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RICARDO SOARES DE OLIVEIRA

“O GOVERNO ESTÁ AQUI”: POST-WAR STATE-MAKING IN THE ANGOLAN PERIPHERY

For the duration of Angola’s twenty-seven-year civil war, the central state did not control up to 80% of its nominal territory. In the aftermath of its 2002 victory over the Unita rebels, however, the oil-rich MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) regime enthusiastically embraced the commitment to build a self-styled “modern state” across Angola. The resulting effort to break out of the enclaves it had long held and occupy the vast and sparsely populated territory, extend civil administration and rebuild infrastructure is a key political dynamic in present-day Angola. This article is an attempt at understanding the post-2002 state-building drive in Angola’s periphery through the prism of both the regime’s ambitions and the historical trajectory of the Angolan state and centre-periphery relations.

The article argues that there is a clear project of establishing state hegemony across Angola¹. Though phrased in developmental terms, this is primarily about the achievement of political control. The first section briefly surveys the challenges faced by state builders in Angola from the pre-Scramble colonial pockets to the last years of the civil war. It posits that the MPLA’s state rationalities and methods on the periphery must be understood historically in terms of the existence of a coastal and urban culture of the state; a long-extraverted economy; and the political geography and logistical limitations that severely hamper the broadcasting of state power. All of these have elicited striking continuities in the pattern of centre-periphery relations. The next section outlines the dizzying array of post-war strategies ranging

1. I thank the Levehulme Trust for electing me to a Fellowship during 2011-12 that allowed the carrying out of additional fieldwork for this article. Much of the writing took place in March and April 2012 during a stint in Paris as Oxpo Visiting Professor at Sciences Po, whose hospitality I much appreciated. I particularly thank Mathias de Alencastro, who travelled with me in Lunda and Moxico and shared his great knowledge of the east, as well as Michel Cahen, Laurent Fourchard, Daniel Large, Aslak Orre, Justin Pearce, Fernando Pacheco, Gavin Williams and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and/or conversations on the subject, and Sharath Srinivasan for inviting me to Cambridge to present an earlier version of this paper in 2010. The slogan in the title (“The Government Is Here”), placed in billboards over government buildings, construction sites and other visible manifestations of state activity, is ubiquitous in eastern Angola. In the Angolan context of MPLA hegemony, concepts such as “government”, “regime”, “ruling party” and “state” are often used interchangeably.

from high-modernist, pseudo-developmental state activism to extensive subcontracting to non-state actors that are used to expand the writ of the state from the political centre and provincial capitals to the remotest regions. This opportunistic, almost baroque entanglement of apparently contradictory policies, which are often ascribed to incompatible visions of the state, is a defining feature of Angolan state-making in the periphery. The final section provides a provisional interpretation of Angolan state expansion over the past decade.

A national-level analysis is a crucial, and hitherto missing, contribution towards making sense of regional and local realities, even if a full study of state expansion also entails the detailed analysis of particular regions. A national perspective further emphasizes the central state as a key driver of change in rural Angola and the fact that this state-making agenda is primarily generated by state elites rather than by local (or for that matter, international) pressure. Seeking to counter often inaccurate assumptions of central state autonomy and scholarly neglect of local agency, influential work has instead focused on how rural interests shape state-building efforts by the central state²; some authors even argue that “local configurations of power [play] the decisive role in enabling or disabling the process of state-building”³.

This paper, in contrast, reasserts the pivotal role of the central state in the process of state formation. This is not fundamentally premised on conceptual disagreement with a “state in society”-type approach, but its emphasis on “other social formations”⁴ has limited traction for Angola over the past decade. Simply put, the regime’s “peace dividend” materialized as hegemony over a physically and mentally drained society. Angola is now “the most centralist state in Africa”, with every official nominated from Luanda⁵. Underpinned by a budget in excess of total OECD aid to Africa, Angola’s state-making project is generated by President dos Santos and MPLA elites and enacted via a plethora of public and private actors and institutions linked to the regime that has directed the Angolan state since independence. Although diverse and self-interested, these participants have mostly advanced, rather than impeded, a relatively coherent policy of expansion designed to favour the consolidation of MPLA dominance. As I will explain, this does not remove the agency of subordinate actors but it considerably circumscribes it.

