly correlated, yet they are combined to form the index because both of them "cause" democracy or, alternatively, because both are constitutive of democracy.

Therefore, when several SEPP items were included in the questionnaire with the specific goal of measuring the same underlying regime aspect, I combined them in an index. For example, items 35a through 35d are all about the risk facing public employees in case they were openly critical of the provincial administration. Experts had to say whether four types of employees[15] faced "grave risks" (such as being fired), "moderate risks" (such as not being promoted), or "no risks." Although things could be different for each type of employees, one could still construct an index to gauge to what extent provincial public servants are punished for their political opinions. In the actual analysis the inter-item correlations were all positive and quite high (between 0.58 and 0.88), and the resulting *Punish Employees* index (see details below) had a very high Cronbach's alpha (α=0.91).[16] This example illustrates how both goals were achieved: four items were reduced to just one index, significantly lightening the analysis burden and increasing measurement reliability.

Empirical considerations also have a role in building indices. "Effect indicators" (Bollen and Lennox 1991) – those that are caused by the underlying variable of interest – can be combined only if they are actually correlated. Sometimes it is not clear whether two or more indicators measure the same underlying trait. In these cases, correlation or factor analyses assist the researcher in deciding inductively which indicators should be combined. Even items that, *prima facie,* are not measuring the same thing can turn out to be highly correlated and combined because, whatever prior expectations the researcher had, they seem

[14] Only "effect indicators" are logically expected to be correlated, as they are supposed to be caused by the underlying variable they try to measure (Bollen and Lennox 1991).

[15] High ranking career civil servants, administrative career employees in the ministries, temporary administrative employees in the ministries, and teachers.

[16] Cronbach's alpha (α) is a measure of index or scale reliability. It ranges between 0 and 1. Numbers closer to 1 indicate higher reliability.

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to be tapping the same underlying variable. Some of the indices introduced below (for example *Totalitarian Control*) were constructed in this somewhat inductive way.

Following these guidelines, I developed nineteen SEPP-based indices, calculated as simple, unweighted averages of the items they are based on.[17] Table 3.1 displays their names, a short description of their substantive content, the list of all the survey items they include, the number of items included, and their Cronbach's alpha (α, see note 16). Indices vary widely in terms of the number of items they include (from two to twenty, although most have between four and six items), but they always have quite high reliabilities: alpha averages 0.88, is above 0.80 for all but one index, and is as high as 0.96 in two cases. The first two columns of Table 3.1 indicate what dimensions and subdimensions of democracy (see Figure 1.1) the indices are associated with. There are two types of indices: seventeen are "first-level," which tap relatively narrow aspects of subnational regimes, and two are "second-level," that is, broader indices that encompass several related aspects of democracy.[18]

Table B (in Appendix B) contains a more detailed explanation of the process of index construction. The first four columns display the operationalization scheme (from Table 1.1) down to the level of subcomponent, while the last three columns indicate: (1) which SEPP items correspond to each subcomponent of democracy, and (2) which indices are constructed on the bases of what items. Nine out of the ninety-two relevant items are not included in any index (and are crossed out in Table B for easy identification) either because they have practically no interprovincial variance (identified in the table as "lv," for low variance) or because their correlations with the other items are not high enough to justify inclusion ("lc," for low correlation). Eighty of the remaining eighty-three items go into the construction of the seventeen first-level indices.[19] Some are just summaries of a single question on the same topic repeated for different aspects of the topic (e.g., items 35a–35d, mentioned above, about the risk facing public employees critical of the provincial government). Other indices are formed from different questions in the SEPP that are thematically and empirically related. For example, questions 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25

[17] Additive indices (including those based on averaging items out) and factor analysis-based indices tend to be highly correlated (Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008), but the former have the advantage of keeping the original scale of measurement of the variables instead of converting it to a standard variable with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. The latter operation means that one loses sight of differences in the variances of the indices, as all have by definition the same standard deviation.

[18] The seventeen first-level indices are mutually exclusive, as each item belongs to only one of them. The two second-level indices, *Media Independence* and *Punish Opponents*, do not share items between them either, but they summarize information already contained in some of the first-level indices.

[19] Three items (3L, 39, and 42) do not belong into any of the first-level indices because they are neither conceptually related to nor empirically correlated with them.

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TABLE 3.1. *SEPP-based indices of subnational democracy*

Dimension	Subdimension	Index name	Substantive content	Items (# of items)	α
First-level indices					
Popular sovereignty or democratic rule	Inclusiveness	**Fair Elections***	Procedural fairness of last gubernatorial elections (registration, vote counting, etc.)	19–25 (7)	0.88
	Contestation	**Campaign advantage**	Incumbent gubernatorial candidate advantage in funds and media coverage during last campaign	29+30***, 32a–d (5)	0.87
		Soft Media Control	Scope of government measures to control the content of the media	44a–c, j–k (5)	0.73
		Hard Media Control		44d–i (6)	0.91
		Media bias	General (i.e., not campaign-specific) level of pro-incumbent media bias	40a–d (4)	0.85
		Critical journalists	Proportion of critical and noncritical journalists in the local media	41a–b (2)	0.96
		Punish journalists	Frequency of government sanctions against critical journalists	43a–f (6)	0.87
		Opposition leaders	Frequency of government sanctions against critical opposition politicians	33a–e, 34 (6)	0.89
		Punish employees	Intensity of government sanctions against critical public employees	35a–d (4)	0.91
		Free protest	Population's freedom to criticize government and participate in protests	36, 37, 38 (3)	0.93

(*continued*)

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TABLE 3.1. (*continued*)

Dimension	Subdimension	Index name	Substantive content	Items (# of items)	α
Political liberties or limited government	Institutional constraints	**Legislative control**	Extent to which legislature has real power and constrains the executive	3a, 5a–b, 6 (4)	0.94
		Judicial control	Extent to which provincial supreme tribunal and lower courts are independent from and constrain the executive	7, 8b, 10 (3)	0.88
		Horizontal accountability	Effectiveness of controls on the executive by agencies of horizontal accountability	11a–f (6)	0.92
	Liberal rights	*Pluralistic media*	Ease of access to varied media information about provincial politics	45a–c (3)	0.85
		Police repression	Frequency of unjustified police repression	47a–f (6)	0.87
		Totalitarian control	Government control of society through indoctrination, restrictions on public information, spying, and police repression	46–49, 51 (4)	0.84
		Government discrimination	Government discrimination against groups defined by religion, ethnicity, etc.	50a–f (6)	0.81
Second-level indices					
Popular sovereignty	Contestation	**Media independence****	Extent to which there are alternative, diverse and critical sources of information (media outlets) about local politics	31, 40a–d, 41a–b, 42, 45a–c (11)	0.94
		Punish opponents	Frequency of government sanctions against critical opposition politicians, journalists, public employees, and citizens	33a–e, 34, 35a–d, 36–39, 43a–f (20)	0.96

Note: Italicized names indicate that index is subsumed into one of the two second-level indices. These indices are used (like all other indices) for descriptive purposes in this chapter. Bolded indices are those also used for explanatory purposes in Chapter 6.

*The Fair Elections index contains items tapping both the Inclusiveness and Contestation subdimensions of Popular sovereignty.

**The Media Independence index contains a few items from the Liberal rights subdimension of Political liberties.

***Questions 29 and 30 are combined into a single item.

are all about the fairness of elections, and they are all highly correlated, so I combined them into the *Fair Elections* index.

Aggregating eighty items into seventeen indices represents great progress in data reduction, but still a quite large set of dependent variables. It turns out, however, that several of these "first-level" indices are conceptually and empirically related, so they can be subsumed into two more comprehensive, highly reliable, "second-level" indices (see lower panel of Table 3.1 and last column of Table B in Appendix B): the *Media Independence* index, which contains all the items included in the first-level indices *Media Bias*, *Critical Journalists* and *Pluralistic Media* (plus items 3L and 42, see note 19), and the *Punish Opponents* index, which includes all the items in the indices *Punish Employees*, *Punish Journalists*, *Opposition Leaders* and *Free Protest* (plus item 39, see note 19).

Of note, the two items that measure the subdimension "effective elections" (17 and 18) are not highly correlated between them or with other items, so they do not take part in any indices. In the next section, I analyze them individually along with the first- and second-level indices introduced earlier.

In summary, I derived nineteen indices from the original ninety-two SEPP items measuring specific aspects of the provincial regime. Of these, seventeen are "first level" and two are "second level." In the next section, I use all of them to describe provincial regimes in Argentina. For reasons of space in the explanatory Chapter 6 I analyze only twelve indices: the two second-level indices and the ten first-level indices that are not subsumed into either of them.

3.2 RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF EXPERTS ON PROVINCIAL POLITICS

This section presents the main descriptive results of the SEPP. First, a note on the interpretation of the figures below. The survey's questions had (typically ordinal) response options that, to maximize readability and interpretability were sometimes ordered from less to more democratic and sometimes from more to less democratic. Moreover, not all questions had the same number of response options (most had between three and five). Therefore, the raw scores for different survey items are not always comparable. To facilitate the interpretation and analysis of the items, I rescaled them so that they all range from a theoretical minimum of 0 (least democratic end) to a theoretical maximum of 1 (most democratic end), regardless of the range and direction of the scales used in the questionnaire. The items, first-level indices and second-level indices used henceforth should be interpreted in terms of this scaling.[20] Since provincial

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[20] Both the first-level and the second-level indices are constructed as simple averages of items, so they conserve the 0–1 scale. The two indices derived through exploratory factor analysis in Section 3.2.1 have a different scaling: they are standardized variables with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

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scores are the mean of the answers given by all the experts, a province can only reach the minimum of 0 (or the maximum of 1) on a given item when all experts choose the least democratic (most democratic) answer. Practically all items have a narrower empirical range, as experts seldom code unanimously an aspect of a province's regime as perfectly democratic or perfectly undemocratic.

The interpretation of the SEPP data also has to take into account measurement error. As explained in Section 3.1.1, under standard assumptions, the mean of all expert scores for a given item and province is an unbiased estimator of the true score.[21] The variance or measurement error of this estimator decreases both with the level of agreement among experts[22] and with the number of experts consulted. Measurement uncertainty is never large in the estimates below, but it is almost never zero either (the estimated magnitudes of measurement error for an illustrative item are provided in Appendix C; for additional information see online appendix). Hence, observed differences among provinces – especially those that are small – may be due to measurement error rather than to real differences. As a rule of thumb, interprovincial differences smaller than 0.2 should be seen as not significant.[23] This "0.2 difference rule" is an admittedly rough but simple and reasonable alternative to reporting thousands of *t*-tests for all the possible two-province comparisons across the many SEPP items and indices.

The descriptive analyses below focus mostly on the nineteen first-level and second-level indices (see Section 3.1.1 and Table 3.1), and on two inductively derived indices that are introduced in the next subsection. The statistical description of the ninety-two regime-related items for each of the twenty-four provinces would be too lengthy and involved for this book, but their results are summarized at the national level in Section 3.2.4 (readers interested in the scores of each item for each province can obtain them from the SEPP dataset; see note 13).

Before tackling this lengthy and complex description of various aspects of democracy at various levels of analysis, I present the SEPP information summarily in the form of a map (Figure 3.1), where provinces are painted in lighter (more democratic) or darker (less democratic) shades of gray according to their average score on the seventeen first-level indices of subnational democracy.

[21] Using the mean implies assuming that the (ordinal) survey items are measured on an interval scale. This assumption seems reasonable for practically all items. For details, see Section 3.1.1.

[22] That is, with the standard deviation of the scores they assign to a given item.

