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Power calculations and political decentralisation in African post-conflict states

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Abstract
Although many African governments introduced provisions for subnational elections in the early 1990s, there is variation in the extent to which these reforms were implemented and sustained. Our inductive analysis of three post-conflict cases – Angola, Ethiopia and South Africa – suggests that one factor explaining this variation is elite discontinuity when an insurgent group wins power in the aftermath of conflict. Systems of subnational elections adopted by new governments with an extensive social base derived from an insurgency, as in South Africa and Ethiopia, have proved relatively robust. By contrast, in Angola, where there was no change of executive power after the conflict ended, routinised subnational elections have not been implemented. The identified causal mechanism is that, for the new governments in the first two cases, subnational elections served as opportunities to mobilise party support and to consolidate control by sidelining local elites aligned with the previous regime.

Keywords
Decentralisation, post-conflict states, Angola, Ethiopia, South Africa

Introduction

During the last decades, a number of African countries, including countries emerging from conflict, have introduced constitutional provisions for subnational elections. While the central governments in some countries have fulfilled these provisions, other governments have failed to routinise subnational elections. In this article we focus on post-conflict states and argue that central governments face different incentives for the routinisation of subnational elections depending on whether

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the conflict ended in an insurgent group winning power or in the continuation of the previous government.

Angola, Ethiopia and South Africa are three post-conflict states in Africa where constitutional provisions for subnational elections were introduced in the early 1990s. Through in-depth studies of these cases, we identify two causal mechanisms, mobilisation and control, that help explain why governments emerging from conflicts that end with an insurgent group winning power are likely to routinise subnational elections, while this outcome is less likely if there is a continuation of the government in power before and after the peace settlement. First, insurgent groups gaining power are likely to have sufficient electoral confidence to introduce subnational electoral arenas as a means of mobilising political support. Second, they stand to increase their territorial control by altering existing power relations at the subnational level, tilting power towards their elected affiliates and away from the existing bureaucracy aligned with the pre-settlement government. The flip-side argument is that in cases where there have not been such clearly defined changes in the composition of the group that forms the executive, a routinisation of subnational elections is less likely.

This article is situated within the scholarly literature on post-conflict states that examines how conflicts end and the effects of these endings on how institutions develop in the aftermath of conflict. Recent studies have found that the circumstances of the termination of a war or conflict can affect the prospects for democracy (Gurses and Mason, 2008), the characteristics of post-conflict party systems (Ishiyama and Batta, 2011), the process of building post-war party organisations (Levitsky and Way, 2012; Reilly, 2013) and the governing credibility of powerful post-war parties (Lyons, forthcoming). Our study develops the hypothesis that the characteristics of the termination of conflict and the nature of the insurgent's power base particularly affect the process of routinising subnational elections. We draw on Lyons (forthcoming), who argues that victorious insurgents can consolidate and expand their political power by building upon their 'pre-existing wartime structures of command and control'. We contend that the presence of these command and control structures also increases the commitment of post-conflict governments to implement constitutional provisions for subnational elections, independent of the democratic credentials of these governments.

We draw on the extant literature which argues that legislatures are political institutions that autocratic executives rely on to incorporate cooperation of both supporters and potential opposition forces (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007: 1279), but expand on it by identifying subnational elections as an arena where similar mechanisms appears. Clearly, some national governments would use ethnic brokerage (Arriola, 2009) or organisational borrowing (LeBas, 2012) to neutralise threats from larger groups of the society, but in some contexts, as we suggest, a routinisation of subnational elections is clearly compatible with a new government's aim to remain in power. This argument needs, however, to be contextualised, as a routinisation of subnational elections is clearly more favourable for some governments than others.

Our argument is built on the following reasoning: the literature on elections in post-conflict states suggests that national governments avoid introducing subnational elections after conflict because such elections would represent 'an additional threat to incumbent party leaders' (Manning, 2007: 254). In contrast, as subnational elections are routinised in some post-conflict states, and not in others, we assume that they may be a useful institutional tool for some post-conflict governments to remain in office. According to Wood (2001: 864), governments that emerged at the end of conflict from an 'insurgent counter-elite' – an elite representing economically and socially marginalised groups that had been brutally repressed by the prior regime – have a different character than other regimes. These insurgents are likely to have developed a strong civilian base in addition to the military wing, which is well rooted in social networks (Parkinson, 2013). These social networks puts successful insurgents group in an excellent position to mobilise support in subnational elections and to reward those loyal to the organisation. In addition, they have strong motivation to

impede the power of subnational authorities linked to the pre-settlement government, at the same time as they may depend on their bureaucratic knowledge. Representative subnational units would allow incorporation of civil servants in the new political set-up, yet making them responsive to elected representatives who, in many circumstances, have won through as candidates for the new ruling party.