2. C. Boone, “Statebuilding in the African Countryside: Structure and Politics at the Grassroots”, *Journal of Development Studies* 34 (4), 1998, p. 1-31 is a notable contribution in this regard.

3. D. Nugent, “Building the State, Making the Nation: The Bases and Limits of State Centralization in ‘Modern’ Peru”, *American Anthropologist* 96 (2), 1994, p. 333-69.

4. J. Migdal, *State in Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 10.

5. A. Orre, “33 Years and 10 to go? The Future of Angolan Democracy”, paper presented at the conference “Angola: Growth, Development and Inequality”, CMI, Bergen, December 2012.

For in the Angolan post-war context, the MPLA's coercive and fiscal might⁶ have allowed significant choices about the character of state expansion and contributed to an asymmetrical rapport between the state and rural society.

The study of Angolan post-war state-making in the periphery, important in its own right, offers insights for the broader study of emerging state-building projects in Africa and strongly challenges the assumption that little of that is going on⁷. African elites, when not heading "failed" states, are portrayed as "concerned with seamanship rather than navigation"; on the contrary, this article shows that there are internally-generated, robust statist projects, primarily of an illiberal nature and not aimed at service-delivery and the exercise of citizenship, that nonetheless seek to realise some conventional goals such as territorial coverage and the rooting of the state's infrastructural power in the periphery⁸. While this article is focused exclusively on Angola, a companion article will develop these ideas further and study the Angolan trajectory in comparative perspective with other processes of state-building in contemporary Africa.

ANGOLA'S CENTRE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

"Angola's history", writes Christopher Cramer, "reverberates with continuity"⁹. The genesis of the Angolan state is to be found not simply in the decades of formal colonial rule but in the slave trade's centuries-long engagement with the world economy. The early modern foundation of the trading ports of Luanda and Benguela led to an extractive pattern of centre-periphery relations with its own political imagination and specific methodologies of rule. The very different timings of incorporation into the colonial state, which spanned centuries, were to be reflected in the incompleteness, spatial unevenness, and disarticulated nature of colonial space. In the formal era of colonialism, this disjointed pattern remained influential in defining the character of the central state, the thinking of its elites vis-à-vis the hinterland, and the recurrent use of non-state actors to guarantee territorial

6. D. Péclard, "L'Angola dans la paix: autoritarisme et reconversions", *Politique africaine*, n° 110, juin 2008, p. 5-20.

7. T. Hagmann and D. Péclard, "Negotiating Statehood: Dynamics of Power and Domination in Africa", *Development and Change* 41 (4), 2010, p. 539-62 includes a useful survey of the state of the literature on the African State.

8. For one such effort, see W. Jones, R. Soares de Oliveira and H. Verhoeven, "Africa's Illiberal Statebuilders", Working Paper 88, Refugee Studies Center, University of Oxford, January 2013.

9. C. Cramer, *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing*, London, Hurst, 2006, p. 16.

coverage and extraction. The tension between an old coastal presence, on the one hand, and the very late and diffuse control of the interior, on the other, is a fundamental aspect of Angolan state formation and accounts for its severely bifurcated character.

For about three hundred years, the Atlantic economy made extensive inroads into Central Africa but the areas of direct Portuguese control were mostly limited to the coast¹⁰. Attempts to expand into the interior failed amidst enduring limitations of geography, disease and African resistance. A pre-Scramble colonial governor lamented that the inland dominion had become “imaginary” and that Portuguese establishments in the interior resembled “lost islands in a limitless indigenous ocean”¹¹. The actual conquest of Angola proved a protracted affair on account of Portuguese weakness¹². By 1906, the Portuguese controlled only about 10% of Angolan territory and the occupation was not complete until the mid-1920s. In a notable study, Roque emphasised the “vulnerability” of these efforts¹³.