[23] This number arises from a simple *t*-test on a typical two-province comparison: Imagine that provinces A and B were evaluated by roughly the average number of judges (6.46), that is, six and seven experts respectively, and that the standard deviations of their answers equals 0.194 (the mean standard deviation for all the SEPP regime-related items for all the provinces) for both provinces. If the observed difference between the provinces is 0.2 (say because the mean of all expert answers was 0.5 for one and 0.7 for the other), a single-tailed *t*-test for the null hypothesis that both means are equal yields a *p*-value of 0.045, below the conventional 5 percent significance level. If these provinces had been observed by the sample minimum of four experts each (=4), the *p*-value would be 0.098 (that is, still significant at the 10 percent level).

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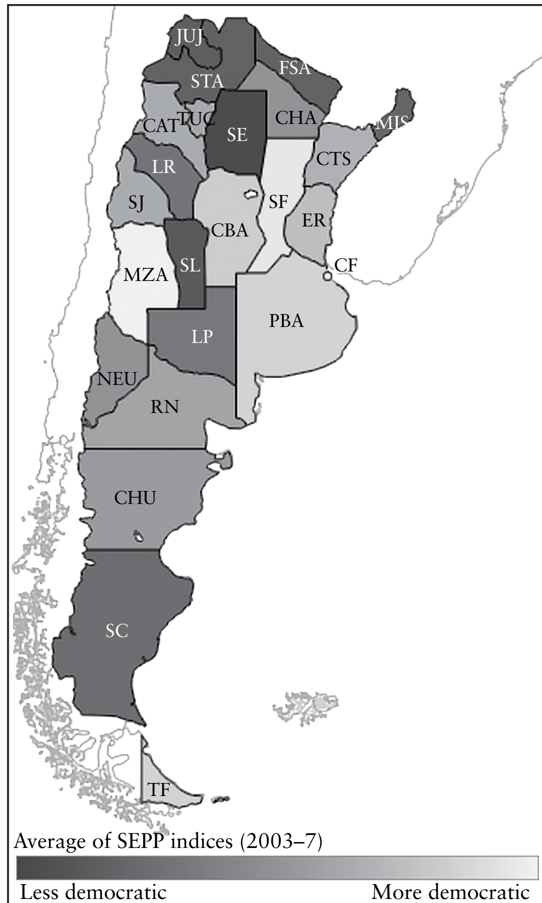

FIGURE 3.1. *Average of seventeen first-level indices of subnational democracy (2003–7) by province*
See note 13 in the Introduction.

Because of differences in methodology and temporal coverage, the patterns found in this map are not the same as those of found in the map corresponding to the objective SDI (see Figure 2.1). However, there are some significant resemblances. In particular, several of the least and most democratic provinces are the same (Formosa, San Luis, Santa Cruz, and Santiago del Estero among the former; the Federal Capital, Mendoza, and Santa Fe among the latter). Section 3.3 at the end of this chapter presents a more rigorous analysis of the level of correspondence between the SEPP-based indices and the SDI.

The following four subsections present the main SEPP results. Section 3.2.1 provides a first, simple, aggregated look at provincial regimes by describing them in terms of two meta-indices that summarize the information contained

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in the seventeen first-level indices. Section 3.2.2 presents basic statistics *at the national level* for each of these seventeen indices plus the two second-level indices, so that readers can see which aspects of subnational democracy do better or worse in Argentina as a whole and which ones are more and less variable across provinces. Section 3.2.3 also describes the nineteen first- and second-level indices, but does so *at the subnational level*, showing the position of all twenty-four provincial regimes on each of those indices. Finally, Section 3.2.4 focuses on the individual SEPP *items*, analyzing their central tendency (mean) and dispersion (standard deviation) for the country as a whole.

3.2.1 Two Dimensions of Subnational Regimes: Incumbency Advantage and Repression

To reduce the seventeen first-level indices to a smaller number of more aggregated indices I constructed two additive scales – the "second-level" *Media Independence* and *Punish Opponents* indices – that are both conceptually homogenous and highly reliable (their Cronbach's alphas are 0.94 and 0.96, respectively[24]; see Section 3.1.1). An alternative way to arrive at such indices is to use exploratory factor analysis (a "data-reduction" statistical technique) to aggregate the many items into a few underlying dimensions.[25] This method is fully inductive, in the sense that it does not consider a priori information about conceptual relations among variables, joining them in one index or several indices ("factors") only on the grounds of their correlations. This "ties the hands" of the researcher and lets the data speak.[26]

There are two reasons why one would expect survey items to be highly correlated (and therefore amenable to factor analysis). First, there is the simple fact that many of them are designed to measure the same underlying variable (for methodological reasons explained in Section 3.1.1, multi-item measures are superior to individual indicators). Second, many dimensions and subdimensions typically identified in conceptualizations of democracy are causally related to each other. For example, contestation for office appears to have led historically to broader inclusion. Bollen and Grandjean (1981) find, for national regimes, that the dimensions of "popular sovereignty" and "political liberty" have a 0.98–0.99 correlation. Likewise, Coppedge, Alvarez, and

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[24] On the interpretation of alpha, see note 16.

[25] Given the scarcity of comparative descriptive data on subnational democracy and the many and diverse components of democracy measured by the SEPP, there is not a clear basis for holding *a priori* theoretical expectations about the number and contents of the underlying dimensions. It may be the case that subnational democracy is unidimensional, but it may also occur that it has two or more empirically distinct dimensions. Therefore, the factor analysis should be exploratory rather than confirmatory.

[26] A potential disadvantage of this empirical approach is overfitting: some factors may be a function of specific features of the sample under consideration that are not present in the more general population of interest. This risk is especially high in small samples.

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Maldonado (2008) demonstrate that contestation and inclusiveness are "persistent dimensions of democracy" at the national level, but not independent dimensions: the correlation between them is estimated at 0.47.

Statistical analysis confirms that SEPP indices tend to be correlated. I factor analyzed the seventeen first-level indices, obtaining a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy of 0.77, well within the 0.5–1.0 recommended range. Moreover, the analysis identified a very strong first factor (eigenvalue=9.7; 65.4 percent of the variance shared by all first-level factors), and a relevant second factor (eigenvalue=2.1; 14.4 percent of shared variance). No other factor reaches an eigenvalue of one, the standard threshold. I therefore extracted these two factors (with an oblique rotation method to allow for correlations among factors). The factor loadings (i.e., the correlations between the factors and each index) are shown in Table 3.2. Those above 0.50 appear in bold-faced type, and those above 0.75 have also been shaded. Factor 1 is most highly correlated with *Punish Journalists* and *Opposition Leaders*, that is, the indices measuring the frequency of sanctions against critical journalists and critical opposition leaders, respectively. Other high loadings correspond to the indices *Hard Media Control*, *Police Repression*, *Totalitarian Control*, and *Punish Employees*. Factor 2, on the other hand, is never highly correlated with these indices (and sometimes negatively correlated), but loads very highly on the *Campaign Advantage* index and, slightly less strongly, on the pro-incumbent *Media Bias*. The third more highly loading index is the proportion of critical to noncritical journalists in the local media (*Critical Journalists*).

Given these results, factor 1 appears to be about the "tough side" of provincial regimes, so to speak. It summarizes the indices that gauge to what extent the provincial incumbent punishes opponents, cracks down on the critical media, and uses security forces to repress demonstrations or spy on dissidents. The fact that factor 1 also correlates relatively highly with the indices related to institutional constraints (*Horizontal Accountability*, *Legislative Control*, and *Judicial Control*) suggests an element of power concentration. In summary, the first factor can be seen as a dimension that, at one extreme, has unchecked governors who limit political rights by imposing sanctions on troublesome opponents, while at the other extreme has governors that, limited by legislators and judges, abstain from harassing or coercing those in the opposition. Factor 2, on the other hand, is about "gentler" ways of keeping competitors at bay (incumbency advantages related to campaign funds and media coverage). At one end of this dimension, there are ruling parties that command much more campaign resources and positive media coverage than their challengers do, and that as a result tend to win elections easily; at the other extreme opposition parties compete with incumbents on a level playing field in terms of resources and media coverage. From here on, I call factors 1 and 2 the *Repression* factor[27] and

[27] There is a clear resemblance between this factor and the *Punish Opponents* index. Their Pearson correlation is 0.96.

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the *Incumbency Advantage* factor, respectively. These dimensions, inductively derived from data on the Argentine provinces, are likely not idiosyncratic: a study of dominant parties around the world speaks of "two types of dominant party advantages: the incumbent's resource advantages and its ability to raise the costs of participation in the opposition" (Greene 2007, 5). As expected, there is a moderate positive correlation between both factors ($r = 0.40$). That is, they are empirically different, but still somewhat related to each other: the less democratic a province is in terms of repression, the less democratic it tends to be also in terms of incumbency advantage.[28]

How do these factors relate to the operationalization scheme proposed in Section 1.2.2 (see, in particular, Figure 1.1)? Even though they were inductively derived from the data, they to some extent reflect (and to some extent modify) the two dimensions of democracy introduced there: The *Incumbency Advantage* factor is undoubtedly linked to Popular sovereignty (or Democratic rule), while the *Repression* factor can be interpreted in terms of Political liberties (or Limited government). The first case is straightforward: Popular sovereignty requires multiparty elections (which do take place in all Argentine provinces), but it also requires a reasonable level playing field so that the opposition "has some chance of winning office as a consequence of elections" (Alvarez et al. 1996, 5). Where the level of incumbency advantage is very high, that chance is very low, and therefore elections and democracy are more formal than real. Just as in national dominant party systems characterized by "hyper-incumbency advantages" (Greene 2007, 39), elections are "meaningful but

[28] A methodological weakness of this analysis is the low ratio of cases (twenty-four) to variables (seventeen). The literature on factor analysis recommends a considerably higher cases-to-variables ratio (a minimum of five to one) and a higher minimum *N* (e.g., fifty observations) (Hair et al. 1998, 98–9). The analyses conducted above are far from reaching these standards: The absolute sample size is less than half than the minimum of fifty (although this is inevitable given that the universe of analysis includes only twenty-four provinces), and the cases-to-variables ratio is 1.41, much lower than the recommended minimum of five. The main risk of running factor analyses with small samples is overfitting, that is, the derivation of "factors that are sample specific with little generalizability" (Hair et al. 1998, 99). It should be noted that the justification of these minimum standards is not clear. In fact, recent literature questions such general claims and calls for a more study-specific evaluation of sample size. Costello and Osborne (2005), while emphasizing the general desirability of large sample sizes, caution, "adequate sample size is partly determined by the nature of the data" and that "the stronger the data, the smaller the sample can be for an accurate analysis" (p. 4). Strong data means having "uniformly high communalities" (about 0.8 or greater), "without cross-loadings" ("items that load at 0.32 or higher on two or more factors"), "plus several variables loading strongly on each factor" (five or more items loading 0.5 or better are desirable) (Costello and Osborne 2005, 4). A closer look at Table 3.2 reveals that the SEPP data are quite strong. Communalities are at or above 0.80 for five of the seventeen variables, and above 0.70 for ten of them. Only four variables "cross load," and both factors have five or more strongly loading items: Factor 1 correlates at 0.5 or higher with twelve variables, and factor 2 with five variables. This is not to say that the sample is perfectly adequate, but that the problems of a small sample are ameliorated by the strength of the data.

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manifestly unfair" (p. 12). That the factor *Repression* corresponds to Political liberties, on the other hand, is less clear because the first-level indices most highly correlated with it (*Punish Journalists*, *Opposition Leaders*, and *Hard Media Control*) correspond to the dimension of Popular sovereignty, not to Political liberties (see Table 3.1). However, this factor also correlates highly with indices that belong to the dimension of Political liberties (such as *Police Repression* and *Totalitarian Control*). What all indices belonging in this factor have in common, regardless of the dimension they were originally classified in, is government coercion. Political liberty implies that citizens, journalists, NGOs, and political parties can exercise their political rights freely, without any fear of punishment. Where (as in some Argentine provinces) power is highly concentrated on an incumbent who uses it to repress dissent, the principles of political freedom and limited government are all but a mockery.

