The State of the State in Latin America: Challenges, Challengers, Responses and Deficits*

El estado del Estado en América Latina: Desafíos, desafiantes, respuestas y déficits

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the state in Latin America requires an understanding of the challenges and challengers that it is facing. This paper argues that the region's three major transitions at the end of the 20th century (i.e. democratization, liberalization and decentralization) each posed distinct challenges to the state. It then uses the concept of infrastructural power to conceptualize the actors who are challenging the state, distinguishing between those who threaten either its territorial power or its relational power. Turning from challenges and challengers to responses, the paper identifies three different types of changes (i.e. policy, institutional, and regime) that states have adopted to undercut, accommodate, or defeat challengers. Finally, the paper underscores the difficulty of measuring state deficits in post-decentralization Latin America.

Key words: State, Challengers, Infrastructural Power, Latin America, Decentralization.

RESUMEN

Entender al Estado en América Latina requiere entender los desafíos y desafiantes que éste enfrenta. El presente artículo sostiene que las tres transiciones principales de finales del siglo XX (es decir, la democratización, la liberalización y la descentralización) plantearon desafíos específicos al Estado. Luego se utiliza el concepto de poder infraestructural para conceptualizar a los actores que están desafiando al Estado, diferenciando entre aquellos que amenazan su poder territorial o su poder relacional. Virando el foco desde los desafiantes hacia las respuestas, el artículo identifica tres tipos de cambios diferentes (de políticas, institucional y de régimen) que los estados han adoptado para debilitar, acomodar o derrotar a los desafiantes. Por último, el artículo resalta la dificultad de medir los déficits estatales en la América Latina de la post-descentralización.

Palabras clave: *Estado, desafiantes, poder infraestructural, América Latina, descentralización.*

In contrast to other articles in this issue that seek to conceptualize the state itself, this article turns to the conceptualization of the state's main challenges and challengers. In order to better understand the state of the state in Latin America, we need to focus not only on how to define and operationalize the state, but on how it is being challenged and by whom. As Andreas Feldmann and Juan Pablo Luna (2011) ask in their introductory article: how is stateness shaped by the configuration and evolution of different types of challenges and challengers? With respect to the former, my goal is to contribute to the study of the state both by identifying a range of common challenges and by arguing for the special importance of one particular and seemingly intractable challenge: the U.S.-financed drug war and the outsize profits it generates for drug traffickers. Turning from the common challenges facing the state to the actors who challenge it, I propose an analytical framework based on Michael Mann's notion of infrastructural power that distinguishes between whether the challenger in question is contesting the state's territorial power or its relational power. In other words, Mann's approach may provide useful insights not only about how to study the state but about how to study its challengers as well.

Faced with dire challenges and significant challengers, in many countries the state has failed to mount effective responses; hence the concern that these states may be failing. No responses or inadequate responses are common, but should not disguise the reality that the state has indeed responded in a variety of ways. Not only is the state in Latin America facing a range of challengers, but the state's responses to these challengers have also varied. Because the state in Latin America has responded differently to different challengers at various points in time, the article then seeks to conceptualize these state responses, distinguishing between policy changes, institutional changes and regime changes. Finally, in addition to conceptualizing and comparing responses, the last section of the article turns to the question of the state's deficits and to some of the problems they pose for conceptualization and measurement.

CONCEPTUALIZING CHALLENGES

While the nature and the extent of the challenges that are confronting the state in Latin America vary from country to country, it is nevertheless worthwhile to ask how some of the transitions taking place in the region have posed similar challenges to the state in recent decades. This section focuses on some of the challenges generated by democratization, liberalization and decentralization as three distinct but inter-related transitions, after which it turns to what is in some Latin American countries the far greater challenge to the state: U.S. drug policy. The goal here is to be suggestive rather than exhaustive, merely showing how certain aspects of these macro-level transitions and phenomena have created problems for the state.