The hypothesis developed in this study applies to post-conflict states where provisions for subnational elections have been included in a constitution after the conflict ended. Discontinuity in national leadership may affect territorial politics in more peaceful settings as well, but we find post-conflict states a particularly apt context for developing our theory, as insurgent group representatives, at least on a theoretical level, are assumed to be more open to social transformations and more likely to have developed hierarchical structures than regime critics in peaceful settings. The limitation to cases with constitutional provision for subnational elections focuses the explanation on the distinct option of implementation, or not, of such provisions. We consider only intrastate conflicts and thus do not include settlements after interstate conflict, including fights for independence, or constitutions adopted after a period of military rule.

We limit our case selection to post-conflict states in sub-Saharan Africa because such countries are likely to have had relatively similar experiences with international demands for democratisation and decentralisation in a context of economic dependency. While the literature addresses different dimensions of decentralisation, we focus on only one aspect of political decentralisation, that is, whether a country has successfully routinised subnational elections or not. 'Routinised' subnational elections are those arranged on a *regular* basis (every fourth or fifth year), held according to electoral *rules*, and applied *universally* across the country. To investigate whether subnational elections meet these criteria, we have selected only cases where a sufficient time has elapsed since constitutions were signed: specifically, countries that experienced long-lasting intrastate conflicts during the 1980s and adopted new constitutions in the early 1990s. This reduces the set of cases to Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda.[1] Among these, Angola, Ethiopia and South Africa have been selected for more intense examination for the purpose of hypothesis development and identification of causal mechanisms. The potential relevance of our hypothesis to Mozambique and Uganda is discussed briefly at the end of the article.

Ethiopia and South Africa represent positive cases where insurgent groups won power in the early 1990s and routinised subnational elections in the 1990s and 2000s. They vary, however, in regard to the democratic credentials of the post-conflict governments and the details of the end of the conflict. Considering Gurses and Mason's (2008) finding that power balance is more likely than other outcomes to bring about more democratic polities in a post-conflict setting, we have chosen one positive case where a negotiated settlement resulted in a democracy, South Africa, and one positive case where outright military victory produced an authoritarian result, Ethiopia. These cases suggest that similar post-conflict power calculations may be made by governments with very different views on democratic principles. Angola, meanwhile, represents a negative case. Provisions for elected local governments were introduced in 1991 when the conflicting parties in the civil war, the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) and Unita (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola), agreed on a new constitutional settlement. However, the MPLA continued as the national government and has delayed all efforts to introduce local elections, citing the principle of gradualism (*gradualismo*).

Political decentralisation as power calculation

The puzzle of why some national governments choose to devolve power to elected authorities at lower levels of government has received substantial attention in the last few decades. As the

maximisation of power is assumed to be a central goal of political actors everywhere, this literature takes as its point of departure that central governments will remain reluctant to implement decentralisation reforms if these are seen as giving away central power. It asks under what circumstances there is an observed commitment to decentralisation.

Decentralisation is fundamentally affected by the territorial politics of national governments. While several studies address the success and failure of decentralisation reforms in Africa (Blair, 2000; Connerley et al., 2010; Crawford and Hartmann, 2008), fewer studies of political decentralisation explore how such policies are affected by the power calculations of national governments, like we do in this article. This question receives attention mainly in studies of Latin American politics (Falleti, 2005; Garman et al., 2001; O'Neill, 2003). O'Neill, for example, argues that decentralisation occurs when a governing party sees a stronger electoral future at the subnational level than at the national level (2003: 1074). Garman et al. (2001), however, see political decentralisation as linked to internal power structures within the executive party. None of these, however, consider the introduction of subnational elections as a means of consolidating central control over the territory, as our argument maintains. Studies of Latin America focus on whether political decentralisation should be deepened (e.g. by introducing direct elections of governors and mayors) and not on whether local polls of any sort should take place at all, which is the principal issue in Africa.