The inductive results of the factor analysis in Table 3.2, then, suggest a modification in the original, theoretically derived, dimensions introduced in Section 1.2.2. It may be conceptually adequate to differentiate the "democratic" side of democracy (the Popular sovereignty dimension) from the "liberal" side of democracy (the Political liberties dimension), but the data suggest a somewhat different pair of dimensions: those that differentiate the "level playing field" side of democracy (captured by the *Incumbency Advantage* factor) and

TABLE 3.2. *Factor analysis of seventeen first-level indices of subnational democracy; Rotated factor loadings and unique variances*

Index	**Factor 1 (repression)**	**Factor 2 (incumbency advantage)**	**Uniqueness**
Fair Elections	0.28	**0.54**	0.52
Campaign advantage	−0.26	**0.98**	0.17
Media bias	0.17	**0.82**	0.19
Critical journalists	0.29	**0.70**	0.26
Punish journalists	**0.94**	0.07	0.05
Pluralistic media	**0.58**	**0.51**	0.17
Hard Media Control	**0.89**	-0.10	0.27
Soft Media Control	0.48	0.45	0.40
Opposition leaders	**0.93**	-0.16	0.23
Punish employees	**0.83**	0.06	0.26
Free protest	**0.62**	0.44	0.20
Legislative control	**0.62**	0.17	0.51
Judicial control	**0.62**	0.37	0.30
Horizontal accountability	**0.77**	0.03	0.42
Police repression	**0.85**	0.17	0.36
Totalitarian Control	**0.87**	0.03	0.23
Govt. discrimination	**0.60**	−0.03	0.65

Note: Factor loadings above 0.50 shown in bold-faced type; those above 0.75 are also shaded.

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the "freedom from political coercion" side of democracy (captured by the *Repression* factor). In substantive terms, these inductively derived dimensions suggest that provincial rulers use two strategies, one "gentler" and one "tougher," to undermine democracy: (1) exploiting the advantages of incumbency to slant the electoral playing field in their favor, and (2) abusing the coercive powers of the state to repress opponents.

Figure 3.2 presents both factors in a scatterplot, showing the coordinates of each province and the details of the correlation between both dimensions.[29] Although the most democratic provinces cluster around the upper right corner, the least democratic ones diverge in two directions. Most are especially low in the *Incumbency Advantage* factor: in provinces such as San Luis, Jujuy, Formosa, and Santa Cruz rulers enjoy huge advantages vis-à-vis their challengers. However, provinces can be less democratic on the other dimension, as illustrated by Santiago del Estero, which was very repressive compared to the rest. However, this province happens to score quite well on the *Incumbency Advantage* factor, as a result of the fact that the 2005 elections that experts evaluated were conducted under a federal intervention (that is, without an incumbent running for reelection; see note 37).[30]

A couple of provinces – Salta and Misiones – seem to base their hybrid regimes on a combination of repression (but not as much as in Santiago del Estero) and a significant incumbency advantage (but not as much as in San Luis). Two other analytically significant groups of provinces are those in the "off-diagonal," that is, those that are largely democratic in one dimension, but not so much in the other. Río Negro and to a lesser extent Neuquén present a political playing field practically as level as those of the most democratic districts (Capital Federal, Mendoza, and Santa Fe), but they are below the mean

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[29] Notice that, unlike all other items and indices, these factors are not scaled 0 to 1, but are standard variables with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

[30] The position of Santiago del Estero indicates that it is not only an outlier in terms of the repression factor but also an influential observation in terms of the correlation between the factors. It is clearly the district that deviates the most from the imaginary regression line describing the relationship between the *Repression* and *Incumbency Advantage* factors. This empirical anomaly is easy to tie to the political anomaly of a federal intervention. I dropped Santiago del Estero from the sample and reran the factor analysis above to check whether the number and content of the factors (and their correlations) change when only the twenty-three non-intervened provinces are considered. The results are quite similar in terms of identifying two factors, with practically the same eigenvalue and variance explained for the first one, and slightly lower figures for the second one. The factors are broadly similar to those of the full sample. The correlations between the factors is, as expected, stronger than before: As shown in Figure 3.2, the deviant observation of Santiago del Estero weakened the association between the Repression and Incumbency Advantage indices, so when this province is dropped, the Pearson correlation grows from the previous 0.40 to 0.55. In other words, the factor analysis identified two distinct underlying dimensions in the SEPP data, but as is the case with dimensions found in national-level studies (e.g., Coppedge, Alvarez, and Maldonado 2008), they have a positive and relatively sizeable correlation.

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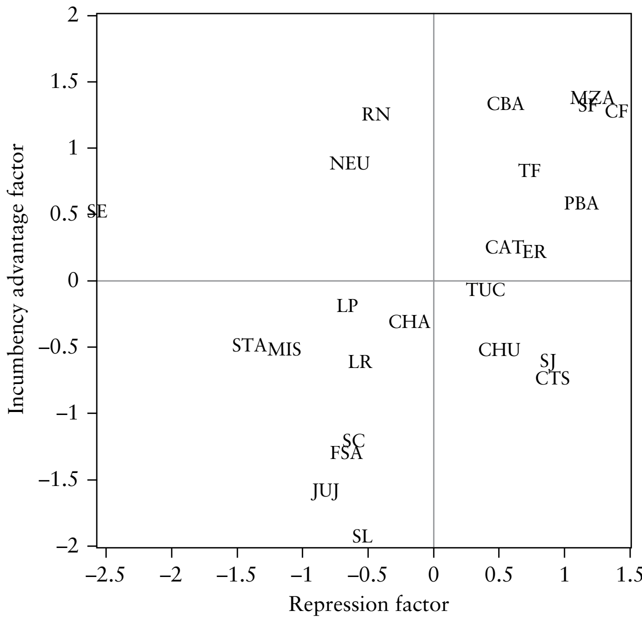

FIGURE 3.2. *Scatterplot of Repression factor and Incumbency Advantage factor*

in terms of repression, doing as poorly as the least democratic provinces such as Formosa, Santa Cruz, and San Luis. The other group – Corrientes, San Juan, and Chubut – has the opposite combination: these provinces are basically democratic in terms of repression, but their playing fields are considerably biased in favor of the incumbent.

In summary, three conclusions emerge robustly from the factor analysis performed on the SEPP data: (1) behind Argentina's provincial regimes there are two dimensions, one related to the magnitude of the advantage they grant to incumbents and one related to their coercive side; (2) the inductively derived *Incumbency Advantage* and *Repression* factors can be seen as roughly corresponding to the conceptual dimensions of Popular sovereignty and Political rights, respectively; and (3) those factors are positively (if moderately) correlated. Moreover, it seems theoretically plausible that restrictions on democracy occur through different combinations of two possible mechanisms: Resource and media advantages for incumbents and government sanctions against those who threaten the tenure or power of the incumbents. Given the intrinsic limitation of the sample in terms of size, however, these conclusions must be interpreted with care. They may be specific to this particular sample (that is, Argentine provinces circa 2007). In the spirit of reporting the uncertainty of scientific inferences (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994), then, I conclude indicating that the findings on dimensionality presented above should be taken

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as reasonably certain for the particular sample at hand, but just as a plausible hypothesis for other populations (e.g., the Argentine provinces at a different period in time, or the subnational units of other countries). Future research should aim at testing whether subnational and national electoral hybrid regimes around the world also apply different doses of repression and incumbency advantage to keep challengers at bay and lessen the threats that democracy poses to rulers.

3.2.2 First- and Second-level Indices of Subnational Democracy: National Level

This section moves the focus to the nineteen first- and second-level indices of subnational democracy derived from the SEPP's individual items.[31] Because these indices are simple averages of the standardized items, they also range between 0 (least democratic) and 1 (most democratic). National means (i.e., the average of the scores of the twenty-four provinces) range from a minimum of 0.29 (for the *Horizontal Accountability* index) to a maximum of 0.93 (*Government Discrimination* index). Indices also vary considerably in terms of interprovincial dispersion, from a minimum standard deviation of 0.07 (*Government Discrimination*) to a maximum of 0.24 (*Campaign Advantage*).[32]

Figure 3.3 shows the results for each index as a boxplot graph[33] (the summary statistics for all the indices – and two individual items on "effective elections"[34] – can be consulted in Table B.1 in the online appendix). The indices are ordered from lower to higher medians. All those related to checks and balances (constraints imposed by legislatures, courts, and horizontal accountability agencies) appear on the least democratic end of the graph, although with considerable levels of variance. At the other end of the boxplot, the discrimination against minorities appears as a very democratic and homogenous box (the same is true, although to a lesser extent due to the influence of the outlying Santiago del Estero, for the indices tapping the punishment of opposition leaders and police repression).

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[31] See details on the construction of these multi-item measures in Section 3.1.1 and Table 3.1.

[32] Keep in mind that, since indices vary at most from 0 to 1, their standard deviation has a theoretical minimum of 0 and a theoretical maximum of 0.5.

[33] Boxplots are interpreted as follows: the middle line, the lower hinge, and the upper hinge of the boxes represent the median (or 50th percentile), the 25th percentile, and the 75th percentile, respectively. The ends of the whiskers represent the lower and higher adjacent values, and the circles correspond to the outlying cases (which are labeled).

[34] This subdimension produced no indices (see Section 3.1.1 and Table B in Appendix B). Its two items, about the constraints on the elected provincial government imposed by (1) unelected local powers, and (2) elected national powers, are too weakly correlated ($r = 0.34$) to form an index. In the following analyses, I include them individually so that all subdimensions are taken into account.

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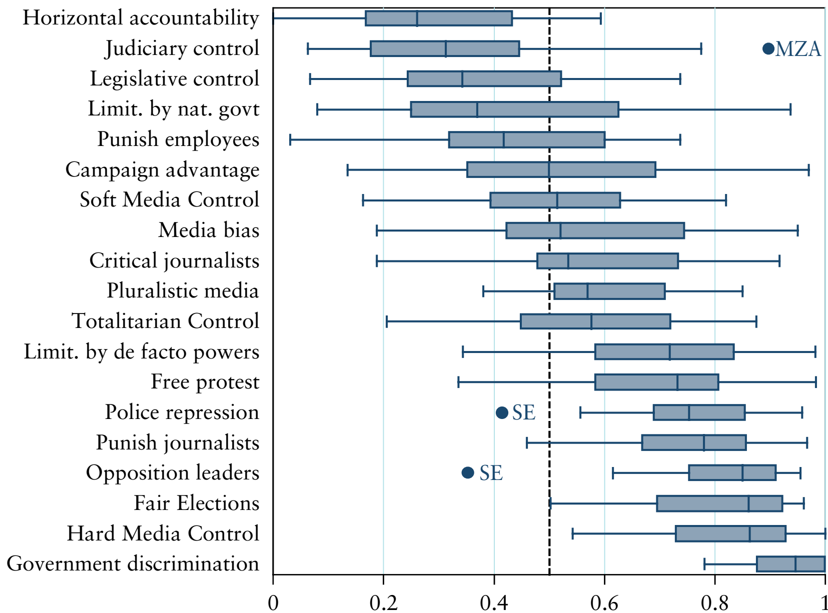

FIGURE 3.3. *Boxplot of seventeen first-level indices (ordered from lowest to highest median)*

An alternative way of presenting this information is through a scatterplot of means (central tendency) and standard deviations (dispersion). The indices' means provide information about the average provincial situation on a given aspect of democracy, while their standard deviations reflect interprovincial dispersion, that is, the extent to which the provinces tend to be close to the average or far from it. Keep in mind that the standard deviation of measures that range at most from 0 to 1 can be as small as 0 (no dispersion: all provinces obtain the same score) and as large as 0.5 (maximum dispersion: half of the provinces obtain a 0 and the other half a 1).

