Federalism

AND

Democracy

IN

Latin America

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CHAPTER 5

Reallocative Federalism

Legislative Overrepresentation and Public Spending in the Western Hemisphere

—EDWARD L. GIBSON, ERNESTO F. CALVO, AND TULIA G. PALLETTI

Do institutional features of federal systems have an independent impact on politics and public policy? For a long time the debate was somewhat closed. William Riker’s suggestion that federalism and its institutions had no significant impact on public policy was largely unquestioned in the three decades since he first pronounced himself on the subject. However, recently this claim has come under scrutiny. In this volume Alfred Stepan challenges Riker’s position explicitly, and other contributions (Samuels and Mainwaring, Penfold-Becerra, and Ochoa-Reza) provide implicit criticism of Riker’s skepticism about the independent effects of federal institutions on political outcomes. These authors’ works tackle the issue from a variety of perspectives, but a common thread that links them concerns the relationship between the institutional features of federal systems and the underlying asymmetries of federal countries. All federal countries are characterized internally, and in varying ways, by asymmetry. Asymmetries in population, size, and economic power exist between
CHAPTER 7

Unity by the Stick
Regional Conflict and the Origins of Argentine Federalism

—EDWARD L. GIBSON AND TULIA G. FALLETI

The acts of making federal constitutions should display the main feature of bargains generally, which is that all parties are willing to make them.

William Riker (1987)

Haremos la unidad a palos
(We will forge unity by the stick)

Aide to Argentine President Bernardino Rivadavia, 1827

How do rivalries between territorial units of a federation shape the institutional evolution of federalism? More specifically, how do federal countries resolve the problem of a regional hegemon within the federation? Our chapter explores these questions in a case study of the creation and evolution of federalism in Argentina. In addition to providing a new perspective on the origins of federalism in Argentina, we seek to make a number of theoretical contributions to the comparative historical study of federalism.

First, the comparative literature on federalism has tended to focus on conflict between levels of government (i.e., between the national and subnational governments) to explain change in federal systems. In this chapter we provide a theoretical framework that adds an interprovincial conflict dimension to the intergovernmental conflict dimension traditionally found in explanations of centralization or decentralization in federal systems. This provides a fuller understanding of the internal power dynamics of federal systems than approaches focusing unidimensionally on intergovernmental conflict. Conflict between regions and conflict between levels of government operate simultaneously in federal systems, and they jointly affect important outcomes in the institutional development of federalism and its degree of centralization. In this chapter we therefore develop a regional conflict perspective to analyze the origins of Argentine federalism and to explain the institutional power relationships that emerged from the nineteenth-century cauldrons of interprovincial strife.

We also develop theoretical insights about the origins and formation of federal regimes. We distinguish between three outcomes of federal system formation that tend to be conflated in the contemporary literature: national unification, the decision to adopt a federal (versus unitary) regime, and the degree of centralization of that federal regime. Each of these represents a separate stage in the emergence and evolution of federal systems, and the sequences between these stages (the U.S. “ideal type” notwithstanding) have varied empirically across historical cases. In addition to being sequential, these three outcomes also involve a distinct causal mechanism.

Regarding the Argentine case, our theoretical framework explains how nineteenth-century interregional conflicts simultaneously determined the balance of power between the national and provincial governments as well as the balance of power between the provinces themselves. The struggle over political centralization, we contend, was less a struggle over how a national government would dominate local governments than over how the provinces would dominate one another. Having first experienced subordination to Buenos Aires province, the regional Goliath, in a decentralized federal order we categorize as hegemonic federalism, coalitions of weaker provinces fought for a strong and autonomous central government to check the union’s most powerful province. While giving peripheral provinces strong representation in national political institutions, they created a federal system that centralized considerable power in the national government. A centralized plural federal-
monitored collectively by the provinces, nevertheless retained considerable discretionary power in its actions toward individual provinces.

Theoretical Considerations and the Argentine Case

William Riker and the Origins of Federalism

A logical theoretical point of departure for a search for the origins of Argentine federalism is William Riker's (1964) classic work on the origins and evolution of federal systems. Drawing his theories from the experience of the late-eighteenth-century North American colonies, Riker saw the international security context as a driving force for the formation of federal systems. In what Alfred Stepan has characterized as a "coming together" theory of federalism, Riker suggests that political entities with actual or presumptive claims to sovereignty agree to come together in a federation to meet a joint security threat or foreign military opportunity that they are unable to meet on their own. The constituent units of the federation willingly trade sovereignty for security and military power in a "federal bargain" (Riker 1964, 11–14).

In describing his "law of federal origins," Riker lists two conditions predisposing leaders to enter a "federal bargain": (1) the "expansion condition" (the opportunity for aggression by the federation) and (2) the "military condition" (the desire for protection from an external military threat). He goes on to write that "these two predispositions are always present in the federal bargain and that each one is a necessary condition for the creation of federalism" (Riker 1987, 13–14).

Riker's "universal" theory of federalism draws heavily on the case of the United States, which results in several shortcomings when applied to the study of Argentine federalism. The first shortcoming is that the international threat/opportunity condition does not apply to the nineteenth-century geopolitical context that gave rise to the Argentine federation. As we will discuss below, international wars took place, and security threats existed, but none of these applied consistently to all or even most of the eventual constituent units of the federation at any particular time. Furthermore, none of these events or threats was salient at the two major moments of federation building, the 1831 pact that gave rise to the Confederación Argentina (Argentine Confederation) and the constituent assembly of 1853 that inaugurated the Argentine Federal Republic.

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tinctions between three analytically separate phenomena: the causes of national unification, the adoption of a federal regime, and the subsequent degree of centralization of that federal regime. In Riker's own account of the origins of federalism in the United States these three factors tend to converge. National unity and the adoption of a federal regime are treated as simultaneous and analytically equivalent events (caused also by the same international security variable). The confusion is further compounded when Riker shifts the outcome under study to the centralization of the federal system rather than the origin of the federal system itself.

Concepts and outcomes are thus conflated in Riker's treatment of federalism, constraining its usefulness as a road map for the study of Argentine federalism. In the following pages we look at the historical origins of that federal system by systematically addressing the three analytical stages mentioned above (causes of national unification, decision to adopt a federal regime, and its degree of centralization). We suggest that each dimension has its own causes. First, the union of separate sovereign or semisovereign provinces was driven by mutual economic needs, but these by themselves did not determine a federal outcome. Second, the choice of a federal regime was determined by the inability of one powerful region to impose its dominion over the others through a unitary project. Federalism emerged only after decades of failed constitutional projects, intermittent secessionist challenges, and continuous military conflict. Finally, the emergence of a "centralized federalism" was similarly the outcome of regional conflicts in which victorious elites from poor provinces sought a strong and autonomous central government that would prevent one province's dominion over the others in the union. A "federal bargain," driven by economic need and global economic opportunities, would indeed be struck between separate governmental units, but its provisions would be enforced by a third party to that bargain: a relatively autonomous federal state working on behalf of the union against encroachments by any single member.