If one important manifestation of state strength is the ability to project power across space and to evenly uphold the rule of law within the national territory, democratization and the institutionalization of electoral competition can pose certain dilemmas in this regard. Consider, for example, the phenomena of subnational authoritarian enclaves, which have

recently inspired a great deal of scholarship beginning with Guillermo O'Donnell's (1993) discussion of "brown areas" in which the state is largely absent. According to Edward Gibson (2005), it is not simply that local forms of authoritarianism manage to persist despite national-level democratic transitions –a dynamic he calls "regime juxtaposition"– but that democratization at the national level directly supports subnational authoritarianism when national politicians depend on local authoritarian elites for the voting blocs they can deliver in national elections. In this sense, Gibson has identified an important quid-pro-quo according to which local authoritarian elites offer critical political support for national politicians in exchange for their continued ability to flout the rule of law. That national politicians who control the central state often depend on the electoral support of local authoritarian elites has made it possible for these local actors to successfully challenge the implementation of national policies in their territories, a dynamic that limits the state's infrastructural power. Electoral incentives, then, mean that national politicians might regularly behave in ways that actually subvert the state. Just as presidents in Latin America have compromised the quality of the bureaucracy by appointing ministers who bring political rather than technical competence into the cabinet (Geddes, 1994), presidential imperatives vis-à-vis the construction and maintenance of governing coalitions have also undermined the strength of the central state relative to subnational authorities who routinely flout the rule of law.

More generally, we see evidence in Latin America of the claim that it might be difficult to build democracy and the state at the same time (Mauceri, 2004). Here Latin America has witnessed an important debate over the question of possible tradeoffs between civil liberties on the one hand and state building on the other. Millions of Colombian and Peruvian voters, for example, expressed strong support for Presidents Alvaro Uribe and Alberto Fujimori, who argued that restrictions on civil liberties were necessary in order to defeat armed insurgencies and bolster the state's territorial presence. Critics, in contrast, argued that these presidents restricted democratic contestation for their own political purposes, and that there is no necessary trade-off between security and civil liberty. While this is an open debate, countries in other regions where state formation advanced further before the onset of democratization were likely spared some of the challenges posed by Latin America's more simultaneous experience with attempts to build democracy and the state.

Turning from democratization to liberalization, the literature on market reforms has produced an important debate about the impact of these reforms on the state's scope and strength. On the one hand, one could argue that as the scope of the Latin American state expanded to play additional roles in the middle years of the 20th century, when statism dominated as an economic ideology, the capacity to fulfill these new roles lagged behind the increase in scope. Worse, as the state took on more and more responsibilities vis-à-vis society and the economy, its ability to successfully provide those core goods that only it can provide (i.e. security, judicial enforcement, rule of law) decreased, leading to an overall decline in stateness (Domínguez, 1996; Corrales, 2003). While some advocates of market reforms therefore hoped that they would actually strengthen the state by reducing its scope, others argued that liberalization has had the effect of reducing state

strength. As Fukuyama (2004: 15) writes, "the austerity required by stabilization and structural adjustment policies became…an excuse for cutting state capacity across the board". In other cases, the fiscal austerity required by liberalization led to cuts in capacity that were made not "across the board" but rather dictated by a clearly political logic. For example, where presidents use patronage to reward supporters and cobble together legislative coalitions, the need to protect those bureaucratic supporters rather than the desire to defend core state attributes often dominated decisions about where to make budget cuts. Finally, in addition to the claim that it reduced state capacity, liberalization may also have challenged the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force in Latin America by enabling the explosive growth of private security firms, many of which operate in poorly regulated environments (Ungar, 2007-8).