Faced with such limitations, it is not surprising that the Portuguese systematically resorted to the “discharge” of state responsibilities¹⁴. The conquest itself included a mixed cast ranging from Boer mercenaries and native troops to missionaries and settlers that paid lip service to Portuguese sovereignty but were in fact highly autonomous. The Portuguese also gave concessions to private corporations that became de facto sovereigns within their domains of extraction. Even after other colonial powers had mostly abolished concessionaires, swathes of the hinterland remained under their writ: they were the crucial taxpayers and the administrative and financial means to replace them did not exist. Three companies stood out: CCFB, which ran the Benguela railway; Cotonang, the cotton firm in Malange district; and above all, Diamang, the multinational mining consortium in Lunda district. One of the world’s top diamond producers and dubbed the “ninth colonial province” by critics, Diamang evolved into a state within the state with its own peculiar colonial culture. Within the concession zone, natives lived under a highly disciplinarian regime, and settler access was subject to a permit. The

10. There was of course a vast amount of cultural and economic interaction between the hinterland and Portuguese-held areas; see, e.g., I. C. Henriques, *Percursos da Modernidade em Angola*, Lisbon, IICT, 1997 and B. Heintze, *Pioneiros Africanos*, Luanda, Nzila, 2004.

11. J. Dias, “Angola”, in J. Serrão and A. H. de Oliveira Marques (eds.), *O Império Africano 1825-1890*, Lisbon, Estampa, 2001, p. 433-35.

12. M. Newitt, *Portugal in Africa*, London, Hurst, 1981, p. 49 and R. Péliissier, *História das Campanhas de Angola*, volume II, Lisbon, Estampa, 1986, p. 286.

13. R. Roque, “The Razor’s Edge: Imperial Vulnerability in Colonial Moxico, Angola”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36 (1), 2003, p. 105-124.

14. See especially B. Hibou (dir.), *La Privatisation des États*, Paris, Karthala, 1999.

importance of discharge to the private sector was underlined by the failure of white settlement schemes aimed at bringing in Portuguese peasants¹⁵, convicts (Angola was a penal colony until 1934) or even large-scale Jewish colonisation, a 1912 project approved by the National Assembly but never implemented. How to properly govern a territory the size of Germany, Italy and France, put together on the cheap, without enough human resources, and in the face of prohibitive geographical conditions, was an enduring challenge for the early colonial state.

There was one major attempt at breaking with this fragmented approach from 1921-1924¹⁶. The resulting infrastructure brought into existence a contiguous territory, at least in the western half of Angola¹⁷. But Angola soon lost its capacity to incur direct debt, the powers of the colonial government were culled, and a draconian fiscal policy established. Even during the coffee boom in the 1950s, Lisbon allowed only piecemeal steps towards an activist state role. Mid-century Angola thus remained a "highly disarticulated" territory¹⁸: its rail network mainly served the export economy and the paved road network was only 397 km in 1961 (the remaining dirt roads were often unusable during the rainy season). Outside the coast, the towns where the settlers mainly resided were "islands in an African sea, only easily reachable by plane"¹⁹. And away from the cities and the coast, the state was a basic apparatus mostly concerned with taxation and the control of the labour supply²⁰. Discharge, the neglect of useless spaces and the deployment of violence to secure acquiescence were commonplace. This limited set of concerns resulted in state ignorance regarding its territory and subjects. Beyond the narrowest political imperative, "colonial knowledge came late" to Angola²¹. The scientific and ethnographic output of this period, such as it

15. By 1966, the Juntas Provinciais de Povoamento employed more civil servants than the number of settlers under its management. See C. Castelo, *Passagens para África*, Oporto, Afrontamento, 2007, p. 154.

16. The practical failure of High Commissioner Norton de Mattos' modernisation agenda is the subject of consensus but historians are divided on its broader merits: for the critical take see W. Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1985; for a more lenient view, e.g., A. Torres, *O Império Português entre o Real e o Imaginário*, Lisbon, Escher, 1990.

17. Until the 1920s transportation depended on human portage and, in the south, ox-drawn Boer wagons. See B. Heintze and A. Von Oppen (eds.), *Angola on the Move*, Frankfurt, Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2008.

18. F. Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 175.

19. D. Wheeler and R. Pélissier, *História de Angola*, Lisbon, Tinta da China, 2009, p. 22.

20. A. Freudenthal, "Angola", in J. Serrão and A. Oliveira Marques (eds.), *O Império Africano 1890-1930*, Lisbon, Estampa, 2001, p. 300.