Governmental Centralization and Interprovincial Conflict: An Analytical Framework

In the regional conflict explanation presented in the following pages the rise of centralized federalism is seen as an outcome of conflict between two sets of provincial factors, "centralizers" and "peripheralizers." While it is difficult to assert ex ante
to say that strong provinces’ first preference will be a unitary arrangement. If strong provinces cannot impose a unitary government on the other provinces of the union, they prefer “hegemonic federalism,” an arrangement in which a regional hegemon dominates the government of the union (and by extension, the other provinces in that union). Weak provinces, in turn, prefer the institutional arrangements that mitigate that domination. These preferences may change, however, based on the strategic choices faced by powerful provinces seeking to dominate the union and weaker provinces seeking to avoid their domination.

At this point, a bit of chronology is required in order to make sense of the theoretical discussion that follows. We separate the historical discussion in this paper into five phases. During the first period, 1810–31, the post-independence union was beset by conflicts over the form of regime (unitary or federal) to be adopted. In the second period, 1831–52, a decentralized confederation was established following the victory of federalist “peripheralizers,” which very soon succumbed to the hegemonic control of Buenos Aires province. In the third period, 1853–62, a federal constitution was promulgated granting important powers to a central government, but Buenos Aires refused to join. After a series of military conflicts, Buenos Aires eventually prevailed and joined the federation in a position of paramountcy. During the fourth period, 1862–68, a modern state was built under the presidency of Bartolomé Mitre of Buenos Aires, and a centralized federalism emerged under Buenos Aires’s domination. In the final period, 1868–80, the interior provinces engaged in successful institutional coalition building that gradually increased their influence in the federation. Buenos Aires rebelled, and the process culminated in the 1880 military defeat of the province and the removal of the last important vestiges of its control over the national government.

In the Argentine case, contending provinces shifted their preferences about centralization across historical periods. During the early struggles over regime type (1810–31), as Buenos Aires pushed forward with its schemes for unitary domination, the weaker “federalist” provinces of the interior were the union’s “peripheralizers,” raising the banners of subregional autonomy in successful resistance to unitarist centralization. The victory proved to be Pyrrhic, however, as the decentralized confederation that ensued did not protect the weaker provinces from economic and political subordination to the union’s regional hegemon, Buenos Aires (1831–52). Having tasted the fruits of this Pyrrhic victory, the interior provinces became the federal autonomy to protect them collectively against the union’s provincial giant. Buenos Aires, on the other hand, embraced centralization when it could control the central government and advocated peripheralization when faced with the prospect of a central government with autonomous powers.

The regional conflict explanation provided in the following pages therefore argues that the creation of a centralized or peripheralized federal system is an institutional outcome of conflict between the territorial units of the federation (rather than between central and subnational governments). The literature on the origins and evolution of federalism, from Riker to the present, tend to characterize the driving conflict as one between a central government, on the one hand, and the constituent governmental units on the other. The main axis of conflict within a federation is thus conceived as between a national government and the provinces as a whole. Issues
of interprovincial conflict and domination have no place in this conceptualization, nor
do they have a potentially explanatory role in the origins of particular federal sys-
tems. To correct this we add another dimension of conflict to this scheme: conflict
between constituent territorial units of the federation. Federal systems are thus mea-
sured not only according to the relationship between the national government and
the provinces, but also according to their relationship to interprovincial domination.

Thus, to Riker’s “centralized federalism—peripheralized federalism” continuum
we add another continuum: hegemonic federalism—plural federalism. At the “hegemonic”
extreme of this continuum one province dominates the national government—that
is, the central government exercises little or no independence from a provincial
hegemon. At the plural end, the central government is autonomous from any par-
ticular province or group of provinces. It acts on behalf of the union as a whole,
rather than of any constituent member or group of members. Figure 7.1 attempts
to capture the interactions between an axis measuring conflict between levels of
government and an axis measuring conflict between provinces. Different moments
in the institutional evolution of Argentine federalism are placed in corresponding
locations on the two-dimensional space. These distinctions could also be conceptual-
ized dichotomously, as in Table 7.1 where hegemonic or plural federalisms are clas-
sified as subtypes of the peripheralized or centralized federalisms. A country could
be classified as a centralized federalism and then placed in a subtype indicating
whether it is hegemonic or plural.

At this point we see the usefulness of these conceptualizations as heuristic de-
tices for the study of the origins and evolution of federal systems and for providing
systematic ways of integrating the intergovernmental and interregional dimensions
of conflict. The conceptualizations offer better understandings of “federalism” in
both of its key historical dimensions: as a system for managing conflicts between
levels of government and as a system for managing conflict between regions.

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From the very beginning Buenos Aires was at the heart of controversy between the
“provinces” that had once formed the Spanish Vice-Royalty of the River Plate. The
juridical political entity that linked them prior to independence was a construct of
Spanish colonial administration, which linked vast territories, stretching from Tierra
del Fuego to the present-day northern borders of Bolivia and Paraguay, under a
viceroy located in Buenos Aires. Between 1810 (the start of the wars of independ-
ence) and 1853, this assembly of territorial political units lacked a formal constitu-
tion and a permanent national government—but it was not for a lack of trying. Be-
tween 1810 and 1831 political leaders organized at least seven national governments
and four constitutional assemblies, and they sought to promulgate two constitutions
(Chiaramonte 1993). Both were unitary constitutions, and they were immediately
rejected by regional caudillos distrustful of the hegemonic intentions of their Buenos
Aires–based rivals (Rock 1985).8

Buenos Aires’s dominance over the provinces of the ex–vice-royalty was politi-
cal, administrative, and economic. As the seat of the Spanish vice-royalty, the city of
Buenos Aires developed a political and administrative infrastructure unrivaled by
any other province, which made it the “natural” center of government to early as-
piring nation builders. Located at the mouth of a giant network of navigable rivers
linking the provinces to one another and to global markets, Buenos Aires was able
to control the flow of domestic and international trade. Its hold over customs and
ports gave it command over trade and customs revenues, as well as the ability to
impose tariffs on other provinces. The city’s paramount position during the early
decades after independence would be compounded by the explosive nineteenth-
century agricultural development of the province of Buenos Aires. The develop-
ment of the Pampas plains made the province the domestic pivot of an internation-
ally driven model of development that made Argentina one of the richest countries
in the world well into the twentieth century, and further heightened the economic
disparities between Buenos Aires and its provincial counterparts.

Freedom from domination by the provincial colossus thus became the rallying
cry of “federalist” provinces throughout the former vice-royalty of the River Plate.
In the early years of the republic, as the peripheral northern corners of the old vice-
royalty seceded and international conflict led to the separation of present-day
Uruguay from the Argentine territory, the remaining constituent units of the vice-
royalty of the River Plate battled for domination.

Given the bloody and bitter nature of these conflicts, the provinces’ continuing
desire to form a union does seem surprising. The vast geographic distances and cul-
tural divides separating them made them unlikely partners in the building of an Ar-
teguean “nation.” However, the unhappy union, a product of Spanish administra-
tive design, would be held together in the face of repeated secessionist experiments
and autonomist insurrections up to the 1880s for economic reasons.

