Control into nonfinite adjuncts presents a number of theoretical challenges that have not received much attention. The first challenge is the co-existence of indisputable evidence both for Obligatory Control (OC) and Non-Obligatory Control (NOC) in seemingly parallel environments (English is used for convenience; the facts hold in many other languages).

(1)  a. This book, was written [in order PRO, to be read].
    b. There won’t be any progress without [PRO_{arb} insisting on guidance from the outside].

In this context, I show that so-called "implicit agent control" (under passive matrix clauses) is a misnomer for another instance of NOC.

The solution offered in Landau 2017 to this problem exploits the idea that adjunct control employs the same mechanisms that complement OC does. In Landau 2015 I distinguish between predicative and logophoric control. Adjuncts as well may project either a predicative FinP or a larger, propositional CP (embedding that FinP and saturating it with a pro that denotes the logophoric center, or "doxastic counterpart" of the matrix controller). The predicative adjunct forces OC by predication and is indifferent to the [human] feature, as in (1a). The logophoric adjunct allows any perspective-bearing antecedent to control PRO (hence, limited to [+human] PRO). Because the adjunct is not selected, the context of evaluation for PRO is not restricted to the matrix context, resulting in the familiar non-local character of NOC.

Some notion of preference or "default strategy" chooses OC over NOC when both yield coherent interpretations, given that a sentence-external controller is disallowed in cases like (2).

(2)  *John, excelled [in order PRO_{arb} to admire him].

In Landau 2017 it was suggested (following Kawasaki 1993 and Lyngfelt 1999) that NOC may "kick in"only if OC produces an anomalous reading, where "anomalous" is understood in terms of selectional violations. Thus, because subject control in (3) is anomalous, the implicit agent is a legitimate controller (recall that this will be shown to be NOC).

(3)  The ship was sunk to collect the insurance.

However, there remained a glaring problem. A little-know observation made independently in Jaeggli 1986 and Roeper 1987 states that passive-under-passive rationale clauses do not license implicit agent control (4a). I extend their point to all adjunct and all matrix environments that provide no semantically appropriate controller in the subject position, like copular clauses (4b) (cf. (1b)).
(4)  a. *The ship was sunk to be promoted.
    b. * There won’t be any progress without being guided from the outside.

Landau (2017) proposed that passive adjuncts denote predicates and thus can only avail themselves of predicative OC, resulting in a forced semantic anomaly. However, why passive adjuncts must be predicative was left an open question. I would now like to argue that this suggestion cannot be upheld, as passive clauses make perfectly good propositional arguments in bona fide NOC environments.

(5) [PRO to be selected for the job] would be incredible.

Even more tellingly, once rationale adjuncts are expressed as postcopular clauses in a separate sentence, passive does not impede NOC (6). In these inverted constructions, the infinitive is the subject and the precopular DP is the predicate. This implies that NOC in (4) is blocked not because passive per se forces predication but for some other reason. Likewise, it follows that semantic anomaly produced by OC is not sufficient to license NOC (otherwise, implicit agent control in (4) would have been possible).

(6) The ship was sunk. The goal was to be promoted.

A tentative proposal. Following Farkas 1988, we assume that the notion initiator (an intentional causer, broadly construed) delimits the range of potential controllers. Thematic agents, as well as extra-sentential controllers, are [+init]. By contrast, direct objects are [-init]. The OC-NOC competition in adjuncts is resolved as follows: NOC is allowed only if there is a mismatch between the [init] values of PRO and the matrix subject (the OC controller). In (3) PRO is [+init] and the subject is [-init], hence NOC is licensed. In (4) both are [-init], hence NOC is blocked (OC is forced, resulting in incoherence). As for (6), since there is no OC derivation for the postcopular infinitive (the goal can't be a controller, being an inverted predicate), NOC is unhindered.

Conclusion. This study reinforces the role of predication in understanding patterns of control in adjuncts and copular constructions. At the same time, it demonstrates that OC and NOC are fundamentally different processes, operating in different grammatical components, and yet may enter competition under highly restricted circumstances.

References