The actual distribution of the indices in terms of their means (*X*-axis) and standard deviations (*Y*-axis) are displayed in Figure 3.4. The position of the seventeen first-level indices and the two second-level indices are divided in three sub-graphs according to the subdimension of democracy they belong to.[35] Left to right movement in each plot implies going from less to more democratic average situations. Movement from the bottom to the top, on the other hand, is associated with a shift from smaller to larger interprovincial differences.

[35] The Effective elections and Inclusiveness subdimensions do not appear in the graph. The reason for the former is that the two items it includes do not form a scale. The items tapping inclusion do contribute to an index, the *Fair Elections* index, but since it also contains several items measuring contestation, it is considered more a Contestation rather than Inclusiveness index.

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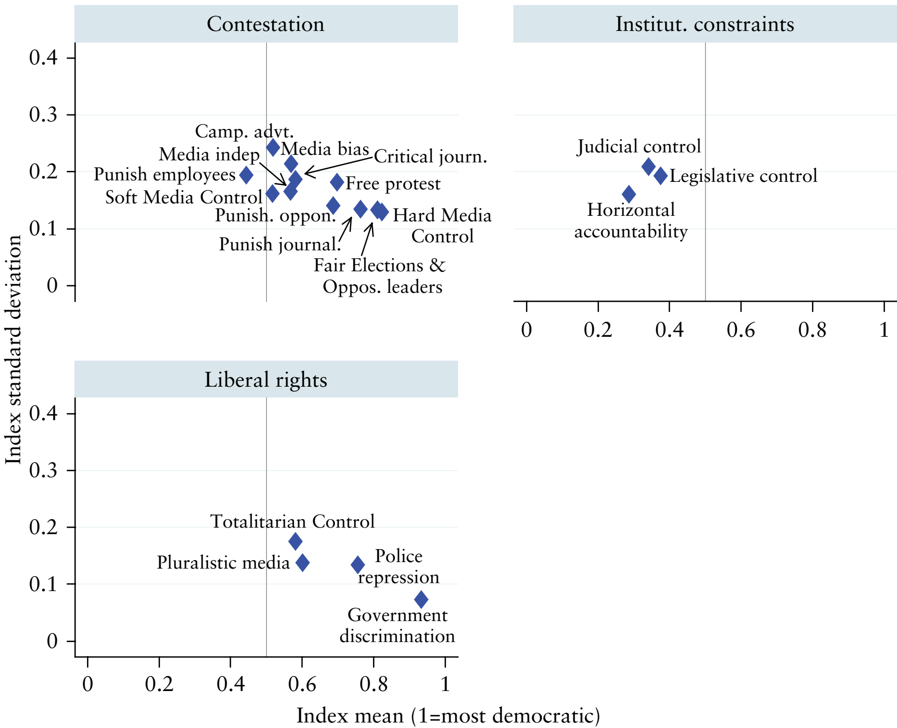

FIGURE 3.4. *Scatterplot of indices' means and standard deviations by subdimension*

Notice the empty area on the left of all graphs: No index has a very low mean, that is, there is no aspect of democracy that performs consistently poorly in all provinces. At the right end of the graph, on the other hand, there is one index: *Government Discrimination* performs well across the national territory (i.e., there is little evidence that any of the twenty-four provincial governments systematically discriminates against minorities or under-privileged groups).

The indices most to the left are those related to institutional constraints, while those related to liberal rights tend to be on the right sector of the corresponding graph. Indices measuring different aspects of contestation appear from the center to the right. The most heterogeneous indices are those related to campaign advantages for the incumbent, general pro-government media bias, judicial and legislative constraints on the power of the executive, and the punishment of critical public employees.

Overall, Figure 3.4 shows that the critical aspects of provincial regimes lie in the weakness of the institutional constraints that are supposed to limit the power of the governor, in the advantage that provincial incumbents enjoy in terms of campaign resources and media coverage, and in their capacity to politically discipline public servants (keep in mind that, as it will be explained in

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Section 5.2, in several provinces the public sector is by far the most important source of jobs). All of these indices are at the center or left areas of the graph, which indicate that the twenty-four-province average leaves much to be desired. They are also relatively high on the *Y*-axis, which means that there are important differences among provinces. At the other end, indices related to police repression, Hard Media Control, and government discrimination boast good averages and small dispersions. Provinces are generally democratic on these dimensions of political regimes.

3.2.3 First- and Second-level Indices of Subnational Democracy: All Provinces

In this section, I describe all twenty-four provincial regimes by analyzing their performance in twelve of the seventeen first-level indices and in the two second-level indices.[36] The information presented below provides a rich, multidimensional and detailed anatomy of subnational democracy in Argentina, which allows for a nuanced evaluation in which a given province may do well in one aspect while leaving much to be desired in another aspect of democracy.

The analysis proceeds by showing scatterplots for pairs of conceptually related indices. All graphs are scaled from 0 to 1 on both the *X*- and the *Y*-axis (even if their empirical range is narrower), so that they are exactly comparable. The midlines mark the 0.5 midpoint of the index's scale (not to be confused with the index mean or median).

The first graph (Figure 3.5) shows results for the strictly electoral components of the democratic/popular sovereignty dimension: the *Fair Elections* (Y-axis) and *Campaign Advantage* (*X*-axis) indices. Most provinces are located above the 0.8 (and many above the 0.9) threshold, in terms of election fairness, and none is below the midpoint (Formosa is exactly on it). Of course, given the centrality of elections to democracy, the position of this province, and that of Jujuy, Misiones, La Rioja, Tucumán, Santa Cruz, San Luis, and Salta are unsatisfactory, but not critical. Overall, experts see core democratic electoral procedures as working reasonably well in most provinces. If the electoral act itself and the counting of votes are generally not problematic, the same is not true for the "level playing field" condition. The incumbent's *Campaign Advantage* index, a measure that taps financial and media-access disparities between government and opposition candidates, shows that provinces vary widely in terms of how much of an advantage the incumbent's candidate enjoys vis-à-vis her challengers, with provinces such as San Luis, Jujuy, Formosa, Santa Cruz, and Corrientes scoring very poorly. By contrast, in Mendoza, Santiago del Estero[37]

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[36] For reasons of space and because they are somewhat redundant with other figures, I do not present here the graphs for the Critical Journalists, Punish Journalists, Opposition Leaders, Punish Employees, and Free Protest indices, but they can be consulted in the online appendix at www.utdt.edu/profesores/cgervasoni.

[37] The unusually democratic position of Santiago del Estero has an idiosyncratic explanation: The gubernatorial elections assessed by the experts were those of 2005, conducted by national

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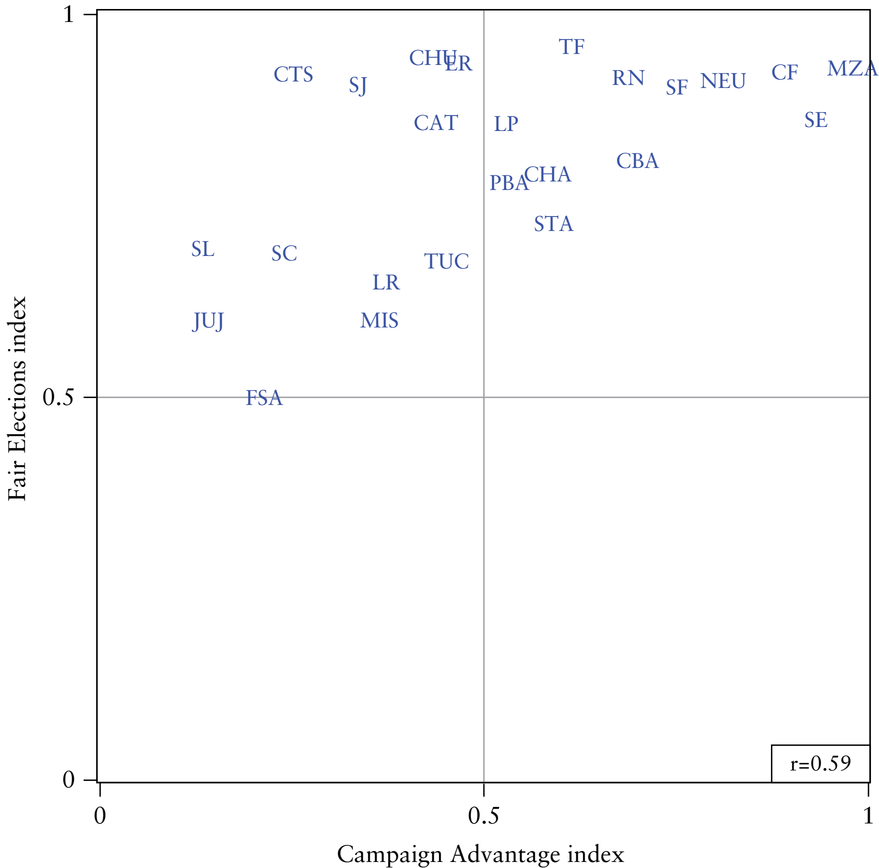

FIGURE 3.5. *Provincial scores on the Fair Elections index and Campaign Advantage index*

and the city of Buenos Aires (CF) the incumbent's advantage was negligible. The *Fair Elections* and the *Campaign Advantage* indices have a relatively high positive association (Pearson's r=0.59): Provinces that suffer from high (low) levels of incumbency advantage in elections, tend to also have more (less) problems when it comes to administering elections impartially and counting votes fairly.

Beyond elections, democratic competition implies a number of political liberties, paramount among which is freedom of expression. The following

authorities appointed by the president (Néstor Kirchner intervened the province in April 2004). Therefore, there was no provincial incumbent party in place running its own candidate. Santiago del Estero would undoubtedly appear in a much lower position if the reference election had been one of the previous or posterior ones in which the provincial incumbent competed.

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graphs present indices of this aspect of democracy. As was the case with the incumbent's *Campaign Advantage* index, important interprovincial differences also occur with regard to the more general (because it goes beyond campaign messages) pro-incumbent *Media Bias* index, and the related *Pluralistic Media* index (Figure 3.6). In a few provinces, including the four largest ones in terms of population (the city and the province of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Santa Fe) experts reported that it is easy to access varied media information about provincial politics and that local broadcast TV, cable TV, radio stations, and newspapers generally cover critical opinions of the government at least as much as they cover favorable opinions. At the other end, San Luis stands out as a district in which alternative sources of information are difficult to find and, even more, where the established media are filled with pro-incumbent messages and devoid of criticisms of the administration. (Notice the very tight statistical