21. Castelo, *Passagens para África*, p. 247.

was, did not consistently feed into the administration²². With an under-developed economy, a weak if repressive state apparatus, and fragmented, non-contiguous governance, Angola “was still far from being a uniform social formation”²³ on the eve of the anti-colonial war in 1961.

Ironically, the nationalist challenge would foster an unprecedented degree of social transformation and expansion of the state apparatus. The Portuguese did not budge politically but enacted legal and economic reforms in a belated version of developmental colonialism²⁴. The government repealed the detested Indigenous Statute, including its forced labour provisions, abolished compulsory crop cultivation and created rural markets that boosted small-holder production. It also enabled extensive foreign direct investment and metropolitan budgetary transfers to support infrastructure development. As a result of the capable counter-insurgency campaign (made easier by the fact that the liberation movements fought one another), the war, though brutal, was confined to remote regions and had no impact on the diversified economy, which grew at a rate of 4.7% between 1961 and 1974. But the clearest proof of this prosperity was the wartime doubling of the settler population to about 350,000. In these last years of colonialism, the Portuguese created a unified Angolan political space. Asphalted roads crisscrossed the country (an average of 547 km per year were added, and the total was about 6,000 km by 1972²⁵) and placed even the furthest reaches within a day’s reach. This changed Angola’s political geography and made it governable from the centre. As a consequence, the administrative grid became much denser and more knowledgeable about the territory. Although this period remains understudied, there is no doubt regarding its pivotal, long-term impact in terms of state formation as it constituted, until 2002, Angola’s only experience of comprehensive stateness in its history. It therefore remains a key reference for Angolan decision-makers.

The achievements of the late colonial state did not survive independence. The traumatic events of 1975 – the civil war between the three liberation movements and its entanglement in broader Cold War dynamics, the settler

22. C. Messiant, 1961. *L'Angola coloniale, histoire et société*, Basel, P. Schlettwein, 2006, p. 142.

23. W. Clarence-Smith, “Capital Accumulation and Class Formation in Angola”, in D. Birmingham and P. Martin (eds.), *History of Central Africa*, volume 2, Harlow, Longman, 1983, p. 184.

24. On developmental colonialism, see e.g., J. Lonsdale, “States and Social Processes in Africa”, *African Studies Review*, 24 (2-3), 1981, p. 139-225; Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*; and K. Pomeranz, “Imperialism, Development, and ‘Civilizing’ Missions, Past and Present,” *Daedalus*, 134 (2), 2005, p. 34-45. In the context of Mozambique, Pitcher notes that the Portuguese “had become much more aggressively developmentalist, earmarking funds for large projects in the colonies and soliciting foreign investment”. M.A. Pitcher, *Transforming Mozambique*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 31.

25. J. Z. Rela, *Angola entre o Presente e o Futuro*, Lisbon, Escher, 1992, p. 99.

exodus, the implosion of the non-oil economy – were compounded by the lack of human resources (fewer than 100 university graduates remained in the country), the incompetence of the post-independence government and, from the late 1970s, the return of Unita's South African-sponsored insurgency. In regions such as Cunene and Namibe south of the Cuban-manned, fortified ATS (Agrupación de Tropas del Sur) line²⁶, the state was entirely absent. But even in core areas of MPLA control, the writ of the state declined. The complex system of settler-owned rural trade, premised on some 28,000 establishments serviced by about 30,000 trucks, was gone²⁷, and rural communication routes and scheduled transportation were often abandoned. The lack of supply led to absenteeism by agricultural workers, a precipitous slump in production and retreat into subsistence farming. This resulted in the dismantling of economic relations between different sectors and regions, dealing a deathblow to a nationally integrated economy²⁸. With the demise of the physical infrastructure, the historical limitations of Angolan political geography were reasserted. The centre's grip over the periphery, after soaring during the late colonial years, collapsed back into its historical nucleus.