The provinces of the periphery that experimented with autonomy did so at their
economic peril. The price paid for secession was not military conquest or absorp-
tion by another power but poverty and economic isolation. Almost all outlets to for-
eign trade passed through Buenos Aires, and the revenues controlled by that
province were often vital to local economic well-being. Furthermore, the provinces
of the interior, whether the poor provinces of the north or the more prosperous ones
adjoining Buenos Aires, had a clear interest in ensuring that the fluvial choke-points
of the River Plate remained open to them rather than controlled by a hostile or iso-
lated foreign power. Thus, recalcitrant provinces eventually returned to some kind
of national union, and the subject of national unity remained active on the agenda
of interprovincial discussions and debates. The provinces desperately needed the
economic dynamism Buenos Aires could provide, but they feared with equal des-
peration the political price of union with the regional hegemon.

From the perspective of Buenos Aires, national union offered the expansion of
markets and trade revenues under its control. The economic incentives of union in-
creased dramatically for Buenos Aires during the nineteenth century as the wool and
cattle boom on the Pampas and international demand for Argentine agricultural
products pushed development northward and westward into adjoining provinces in
an expanding search for new lands and settlement. Buenos Aires’s ability to seize
the opportunity offered by the boom in global demand was thus increasingly tied to its
political interactions with the provinces of the interior (Burgin 1946; Rock 1985).

These factors provide a more compelling and consistent explanation for the per-
sistence of a national unity project than international military risks or opportunities.
International security risks did appear during the four decades between indepen-
dence and the 1853 federal regime, but they were either too localized or too ephem-
eral to have sustained the union by themselves. The wars of independence from
permanent union nor a federal regime. Furthermore, the threat of a Spanish re-
conquest, along the lines of that provided by Great Britain against the fledgling
United States of America, simply did not exist after 1820. By Riker’s (1964, 41–42)
theory, then, the Argentine federal union should have broken apart once the mili-
tary need for it had subsided. Nevertheless, in spite of bitter interregional conflicts,
the push for union continued, and federalism in its peripheralized variant was es-
established in 1831.

Other military conflicts after independence also fail to explain this trend. In the
late 1820s the provinces of the River Plate went to war against Brazil in a conflict
that eventually resulted in the creation of Uruguay as an independent buffer state.
However, this war did not involve much of the federation. The main combatants
were the province of Buenos Aires and to a lesser extent the provinces adjoining
Brazil to the north of Buenos Aires. In 1866 Argentina went to war (this time allied
with Brazil) against Paraguay in a bloody war that did much to consolidate the Ar-
teguean state and its fledgling federal army. However, by this time a federal govern-
ment had been formally constituted for fifteen years, rendering this particular “for-
eign military opportunity” unsuitable as an explanation for the origins of Argentine
federalism.

This leads us, therefore, to restate our basic rejoinder to Riker’s theory. National
union and federal regime creation were two distinct processes that had different
causes: international economic need and opportunities for the former, and subna-
tional territorial conflict for the latter. Furthermore, in neither case were the inter-
national security variables mentioned by Riker the driving forces for either national
union or the creation of federalism.

Leviathan or Hegemon? The Creation of
Peripheralized Federalism, 1831–1852

A situation of mutual distrust combined with growing mutual need shaped the early
decades of the Argentine union. Against a backdrop of permanent interprovincial
war and conflict between “unitarists” and “federalists” the hapless political leaders
of the “United” Provinces of South America sought to craft political arrangements
that would impart institutional order to their union. The eventual proposals that
emerged usually reflected momentary balances of power wrought on the battlefield.
Regional Conflict and the Origins of Argentine federalism

Governments fashioned during the 1810–31 period and served as the hotbed of unitarist designs for national union. The weaker provinces of the “interior,” hotbeds of “federalist” agendas, were unable to impose their constitutional projects of limited government and provincial autonomy from Buenos Aires. Yet their resistance was enough to undermine successive unitarist schemes launched by Buenos Aires. During this period the concept of a strong central government, embodied in the unitarist schemes of the day, was inseparable from the notion of a nation dominated by its richest province. The “federalism” of the times, therefore, represented resistance to both the idea of a central government and the idea of a Buenos Aires–dominated national union.

It was only with the eventual military triumph of “federalist” forces throughout the territory that the fledgling union’s first federal arrangement became accepted by all of its constituent units. The key to this development was a successful federalist insurrection in Buenos Aires province itself. Juan Manuel de Rosas, a prominent cattleman and general in the Buenos Aires militia, unfurled the federalist banner against the urban-led unitarist leadership in his province. Forming an alliance with federalist caudillos in the interior, he defeated the Buenos Aires government in 1829 and ruled the province with an iron hand until his ouster in 1852. His rise to office shifted the national balance of power in favor of the federalists. Reinforced with the material and political support of the nation’s provincial giant, federalist forces in the interior soon subdued the last bastions of unitarist armed resistance. In 1831 a Pacto Federal (Federal Pact) was accepted by all Argentine provinces and became the legal basis for the newly named Confederación Argentina (Argentine Confederation). Unitarism was now defeated militarily. Argentina formally became what Riker would consider a “peripheralized” federal system.

The Pacto Federal was not a constitution. It was a pact meant to have temporary binding force, pending the drafting of a constitution by a constitutional convention. The confederation bore some resemblance initially to another hemispheric experiment in peripheralized federalism, the short-lived Confederation of the United States of America. However, in design and actual practice this longer-lived experiment would prove even more peripheralized than its northern counterpart. As the U.S. confederation, the signers of the Pacto Federal did not create a national executive or judiciary. Instead, they delegated powers to a national “Representative Commission” of the provinces exclusively to raise armies for the national defense. A constitutional convention scheduled later would decide on more permanent arrangements regarding the division of powers between the central and subnational governments, as well as thornier questions of national tax collection and the sharing of revenues from trade between Buenos Aires and the provinces (Sampay 1975). However, the constitutional convention never convened. Buenos Aires had little interest in weakening its control over trade revenues and formalizing revenue-sharing schemes that would diminish its discretionary control over its confederated allies. Nor did it have much interest in granting legal powers to a national government vis-à-vis the provinces that might mitigate its sway over the federation.