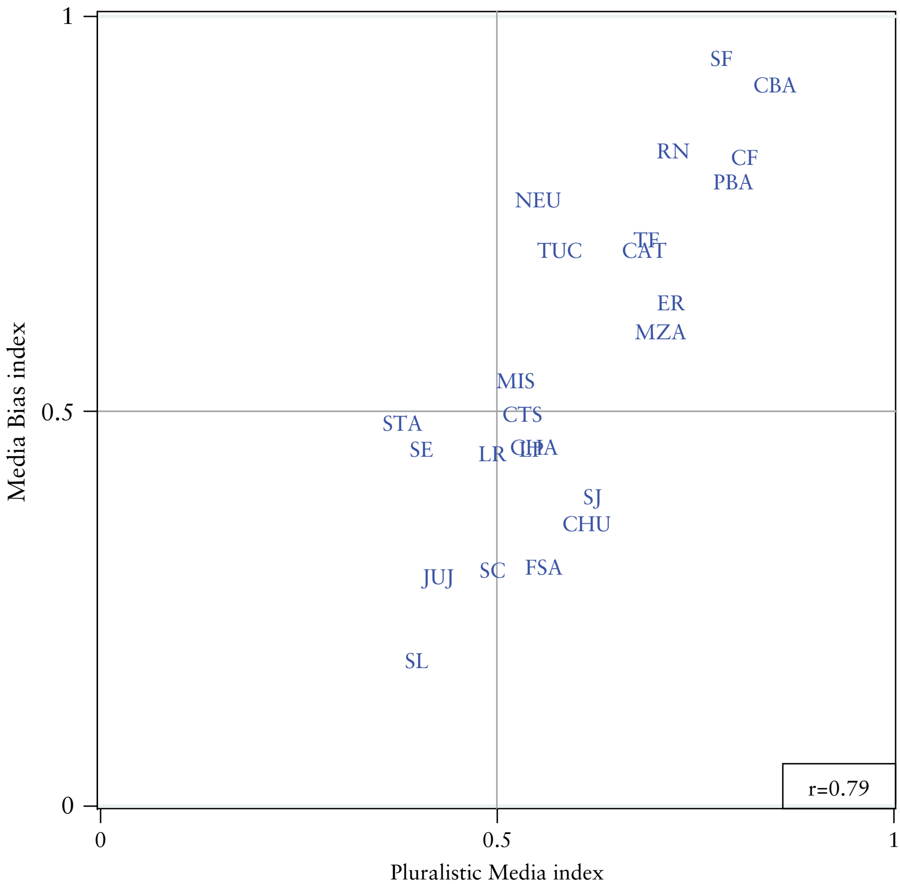

FIGURE 3.6. *Provincial scores on Media Bias index and Pluralistic Media index*

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association between both indices in Figure 3.6; *r*=0.79.) Most provinces hover around the midpoint in terms of how easy it is to access diverse information about provincial politics in the local media (*Pluralistic Media* index). Although in no province is the information environment hopeless, Salta, San Luis, Santa Cruz, Santiago del Estero, and Jujuy appear again as the poorest performers.

Items on methods used by provincial governments to control the local media were summarized in two indices, one about "hard" measures (such as hostile inspections, threats, denials of permits, etc.) and one about "soft" measures (e.g., selective distribution of government publicity, biased use of provincially owned media, etc.). Figure 3.7 shows that most provinces appear in good positions in terms *Hard Media Control*, the exceptions being La Pampa, Santiago del Estero, and Salta, which obtain middling scores. The situation is different when "soft" tactics are considered. Interprovincial differences are significant

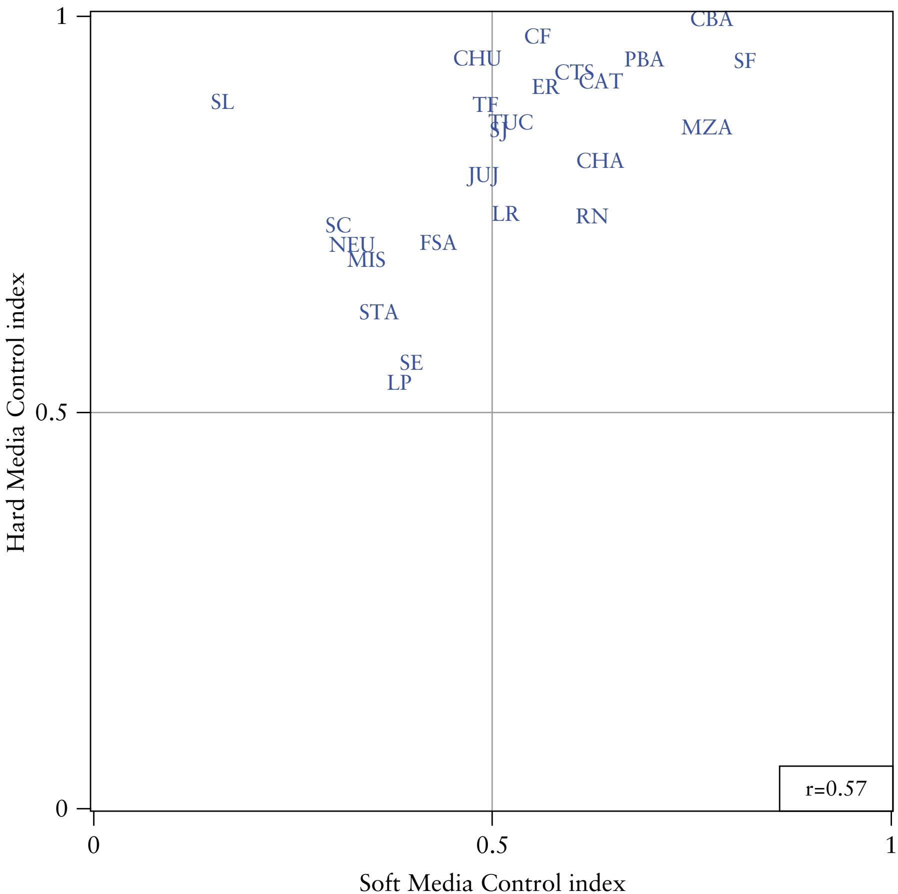

FIGURE 3.7. *Provincial scores on the Hard and Soft Media Control indices*

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and several provinces are in worrying positions, especially San Luis. Consistent with the "hybrid" logic spelled out in Section 1.2.1, provincial rulers eager to bias media content in their favor usually refrain from blunt and easily visible actions such as overt censorship, resorting instead to subtle and even (sometimes) legal measures, such as allocating official publicity according to the editorial line of each media outlet. Notice that not even the democratic Córdoba, Mendoza, and Santa Fe are entirely free from this type of government interference with media freedom. As it was the case with the two previous pairs of related indices, the correlation between hard and soft ways of obtaining political control of the local media is positive and relatively strong ($r = 0.57$).

The following two figures display results related to the institutional constraints that are supposed to limit the power of rulers in a liberal democracy: those originating in the legislature, the judiciary, and the agencies of horizontal accountability. As the results for the *Legislative Control* index in Figure 3.8

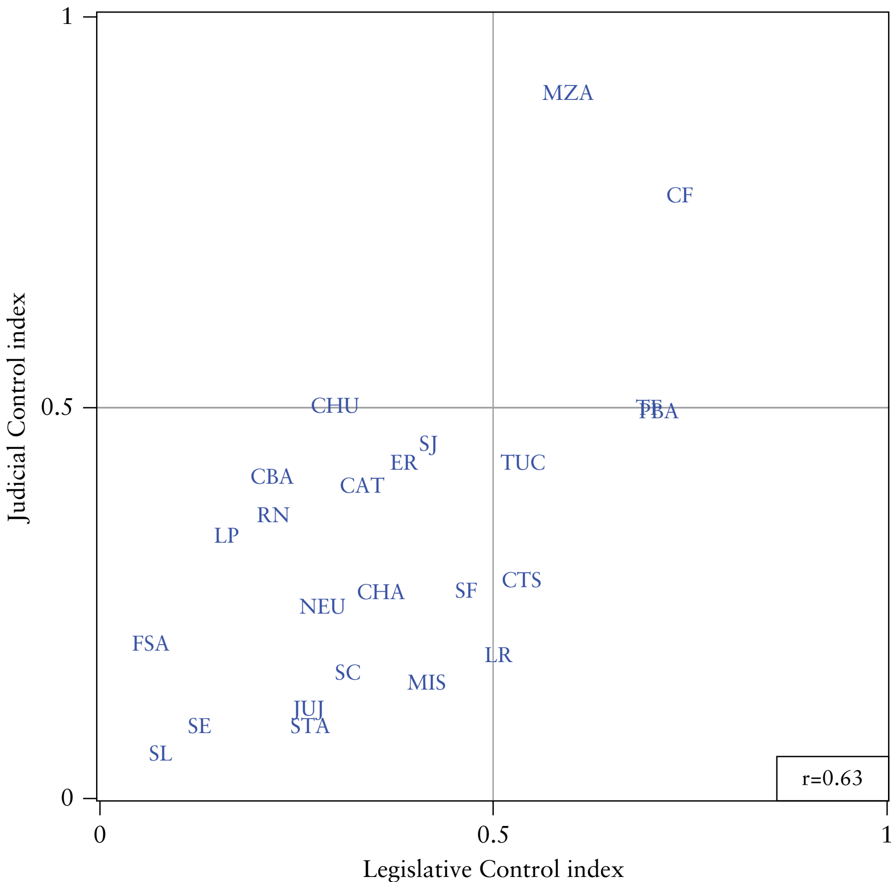

FIGURE 3.8. *Provincial scores on the Judicial and Legislative Control indices*

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shows, in no province are legislative constraints especially strong. In the CF, Buenos Aires, and Tierra del Fuego lawmakers appear to represent a reasonable counterbalance to the executive, while all other provinces appear in middling or low positions. The experts see the legislatures of Formosa, San Luis, Santiago del Estero, and La Pampa as largely irrelevant. A similar picture emerges with respect to constraints imposed by the judiciary on the executive (*Judicial Control* index), although with two districts that stand out as clearly the most liberal in this respect, Mendoza and CF. San Luis, Santiago del Estero, Salta, Jujuy, Misiones, Santa Cruz, La Rioja, and Formosa all lack judiciaries that represent real limitations to the governor's power. (Notice that the results for Mendoza and San Luis are highly consistent with the findings of Chavez [2004] in her case studies of these provinces.) Institutional constraints on the power of the executive is a weak aspect of subnational democracy in Argentina: most provinces appear at the bottom-left quadrant. Not surprisingly, the correlation between legislative and judicial constraints is quite high (r=0.63): where lawmakers are (are not) effective controllers of the governor, the judges also are (are not) effective limiters of her or his authority.

Agencies of horizontal accountability such as *Fiscalías*, *Defensorías,* and *Tribunales de Cuentas* are nowhere very effective, as shown in the X-axis of Figure 3.9 (*Horizontal Accountability* index). Only San Juan, CF, and Mendoza are at (or slightly above) the index's midpoint, while this type of control is considered nonexistent by experts in San Luis, and very weak in Santiago del Estero, Salta, Jujuy, Misiones, Santa Cruz, and La Rioja. Figure 3.9 also displays the *Totalitarian Control* index (not strictly related to *Horizontal Accountability*), which is unique in bringing together four quite disparate items of the SEPP (though all of them belonging to the "liberal rights" subdimension of democracy): The extent to which information about state activities is easily available, the extent to which police abuses are ordered by the government (as opposed to being carried out by policemen on their own), the extent to which the government spies on opponents, journalists, judges, and other politically prominent citizens, and the extent to which school classes and textbooks are used to present a positive image of the governor. The last three can be seen as active efforts by the government to control society: Citizens who fear a politically motivated police force, suspect they are being spied upon, and are indoctrinated in schools are less likely to challenge the incumbent. The first item implies asymmetric information and can also be seen as a control instrument, since without access to information citizens are unlikely to be politically effective. Santiago del Estero stands out as the most politically controlled province, followed by Formosa, Misiones, Salta, La Pampa, and San Luis. Chubut, Santa Fe, and San Juan, on the other hand, score rather highly on this index. In spite of not being conceptually related, the *Totalitarian Control* and the *Horizontal Accountability* indices in Figure 3.9 are highly correlated (r=0.72).