As Latin America's third macro-transition, decentralization appealed to its adopters as a reform that might help strengthen the state by bringing it closer to the people. Indeed, some of the region's most exciting and important episodes of state-building in recent decades have unfolded at the subnational level, from indigenous mayors who have used their decentralized powers to strengthen state-society relations (Van Cott, 2008), to social movements that have lent some of their capacity to the state itself (Abers and Keck, 2009). Despite these scattered success stories, however, it is more generally the case that decentralization has made the state in Latin America more fragmented, incoherent and internally divided. Failures of cooperation between state agents at national and subnational levels who are supposed to play complementary roles in service provision can limit the state's ability to implement its policies just as certainly as the absence of willing interlocutors in civil society. Particularly important for the state's infrastructural power are hierarchical relationships between state agencies that are characterized by non-compliance or resistance by lower level officials, now emboldened by decentralization. These relationships might take the form of officials in national ministries giving orders that go unimplemented to the deconcentrated agents of those ministries, or of national government ministries that fail to secure the cooperation of the bureaucrats who now report to separately elected subnational governments. Worse still, many decentralization programs in Latin America were much more ambiguous and imprecise about the assignment of responsibilities on the expenditure side than they were about the assignment of fiscal revenues, leading to often deep confusion about which level of government is responsible for which services.

Even on its own, any one of these three large-scale transitions –democratization, liberalization and decentralization– would have implied significant challenges to the state in Latin America; taken together they have dramatically altered the terrain in which the state operates. By changing what the state does relative to the market (liberalization), which level of the state provides which services (decentralization), and how those who control the state come to occupy those positions (democratization), the three overlapping transitions have introduced a tumultuous period for the state.

While the effects of these three transitions are not to be under-estimated, I nevertheless wish to underscore the particular importance of a fourth, largely external challenge that the state faces in Latin America: the U.S.-financed and directed drug war. Even as the state

in Latin America has wrestled with the effects of internal changes like democratization, decentralization and liberalization, it simultaneously has been battered by the direct and indirect effects of the drug war. The story is well known: growing drug use in the U.S. in the last half of the 20th century, decisions by successive U.S. administrations to see drug use as a criminal rather than public health problem, and proximity to the U.S. market have all translated into enormous profits for drug cartels (Bertram, Blachman, Sharpe and Andreas, 1996; Nadelmann, 1993). Just as problematic, the consistent decision to emphasize the supply side over the demand side in the attempt to reduce drug consumption has led the U.S. to intervene in the region through partnerships with Latin American militaries that are ultimately negative not just for democracy (Youngers, 2004) but for state building as well. Human rights abuses by military forces in the prosecution of the drug war along with the corruption of government officials by the cartels have broadly undermined state institutions (at both national and subnational levels) in numerous countries, including Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. In any contemporary debate about "stateness" in Latin America, the U.S. drug war rightfully deserves to be understood as a major challenge to the state, one that continues despite overwhelming evidence of policy failure. Simply put, if it seems that the state is unable to provide security in much of Latin America today, this may say less about the state's weakness or declining capacity than about the cartels' strength, sustained and financed as they are by the war on drugs.

CONCEPTUALIZING CHALLENGERS

What can we learn about "stateness" by better understanding the origins, motivations and identities of the actors who are challenging the state in the contemporary period (and who may or may not be different from challengers in earlier periods)? The starting point here is to come to some sort of agreement about what we mean by the verb "to challenge", without which the analysis becomes too unwieldy. To challenge the state is to contest its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence *or* to seek to prevent or escape the implementation of its laws and policies. Thus not all protestors are challengers. For example, "rightful resisters" under this definition are not challenging the state; they are seeking to force the state to live up to its own laws (O'Brien and Li, 2006). Similarly, transnational NGOs who "name and shame" do not challenge states when they simply try to hold them accountable for policies that are on the books (Keck and Sikkink, 1998), even though the states in question might allege that sovereignty is under attack, as Presidents Alán García, Evo Morales and Alvaro Uribe have recently claimed in Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia. Likewise, groups that oppose and/or protest the state's adoption of a policy decision are not challenging the state, though indeed they may be challenging the government. The distinction between policy adoption and implementation is critical here, and suggests that the label of "challenger" should be reserved for those who contest the state's right to implement policies that have been adopted through legal channels.