Hartmann (2004) and Muriaas (2015) provide overviews of the institutional arrangements and quality of subnational elections in selected countries in Africa, but they do not attempt to explain the variation in national governments' commitment to introducing subnational elections. Riedl and Dickovick (2014), however, argue that national governments carry out 'robust decentralisation' – comprising administrative, fiscal and political decentralisation – when they find partisan or regime maintenance advantages in doing so. That is, hegemonic parties, in an authoritarian setting, are most likely to decentralise if by doing so they can extend the party-state to the local level, increase patronage opportunities, and deepen linkages between the party and citizens. Although in line with our contention that decentralisation is a result of regimes' power calculation, Riedl and Dickovick do not specifically address the question of how the party-state may be extended to the subnational level through political or administrative decentralisation, and they do not sufficiently explain why some governments use decentralisation to provide patronage opportunities while others do not.

Boone's argument that decentralisation processes depend on 'bargaining and conflict between rulers and societal groups' prior to political decentralisation reforms (2003: 356) is, we believe, important for understanding variation in territorial politics. Although Ghana is not included in our set of post-conflict cases, Boone's study of political changes in Ghana in the mid-1980s is useful in considering how elite continuity and discontinuity relates to the introduction of subnational elections. For example, Boone, drawing on Green (1997: 195–198), argues that Ghanaian president Jerry Rawlings's motivation for introducing subnational elections in the mid-1980s was primarily to sideline the old partisan elite and bring to power 'a whole new group of average citizens' (Boone, 2003: 356). This observation suggests that we are likely to see different patterns of territorial politics depending on whether there is continuity or discontinuity in executive power.

What we see, however, is that the post-conflict setting is especially instructive for highlighting this link. The reason for this is that we have to study contexts in which there is a significant change in the national leadership. In some instances, there may be executive turnovers of ruling parties, but if this turnover in essence is nothing more than a name game where the same people are returning under new party labels and with new alliance partners, these elites would theoretically be less open to social and institutional transformation. Based on this reasoning, a post-conflict situation is understood to represent a situation where a clear change in national leadership is likely to be produced. In addition, insurgent groups who win powers are also likely to have particular

characteristics that put them into a position where subnational elections are not really looked upon as a threat.

Existing research has, for instance found, that when insurgent groups win power after long-lasting, deep-seated conflicts, they may actually have 'experience in administering liberated territory and managing top-down relationships with the peasantry' (Lyons, forthcoming). Insurgent groups winning power could thus use such structures to mobilise political support and formalise wartime structures, as well as to build institutions in communities that were less directly involved in the armed struggle. The legacy of a common violent struggle is likely to make insurgent parties 'more disciplined, less prone to defection, and more capable of repression' than those without a violent past (Levitsky and Way, 2012), ultimately reducing the risk of electoral defeat. It is also important to highlight that wartime structures involve more than soldiers. As pointed out by Parkinson, sustaining a militant organisation also requires the development and upkeep of politically, financially and logistically focused subdivisions (2013: 418). After a conflict end, it will be possible for the winners to formalise such wartime structures into a system of local governance. Civil wars and deep-seated political conflicts may radically transform social networks (Parkinson, 2013), and old networks that link clients to landlords and local authorities may be displaced by new ones. While some governments may wish to restore the pre-conflict status quo, others find it in their interest to foster these new networks. Transformation of the local governance system, towards a more inclusive one, could give those actively engaged in the struggle, such as youth and women, a platform to participate politically (Muriaas and Wang, 2012).

Still, the nature and scope of the winning insurgent's power base vis-à-vis the opposition matters. A study by Levitsky and Way (2012: 870) has found that ruling parties that combine mechanisms of patronage distribution with the strong identities, solidarity ties and discipline generated by violent origins are most durable. Theoretically their ability to sustain their power would increase if they are successful in portraying themselves as the rightful – and moral – winners of the conflict and their opponents as oppressors. Coming out of a conflict as the moral winner creates a broader institutional spectre that can be used to incorporate potential opposition forces or neutralise them by giving them access to some positions (like in the bureaucracy) and some political offices (run subnational governments). Representative subnational institutions, like partisan national legislatures, may incorporate oppositional forces, and even leave them 'with a stake in the ruler's survival', which is highlighted by Gandhi and Przeworski (2007: 1280) as an important strategy for broadening the basis of support for the ruler. Yet if the opposition or remnants of the previous regime have retained significant support among some elements of the population, it may be less likely that the insurgents will routinise subnational polls. Exactly where the tipping point is obviously needs further studies. This underlines that the importance of analysing the strength of both the winning insurgents and their opponents in explaining the power calculations behind decentralisation reforms.