The Pacto Federal would thus remain in a state of “provisional permanence” for over two decades as the Argentine federation’s legal framework (Chiaramonte 1993, 82). However, it would become a rather empty shell for a loose alliance of provinces that soon succumbed to the de facto control of its provincial hegemon. Within a year of the pact’s signing Buenos Aires engineered the dissolution of the confederation’s only national organ, the “Representative Commission” of the provinces. Rosas emerged as the dominant political figure of the Argentine confederation, eclipsing the provincial federalist caudillos that cofounded the union and crushing sectionalist rebellions within the federation’s borders. The government of Buenos Aires assumed control over national military affairs and external relations, and it dominated the union through military force, control of international and interprovincial trade, and the discretionary use of subsidies to resource-starved provincial allies (Rock 1985, 104–13).14

The Confederación Argentina put into bold relief that regardless of the regime type adopted, the issue of Buenos Aires’s political domination upon the other provinces would not go away. Many had seen the “federal-unitary” distinction as the dividing line between pluralism and hegemony, yet it had proven inadequate for capturing the dilemmas of nineteenth-century regional conflict. The root of the problem was that neither federalist nor unitarist leaders of the early postindependence period had been able to imagine a national government that was not controlled by Buenos Aires. Federalists, therefore, sought the absence of central government. When Rosas turned Buenos Aires into a bastion of federalism, all provinces converged for once on the common institutional device of a peripheralized federalism under the Argentine confederation. However, it would be a common device for different purposes. The caudillos of the interior saw it as a way to gain the benefits
of union without the domination of Buenos Aires. The supreme caudillo of Buenos Aires saw it as a way to maximize his province’s own structural advantages vis-à-vis the union unencumbered by institutional counterweights and constraints.

Rosas proved the most prescient of the group. A federal union without a central government was little different than a unitary government controlled by Buenos Aires. The key was not the type of regime but the relationship of central authority to the union’s richest province. The bitterly ironic lesson learned by the provinces during the Argentine Confederation was that, after decades of fighting a unitarist Leviathan, they were now at the mercy of a federalist hegemon.

The Development of Centralized Plural Federalism 1853—1880

The Constitution of 1853 and the Struggle against Hegemonic Federalism

A key moment in the evolution of any federal union is when the national government becomes separated from the government of the union’s most powerful province. This may occur relatively early in the union’s history, or it may take decades of struggle, but it is a vital step in federalism’s institutional evolution. It produces a “relatively autonomous” central government that acts on behalf of the collectivity of provinces rather than of any single constituent member or members.15 “Hegemonic federalism,” where the government of the union is dominated by a provincial primus inter pares, gives way to plural federalism, where in its ideal form a national government exercises equal sovereignty over all the constituent governmental units of the federation. This move from one form of federalism to another is an outcome of interprovincial conflict. Where successful, however, it also marks a shift from the axis of intraregional conflict toward the intergovernmental conflict axis. In other words, the conflict between provinces is increasingly displaced by sovereignty conflicts between levels of government.

In Argentina the struggle took nearly seventy years. It culminated spectacularly (once again) in 1880, in the military conquest of Buenos Aires by a federal army. The victorious forces subjugated the government of the province and wrested away its crown jewel, the city of Buenos Aires. The city, with its ports, customs revenues, administrative infrastructure, cultural heritage, and economic wealth, was made a federal district, controlled by the national government and officially declared the patri-

were forced to set up a new provincial capital in the sleepy River Plate town of La Plata, sixty miles from the new federal district.16

The 1880 military denouement, however, marked the endpoint of a struggle that in the previous two decades had become increasingly institutional. Military and economic power had been gradually displaced by the coalition building of the weaker provinces in the newly created federal institutions. The process evolved slowly, starting in 1852 when a military coalition of provinces led by the Entre Ríos caudillo Justo José de Urquiza defeated “the Caligula of the River Plate,” Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas. The victorious forces held a constitutional convention in the province of Santa Fe and in 1853 promulgated a federal constitution that created both a high degree of provincial representation in national political institutions and a powerful central government.

In spite of deep partisan and regional hostilities, the economic impetus for union was stronger than ever. A boom in international demand for Argentine wool and cattle products was underway and had transformed much of the country’s agricultural landscape. The provinces were desperate for a piece of the boom, and they needed Buenos Aires for access to it. Buenos Aires, on the other hand, also needed land and markets in the interior. As Rock (1985, 123) writes, “both the provinces and Buenos Aires—one wanting trade outlets and investment funds, the other seeking new land—had reasons to support peace and cooperation.” Nevertheless, the terms of that union continued to be problematic. Intellectuals and political leaders on both sides of the provincial divide were converging on the need for national union and, more importantly, for a central government that could bring order and facilitate the nation’s international economic integration.17 However, these modern state builders could not agree on the government’s role in the regulation of interprovincial domination.

The federal constitution of 1853 represented a solution to many in the Argentine political elite. The constitution embodied fundamental changes in Argentine federalist thought wrought by the experience of hegemonic federalism under Governor Rosas’s rule. Botana (1993) has characterized the 1853 constitution as a fusion of unitarist and federalist ideals, embodying the unitarist ideal of a powerful presidentialist central government and the federalist principles of provincial autonomy and representation in national political institutions. What this “fusion” also represented was a clear revalorization by federalists of the functional and strategic uses of a central
saw the values of a central state for maintaining order and providing the organizational bases of Argentina’s integration into the international economy. Strategically, however, the creation of an autonomous central government would introduce an institutional counterweight to Buenos Aires. The federalist “peripheralizers” of the past were now the “centralizers” of the Argentine federation. The federalist provinces that had once seen a strong central authority as the agent of their domination by the union’s giant now embraced it as their deliverer from that domination.

The new constitution established a federal regime, a bicameral legislature, and an independent judiciary. On one hand, the new constitution provided for a high level of provincial representation in national political institutions. A national senate, invested with considerable policy-making influence, would be composed of two senators per province, each elected by provincial legislatures. This arrangement also ensured an important national role to provincial governors, whose control of local legislatures would give them a central role in determining the composition of their province’s two-member delegation to the Senate. In addition, the constitution created a president with a six-year term of office without immediate reelection. An electoral college of provincial delegates would elect that president.

The new federal constitution, on the other hand, also introduced a high level of centralization. One of the most important institutional provisions that the interior’s new centralizers created was the power of “federal intervention.”18 Copying the United States’s constitutional clause by which the federal government can intervene in its member states to guarantee the republican form of government, the Argentine “founding fathers” also granted the federal government such a power in Article 6 of the constitution.19 However, from the very beginning, the issue of federal interventions raised many questions about when and how they should be used and about the capacities of the federal government vis-à-vis the provinces before and during the interventions. In the constitutional convention of 1853, the preferences of centralizers and peripheralizers were reflected in two competing proposals regarding federal interventions. The provinces of the interior wanted a strong central government and sided with Juan Bautista Alberdi’s proposal that, in case of sedition, the federal government could intervene in the provinces without their request in order to reestablish order.20 The province of Buenos Aires instead preferred a federal government with limited powers and sided with Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s proposal to prohibit the federal government from intervening without the explicit re-

The final text of the 1853 constitution permitted interventions with and without local requests and failed to specify if the national executive needed the approval of congress to declare an intervention. Thus, the constitution of 1853 left the door open for the national executive to use federal interventions according to its discretion and convenience. Indeed, soon after the constitution was promulgated, federal interventions in Argentina became widely used and one of the most important institutional mechanisms to control subnational governments and political actors. Between 1853 and 1860, the center intervened in all provinces but Entre Ríos and San Luis—some of them on two occasions—and all interventions were decided by presidential decree.21