This understanding of what it means to "challenge" the state accords with the emphasis that Michael Mann places on the state's infrastructural power, by which he means "the

capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society and implement its actions across territories" (Mann, 1986; 2008: 355). As Soifer and vom Hau (2008) argue, Mann's focus on infrastructural power broadened and re-framed the debate among scholars of the state who had either focused on "state autonomy" (or what Mann would call "despotic power") or the professionalization of the state bureaucracy (which, as Mann showed, offers too thin a way to think about state capacity). For Mann, the state's infrastructural power has both a spatial and a social dimension. Spatially, infrastructural power enables the state to control the territory that is demarcated by the state's official borders. Socially, infrastructural power is a relational power.[1] As Soifer and vom Hau (2008: 222) argue in reference to this second dimension, infrastructural power is "grounded in the organizational entwining…between state and non-state actors", and is also "shaped by the relationships among different state agencies themselves".

Mann's two-dimensional approach to infrastructural power can help us conceptualize and distinguish between different types of challengers to the state in Latin America: spatial/territorial and organizational/relational. In other words, not all challengers are alike; some challenge the state by seeking to displace its agents and/or institutions from subnational territories, but others challenge the state by seeking to disrupt its attempts at social rather than spatial control.

Territorial challengers are societal groups or non-state actors who thrive in spaces not controlled by the state, which is typically indicated by the absence of sufficient police or military presence. Territorial challengers can differ in their goals and strategies. With respect to goals, these challengers might use spatial control in the attempt to take over the state and win control of the national government. A classic example here would be the rural (as opposed to urban) Marxist-Leninist guerrilla insurgencies that emerged in the 1960s across Latin America, though generations of regional *caudillos* before them would also fall into this category as actors who sought to leverage spatial control as a launching pad to national office. Territorial control can be useful for groups with much less ambitious goals, however, and not only as a toehold to take over the state. Some challengers challenge the state's territorial presence because control over space enables them to secure economic benefits, as in the case of groups who use territorial bases for trafficking in drugs or other contraband (Davis, 2009).[2] In addition to goals, the strategies of territorial challengers also vary widely; while some focus on displacing the state by defeating it militarily, others seek to supplant the state territorially by providing the services that the state has failed to provide. Colombia is perhaps the best example in Latin America of a state that faces significant territorial challenges, though military

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[1]   Migdal's state-in-society approach (2001) likewise draws our attention to the reality that societal attributes shape the strength of the state, as does Boone's (2003) focus on within-country variation in the accommodation of subnational societal leaders by central state actors.

[2]   It is also important to note that the territorial absence of the state is sometimes the result of the challengers themselves, who have successfully driven out the state's representatives through force of arms. But we should also consider as "territorial challengers" groups that merely benefit from (and seek to perpetuate) the state's absence even if they are not the causes of this absence.

setbacks for the FARC and its loss of important leaders in recent years has reduced its salience as a territorial challenger.

While guerrilla insurgents and drug traffickers are the most obvious and important examples of territorial challengers to the state in Latin America, do these actors exhaust the category? Is it possible or desirable to de-link "territorial challenger" from "violent challenger"? Equating the two might serve as a conceptual roadblock that prevents us from seeing that some territorial challengers have deployed mostly non-violent approaches in their attempts to avoid state control. Consider for example the recent movements for territorial autonomy led by indigenous communities on the one hand and market-oriented subnational officials on the other. Should we understand these autonomy movements as territorial challengers? The answer appears to be quite mixed. To the extent that these movements have sought to prevent the implementation of national laws in their territories, they might be understood as territorial challengers, following Mann. For example, indigenous communities have articulated demands for autonomy that would significantly limit the territorial reach of the state and its ability to implement policies decided at the national level (Yashar, 2005). In similar fashion, but on the opposite side of the ideological spectrum, the region's Left Turn has also triggered demands by conservative groups in countries like Bolivia and Ecuador that directly challenge the central state by calling into question its ability to impose uniform (statist) policies across subnational regions (Eaton, 2011). While these movements seek to limit the reach of the state and therefore presumably challenge the state, it is also the case that they have privileged mostly *legal* strategies in pursuit of this goal (including active participation in constituent conventions on behalf of their rival visions of autonomy), which means that they cannot be understood unambiguously as "challengers".