Ethiopia and South Africa: Insurgent group winners and routinised local elections

Ethiopia

Decentralisation was introduced in Ethiopia in 1991, after the military regime of the Derg was toppled and the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power. Having fought the Derg's centralised single-party rule since 1975, the new EPRDF regime went further in its decentralisation efforts than any other regime on the African continent at the time. It not only introduced a multiparty system, but also granted all ethnic groups ('nations, nationalities and

peoples') the right to self-determination (including secession) and the right to have their own administrations and governments in an ethnically based federal system (Ethiopian constitution of 1995, article 39). In addition to national and regional elections, local elections to *woreda* (county) and *kebele* (neighborhood) councils have been held regularly since 1992. Opposition parties have argued that elections have been manipulated and have boycotted some of them. The EPRDF, however, has won with large majorities in all national and local polls.[2]

Since 1991, both resources and authority have been delegated to regional and local levels, potentially giving the subnational administrations and their elected councils great autonomy. Local government reforms since 2005 have transferred more resources to the local level, and representatives to the locally elected councils have multiplied, greatly increasing the number of people taking part in local governance (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009). The international community has reinforced these reforms by supporting the Protection of Basic Services programme, which transfers funds directly to local communities instead of to the national government (World Bank, 2013). While this programme was intended to promote decentralised service delivery and to enhance transparency and accountability, it has in practice also enhanced the government's ability to reward loyal staff and party members at the local level.

The Ethiopian case appears to provide support for this article's causal argument: that subnational elections are introduced and sustained after a clear change of the elite in power, when the new government wants to utilise decentralisation reforms to sustain its territorial control, build a new local elite and mobilise the local population. Another important factor in the Ethiopian equation is that the introduction of political decentralisation was perceived as involving few risks for the new regime. The EPRDF coalition dominated the first transitional conference in 1991, excluding members of the former regime's Workers' Party and other non-ethnic movements (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003). The Oromo Liberation Front, a competing movement representing the largest ethnic group in the country, was militarily defeated in 1992. So the EPRDF quickly gained control of the majority of the Ethiopian territory after it toppled the Derg, and it did not have to fear that giving away power to local administrations would entail any challenge to that control. Confident of winning elections, the EPRDF saw the introduction of elected *woreda* and *kebele* councils as a chance to penetrate the national territory and install a new local leadership nominated by the ruling party. In many communities, young, inexperienced but loyal local leaders took the place of Derg officials and traditional leaders in the *kebele* and *woreda* administrations.

In addition, the new Ethiopian regime had its own ideological reasons for introducing radical decentralisation reforms. The central focus of the civil wars from 1974 to 1991 was the position of marginalised ethnic groups and territories within the country, the so-called 'national question' (Young, 1997). Both the imperial regime of Haile Selassie (1930–1974) and the Derg regime were dominated by elites of Amhara origin, who tried to impose Amharic language and culture upon the more than 80 ethno-linguistic groups in the country. Although the Derg's 1987 constitution recognised the right of regional autonomy for five of Ethiopia's regions, there was no real decentralisation of power. Instead, the powers allocated to subnational governments were strictly delimited, and the centralised structure of the Workers' Party, the only legal party in Ethiopia at that time, remained unchallenged. This represented a strong continuity with the imperial regime, in which the emperor personally appointed and dismissed local administrators, and any attempts to establish independent local administrations were largely symbolic.

Given this centralisation and the Amhara dominance of the former regimes, an ethnically based decentralised system was the only ideologically acceptable solution for the new regime, which was a coalition of various ethnic groups. In order to make up for what the EPRDF saw as misdeeds of the past regimes, ethnic groups had to be recognised and represented in local, regional and national governments.