The 1853 constitution that would govern the República Argentina was signed by all the governments of the interior provinces that had defeated Juan Manuel de Rosas, but Buenos Aires, suspicious of the interior’s designs on its capital city and control over international trade revenues, refused to subscribe to the new constitution. The provinces of the new union thus set up their capital in the city of Paraná, metropolitan center of the province of Entre Ríos, the second power of the Argentine union.22 For the next six years the relationship between Buenos Aires and the union remained in a legal state of limbo. Much of that time the city of Buenos Aires was under siege by the armed forces of the Republic;23 the province and the federal government refused to recognize each other’s claims to political authority and harassed one another with economic blockades and discriminatory tariffs. The first break in the logjam came with the military defeat of Buenos Aires in the 1859 battle of Cepeda. A reluctant Buenos Aires agreed to the terms of the 1853 constitution (after an 1860 constitutional convention incorporated certain reforms favorable to the province) and pledged large monthly subsidies to the other provinces in the union (Oszlak 1985, 236).24

In yet another of the dizzying reversals of fortune that characterized nineteenth-century Argentine regional conflicts, an ever-defiant Buenos Aires turned the tables again on the union less than a year later. The Buenos Aires militía, led by Bartolomé Mitre, defeated the allied provincial militias in the Battle of Pavón in 1861. In 1862 Mitre was unanimously proclaimed president of the newly named República Argentina by an electoral college of delegates from the provinces (Botana 1993, 234). Mitre, who had become governor of Buenos Aires only in 1860, was a zealous defender of Buenos Aires interests. Nevertheless, he was also a prominent local advo-
intellectual elite that drafted the 1853 constitution, he saw the region's future greatness as best ensured by a union led by a modern national state. He thus sought unity, but on different terms from those advocated by his contemporaries in the Argentine federation. As Rock (1985) writes, "whereas Urquiza sought to reduce the power of Buenos Aires and impose an equitable sharing of revenues, Mitre's conception of unity endorsed the paramountcy of Buenos Aires."

Mitre's triumphs thus paved the way for a new project of hegemonic federalism led by Buenos Aires, this time under a federal government with considerable powers over the provinces. Exhausted by stalemate, and desperate for an end to the economic hardships imposed by interregional strife, the other provinces of the federation acquiesced. A military victory had once again set the terms of national union. In the next six years of Mitre's presidency, Buenos Aires's economic powers and a booming global demand for Argentine agricultural products would make those terms palatable to the provinces and consolidate support for the union throughout the territory.\(^5\) However, during this time a less visible but nevertheless important story that would ultimately undermine Mitre's project of hegemonic federalism was being played out in the nation's fledgling institutions.

The 1862–68 presidency of Bartolomé Mitre was an institutional watershed for the country. For the first time in its history, a central government became consolidated, governing effectively over all the provinces of the territory. This is not to say that the central government ruled unopposed. During Mitre's six-year presidency there were a total of 107 uprisings in the interior against the central government (Botana 1980), and 117 "unscheduled" local changes of government.\(^6\) Mitre's government dealt with these challenges through a variety of means. The economic boom provided ample resources for dispensing subsidies to the provinces and building alliances with caudillos whose militias maintained order and crushed antigovernment military challenges. Eventually the central government formed a network of provincial allies that helped enforce its authority throughout the territory.

The government also availed itself liberally of the powers of federal intervention granted by the constitution, demonstrating the power of this constitutional device for consolidating centralized presidential authority. As Oszlak (1985, 127–28) has observed, with continued use and with practically no constitutional limitations on how or when they could be used, federal interventions became the indispensable tool for Mitre and his immediate successors for imposing central authority over the union.

to other provinces, the principle of divide et impera permitted the government to prevent coalitions from forming and to confront the provinces one on one with a clear asymmetry of power. In this process of continuous learning, the national government was able to develop and fine-tune an invaluable instrument that would wipe out all federalist vestiges that opposed its quest to concentrate and centralize political power.

Between 1860 and 1880, as the system of centralized federalism was crystallizing, four presidents intervened a total of twenty-nine times in the provinces. Only five of those interventions were passed by congressional law. The rest were the result of presidential decrees (Comisión de Estudios Constitucionales 1957, 26–28).

The centralization of power facilitated another institutional accomplishment during Mitre's presidency: the creation of a national state. When Mitre assumed office the three branches of the national government were located together in the national capital for the first time. In addition, Mitre's government created a national legal system, a taxation system, and a national bureaucracy.\(^7\) In its early years the administration created a national treasury and a customs office, followed shortly thereafter by a national judiciary. Midway through his presidency, Mitre also embarked upon the building of a modern national army. By the end of his term the federal army was fifteen thousand men strong, and it would gradually eclipse all provincial militias that challenged the central government's supremacy throughout the territory (Botana 1993, 236).

The imposition of central authority and the construction of a national state were thus major advances in the consolidation of Argentina's federal regime. However, Mitre's was a hegemonic centralized federalism, and it was a one-sided affair. The central government's powers increased vastly over those of the provincial governments of the interior, but not over the union's strongest province. All interventions during Mitre's presidency were directed at the interior provinces. The province of Buenos Aires, in contrast, continued to enjoy considerable autonomy vis-à-vis the central government, as did the province of Entre Ríos, the junior hegemon of the union. As Botana (1980, 109) has written, "Argentina was governed by a political regime whose most significant characteristics can be summarized as follows: two regional powers—Buenos Aires and Entre Ríos—jealously guarding their autonomy and privileges before the national government, and a periphery of provinces that had experienced the effects of federal intervention. The national government thus had
strong provinces, on the other hand it had managed to impose its sovereignty on the rest of the provincial constellation.

In the end, hegemonic federalism would be undermined not by provincial military insurrections or civil war but by the fledgling institutions of the federal regime itself. While Mitre consolidated central authority, built the national state, and coordinated the nation's domestic and international economic integration, the institutions of federalism were silently shifting the coalitional landscape against his home province. The constitution of 1853 had invested tremendous powers in the presidency. However, it had also created important national arenas for the representation of provincial interests whose clout was not initially evident in the heady days of Mitre's hegemonic federalism. The Senate, the Electoral College that elected the president, and the informal networks of gubernatorial alliances were forums that privileged numbers and coalitions over sheer power. They were also organs that had the institutional authority to decide presidential succession. During Mitre's tenure they became the crystallizing points of interprovincial coalitions that would defeat the continuity of his hegemonic project and expand the interior provinces' influence over the federal system.

Institutional Conflicts and the Transition to Centralized Plural Federalism

The trick for outflanking Buenos Aires institutionally lay in an electoral college coalition, crafted by senators and governors, between a majority of interior provinces and an anti-Mitre dissident faction in Buenos Aires. The quid pro quo between these regional actors was the vice presidency for the Buenos Aires faction in exchange for support in the electoral college for a president from the interior. The first test of this arrangement came in the succession struggles of 1868. San Juan province's Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (one of the centralizing federalists who had crafted the constitution of 1853) defeated Mitre's handpicked successor in the electoral college. The coalitional formula proved its staying power. Starting with Sarmiento, the interior provinces would win the presidency in four consecutive elections.