If the spatial dimension of Mann's concept of infrastructural power helps us ask important questions about what constitutes territorial challengers, the relational dimension leads us to focus on actors who challenge the state by seeking to impede (or compete with) its attempts at social control. Even in areas where the state faces no significant territorial challengers, the lack of institutionalized connections with civil society may still operate as a major constraint on its infrastructural power. As Soifer and vom Hau point out, the presence of schools and police officers in remote areas does not guarantee control over society (2008: 226). Organizational challengers pose challenges that are perhaps more subtle, less direct and therefore less visible than is the case with territorial challengers, which also means that they are likely to be harder for the state to combat and for the analyst to study.

Groups that repudiate the state by refusing to partner with state agencies or to participate in state-sponsored projects may take a number of forms. For example, in the Mexican state of Guerrero communities have established their own police patrols in the attempt to limit the penetration of abusive state police forces (Rowland, 2006). In parts of Bolivia, traditional authority structures have eschewed participation in the civil oversight committees (*comités de vigilancia*) that were set up in the 1990s to monitor and therefore legitimize municipal governments. In Peru, many indigenous communities steered clear of the ethno-development institutions that President Alejandro Toledo tried to establish, viewing them as a new form of corporatism and top-down control (Chartock,

forthcoming). Relative to these examples, paramilitaries represent a distinct type of organizational challenger; rather than refuse to partner with state actors (with whom they are often tightly connected, as in Colombia), they challenge the state by seeking to establish their own direct forms of social control (Romero, 2000).

By encouraging us to cast a rather wide net when we think about who the state's main challengers are, Mann's framework forces us to confront the reality that these challengers have heterogeneous identities and normative commitments. Drug traffickers, guerrilla insurgencies, paramilitaries and violent gangs are not the only groups who are challenging the state. Indigenous communities that have long suffered at the hands of the state and that seek to avoid co-optation, as well as territorially-based groups who want autonomy to prevent the implementation of centrally-decided policies might also be thought of as challengers. Challengers can be violent or non-violent, left or right, high income or low income. Rather than assume that challengers are negative forces or that stateness is a normative good, participants in the debate over stateness should remember that challengers can be motivated by constructive or destructive impulses, just as the state's infrastructural power can be used for good or for ill.

CONCEPTUALIZING RESPONSES

If the state's challengers in Latin America are characterized by significant variation in terms of their ideological preferences, class affiliations, and strategic orientations, how is the state responding to these challengers? Using the tools of comparative political analysis, a number of research designs might enable us to better understand the content of state responses. For example, within the same country do different types of challengers regularly trigger different responses by the state? Do similar types of challengers tend to encounter the same type of response from states in different countries, or have states in different countries responded differently to similar challengers? Across time, do we see variation in the effectiveness of responses that the state has adopted vis-à-vis similar threats, an outcome that might suggest political learning through time? As a first step toward thinking more comparatively about the state's responses to its challengers, this section seeks to distinguish at the conceptual level between different types of responses. While it often seems that the state has simply failed to respond to the challengers that it faces, an observation that has triggered premature discussions of state failure in Latin America, the reality is that the state has embraced and enacted a number of responses.