As a guerrilla movement inspired by Marxist ideas, the leading party in the EPRDF coalition, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) had built a hierarchical and centralised organisation with a strong core leadership that was highly efficient in mobilising popular support during the struggle (Young, 1997). After the war, the EPRDF was able to build upon their 'pre-existing wartime structures in command and control' (Lyons, forthcoming). Along with establishing locally elected councils, the EPRDF launched mass recruitment of party members at local level, boosting the support of the ruling party across the national territory. With the exception of contested polls in 2005, the ruling party has prevented the opposition from mounting a significant electoral challenge. With the opposition unable to field candidates in a majority of the thousands of seats for *kebele* and *woreda* councils, elected government structures at all levels remain safely in the hands of the EPRDF. While the EPRDF argues that the increase in its representatives on local councils is a way of boosting participatory democracy, the opposition views this as yet another method used by the ruling party to bolster its control across Ethiopia.

The ethnically based administrations introduced in 1991 have facilitated the entry of the EPRDF party organisation into every village in Ethiopia (James et al., 2002). Even so, ethnic politics has presented the ruling party with challenges, leading to some reconsideration of decentralisation policies. Ethnic entrepreneurship, the forwarding of claims for new administrative structures at the local level, and sharpened ethnic conflict – termed 'narrow nationalism' by the EPRDF – have made the ruling party reluctant to establish new ethnically based structures (Aalen, 2011). But the mobilisation approach to local governance remains unchallenged. In fact, it has been reinforced by the strengthening of the *woreda* and *kebele* structures since 2005, indicating that the local political strategy chosen at the moment just after the new constitution was introduced is still in force.

South Africa

Since the transition to democracy in 1994 and the coming to power of the African National Congress (ANC), all ANC-led governments have remained committed to the process of introducing subnational elections. Between 1994 and 2014 there were four local elections, held in a political environment where ANC representatives occupy about two-thirds of the seats in the National Assembly. The dominant position of the ANC at the national level has never been seriously challenged, and hence it makes sense to conclude that the ANC was the winner over its adversary, the apartheid government, although the conflict terminated in a negotiated settlement. The government's commitment to subnational elections must, however, be seen as the result of multiple incentives in addition to its constitutional obligations and political ideology. On the one hand, one may say that the leadership of the ANC did not introduce local elections only in order to maintain its powerbase, yet, if we take into consideration that the process of establishing subnational elections elsewhere on the continent, it would also help our reading of the South African case, if we see that a different outcome, one of insufficient routinisation of subnational elections, is theoretically possible. In the constitutional negotiations of the early 1990s, it was representatives of the incumbent National Party (NP), which had presided over the apartheid system, who after years of extremely centralised rule began calling for regional autonomy (Steytler and Mettler, 2001: 93). The ANC, in contrast, fought against regionalisation, which it regarded as a method of legitimising the old regime's apartheid policies, such as homelands for Africans and a white Volkstaat.

Under the reign of the NP, the local government system was divided along both urban–rural and racial lines. Initially, all Africans were supposed to be governed by administrations led by chiefs in rural areas, known as Bantustans. In the late 1970s the apartheid government had to acknowledge the permanent presence of Africans in urban areas. This led to a string of laws aimed at establishing Black Local Authorities (BLAs) in cities and towns. The local revenue base for the BLAs included

rents, property taxes and other revenues generated in the areas under their jurisdiction (Maharaj, 1997: 264). This policy was extremely unpopular, and by the end of the 1980s the local government system was in crisis, with scant legitimacy.

In the constitutional negotiations, the ANC fought for integration of the different groups and for revenue systems in which the more affluent areas would help the development of poorer areas. The assumption was that a strong central government in combination with effective local governments could render the provincial level less significant. On the question of local elections, the NP favoured holding them as soon as possible, while the ANC was afraid that early elections could prevent the creation of a new system of local government (Maharaj, 1997: 264–266). Still, the ANC agreed to hold elections for transitional local councils in 1995–1996, before the final constitution was signed in 1996. The NP withdrew from the governing national coalition in that year.[3] After this, the ANC kept its promise to redesign the local government structure. The Local Government Municipal Demarcation Act of 1998 laid the basis for a reform process that would transform the local government system by integrating racially divided group areas under a single authority and tax base. The law translated the constitutional objects and duties into the concept of developmental local governments (de Visser, 2009: 7–25), and the first elections under this framework were held in 2000. After that, two elections, one in 2006 and one in 2011, followed according to schedule.