By manipulating federal institutions during Mitre's presidency provincial elites won the greatest institutional prize: the presidency of the republic. This institutional conquest provided them with the means to consolidate their project of centralized plural federalism. Between 1868 and the final military explosion of 1880, Argentine provincial relations, where the central government redirected economic resources toward the development of the interior and expanded the interior provinces' influence in national political institutions. Economically, the government invested heavily in infrastructure projects for the interior, established protectionist schemes for key industries, and scaled back the Buenos Aires provincial government's control over customs revenues and international trade (Balán 1978; Oszlak 1985). Politically, the interior's influence was advanced through the consolidation of the coalitions built in the 1860s in national political institutions. New institutional layers were grafted onto the federal system that increased the interior's hold over the political process. The electoral alliance that brought Sarmiento to power evolved into a national political party (of sorts) known as the Partido Autonomista Nacional (PAN). The PAN functioned as a network of alliances between the president, the senate, and an informal yet powerful liga de gobernadores (league of governors). The PAN served both as a transmission belt for political decision making between the president and provincial governmental elites, and as a mechanism deciding presidential succession. Regarding the latter, the PAN ensured continued control by the dominant coalition of interior provinces over the presidential selection process. Over the strenuous protests of Buenos Aires (and Entre Ríos in 1874), the electoral coalition engineered the electoral college victories of Nicolás Avellaneda in 1874 and Julio A. Roca in 1880, both from Tucumán Province.

The second front concerned relations between the central government and provincial governments. The now dominant coalition of provincial elites expanded the centralization of the federal system and gradually asserted the supremacy of the central government over provincial governments. Just as Mitre had before them, the presidents from the interior availed themselves liberally of the powers of federal intervention to crush challenges to the national government's sovereignty. They also expanded the federal army's reach throughout the national territory. Not surprisingly, these federal weapons were routinely applied against discolos (malcontents) among the poorer provinces of the largely subordinated interior. However, the ultimate triumphs of centralized federalism came with the subordination of the country's powerful and still defiant provinces. One by one the central government asserted its authority over these provinces. The first triumph came against the province of Entre Ríos, which rebelled against the central government shortly after the electoral college selection of Nicolás Avellaneda in 1874. A federal army defeated and
and put an end to the interior's last bastion of defiance against the central government. Now, as Botana (1980, 109) observed, the last remaining obstacle to the consolidation of federal authority lay in the "undefined relationship between two centers of power: the national government and the province of Buenos Aires."

The opportunity came over yet another dispute over presidential succession. In 1880 the PAN proclaimed Julio A. Roca its presidential candidate, and Roca won the election handily in the electoral college. Buenos Aires rebelled and was defeated by the federal army in a series of bloody confrontations. The decisive military defeat of Buenos Aires's provincial militia put an end to all significant provincial challenges to centralized federalism. The federal government promptly dissolved the Buenos Aires provincial militia and shortly thereafter, in a resounding affirmation of central government supremacy, banned all provincial militias. In an act as important symbolically as it was substantively, the federal government officially "intervened" in the government of the province and dissolved all its branches. It also abolished several economic privileges enjoyed by the province, such as its access to customs revenues and its power to issue currency. Most importantly, however, by federalizing the city of Buenos Aires, it rendered unambiguous the separation between the national government and the province of Buenos Aires. With the final bloodbath of 1880 an institutional framework for interprovincial domination was triumphant throughout the union. Argentina entered the era of centralized plural federalism.

Conclusion

The construction of federalism in Argentina was a blood-soaked and protracted process that bears little resemblance to the theoretical scenario of federalism as a "bargain" between consenting territorial actors in pursuit of common foreign policy goals. We would suggest that the Argentine case is not unique but is representative of broader patterns that can be understood with greater clarity through some of the theoretical contributions made by this chapter.

First, we provide an analytical framework for studying the origins and evolution of federal systems, based on the interactions between two axes of conflict: conflicts between regions or provinces and conflicts between central and subnational governments. "Levels of government" conflicts have predominated in studies of federalism. This has obscured important phenomena relevant to the categorization of federalism in both its operational dimensions: as a system for managing conflicts between levels of government and as a system for managing conflicts between regions. Thus, to William Riker's original distinction between "centralized federalism" and "peripheralized federalism," which measures the balance of power between the central and subnational governments of a union, we have added a distinction between "hegemonic federalism" and "plural federalism," which measures the balance of power between the union's constituent territorial units. Federal countries can thus be compared along two dimensions of power, intergovernmental and interregional, providing a richer picture of their internal power dynamics.

By incorporating interprovincial conflict as one of the theoretical axes of conflict in federal systems we are also in a better position to explain not only key sectional outcomes but the degree of institutional centralization in federal systems as well. A perspective that explains centralization (or decentralization) in federal systems exclusively as an outcome of conflicts between actors defined as a "central government" and "the subnational governments" obscures the enormous impact that these outcomes have for the balance of power between the subnational units of a federation. Where sectional conflicts exist, the battles over how much power to grant the central government are essentially battles over interprovincial domination. The outcomes will tell us as much about the balance of power between the territorial units of the federation as they will about the state of relations between levels of government.31

This chapter also demonstrated the usefulness of distinguishing between three outcomes that tend to be conflated in theories of federal formation: national unity, the choice of a federal system, and the degree of centralization of the federal regime. The Argentine case, where these developments occurred separately and interactively, may be more representative of other cases than the U.S. case analyzed by Riker, in which federalism and the birth of the American state were nearly simultaneous events.32 In much of Latin America, the formation of nation-states took place well before the choice of federalism versus unitarism was made. In fact, the region's two other large federal republics, Brazil and Mexico, began their existence as sovereign states as unitary systems, and conflicts between "federalists and unitarists" were endemic to both countries well after their adoption of federal regimes in later years.

The distinctions between these three developmental outcomes thus provide a useful heuristic for organizing the comparative analysis of federal system formation.
Contrary to Riker’s “law” of federal origins, the adoption of federalism is driven more by internal political dynamics than external military threats or opportunities. The choice of federalism is fundamentally a regime choice, and as such, it is strongly subject to conflict, deliberation, strategic interaction, and, quite often, open warfare between domestic political actors. The international stimuli stressed in Rikerian theories may be an effective explanation for national unification or integration of countries that subsequently became federal, but the causes of each outcome are not the same.

The creation of the Argentine nation-state by reluctant territorial leaders was driven by economics. International economic opportunities, and the advantages of national unity for meeting those opportunities provided the impetus for unification between the fractious members of the former Vice-Royalty of the River Plate. The subsequent emergence of centralized federalism and the eventual victory of its plural subtype in Argentina were an outcome of interprovincial conflict. The struggle was framed in terms of conflict between the central and provincial governments, but until the relationship between Buenos Aires and the national government could be resolved it was fundamentally an issue of interprovincial domination. In a prolonged confrontation that culminated in 1880, provincial “centralizers” prevailed over their “peripheralizing” counterparts in the struggle to determine the relationship between the union’s regional hegemon and central authority. The outcome was a relatively autonomous central government, monitored collectively and institutionally by a majority of provinces, and invested with considerable powers to act against any single member on behalf of the union.