First, it is possible to observe that challengers have led Latin American states to adopt a series of *policy* changes, either in the attempt to undercut the appeal and strength of challengers or in the attempt to more forcefully combat these challengers. As an example of the former, the guerrilla insurgencies that proliferated in the middle part of the 20th century and that sought to take over the state often had the effect of prodding the state into more robust forms of action, including land redistribution, infrastructural investments, and other "Alliance for Progress" era policy reforms. Today, however, many of the state's most important challengers (i.e. drug cartels, criminal gangs) appear to

be less motivated by ideological principles, less interested in overthrowing the state for political reasons, and therefore less likely to prompt states to respond by trying to provide a more appealing set of redistributive policies (rather than simply focus on shoring up military or police installations). Another much more recent example of a policy response designed to undercut the state's challengers by reducing their resource base can be seen in the growing move among high-level political elites in Latin America for a serious debate about the legalization or de-criminalization of drugs. In addition to pressure in this direction from ex-Presidents, including Fernando Cardoso, Vicente Fox, Ernesto Zedillo and César Gaviria, sitting Presidents Otto Pérez Molina and Juan Manuel Santos forcefully embraced this policy idea at the April 2012 Summit of the Americas.

Whereas some policy responses have focused on reducing the strength of challengers or limiting their appeal, others have attempted instead to enhance the state's repressive capacity vis-à-vis these challengers. For example, the strengthening of criminal networks and drug cartels that challenge the state's ability to provide security has triggered the adoption of draconian policies under the rubric of "*mano dura*", including longer mandatory prison sentences and enhanced prerogatives vis-à-vis detention of suspects by the police. This is not just a national-level response – across Latin America in the wake of decentralization and in the throes of the crisis of insecurity, mayors have been elected and re-elected on *mano dura* platforms that propose getting tough on crime. Examples of this type of response can also be seen in the area of tax policy, including President Alvaro Uribe's 2002 adoption of the so-called "war tax" (a one-time tax on corporations and individuals with more than US$60,000 in assets), which has emerged as one of the Colombian state's most important policy responses to the FARC challenge.

In addition to enacting policy reform, the state has also responded to its challengers by introducing more deep-seated and longer-term *institutional* changes that go far beyond policy. In some countries, for example, the introduction of a corporatist relationship with labor unions in the first half of the 20th century might be understood as an institutional response designed to pre-empt or attenuate more radical anarcho-syndicalist threats to the state. Corporatism can thus be thought of as an attempt by the state to deepen its own infrastructural power in the relational (as opposed to territorial) sense that Mann identifies. More recently, the granting of territorial autonomy, often via constitutional changes that now specify the rules through which regions within the state can petition for autonomy from it, has emerged as a significant institutional response to territorial challengers. In addition to changes in institutional rules like corporatism and territorial autonomy, states have also responded by promoting changes within existing institutions, including for example the police. Somewhat in contrast to policy changes above that simply delegate greater authority to the police, reformers have argued persuasively that police institutions need to be thoroughly re-designed in order for the state to respond to those who challenge its monopoly on the legitimate use of force (Eaton, 2008). These reforms include greater community oversight, purges of corrupt police officers, and deep changes in the training of police officers that displace the military training model in favor of one that emphasizes problem solving and conflict resolution (Bailey and Dammert, 2006). In a region where

citizens often fail to report crimes because they fear the police as much as the criminal, police reform will likely be a necessary component of any broader attempt to bolster the state's effective monopoly on the legitimate use of force.

The third type of challenge-induced response by the state is the most extreme and takes the form of *regime* change. Beyond altering the policy environment or redesigning institutional rules, *golpistas* in their military and civilian guises have argued that the only way to save the state from its challengers is to abandon democratic forms of government in favor of direct military rule. In the 1960s and 70s, the National Security Doctrine as it was taught to military officers across the region and in the U.S. claimed that the state faced dire internal threats, whether, as Stepan (1973) noted, these were framed as emanating from labor unions and Marxist-Leninist guerrillas or land owners who stood in the way of needed socioeconomic reforms. On the one hand, less external support for overtly authoritarian solutions combined with negative domestic legacies from the military's last turn in government have limited the likelihood of this kind of response to contemporary challengers. On the other hand, the urgency of the criminal challenges posed by drug cartels combined with the lack of effective police institutions in the region have drawn the military ever more directly into the fight against crime in ways that likely compromise democratic civilian control of the military. While the prospect of direct military rule via regime change now seems remote, the argument that suspending civil liberties might be acceptable or necessary in order for the state to defeat its challengers has much in common intellectually with the older argument for direct military rule.