There are undoubtedly multiple factors that help explain why the ANC remained committed to subnational elections. We would, however, strongly suggest that the ANC's history as an insurgent group that had just won power after decades of struggles for inclusion of the non-white majority population is a significant part of the equation. The ANC was criminalised by the apartheid regime in the 1960s; its leaders were in prison, in exile, or operating clandestinely until 1990, when the party was unbanned. This meant that the ANC had few openly organised structures in South Africa, although it had close links to those involved in the United Democratic Front (UDF), the anti-apartheid organisation formed in 1983.[4] In a speech to the ANC Youth League in 1990, Nelson Mandela stressed that the NP during its reign had been aware that the ANC had no strong organisation in the countryside and had taken advantage of this absence to forge an alliance with traditional leaders.[5]

The ANC's 'Strategic Perspective' for the democratic negotiations in 1992 recognised the party's organisational weaknesses. However, in this document the leadership also stressed that the ANC's 'capacity to mobilise large-scale mass action' was one of its greatest advantages over its opponents (ANC, 1992). When the conflict ended, the ANC had a strong, hierarchical party organisation and a long history of coherent leadership, and it was seen as a legitimate representative of those who had been deprived of political power under the apartheid regime.

In this situation, we would suggest that the introduction of subnational elections offered promise as a mobilisation strategy, as well as an opportunity for the ANC to absorb local members of the UDF into its party structure. National and provincial elections, particularly given the proportional representation electoral system, were primarily top-down exercises, but local elections had the potential to build structures on the ground.

Yet an opportunity to mobilise support for the party was not the only incentive for the ANC leadership. Elections could also be seen as a way to shift power from the old local establishment to elected councillors, who in most districts would likely run on an ANC ticket. Hence, subnational elections could help the ANC take control of the civil service, as long as the party proved popular at the polls. When the ANC came to power in 1994, the local administration was staffed with civil servants who had worked under the apartheid regime. In its 'Strategy and Tactics' document of 1997, the ANC noted that 'the majority of public servants, especially at senior level […] shared the perspectives of the former government or its white opposition, including racial and gender stereotypes'. Such officials, the party feared, could 'influence the agenda of transformation in favour of

the privileged classes' (ANC, 1997). Representative local governments could therefore have been used as a strategy to empower elected officials loyal to the ANC. In a well-functioning local governance system, these elected structures could diminish the influence of local public servants held over from the apartheid era. This means that the alternation of executive power, from the apartheid government to the insurgent counter-elite, had two effects on the potential for routinised subnational elections, both in terms of mobilising support and in terms of bypassing the old local elites.

In the mid-1990s the ANC had ample reason to assume that it would win local elections. The party had won a comfortable victory in the 1994 general elections, with 62% of the vote. In the local elections in 1995–1996, the ANC also emerged as the most successful party, with 58.2% of the total vote. In 2000, 2006 and 2011 the ANC remained the strongest party in local elections. With the introduction of a system of elected local offices, as many as 9,090 posts were up for contestation across the country. In each election the ANC won a clear majority of the seats in most municipalities. With this institutional set up, the ANC was in a position to transform local government, including those supporting the party through the electoral channel, while working together with, or incorporating, the qualified administrative staff that was already in place into the new local government system, monitored by the ANC.

The fact that the ANC has remained committed to subnational elections does not mean that the process has gone unchallenged. Indeed, the system of local governance in South Africa has come under extensive criticism. Numerous protests, demonstrations, and violent confrontations, most often related to government failures to deliver community services, took place ahead of local elections in 2006 and 2011. Still, the local government system has been a useful instrument for the ANC in expanding its control over the state. Since the first ANC administration, the party has been deploying ANC cadres to key positions in the state and has required that they remain under party discipline (Booysen, 2011: 368). Hence, subnational elections have been routinised by a highly centralised ANC.

Angola: Elite continuity and no routinised subnational elections

The Angolan constitution of 1992, adopted after the 1991 peace agreement between the government and Unita, included the specification that elected local government bodies, called *autarquias*, should be the basis of local governance.[6] However, Unita rejected the outcome of the 1992 elections and the country returned to civil war, which only ended in 2002. The 2010 constitution also included provisions on local authorities. As of early 2015, however, no subnational elections have been held in the country, and political decentralisation has remained unimplemented.[7] Even with the return to peace, the Angolan regime has chosen to ignore the constitutional provisions for elected local government. Instead, the outcome has been a continuation of the status quo as it existed before the termination of conflict, that is, a centralised state without local polls.