In the seventy-year struggle that culminated in the conquest of Buenos Aires there was a rather surprising role reversal between the poorer and richer provinces regarding preferences over centralization. The federalist peripheralizers of the 1810–52 period became the federalist centralizers of 1853–80. And Buenos Aires, once the breeding ground of unitarist and centralist designs for the union, became its last bastion of provincial independence from central authority. The reason for this lay in the parties’ shifting perceptions about the relationship of political institutions to interprovincial domination. The bitter lesson learned by the peripheralizing provinces of the immediate postindependence period was that a union without a central government was still a union dominated politically and economically by Buenos Aires. Once they got their second chance to design a regime for the union, government could act against any of them at any time, and for the weaker provinces of the interior this did indeed become a permanent threat. However, the eventual victory of centralized plural federalism universalized that threat, and by doing so it rescued the provinces of the interior from the permanent political hegemony of Buenos Aires. There was nothing the interior could do to eliminate the overwhelming structural advantages enjoyed by Buenos Aires. However, the political system they designed and later crafted through bloodshed, institution building, and sheer political manipulation brought about, to an important degree, a separation of national political power from regional economic power.

The rise of centralized plural federalism in Argentina also provides an eloquent demonstration of the power of institutions as strategic tools in conflicts between political actors. As the debates between the constitution’s designers made clear, they certainly had theoretical notions about how its institutional features might affect power relations between the provinces. Nevertheless, it was economic and military power between the provinces that first set the terms of the union during the hegemonic federalism of Bartolomé Mitre’s presidency. However, once created, these institutions, through the many arenas and mechanisms for provincial representation and coalition building, provided the weaker provinces with means for countering the hegemon’s political hold on the union. Ironically, Mitre’s own state building made the prize of their institutional maneuvering all the greater. The presidency that the coalition of interior provinces captured and held after 1868 possessed significant constitutional powers, an increasingly effective national bureaucracy, and a federal army that in 1880 proved equal to the task of subduing its most indomitable provincial foe. This was an irony well captured by historian Rock (1985): “Eighteen years earlier the province of Buenos Aires had supported a national government in the belief that the nation would be its captive; but in 1880 the province instead became the last and greatest prize of its own creation.”

NOTES

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to other countries where such terms as "state," "canton," or "republic" denote this type of subnational entity.

2. This would presumably be the regime governed by the Articles of Confederation. This system is described by Riker as a "peripheralized" federal regime, on the continuum from centralized to peripheralized federal systems, rather than an entirely different form of regime. It should be noted that the cause of both the Articles of Confederation and the constitution of 1787 appears to be the same in Riker's book, namely, the disposition of political elites to enter into a federation to meet an international military threat or opportunity.

3. In fact, this proposition is consistent with one aspect of Riker's (1964) theory. He states that the politicians offering the federal "bargain" to their regional counterparts do so because they are unable to expand by conquest, "because of either military incapacity or ideological distaste" (12). We would suggest that this statement constitutes the nub of a regional conflict explanation for the formation of federal systems. In other words, regardless of the external stimulus (international security or international economics) the adoption of a federal form of government is the outcome of a military or political stalemate between subnational units of the federation, which prevents a dominant region from imposing a unitary regime.

4. Defined in terms of Riker's centralized federalism–peripheralized federalism continuum. A centralized federal system is one in which the central government possesses independent decision-making power vis-à-vis the subnational governments in a high number of issue areas.

5. Assuming, of course, that the option to secede is either undesired or unattainable.

6. This can be seen in the works of Riker (1964), Stepan (chap. 2), and Weingast (1995). To Riker, the movement between "centralized" and "peripheralized" federalism results from the continuous struggle between "the rulers of the federation and the constituent governments," where movement toward either end of the continuum implies one party "overthrowing" the other (6–7). Stepan, on the other hand, categorizes federal systems according to the degree to which the constituent governmental units "constrain" the central government's range of action, resulting in either "demo-constraining" or "demo-enabling" federations. Weingast's sovereign-constituency transgression game, which accounts for a federal system's survival, is played between the center or sovereign and groups of citizens (equivalent to the subnational level) that respond on an equal footing to actions undertaken by the center.

7. We place the term "provinces" in quotes because of the ambiguous juridical status of the current-day provinces between the start of the wars of independence and the 1852 federal republic. The Vice-Royalty of the River Plate was divided into governorships and municipalities that fragmented into new political units during and after the wars of independence. Until the constitution of 1853 their legal status remained ambiguous; although at all times some form of union was in place or under discussion, at some moments these political units appeared to be sovereign entities linked to one another via military and political alliances. At other times they were linked together via confederate arrangements, with their subservience to a presumed central authority more theoretical than real. For a discussion of the theoretical and historical dimensions of these arrangements, see Chiaramonte (1993).

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"United Provinces of the River Plate," denoted the region adjoining the River Plate, which is largely Buenos Aires, and was clearly visualized in the writings and statements of its early leaders as a broad union under the dominion of the River Plate region. Similarly, the very name "Argentina," a derivation of the Latin word for silver (plata in Spanish) connotes the supremacy of the River Plate region.

9. Argentina is over four times the size of France, and the economic differences separating Buenos Aires from the "interior" provinces are compounded by major cultural and sociological differences. For discussions of these contrasts see Gibson (1996) and Scobie (1971).

10. Riker acknowledges that Argentina stayed together as a federal system, in contrast to other early South American federalisms, which either broke up into separate unitary countries or fell under the rule of "centralizing dictatorships" once the external military condition that had brought them together vanished. But he fails to explain why. His general explanatory remarks for "Spanish-American federalisms" are utterly inadequate for the Argentine case. In his own words, "all these remarks demonstrate that the second condition, namely, that the receivers of the federal offer be motivated by a military goal, applies to all the Spanish American federalisms. . . . When the concern over Spanish reconquest died down, federalism waned because few national leaders were willing to offer the necessary bargain to the caudillos. In those cases in which a strong national leader ultimately appeared (e.g., Chile, Colombia), federalism was changed to unitary government. But when no strong national leader appeared, the federation simply dissolved into constituent units." In contrast to Riker's argument, the first triumph of Argentine federalism actually occurred after the threat of Spanish reconquest receded, not before. Moreover, although strong national leaders appeared in Argentina after the creation of the federal republic, the federal system was preserved.

11. Federalist provincial leaders held two constitutional conventions but failed to produce a constitution. See Chiaramonte (1993).

12. Beyond sectional cleavages, intraprovincial federalist-unitarist alignments were often shaped by the urban-rural cleavage in Buenos Aires and much of the country as well. Unitarist sentiment, strongly urban, was naturally strongest in its most urban province, Buenos Aires. However, the explosive expansion of cattle ranching in that province in the nineteenth century gradually eroded the urban monopoly of political power. As Rock (1985, 105) writes, "the rise of Rosas expressed first and foremost the accession to power of the new ranching interests, developing since 1810, and the displacement of the mercantile clique that had sustained Rivadavia [unitarist president in 1827]."