CONCEPTUALIZING DEFICITS

In their introductory article in this issue, Feldmann and Luna (2011) ask us to think not just about the state's challengers but also about its deficits. In answer to their call, it is important to note first that the causal relationship between challengers and deficits is a complicated one. Deficits often provoke challengers but challengers can also increase deficits. For example, deficits provide the motivation for the emergence of some challengers, as in the case of guerrilla insurgents for whom neglect by the state has historically been a rallying cry, and create opportunities for others, as in the case of drug traffickers whose operations can expand precisely because the state is absent. The causal arrow also works in the reverse, as seen in Bejarano and Pizarro's (2005) study of Colombia's "besieged state", where decades of attack by the state's main challengers have had the effect of worsening the stateness deficit.

One implication behind Feldmann and Luna's (2011) question about "how different shortcomings shape *overall* levels of stateness" is that different deficits are not equal in their impact on stateness. Indeed, most of the literature on the state posits a hierarchy among the goods that the state provides, with security at the top of the list. Representative of this view is Robert Rotberg, who writes that "the state's prime function is to provide that political good of security –to prevent cross-border invasions…; to eliminate domestic threats to or attacks upon the national order…; to prevent crime…; and to enable citizens

to resolve their differences…without recourse to arms or other forms of physical coercion (2004: 3)". Once security is provided, the state can then provide "codes and procedures that together comprise an enforceable body of law, security of property and inviolable contracts, (and) an effective judicial system (3)". Finally, according to Rotberg, the state can then consider the provision of other key political goods, including health care, education, physical infrastructure, communications networks, a money and banking system and environmental protection.

There is much support in Latin America for this dominant view about the primacy of public order relative to the other goods that the state tries to provide. For example, when the state in countries like Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico cannot protect the lives of mayors, this lapse has obviously negative consequences for the provision of health care and education to local communities under the control of these mayors. Parents who worry that their children are not safe in school or would be exposed to security risks in transit will not likely send them to school. In addition to its negative impact on public goods like health and education, the inability of the state to provide security also has negative consequences for economic growth; Coatsworth (1998), for example, has attributed inferior economic outcomes in nineteenth-century Latin America to the underlying failure of the state to provide basic services like public order and infrastructure.[3] In this same vein but on a more positive note, Fukuyama and Colby (2011) have argued that recent improvements in Colombia's security environment have enabled local officials in cities like Medellín to engage in various forms of state strengthening outside the security sphere.

Without directly challenging the view that the state's inability to provide security is an especially important deficit (and critical in explaining "overall levels of stateness"), there are two points I would like to raise here. The first is to note that states without the strength to provide high levels of public security are sometimes nonetheless able to provide other types of valued goods and services. Consider, for example, the case of Colombia, whose fiscal and financial institutions remained among the strongest in Latin America even as the state was losing its ability to control vast stretches of the national territory in the 1990s. To draw again on Mann, while the state cannot provide non-security goods in spaces that it does not control, its infrastructural power may be significant in spaces that it does control. We should look critically at the view that security is always a necessary condition for the state to be able to provide other services. The second point to raise here is that while the state's provision of other goods might depend in large part on how well it is providing security, we must remain attentive to the possibility that the state is actively and directly worsening the security environment rather than merely failing to provide security. Experiences with state sponsored terrorism, predatory police forces, and abuses by members of the military who then retreat into military courts all suggest that the problem is not merely one of states failing to provide security but rather directly providing insecurity (Perreira, 2005; Ungar, 2010).