An important part of the explanation for Angola's failure to hold subnational elections is that the context of the conflict provided no incentives for giving away central powers to local authorities. This had fundamental and lasting impacts on the way subnational elections were handled in the country. In contrast to the conflicts in Ethiopia and South Africa, which were decisively settled in the early 1990s, civil war in Angola continued after the 1992 constitution and elections, largely nullifying their potential for establishing a new political order. The civil war that began at the transition to independence in 1975 was originally fought between three armed anti-colonial movements: the MPLA (established 1958), Unita (1966), and the FNLA (Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola, 1956). The FNLA was quickly defeated by the MPLA, but Unita continued fighting the MPLA until 2002 in a war characterised by the significant involvement of outside powers, including South Africa, the United States, Cuba, and the Soviet Union (Newitt, 2007).

At the time constitutional decentralisation reforms were first formulated in 1992, therefore, there was no clear break with the past, but rather a continuity of elites in charge of the Angolan state. The MPLA held state power and controlled the capital, establishing itself as a one-party government along Marxist–Leninist lines. Like the EPRDF in Ethiopia, the ruling party maintained a tight grip on both executive power and the state apparatus, giving rise to a party-state. But in contrast to the Ethiopian situation, the MPLA could not control the entire national territory: Unita continued to hold large portions of the hinterland, including cities and towns. The introduction of a nationwide local government structure with elected and autonomous units would thus have posed a great risk to the MPLA's power, particularly in areas controlled by Unita. Hence, if local elections had been held, Unita would have been able to build upon their own wartime structures of command and control in certain regions. The first national elections in 1992 proved the case, giving Unita 34% of the votes nationally but about 80% in four central and interior provinces. The MPLA thus lacked what the EPRDF and the ANC enjoyed just after the new constitution was introduced: territorial control and electoral confidence.

After the end of the civil war, it took the MPLA some years to re-establish control over most of the country. Although Unita's leader Jonas Savimbi was killed and his army disintegrated, the MPLA did not feel sufficiently secure to open up for elections. National polls were eventually held in 2008, and the MPLA won nearly 82% of the vote and more than a two-thirds majority in the parliament. At that time, MPLA's enhanced electoral confidence could have provided an incentive for the ruling party to allow local elections. This did not happen.

The MPLA instead saw a continuation of the status quo as serving its interests. This determined the government's choice to pursue political incorporation of territorial units by imposing central state control of the subnational level, leaving political decentralisation unimplemented. At the local level today, no Angolan government officials are subject to electoral scrutiny, and all are members of the ruling party (Orre, 2013). Resources are essentially concentrated in the central state apparatus. Modelled after the Portuguese prefectural administration, where local districts are governed by officials appointed by the central government, the local government structures are in fact local organs of the central state. In theory, there are potential openings for local influence on decision making through two non-elected institutions: first, the traditional authorities (*sobas*, chiefs on the state's payroll, who act as intermediaries between the state/ruling party and local communities); and second, the councils of community consultation and cooperation (members of various groups in the community, selected by the local administrator). But none of these are independent from the executive or the ruling party. Instead of being elected, with their own constituencies and local power bases, local governments are essentially satellites of the central government.

One could say that the real turn towards a multiparty system began only after the MPLA defeated Unita in 2002. But even then, the end of the civil war did not change the strategies of subnational elections in Angola. The MPLA, which has dominated the country since independence, continues to extend central state control to local areas but without creating an opening for subnational elections. It maintains efficient control of the state apparatus and there is little distinction between party and state, both of which derive important support from the army. The party dominates the National Assembly and has the judiciary in its grip. Sectors of civil society have also been subject to government control, with large government-aligned civic organisations having significant advantages over independent or opposition civic organisations (Messiant, 2007; Vidal, 2007). Unita's exclusion from local governance has also had an impact on its ability to contest national elections. In the 2008 general elections, Unita saw a dramatic decline in its support, taking only 10% of the votes.

Given its strong political machinery, in many ways equal to that of the EPRDF in Ethiopia, why did the MPLA not introduce subnational elections as a way of boosting its control and legitimacy at the local level after 2002? We argue that this must be seen in relation to the social processes of

the civil war. During the war, the MPLA government tried to demobilise the population that lived within the areas controlled by Unita, at the same time as Unita developed support networks that could serve as sources of political mobilisation if subnational elections were introduced. Although the MPLA has gained control and now enjoys a secure position at national level, comparable to the EPRDF's, the hierarchical networks of insurgent supporters of Unita still have the potential to be activated. So even if the risk of subnational elections is now reduced, at least in comparison to the situation in the early 1990s, the MPLA has more to gain by building the authority of the local bureaucracy and traditional institutions than by allowing Unita to possibly win local power through elections.