In view of these developments, post-1975 Angola was inimical to the territorialised and bureaucratised governance of the late colonial years. Yet the war merely deepened the historical dichotomy that the Portuguese had belatedly and all too briefly started to address. I am referring here to the veritable civilisational rift between the cities and long-colonised coastal regions, and the weakly governed periphery. A contributing factor to this was the character of the movement that took power in 1975, the MPLA. Presenting itself as a pan-Angolan movement that transcended the narrow, regional focus of its rivals, the MPLA's social roots were in the old Europeanised communities on the coast, above all Luanda. The movement's membership was in no way limited to these communities but they provided the bulk of its elites and implicit standard of civilisation²⁹. Social prestige in MPLA society came to be associated with mastery of the Portuguese-inflected deportment, speech patterns and lifestyles of the central society; distance from it signified uncouth, pre- or un-Angolan parochialism. In a wildly distorted version of this centre-periphery dynamic, Jonas Savimbi presented Unita's struggle as that between authentic black Angolans and the MPLA's creolised elites,

26. E. George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, London, Frank Cass, 2005, p. 120-21.

27. JMJ Angola, *Análise do Sector de Agricultura*, Luanda, Banco Mundial, 2011, p. 16.

28. M. E. Ferreira, *A Indústria em Tempo de Guerra*, Lisbon, Cosmos, 1999, p. 44.

29. On the complex character of the MPLA see, e.g., the work of C. Messiant and J. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1969 and 1978; and J. Mabeko-Tali, *O MPLA Perante Si Próprio*, Luanda, Nzila, 2001.



but beyond such caricature, this rift had historical resonances for many Angolans and partly defined MPLA policies. Hemmed in by the war, unfamiliar with the rural world and oil-rich, the regime retreated to its strongholds, with resources almost exclusively disbursed in the urban setting for the benefit of core MPLA constituencies.

This reached an extreme during the last decade of the war when the radically privatised state mimicked the old, extraverted slaving emporiums to a remarkable extent³⁰. Its monopoly of force applied only to the major cities. The interior was a desolate, scorched immensity with scant administrative presence, even in areas with only intermittent rebel activity. The state saw an important degree of institutional development and consolidation when it came to fighting the war (the armed forces), keeping control of urban society (the police and intelligence outfits) and managing the fiscal lifeline (the national oil company Sonangol³¹). But these structures existed to defend and consolidate the Luanda state; they were not created or fitted for everyday territorial administration. The umbilical link with the world economy in the form of the coastal oil-producing enclaves was the state's overriding concern and its gaze was oriented outwards. In the meantime, Unita activity had severed the remaining provincial capitals from Luanda, and they were only accessible by air transport or dangerous, heavily escorted supply convoys that lasted for weeks. The state had shrunk back to the archipelago of cities that had long worried colonial administrators.

THE PARTY-STATE TAKES OVER THE PERIPHERY

The end of the civil war was therefore a beginning of sorts, for the state in rural areas had to be re-established³². The official narrative presented Unita as a challenger to the status quo, but there were entire regions from which the MPLA had been absent and where the rebels had created state-like governance structures ruling over, at times, hundreds of thousands of Angolans³³. Even as Unita steadily lost territorial control, the government

30. On the Angolan slave trade see J. Miller, *Way of Death*, Madison, Wisconsin University Press, 1988.

31. R. Soares de Oliveira, "Business Success, Angola-Style: Postcolonial Politics and the Rise and Rise of Sonangol", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 45 (4), 2007, p. 595-619.

32. The fact of state absence until 2002 makes the Angolan experience similar to that of other post-conflict states, but different from most of the case studies in the relevant African literature that tend to focus on "reform" to a long-standing central state-rural state rapport.

33. The study of Unita's governance structures is beyond the scope of this article but see J. Pearce,

was unable to establish rural administrative structures. The party-state's breaking out of the cities and the coast since 2002, and the process of territorial occupation that ensued, have therefore been amongst the most significant developments in post-war Angola. This process differs across regions with historically dissimilar relations with the centre and unequal resource endowments. In resource-rich areas such as Cabinda and the Lundas, for instance, the motivation for this effort is strongly related to their extractive potential. Yet the state is no longer exclusively focused on "useful spaces". The motivations for this vast enterprise, which has been compared with the Portuguese "effective occupation" a century ago, are the party-state's own, i.e., consolidating its hegemony through territorial occupation, the cooptation of local elites and the subjection of the majority. In line with the permissive expectations as to the empirical sovereignty of African states, there has been no external pressure for the Angolan state to expand its writ over the *de jure* territory³⁴.