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[3] See also Centeno's (2003) argument that limited wars produced limited states; the former were financed by debt rather than the more aggressive forms of domestic resource extraction that could have sustained more vigorous state institutions.

In addition to asking us to conceptualize the state's chief deficits, Feldmann and Luna (2011) also call us to identify problems that might complicate efforts to measure these deficits. What is immediately apparent is that some deficits are much harder to measure than others. While certain deficits can be measured in at least a crude way with data that is readily available or easy to collect, others are harder to measure. For example, in the security realm, the territorial reach of the state can be approximated by identifying the number of municipalities that maintain a police presence. The steady decrease in this number in Colombia in the 1990s and its recuperation after 2002 is widely taken as a rough indicator of changes in state presence (Rangel, 1997). Likewise, the significance of income (as opposed to sales or excise) tax collection and the incidence of income tax evasion (when adjusted for level of bureaucratic effort expended against evasion) provide useful measures of the state's extractive capacity. Infant mortality rates, access to potable water and sewerage, and the incidence of preventable diseases offer rough indicators of the state's health care performance. Other deficits are harder to measure. It is insufficient, for example, to merely count the miles of roads built by the state without considering the degree to which they are maintained, which is much more difficult to monitor. Likewise, graduation rates do not tell us enough about the quality of education that the state is providing, and the use of standardized tests to produce better measures presupposes significant levels of state capacity.

In addition to noting that the various deficits of stateness are not equally difficult to measure, I would like to end by returning to the state's territorial quality and the special measurement challenges that it poses, in two senses. First, while some of the public goods that the state provides can be and have been decentralized (e.g. health care, education) others cannot be and remain centralized (e.g. defense policy, currency emission and controls). As a result, compiling accurate measures of state strength will involve much more subnational data collection in some areas of state activity than in others. All things equal, for example, it is probably much harder to measure the state's capacity to provide health care than was the case in the pre-decentralized past. Second, a further complication here has to do with the distinction between deconcentration and decentralization. In trying to measure the state's infrastructural power in a given field of action, it is important (but difficult) to distinguish between how much capacity resides in the deconcentrated agencies of the national government and how much resides in state institutions now under the control of separately elected local officials. Increasingly, territorially situated bureaucrats are subject to hybrid accountability structures (to national line ministries and to subnational elected officials) in ways that complicate efforts to measure the national as opposed to subnational capacity of the state.

CONCLUSION

The opening years of the 21st century have been a momentous time for the state in Latin America, as well as for the literature that seeks to conceptualize the region's still incomplete and territorially uneven process of state building. As I have shown in this

article, each of the three transitions that dominated the comparative politics literature at the end of the 20th century –democratization, liberalization and decentralization– has generated additional new challenges for the state, though in many countries these challenges pale in comparison to the exogenous threats posed by the U.S.-financed drug war. While some types of challengers are less common than in the past, including the armed insurgents who formerly sought to take over the state in order to transform society, a whole host of new challengers have emerged, including groups like drug cartels that seek to penetrate the state, and territorial actors that are seeking not to penetrate the state or to overthrow it but rather to escape from it in the form of autonomy. We should think as broadly as possible not only about the range of the challenges and challengers that are confronting the contemporary state, but also about the variety of ways (some more visible than others) through which the state is responding to its challenges and challengers. Not only can we distinguish between responses that take the form of policy, institutional and regime changes, it is also possible to determine whether these responses are designed to undercut challengers (by limiting their appeal), to accommodate challengers (by meeting some of their demands) or to defeat challengers (by bolstering the state's repressive apparatus). Much work remains to be done –both at the level of theorizing the relationship between challenges, challengers and responses, and at the level of measuring the state's various deficits– and it is important to realize at the outset that all such research has now been profoundly complicated by the decentralization of the state itself.

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