

*Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico.* Edited by Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd A. Eisenstadt, and Jane Hindley. La Jolla, Calif.: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1999. Pp. 376.

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This collection makes a major contribution to the comparative study of democratization. Conventional approaches to the study of regime transition differ over the relative causal weights assigned to elite conflict versus mass mobilization, to political parties versus social and civic movements, as well as to domestic versus international factors. What these frameworks often share, however, is the powerful assumption that the nation-state is the only relevant unit of analysis, especially for comparative research. For the growing number of regimes that fall into grey areas of partial and uneven political transitions, this assumption of national political homogeneity can obscure more than it reveals. Many regimes, which may appear to be democratic to those doing research from libraries or national capitals, in practice deny important segments of their citizenry full access to democratic freedoms. Analytically, the causal arrow between national and subnational political change can go both ways, and this volume begins to disentangle the complex threads that link a nation's center to its regions.

The open-ended outcome of Mexico's protracted process of political change. Wayne Cornelius and his colleagues argue, will depend to a large degree on the interaction between national and subnational arenas. Specifically, while national political competition has opened up dramatically in the past decade, and many important states and local governments have been won by the opposition, many other regions remain under entrenched authoritarian rule. Both analysts and state-level opposition leaders have predicted that Mexico's democratized states will drive the national regime transition ("the centripetal road to democracy" [p. 1]). The most recent evidence, Cornelius argues, suggests instead that "the subnational political arena will be the principal source of inertia and resistance to democratization, rather than the breeding ground for democratic advances. . . . So long as anti-democratic forces at the state and local levels can operate with relative impunity" (p. 11).

This collection provides strong support for this general hypothesis. Its balanced mix of case studies includes four studies of political party organizations, six studies of popular movements, and three essays that draw analytical lessons from center-periphery relations. Bruhn's study of the dozens of municipalities governed by the center-left party of the Democratic Revolution in the state of Michoacán concludes "that in centralized authoritarian regimes, alternation in power at the local level can serve more as a diversion than as a path to either local democratization or national regime change" (p. 44). She sees local progress as driven more by national change. Shirk then analyzes the center-right National Action

Party's (PAN) presence in and governance of the industrial city of León, Guanajuato, filling an important gap with his exploration of internal party dynamics. Espinoza's study shifts from the municipal level, assessing Mexico's first opposition party in power at the state level in Baja California Norte. The PAN governed there, in de facto partnership with then-President Salinas, led Espinoza to characterize the experience as "contained alternation" (p. 78). Calvillo explains a rare case of right-left opposition unity in the unsuccessful 1991 campaign for the governorship of San Luis Potosí.

Because of Mexico's opposition political parties' limited basis in civil society, this collection's broader focus on the social basis for democratic change is especially appropriate. Tavera-Fenollosa finds the roots of Mexico City's 1997 democratization in the unusually successful post-1985 movement of earthquake victims. Torres analyzes the internal dynamics of the broad-based, post-peso crisis debtors' movement. Hernandez Navarro explains the state of Oaxaca's 1995 indigenous rights reforms, which bypass political parties to legitimate widespread nonparty indigenous local governance practices. Rubín creatively explains the precedent-setting democratization of the Zapotec city of Juchitán through the interweaving of institutional and identity politics. Hindley shows how a regional Nahua movement emerged and successfully blocked a proposed hydroelectric dam in Guerrero. Harvey then provides critical context for the Chiapas rebellion with his analysis of previous indigenous movements for full citizenship rights. Mexico's indigenous peoples are the most excluded as well as the poorest social groups (at least 11% of the population, officially), so it is quite appropriate that four of the volume's chapters focus on their movements for democratization.

In the concluding section on center-periphery relations, Eisenstadt unravels how weakened presidential authority allowed authoritarian rule to flourish in the state of Tabasco (whose governor then became a leading presidential candidate by the fall of 1999). Snyder shows how neoliberalism's ostensible withdrawal of the national state from regulating key markets (in this case, coffee) creates space for diverse "reregulation" efforts by state governments. Prud'homme effectively compares Mexico's conflictive state-level elections during the 1988-94 period, most of which were resolved not by the voters, but through extrainstitutional pressures from both above and below. This collection persuasively reveals the limitations of most efforts to make nationwide, homogenizing generalizations about Mexico's regime in transition, with important implications for rethinking the study of regime change more generally.