The *Totalitarian Control* index and the two indices presented in Figure 3.10 (*Police Repression* and *Government Discrimination*) summarize core liberal

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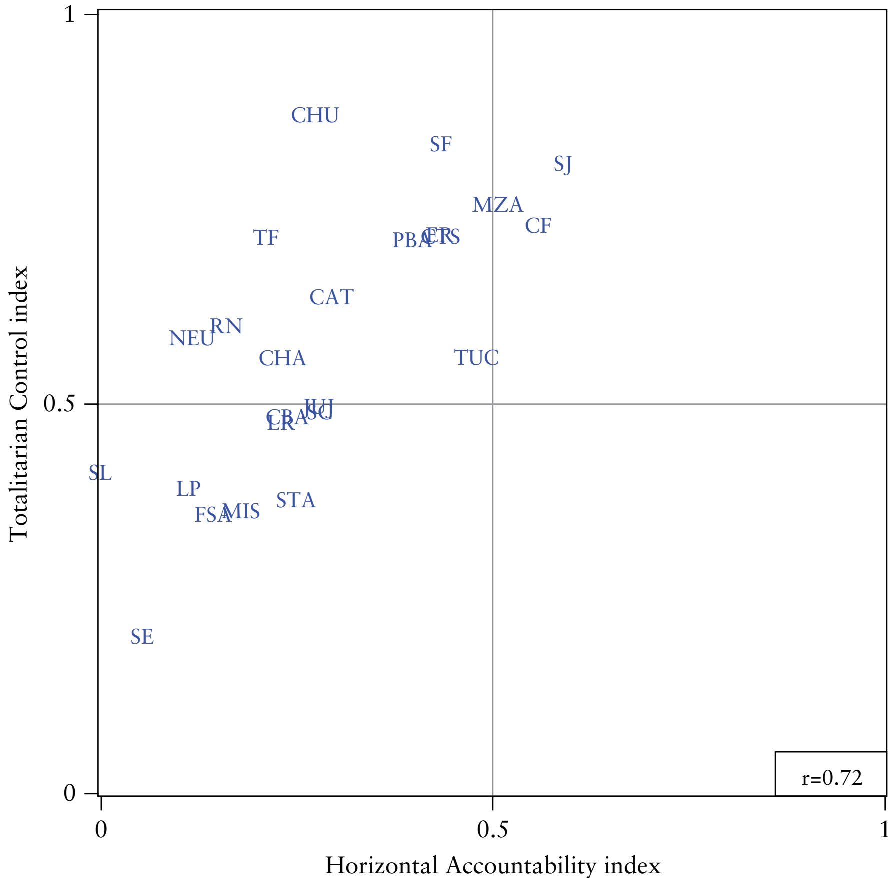

FIGURE 3.9. *Provincial scores on the Totalitarian Control index and Horizontal Accountability index*

rights and guarantees, such as freedom of information, physical security, privacy, academic freedom, and tolerance for religious, cultural, national, sexual, and other minorities. The *Y*-axis in Figure 3.10 shows that, consistently with the logic of hybrid regimes, police forces (which are controlled by the provincial government except in the CF[38]) are nowhere very repressive. Only Santiago del Estero appears below the midpoint, followed by La Rioja, Río Negro, Jujuy, Santa Cruz, and Neuquén. The *Government Discrimination* index shows that provincial rulers hardly ever discriminate against religious minorities, people of indigenous descent, immigrants from other Latin-American countries, residents from other provinces, women, or homosexuals

[38] As of 2007, the Federal Capital did not have its own police force. Starting in 2008 Mayor Mauricio Macri's administration created and began to deploy its own *Policía Metropolitana*.

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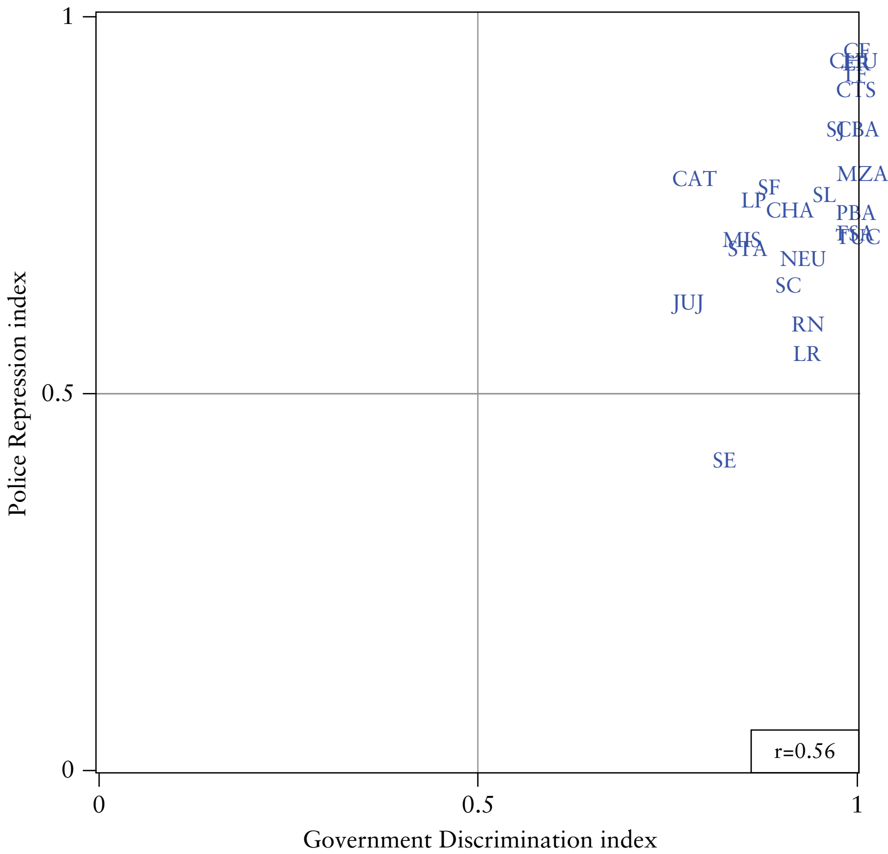

FIGURE 3.10. *Provincial scores on the Police Repression index and Government Discrimination index*

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(*X*-axis). Close to half of the provinces obtain the maximum possible score (meaning that all experts agreed that there is no government discrimination against any of the six types of groups included in the question). Five Northern provinces – Jujuy, Catamarca, Santiago del Estero, Misiones, and Salta – are in somewhat lower positions on this index, because they register some instances of discrimination, especially against native Argentines and, to a lesser extent, women and homosexuals.

As explained above, much of the information contained in the seventeen first-level indices is summarized in two second-level indices: *Media Independence* and *Punish Opponents* (their names are fairly self-explanatory; for details about their content see Section 3.1.1, Table 3.1, and Table B in Appendix B). Their distribution is shown in Figure 3.11. *Media Independence* (*Y*-axis) performs poorly in San Luis and Jujuy, and is only a little better in Formosa,

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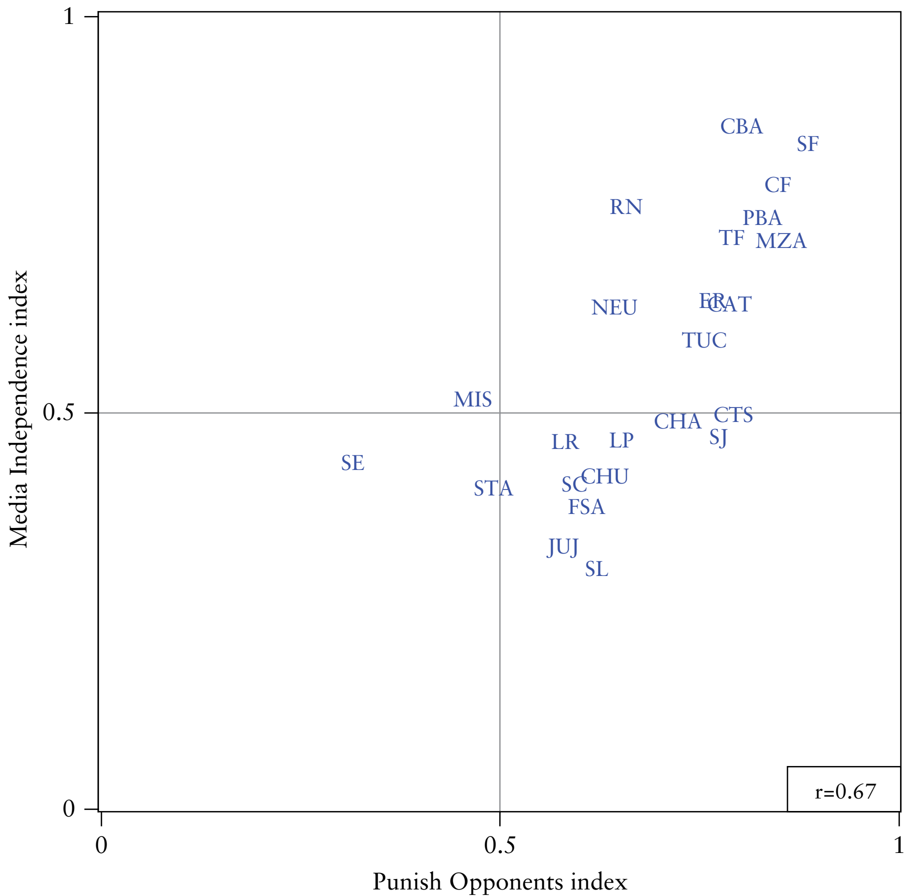

FIGURE 3.11. *Provincial scores on the Media Independence index and Punish Opponents index*

Salta, Santa Cruz, Chubut, and Santiago del Estero. On the contrary, citizens do have access to reasonably independent and diverse media outlets in Córdoba, Santa Fe, CF, Río Negro, Buenos Aires, Tierra del Fuego, and Mendoza. *Punish Opponents* (shown in the *X*-axis) contains twenty survey items that relate to sanctions against critical politicians, journalists, public employees, and regular citizens. The fact that no province is very close to a score of 1 should not be interpreted in overly pessimistic terms, as the sanctions considered include "soft" ones such as not promoting a critical public servant or shunning a critical newspaper from the government's publicity budget. Santa Fe, Mendoza, CF, and Buenos Aires score quite well, while Santiago del Estero is the most coercive province. Misiones and Salta are also below the midpoint, and La Rioja, Jujuy, Santa Cruz, Formosa, and San Luis are not far above it.

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Although some clear patterns emerge from the results in the previous seven figures (plus three more available in the online appendix, see note 36), making sense of all the 456 scores (=19 indices*24 provinces) requires some type of systematic summarization. Table 3.3 is a matrix of indices and provinces, with each cell shaded according to the score: The less democratic the score the darker the cell. Provinces are ordered from less to more democratic (left to right) according to a simple (unweighted) average or all first-level scores (it is important to note that this order can change with relatively small changes in the indices' weights), and indices are ordered from those performing better (i.e., more democratically) at the top, to those performing worse at the bottom.

Perhaps the most important conclusion of the table is that no province is perfectly democratic or perfectly authoritarian. Some are, of course, much "lighter" than others are, but relative positions vary nontrivially from index to index. The Federal Capital, Mendoza, and Santa Fe appear to be the three most democratic provinces, followed by Buenos Aires, Tierra del Fuego, and Córdoba. At the other end Santiago del Estero, San Luis, Jujuy, Formosa, Salta, and Misiones are judged as the least democratic, followed by Santa Cruz, La Rioja, and La Pampa. In between these groups, there is a set of nine intermediate provinces that do not stand out as very democratic or very authoritarian in any index. In alphabetical order, they are Catamarca, Chaco, Chubut, Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Neuquén, Río Negro, San Juan, and Tucumán. Only one of them has been governed by the same party since 1983 – i.e., Neuquén by the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (a local party). All the other single-party provinces have been dominated by the PJ, and all of them appear among the least democratic in Table 3.3.

3.2.4 A Look at the National Distribution of Individual Items

This section analyzes the national central tendency and dispersion of the ninety-two SEPP items related to specific aspects of subnational regimes. Their normalized means (0=least democratic; 1=most democratic) range approximately from 0.17 (two items related to the campaign resources available to incumbents and challengers) to 1 (an item on government killing of critical journalists). This means that the SEPP covers a wide range of issues that go from those in which the provinces rank consistently democratic (in none of them does the government kill journalists) to those in which they tend to do poorly (in general incumbents' campaign funds are much larger than those of their challengers).