That the post-war agenda for the periphery is also a test of the party-state's available means can be gauged from the extent of the tasks involved. By the government's own optimistic admission, 40% of the territory was not under its administration by 2002; while it controlled all provincial governments, many municipalities (the second-tier administrative unit) were empty, as were most communes (the third-tier); the fourth-tier of local administration *was not active at all, anywhere*³⁵. This was not merely a problem in remote regions: in Bengo province, just outside Luanda, three out of eight municipalities were inoperative³⁶. Addressing these gaps required considerable financial means. The party-state possessed them and its fiscal independence vis-à-vis the population was to be a key factor in their asymmetrical rapport. This enterprise also entailed human and organisational resources to build and maintain an administrative grid, which were and remain below the required levels.

The state's financial means were soon deployed towards infrastructure rebuilding on a scale rarely seen in Africa. The government invested an estimated US\$4.3 billion, or 14% of GDP, *every year* in ports, railways, roads

"Rebel Movements, Identity and Peace Building in Angola", DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2011, and on-going doctoral research by Paula Roque.

34. R. Jackson, *Quasi-States*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

35. MAT and Pnud, *Desconcentração e Descentralização em Angola*, Ministério da Administração do Território and Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento, Luanda, 2007, p. 53-54.

36. In Lunda Norte, three out of a total of nine municipalities were unoccupied, as were between ten and thirteen out of a total of twenty-six communes. In Lunda Sul, only one municipality out of four was unoccupied, but nine out of fourteen communes had no state presence; A. Marques Guedes et al., *Pluralismo e Legitimação*, Coimbra, Almedina, 2003, p. 79.

and power generation³⁷. Of these, the priority has been the road system, closely followed by railways. The past decade saw the rehabilitation of some 8,000 km of asphalted roads, with US\$2.8 billion spent yearly from 2005 to 2009³⁸. Although the quality of some stretches is uneven, the major roads linking Luanda with Malange, Huambo and Benguela have been repaired to a relatively high standard. Road projects in the North and East have experienced delays³⁹ mirroring the government's sense of geographical priority as well as the fiscal collapse of 2009. But Angola should have fully functioning primary road and railway systems by 2015. The economic consequences, while positive, are fewer than expected, largely on account of the low status of agricultural development for the government. However, its goal of enabling the broadcasting of power across space – the logistical prerequisite for effective control of the hinterland – has been decisively advanced, and the traditional limits of political geography again partly transcended⁴⁰.

In contrast to the absent, “non-governmental” state of the 1990s⁴¹, the MPLA framed these challenges in the relentlessly modernizing, Jacobin version of state-building: the country would be occupied, administered, systematised. It also deployed the rhetoric of inclusive nation-building. But this project was about projecting power, and in specific locations, capturing resources, rather than creating a service-delivery state. There was a marked concern with creating symbols of party-state potency and conveying the impression of ubiquity, particularly in areas of former Unita support⁴². As an Angolan activist noted, “The state tries to create in the collective imagination the idea that it can intervene everywhere at all times to defend its interests”⁴³. This emphasis on political order and authority contained few

37. N. Pushal and V. Foster, *Angola's Infrastructure: A Continental Perspective*, Washington, DC, World Bank, 2011, p. 11. Of this amount, US\$1.3 billion were lost to “inefficiencies” (5% of GDP).

38. Pushal and Foster, *Angola's Infrastructure*, p. 21.

39. In October 2011, the Saurimo to Dundo segment of the Luena to Dundo national road, the main North-South artery in the East, was in a state of utmost dereliction and, according to locals, in a worse condition than in 2002. In September 2012, the Saurimo to Luena segment had some repaired stretches but most of it was also in terrible condition.

40. These are studied in J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000.

41. J. Ferguson, *Global Shadows. Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2006.

42. For lack of space I do not focus on post-war relations between Unita and the MPLA, but see J. Pearce, “L'Unita à la recherche de “son peuple”: Carnets d'une non campagne sur le planalto”, *Politique africaine*, n° 110, juin 2008, p. 47-64 and other work by Pearce, Péclard and others.