An additional factor in Angola is the country's oil wealth. Because of it, the country is less sensitive to external pressure to conduct local elections and has almost unlimited resources for patronage. This means that the MPLA can rely on a different kind of legitimacy than the EPRDF: its legitimacy need not derive from participation and mobilisation, but can be achieved through the distribution of oil-generated resources to loyal clients at all levels of the political system (Orre, 2013). From the regime's point of view, there is thus no need for mobilisation through subnational elections in Angola, as the regime favours patronage over the uncertainty that elections tend to bring.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of our three case studies, we have argued that in post-conflict settings a change in the executive elite, with a background as insurgent groups, and with electoral confidence and territorial control, is a likely precondition for the implementation and subsequent routinisation of local elections. For such regimes, the holding of subnational elections is a strategy used to *mobilise support* for and involvement in the party organisation of a popular movement that has gained power by representing new social forces, marking a discontinuity of elites. Subnational elections are also a strategy for *gaining control* over local institutions that might be packed with officials loyal to the former government. Throwing all of them out of office might be a risky move by a new government; hence, one way to take control is to make sure that the authority of these officials is undermined by elected representatives aligned with the new government.

In contrast, in cases where the pre-peace settlement government remains in power after a conflict but cannot be confident of winning elections across the national territory at the time when subnational election provisions are introduced, the government is unlikely to implement routinised, regular and universal subnational elections, even if the constitution requires them. A government that remains in power after having been challenged by armed groups with regional foundations has few incentives to build subnational electoral structures which could provide openings for the wartime social networks of insurgent groups. Our analysis of Ethiopia, South Africa and Angola indicates that there is a strong linkage between the way a conflict or war ends, the social basis of the old and new elites, and the introduction of routinised and universal subnational elections in Africa.

An additional positive case would be Uganda. In Uganda, an insurgent group, the National Resistance Army (later National Resistance Movement, NRM), who won power in 1986 after a civil war has used subnational elections to mobilise support for the party and take control of the lower levels of government. Similar negative processes are observable in Mozambique, as in Angola, where the ruling party, Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique), continued to hold state power after the civil war ended. Local elections have been introduced, but primarily in municipalities where the ruling party has had good expectations of maintaining control. Elite continuity, and the fact that the elite lacked electoral confidence across the territory, reduced the incentives for

the regime to follow up by universalising subnational elections. Despite inclusion of some opposition strongholds, such as Beira, in municipal elections, universal local elections have yet to be implemented.

Our analysis also shows that a regime's willingness to introduce subnational elections is not necessarily related to a desire to create or deepen local democracy. The governments in Ethiopia and Uganda, which have been holding regular and universal elections throughout the post-conflict period, are by no means democratic. Rather, they have used subnational elections as a tool for consolidating the control of the national dominant party at local level. But even in the more democratic context of South Africa, subnational elections are clearly part of a power calculus aimed at enhancing the nationwide presence of the ANC. Yet within-country comparisons would further reveal variations in processes of consolidating power across territories, depending on the strength and character of the local elites.

What seems significant, however, is that ruling parties with a successful history as an insurgent group have particular characteristics that neutralise some of the threats commonly associated with the introduction of a subnational electoral arena. Successful insurgent groups have a hierarchical organisation, local intelligence and established procedures for soliciting funding, and they are likely to be motivated to transform pre-conflict social networks at the same time as they might need the knowledge of the old local elite.

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Notes

1. Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Conflict Encyclopedia. See http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/search.php.
2. The EPRDF has won all the elections, including national, regional, and local elections, except the one in 2005, with more than 90% of the votes.
3. However, the Inkatha Freedom Party and the Azanian People's Organisation continued to hold seats in the government until the 2004 elections.
4. The UDF and the ANC were not formally aligned, although they both adopted the Freedom Charter.
5. Nelson Mandela, address to ANC Youth League, KaNyamazane, 13 April 1990.
6. Article 146 (1): 'Local government agencies shall be territorial corporate bodies for the purpose of pursuing the interests of the population, and shall for this purpose have elected representative bodies and freedom to administer their communities.'
7. According to Orre (2013), the Angolan minister of administration said in 2012 that no local elections would be held before 2015.

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