The actual distribution of the survey items in terms of their means (*X*-axis) and standard deviations (*Y*-axis) is displayed in Figure 3.12.[39] Each mark represents an item (space limitations do not permit identifying each item by its

[39] Remember that items scaled from 0 to 1 can have standard deviations that range from 0 (all provinces obtain the same score) to 0.5 (half of the provinces obtain a 0 and the other half a 1).

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TABLE 3.3. *Provincial scores in all indices (darkness of cells indicate less-democratic score)*

Index	SE	SL	JUJ	FSA	STA	MIS	SC	LR	LP	NEU	CHA	CHU	RN	TUC	CAT	SJ	CTS	ER	CBA	TF	PBA	SF	MZA	CF
Government discrimination	.83	.96	.78	1	.86	.85	.91	.93	.86	.93	.91	.99	.93	1	.78	.96	1	1	1	1	1	.89	1	1
Hard Media Control	.57	.90	.80	.72	.63	.70	.74	.75	.54	.72	.82	.95	.75	.87	.92	.86	.93	.91	1	.89	.95	.95	.86	.98
Fair Elections	.87	.70	.60	.50	.73	.60	.69	.65	.86	.92	.79	.95	.92	.68	.86	.91	.93	.94	.81	.96	.78	.91	.93	.93
Opposition leaders	.35	.87	.74	.74	.66	.62	.79	.73	.84	.77	.89	.77	.78	.92	.91	.85	.92	.85	.88	.89	.96	.93	.91	.92
Punish journalists	.46	.70	.62	.67	.57	.59	.68	.74	.67	.64	.75	.81	.70	.82	.84	.84	.86	.85	.89	.81	.96	.97	.94	.92
Police repression	.41	.77	.62	.72	.70	.71	.65	.56	.76	.68	.75	.95	.60	.71	.79	.85	.91	.94	.85	.93	.74	.78	.80	.96
Free protest	.34	.46	.61	.65	.49	.56	.43	.39	.65	.79	.64	.73	.88	.74	.79	.70	.80	.74	.88	.81	.78	.96	.94	.98
Pluralistic media	.41	.40	.43	.56	.38	.52	.50	.49	.54	.55	.54	.61	.72	.58	.68	.63	.53	.72	.85	.69	.80	.79	.70	.81
Critical journalists	.44	.50	.19	.30	.38	.53	.56	.53	.50	.67	.50	.40	.73	.58	.53	.46	.50	.63	.92	.89	.73	.83	.83	.78
Totalitarian Control	.21	.42	.50	.36	.38	.37	.49	.48	.40	.59	.56	.88	.60	.56	.64	.81	.72	.72	.49	.72	.71	.84	.76	.73
Media bias	.46	.19	.29	.31	.49	.54	.30	.45	.46	.77	.46	.36	.83	.71	.71	.40	.50	.64	.92	.72	.79	.95	.60	.83
Campaign advantage	.94	.14	.15	.22	.59	.36	.24	.37	.53	.81	.58	.43	.69	.45	.44	.34	.25	.47	.70	.61	.54	.75	.97	.89
Soft media control	.40	.16	.49	.43	.36	.34	.31	.52	.38	.32	.63	.48	.62	.52	.63	.51	.61	.57	.78	.49	.69	.82	.76	.56
Punish employees	.03	.30	.31	.37	.21	.09	.40	.35	.40	.38	.54	.21	.33	.44	.60	.71	.60	.62	.56	.70	.58	.74	.61	.59
Legislative control	.13	.08	.27	.07	.27	.41	.32	.51	.16	.28	.35	.30	.22	.54	.33	.42	.54	.39	.22	.70	.71	.47	.59	.74
Judicial control	.10	.06	.12	.20	.10	.15	.17	.19	.34	.25	.27	.51	.37	.43	.40	.46	.28	.43	.42	.50	.50	.27	.91	.78
Horizontal accountability	.06	.00	.28	.15	.25	.18	.28	.23	.11	.11	.23	.27	.16	.48	.29	.59	.43	.43	.24	.21	.40	.44	.50	.56
Punish opponents (2nd level)	.32	.62	.58	.61	.49	.46	.60	.58	.65	.64	.72	.65	.66	.76	.79	.78	.79	.77	.80	.79	.84	.89	.85	.85
Media independence (2nd level)	.44	.31	.34	.38	.41	.52	.41	.47	.47	.64	.49	.42	.76	.60	.64	.47	.50	.64	.87	.72	.75	.84	.72	.79
Mean of 17 first-level indices	.41	.45	.46	.47	.47	.48	.50	.52	.53	.60	.60	.62	.64	.65	.66	.66	.67	.70	.73	.74	.74	.78	.80	.82

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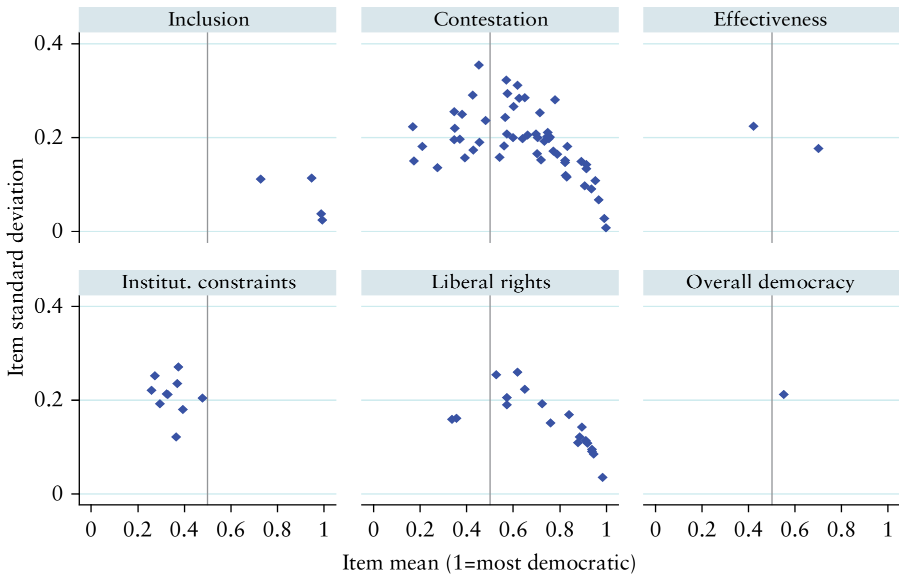

FIGURE 3.12. *Scatterplot of item means and standard deviations by subdimension*

substantive content; a similar graph that does so for a representative sample of the items can be found in Gervasoni 2010b[40]). The items are divided into five scatterplots according to the subdimension they belong to (plus a scatterplot for the overall assessment of democracy shown in Figure I.1). The declining level of dispersion as the item means approach 1 is inevitable: a very high mean (as well as a very low one) can only be obtained if all provinces rank high (low), a situation that implies interprovincial homogeneity (i.e., low standard deviations).

The scale of these graphs is the same as that of Figure 3.4, so that the distribution of items and indices can be compared. The general pattern is that the items (as compared to the indices) tend to be farther from the center of the figure, especially in terms of dispersion. This occurs because indices are averages of items, and averages are by definition less variable than the individual scores that go into them. As it was the case with the indices, the area on the left of the graphs is empty: there is no aspect of democracy that performs consistently poorly in all provinces. Here again the items most to the left are those related to institutional constraints, while those related to liberal rights tend to be on the right sector of the corresponding graph. Items measuring different aspects of contestation appear from the center-left to the right.

As was the case with the indices in Section 3.2.2, however, there are at the right end of the graphs many items with high means: some features of democracy

[40] See supplementary material at http://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/jpla/rt/suppFiles/274/0.

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appear to be prevalent across the national territory. The items with means close to 1 are generally those associated with highly visible violations of democratic principles, such as candidate proscriptions, or arrests and executions of opponents. This evidence confirms the theoretical expectations about subnational regimes spelled out in Section 1.2.1: regional incumbents in national democracies will tend to curtail political rights in subtle and relatively peaceful ways. Following the logic of hybrid regimes, provincial rulers try to avoid blatant (and, therefore, visible) undemocratic practices.

The average of the means of the ninety-two items displayed in Figure 3.12 is 0.62 – somewhat closer to the democratic than to the authoritarian end of the spectrum – and the average of their standard deviations equals 0.17, indicating a moderate level of interprovincial variance. Standard deviations do differ considerably toward the center of the figure, ranging from a low of 0.11 to a high of 0.35. Of course, no item approaches a standard deviation of 0.5 (the polarized situation in which half of the provinces are perfectly democratic and half perfectly authoritarian). However, the fact that all items in the central area of the figure are above 0.10, and many above 0.20, suggests that nontrivial interprovincial differences are always present and that sometimes they are rather large.

The items associated with each subdimension tend to cluster in specific sectors of the graph. First, the four items tapping the inclusiveness dimension are on the lower-right corner, indicating that they are consistently democratic: provincial regimes tend to be highly inclusive in terms of both the right to run and the right to vote.

Second, the institutional constraints items are the only ones that fall clearly on the left half of the figure. Checks and balances that limit the incumbents' power appear as the weakest aspect of subnational democracy in Argentina.[41] Experts see both the provincial legislatures and the provincial Supreme Tribunals (and lower courts) as generally ineffective in checking the governor. The same is true for the provincial agencies of horizontal accountability and incumbent parties. Notice, however, that the relatively high standard deviation of some of these items indicates that at least in some provinces checks and balances do work.

The numerous items associated with contestation follow a less clear distributional pattern. They appear in all populated sectors of the figure, but seem to move from left to right as the substantive content becomes more associated with traditional forms of electoral fraud. For example, election-day irregularities, the arrest of opposition leaders, or the harassment of opposition campaigns are relatively uncommon. Items tapping the fairness of electoral campaigns in terms of financial resources or media coverage, on the other hand, show a generally lopsided picture: incumbents often (but with important interprovincial

[41] For an in-depth analysis of judicial independence and horizontal accountability in the provinces of Argentina – with case studies of Mendoza and San Luis – see Chavez (2004).

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differences) prevail over their opponents because of privileged access to campaign funds, state resources, and favorable media coverage. In summary, some aspects of democratic contestation seem to hold up well in the Argentine provinces, while others are generally weak.

Some contestation-related items are among the most heterogeneous. The three items with the highest standard deviations – related to fairness of the campaign coverage of broadcast TV and newspapers, and to the use of state-owned media to bias coverage in favor of the provincial administration – belong to this subdimension. This evidence suggests that interprovincial differences in levels of actual contestation are to a significant extent related to the role of the media. Consistent with the hybrid logic explained above, it may be less risky for a provincial incumbent to bias local media outlets in her or his favor than to openly rig elections.

Most of the "liberal rights" items appear on the right half of the figure, especially when the substantive content includes overt repression. Items asking about the execution of detainees or about instances of arbitrary detentions or excessive use of force by the police are very close to the right end of the figure. The only two liberal rights items located to the left of the 0.5 midpoint are access to government information and the availability of alternative sources of information for the poor.[42] That is, core liberal rights such as physical security and liberty are for the most part respected, while violations occur in the realm of less-critical rights or for the less-privileged citizens.

The two questions related to "effectiveness" (or the extent to which democratically elected authorities can exercise power without limitations from nonelected actors or the national government) occupy middling positions both in terms of central tendency and dispersion. Experts saw those constraints originating in the federal government as more important than those coming from *de facto* powers such as business associations, the police, or criminal organizations. In both cases, interprovincial differences are important.