13. The Pacto Federal was originally the basis for a military alliance known as the "Liga del Litoral" between the federalist-controlled provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, and Entre Ríos. After the final defeat of unitarist forces, however, the remaining provinces agreed to the pact. See Chiaramonte (1993).

14. A sense of the bitterness of the federalist-unitarist conflicts can be garnered from official statements and documents of the time, which were usually prefaced by the slogan muera los saljes unitarios (death to the savage unitarists). In a turn toward the absurd, one federalist governor, a close ally of Rosas, went so far as to issue a decree proclaiming all unitarists in his province insane. See Cornejo (1990).
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15. In a Poulantzasian sense, but applied to interprovincial conflict rather than class conflict.


17. This convergence can be seen not only in the writings of such illustrious provincial members of the “Generation of 1837” intellectual elite, but also in the thought of Bartolomé Mitre (1859), Buenos Aires’s most prominent political leader at that time. In his opus Historia de Belgrano y de la Emancipación Argentina, published in 1859, he laid out a vision for a strong federal government bringing stability and international glory to the Argentine nation.

18. Although federal interventions have received very little theoretical and empirical attention, these constitutional devices have an important impact on intergovernmental relations as well as on the political party system. When the federal government intervenes, its agents have the capacity to remove all elected subnational offices and judges, call for elections, and hand over the government to the new authorities. Federal interventions suppress the dual sovereignty that is theoretically intrinsic to the federal arrangement. Sovereignty of the intervened territory resides solely in the federal government. Thus, federal interventions nullify the constitutional autonomy of the subnational units in the sense that they suspend federalism for certain periods in certain parts of the nation. Furthermore, in terms of inter and intra partisan competition, the capacities of the national government and/or the national executive to decide upon when and how to intervene, to select and appoint the intervenor, and to prepare and schedule the new elections, all of these attributes, can lead to favorable political outcomes for the political party that controls the presidency if used strategically.

19. See Constitution of the United States of America, Article IV, Section V.

20. Alberdi’s Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la República Argentina proposes the following: “[The confederation] intervenes without requisition in its territory for the purpose of reestablishing the order perturbed by sedition” (as quoted in Comisión de Estudios Constitucionales 1957, 19).

21. The number of interventions between 1853 and 1860: Catamarca 1 intervention, Córdoba 1, Corrientes 2, Jujuy 2, La Rioja 2, Mendoza 1, Salta 1, Juan Juan 2, Santa Fe 2, Santiago del Estero 1, Tucumán 1, Rosario 2. See Comisión de Estudios Constitucionales (1957, 25–26).

22. We say “metropolitan” with some reluctance. At that time Paraná had a population of ten thousand, compared to that of 100,000 for the city of Buenos Aires (Córdoba, the second largest city of the union, had twenty-five thousand inhabitants at that time). This provides yet another indication of the demographic and economic asymmetries between Buenos Aires and the rest of the country. Nevertheless, at that time the wool, cattle, and agriculture boom had transformed Entre Ríos, which in many ways had become a miniature replica of the province of Buenos Aires, and gave it sway over its federalist provincial allies in the country’s interior.

23. In actual fact, these forces were the militia of Justo José de Urquiza, president of the Republic between 1854 and 1860 and caudillo of Entre Ríos province.

24. Among the reforms discussed in 1860 was the issue of federal interventions. As in 1853, the province of Buenos Aires saw federal interventions as a device for an arbitrary central government to encroach upon its autonomy and to threaten political and economic resources under its control. Although the text of Article 6 on federal interventions was amended to accommodate the province’s concerns, the interpretation of the new article confronted similar ambiguities as the 1853 version. The new wording of Article 6 left ample room for presidential interpretation and maneuvering. It was not clear who constituted the “federal government”: was it the president, congress, or both who had the right to declare an intervention in the provinces? Furthermore, according to the text, the “federal government” could intervene without local request to “guarantee the republican form of government.” Provincial request was necessary if the causes of the intervention were sedition or invasion from other province, but nothing was said about which provincial power—executive, legislative, or both—should request federal intervention. See Summariva (1929).

25. Again, quoting Rock (1985, 126), “During its first delicate years the main pillars of national unity were thus high export earning and a matching land boom, foreign investment, and handouts from Buenos Aires to the provincial landed classes.”

26. Several of these rebellions were minor disputes over central government subsidies and tariffs. However, others involved important secessionist challenges and interprovincial warfare and were crushed only with massive military force. Among the most noteworthy challenges were those led by caudillos from the Northwest provinces, mainly La Rioja’s Vicente Peñaloza, and later Felipe Varela, from the same province. They were eventually defeated by armies led by a family clique of caudillos from Santiago del Estero province, the Taboados, who were allied with, and handsomely subsidized by, Bartolomé Mitre’s government. For accounts of these caudillos’ colorful careers, see Lafforgue (1999).

27. For a detailed account of state building under Mitre, see Otsuk (1985).

28. This minority faction was led by Adolfo Alsina, a former autonomist (not to say secessionist) governor of Buenos Aires, and implacable Mitre rival.

29. And, of course, for the administration of patronage, control of elections and electoral fraud, and settlement of interprovincial conflicts. See Gibson (1996).

30. The details of this rebellion are somewhat more complicated. Justo José de Urquiza, the province’s long standing caudillo, had been assassinated shortly before, casting the province’s internal politics into a spiral of instability. His successor attempted to break with Urquiza’s policy of cooperation with the federation and mounted an autonomist challenge to the central government, which culminated in the 1874 uprising.


32. Especially if we consider that the “centralized federalism” analyzed by Riker was adopted four years after the cessation of hostilities with the British former colonial power.

33. The more recent evolution of unitary states toward federal or quasi-federal arrangements, in what Alfred Stepan calls “holding together” patterns of federal formation (Spain and India, for example), provide additional confirmations of this proposition.

34. Furthermore, we would add the additional caveat that the driving international stimuli for Argentine unification were economic rather than military, a finding that suggests the need for an additional modification of Riker’s theory of federal origins.
CHAPTER 8

Multiple Arenas of Struggle

Federalism and Mexico’s Transition to Democracy

—ENRIQUE OCHOA-REZA

Conventional wisdom is easy to follow but occasionally wrong. Political science journals and the international media commonly assert that the recent election of a new president in Mexico ended more than seventy years of national authoritarian rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Although the statement accurately describes Mexico’s authoritarian political situation prior to 1977, it does not accurately explain the decades leading up to the presidential elections of 2000. Long before the momentous victory of Vicente Fox, Mexico’s political regime had undergone vast transformations and democratized substantially.

In the late seventies Mexico had a party-state system in which all sixty-four senators and 196 out of 237 federal deputies were PRI members. The same party governed all thirty-one states and Mexico City. In addition, the PRI held supermajorities in all state congresses and ruled 99 percent of the localities. Twenty-three years later, on the eve of the 2000 presidential elections, Mexico’s political map differed dra-