The overall indicator of democracy used in the first pages of the book to provide a "quick and dirty" assessment of democracy in all provinces (see Figure I.1) is, not surprisingly, located approximately at the center of all items: experts surely took into consideration many aspects of democracy in their provinces and concluded that the overall situation is some type of weighted average of all of them. The mean and standard deviation of this "overall" item are 0.55 and 0.21, respectively, not far from the 0.62 and 0.17 corresponding to the mean and standard deviation of all the ninety-two specific items.

Overall, Figure 3.12 shows that the state of provincial regimes in Argentina is diverse in two senses: (1) some aspects of democracy do on average considerably better than others, and (2) with respect to most items, some provinces

[42] The question about ease of access to alternative sources of information was asked for three hypothetical citizens, a poor peasant, a lower middle class teacher, and an upper middle class professional.

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do considerably better than others. Provincial regimes seem to do very well in terms of inclusion and reasonably well in terms of classic liberal rights. There is more heterogeneity with respect to the central dimension of democracy – contestation. That is, some political rights are generally protected, while others are not well guaranteed in several provinces. Finally, the most problematic aspect of political regimes concerns institutional constraints: checks and balances – a key element of liberal democracy – are weak in the typical province.

3.3 COMPARING OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE MEASURES OF SUBNATIONAL DEMOCRACY

Given the complementary strengths and weaknesses of subjective and objective strategies (see Section 1.3), the ideal course of action is using both: "A…promising route to improving measurement is to look for ways to combine the information from subjective and objective measures of democracy" (Bollen and Paxton 2000, 79).

How similar are the provincial democracy pictures shown by the objective and subjective data presented above? The comparison is not straightforward because the former consists of a single index while the latter gave rise to several indices. Moreover, there is only one period covered by both sources of data, 2003–7.[43] Therefore, I analyze the statistical relation between the objective and subjective measures for this period.

Table 3.4 presents the bivariate Pearson correlations between the objective SDI and twenty-two measures derived from the SEPP (that is, the seventeen first-level indices and two second-level indices analyzed in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, the two additional indices inductively derived through factor analysis in Section 3.2.1 and, in the last row, the "Overall evaluation of subnational democracy" item presented in Figure I.1). The SEPP indices are ordered according to their level of correlation with the SDI.

All correlations are positive, and seventeen of them are significant at the 0.10 level or better in spite of the small sample size (N=24). None of the correlations, however, is close to 1. The three highest range between 0.60 and 0.64, and correspond to the first-level *Free Protest* index, the second-level *Media Independence* index, and the *Incumbency Advantage* factor. Most other correlations are in the 0.40–0.56 range, with a few under that level and only one close to 0 (that corresponding to the *Government Discrimination* index).

Even if both the objective and subjective measures were highly valid (keep in mind that the former is likely less valid than the latter; see Section 1.3 and Table 1.2), less-than-perfect correlations would be expected solely on the ground of random measurement error. Both the objective and subjective indices are measured with some error, which has the effect of downwardly biasing

[43] The objective SDI is available for the 1983–2015 period, while the SEPP, conducted during 2008, covered the 2003–7 period only.

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the estimated correlation coefficient (random measurement error attenuates statistical associations). A graphical analysis of the relationship between the objective index, on the one hand, and the subjective indices, on the other (scatterplots not shown), reveals a clear pattern of "noise in the middle": provinces with middling values in the SDI are often widely scattered in terms of the subjective measures.[44] This was expected on the grounds of our previous elaboration on the special difficulty of measuring mixed or "hybrid" regimes (see Section 1.3). Thus, error in measuring the "gray zone" (provinces that mix democratic and authoritarian elements in similar proportions) contributes significantly to explaining differences between the SDI and the SEPP-based indices.

Even in the absence of measurement error, the correlations in Table 3.4 should be less than perfect because the indices do not tap exactly the same thing: the objective SDI is an overall regime measure that emphasizes democratic contestation and power concentration in the incumbent, while the subjective SEPP indices cover many specific aspects of democracy. It is, in fact, reassuring that one of the highest correlations in the table corresponds to the *Incumbency Advantage* factor (r=0.61): the SDI is supposed to tap to what extent there is a level playing field for democratic competition (see Section 2.1). Likewise, it is reasonable that the SDI correlates relatively strongly with the *Judicial Control* and *Legislative Control* indices (r=0.53 and r=0.50, respectively), which are central to its power concentration aspect. It is also reassuring that some of the lowest correlations in Table 3.4 involve aspects of democracy that are not so clearly within the conceptual scope of the SDI, for example the *Repression* factor (r=0.39) or the *Government Discrimination* index (r=0.05).

In summary, objective and subjective measures of subnational regimes seem to be tapping roughly the same underlying reality – a fact that is reflected in the always positive and sometimes sizeable correlations between them. At the same time, they contain significant levels of measurement error and tap different aspects of regimes, resulting in correlations that are never very high and at times are rather low (to a large extent because of disagreement regarding provinces with middling levels of democracy). Even so, some provinces are consistently low or high in both types of measures. The Federal Capital and Mendoza appear among the most democratic provinces in the objective SDI as well as in most SEPP's indices. Formosa, La Rioja, San Luis, Santa Cruz, and Santiago del Estero, on the other hand, are portrayed as very imperfectly democratic by both measurement strategies. Even where they disagree, the complementary strengths and weaknesses of objective and subjective indices provide a solid point of departure to draw reliable causal inferences. I turn to this explanatory endeavor in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

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[44] Notice that if the relationship between the two types of indices were nonlinear, the size of the (linear) Pearson correlation coefficient would be furthered reduced. However, the scatterplots show that all associations are roughly linear.

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TABLE 3.4. *Correlations between the objective Subnational Democracy Index and twenty-two subjective indices of democracy*

Index name	Substantive content	r
First- and second-level indices		
Free Protest	General population's freedom to criticize government and participate in protests	0.64***
Media Independence (2nd level)	Extent to which there are alternative, diverse and critical sources of information about local politics	0.60***
Campaign Advantage	Incumbent candidate advantage in terms of funds and media coverage during last campaign	0.56***
Critical Journalists	Proportion of critical and noncritical journalists in the local media	0.55***
Media Bias	General (i.e., not campaign-specific) level of pro-incumbent media bias	0.54***
Judicial Control	Extent to which provincial supreme tribunal and lower courts are independent and constrain executive	0.53***
Legislative Control	Extent to which legislature has real power and constrains the executive	0.50**
Pluralistic Media	Ease of access to varied media information about provincial politics	0.48**
Fair Elections	Procedural fairness of last gubernatorial elections (registration, vote counting, etc.)	0.47**
Punish Opponents (2nd level)	Government sanctions against critical opposition politicians, journalists, employees, and citizens	0.41**
Police Repression	Unjustified repression by provincial police	0.40*
Soft Media Control	Scope of government measures to control the content of the media	0.39*
Hard Media Control		0.28
Totalitarian Control	Government control of society via indoctrination, restrictions on information, spying, and repression	0.38*
Punish Employees	Government sanctions against critical public employees	0.35*
Punish Journalists	Government sanctions against critical journalists	0.33
Opposition Leaders	Government sanctions against critical politicians	0.28
Horizontal Accountability	Effectiveness of controls on the executive by agencies of horizontal accountability	0.28
Government Discrimination	Government discrimination against groups defined by religion, ethnicity, etc.	0.05

(*continued*)

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TABLE 3.4. (*continued*)

Index name	Substantive content	*r*
Factor analysis-derived indices		
Incumbency Advantage factor	Incumbent's advantages in campaign resources and media coverage	0.61***
Repression factor	Government sanctions against opponents, hard media control, police repression, social control	0.39*
Overall evaluation of democracy		
Overall evaluation of subnational democracy	Single SEPP item assessing experts' opinions about level of democracy in their provinces	0.56**

* Significant at 10%; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the SEPP, described its methodology, provided details about the construction of indices that measure diverse aspects of subnational democracy, and presented the survey's results. The statistical analysis reveals a complex picture. Different aspects of democracy in the Argentine provinces range from (on average) very good to rather poor. Most also have a significant level of interprovincial variance. For example, there are reasonably good average levels (and only modest interprovincial variance) in areas such as inclusion and fairness of the vote counting, but significant variance (and not-so-good average levels) in other aspects such as campaign media coverage, freedom of expression, and institutional constraints. Overall, expert assessments of subnational democracy levels indicate that cross-provincial variance is significant. These findings mean that subnational regimes are heterogeneous in two ways. First, they perform differently in terms of different components of democracy – e.g., provinces tend to be democratic with respect to inclusiveness but rather authoritarian regarding checks and balances. Second, provincial regimes deviate significantly with respect to their overall average: for a large majority of the indices and items some provinces are clearly more, and some clearly less, democratic. There is, then, plenty of interprovincial variance to explain.

The descriptive results presented suggest that the less-democratic subnational regimes in Argentina are characterized by weak checks and balances and by sophisticated ways of undermining contestation. Inclusion requirements, and to a lesser extent liberal rights, are generally respected by Argentine provincial incumbents. Interestingly, the "strong on participation, weak on contestation" (McMann 2006, 179) pattern detected in very different national contexts is also present in the Argentine provinces. This pattern can be additionally described as "strong on strictly electoral contestation; weak on more

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subtle aspects of contestation," in the sense that incumbents achieve electoral dominance through strategies such as media control and lopsided campaign financing rather than by traditional "ballot stuffing."

The aforementioned weakness of the system of checks and balances – a feature that has also been noted in many third-wave national electoral regimes – means that in several Argentine provinces the governor faces almost no institutional constraints from the legislative and judicial branches. This could be interpreted as the legitimate result of democratic politics, especially with respect to the legislature. One could argue that if a party wins both the governorship and a comfortable majority in the assembly, the preferences of both branches are likely to be aligned. This argument is reasonable, but not conclusive, in part because the incumbents' legislative majorities are often the product of elections conducted on an unfair playing field, and in part because it is unlikely that in a truly democratic regime the legislators of the governor's party would always agree with her or him. A submissive or institutionally weak legislature is arguably a sign of a weak democracy (Fish 2006[45]). More generally, the fact that judicial and other horizontal accountability institutions also generally fail to set any limits on the power of the executive, suggests that the problem is not unified government but an excessive level of dominance of the governor. To the extent that liberal democracy is about limiting the power of rulers,[46] the Argentine provinces tend to be imperfectly democratic.

When all the information contained in the SEPP is simplified through exploratory factor analysis, the picture that emerges is that of a regime space organized around two (moderately correlated) axes. One, labeled *Incumbency Advantage* factor, is about the lopsided political and electoral playing field – in areas such as media coverage and campaign resources – that favors those in control of the provincial government over their challengers. The second axis, the *Repression* factor, is related to (usually) subtle ways of punishing opponents, the critical media, and other inconvenient groups and individuals. Even though these axes were derived inductively, they can be interpreted as roughly corresponding with the two dimensions in which the concept of democracy was decomposed in Chapter 1, Popular sovereignty and Political liberties. Alternatively, they can be seen as dimensions that differentiate "gentler" (Incumbency advantage) and "tougher" (Repression) strategies to undermine democracy. It appears that, stylizing facts a little, the less-democratic provincial regimes come in two varieties: (1) those that are mostly based on the advantages of incumbency that minimize the electoral prospects of opponents, and (2) those that are mostly based on soft and subtle forms of repression that discourage and neutralize opponents.

[45] Fish (2006) makes a persuasive "stronger legislatures, stronger democracies" argument.
[46] Riker (1982).

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This chapter concludes Part I of the book, dedicated to describing subnational regimes. It documented that, in most of the aspects of democracy evaluated, Argentine provinces are quite heterogeneous (and also vary over time). The next three chapters (Part II) turn to explanations in the hope of finding the causes of such interprovincial (and temporal) heterogeneity. The guiding question of the second part of the book, then, is the following: why are some provincial regimes much less democratic than others?

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