43. He added that the goal here was to show that in case of dissent, “the destruction of all those who go against the state is guaranteed” [...] the message is clear: the state has authority over you, but it is not responsible for you [i.e., for your welfare]”. Interview, Luanda, July 2011.

hints of a social contract, with the MPLA's sense of legitimacy emanating primarily from the war victory. In its bid for domination, the party-state cuts deals with local powerbrokers but the overarching demand is that of obedience.

Early Administration

After the end of the war, the priority was sending out the police. This was not a matter of security as the disciplined demobilisation of Unita meant that banditry was not a major issue⁴⁴. The government wanted instead to convey in an unambiguous, visible way that it was now the highest authority, and that it could "crush its enemies, at any time, anywhere"⁴⁵. After the police came the MPLA party apparatus. Only much later did the aptly designated "state peripheral administration" show up; when it did, it was mostly a virtual affair. Many remote municipalities lack any infrastructure to this day but by the 2008 elections many accessible ones had an administrator's villa, a post office, a health centre, a courthouse and a primary school. The stage set of stateness was in place, but the buildings were often empty and many remained so in 2012, some already degraded. Courthouses are particularly inactive, with judges and lawyers unavailable below the provincial capital level. After the brief 2008 and 2012 electoral splurges, the central and provincial governments never provided the financial or human resources to man local institutions and they remain weak and incompetent, when they exist at all.

For the real face of the party-state in the rural areas is the party not the state, and the profile of the former is invariably privileged over that of the administration. This does not debase the status of senior provincial or municipal officials because they are the senior provincial and municipal MPLA officials as well. There is a concerted effort to shift resource distribution to the "second office"⁴⁶. As an NGO official noted, "You rarely see the municipal administrator doing anything, he gives nothing to people *in that capacity*; the handouts and generosity always come from the party or party-related organisations"; populations see the private distribution of goods via MPLA

44. There were instances of banditry by former Unita soldiers in Huambo province and elsewhere, but this fell short of the fears of early observers of demobilisation.

45. Communities below the level of municipalities still have no official police presence, but networks of SINFO (Angola's main intelligence agency) informants are strong and have a close relationship with local party structures. Interview with senior MPLA member, Luanda, March 2012.

46. In this regard, the provincial governor is most often the provincial party head. During interviews with two top officials in Lunda Sul (both high-ranking MPLA members), phone calls and personal requests were met with a "Ring me/Look me up at the party headquarters this afternoon and we will go over it". Interviews, Saurimo, July 2011.



structures as more reliable and are likelier to “reclaim privileges through the party branch than try [to secure] rights as citizens”⁴⁷. With peace, the hope of receiving MPLA support led many to join, including in traditional Unita areas. Partly to counter Unita’s influence, the MPLA’s rural clout became a vital matter in the years leading up to the first post-war elections, but this was about co-opting influential local actors rather than providing popular benefits or expanding political participation. Abel Chivukuvuku, the charismatic former Unita official, went so far as to suggest that only in the cities could one find “free electorates and the possibility to engage in opposition politics”: though MPLA domination of the rural world is very recent, its populations are now “more tightly controlled and dependent” on the party-state⁴⁸. In order to create and consolidate this rural footprint, the party-state has pursued three major strategies: “decentralisation”, cooptation of traditional authorities, and the discharge of state responsibilities to non-state entities.

Decentralisation

The colonial and pre-1991 legacies were hyper-centralist. Talk of decentralisation and local government began two decades ago and culminated in the 1999 Local Administration Decree. After 2002, decentralisation was trumpeted as the key post-war policy in the Angolan periphery, but as late as 2007, the statistics were sobering: 79% of “local government” civil servants were in provincial government headquarters, with only 19% in municipalities and 1% in communes⁴⁹. Just before the 2008 elections, 68 municipalities were chosen to receive a one-off US\$5 million payment from the state budget, regardless of their size, population and actual needs. This was officially extended to all municipalities the following year but disbursement of the second tranche was erratic. The government then used complaints about the mishandling of the 2008 monies, which had certainly not been a concern at the time, to argue that municipalities were unprepared, and by 2010, Angola had returned to direct expenditure by the central government⁵⁰. A similar process ensued for the 2012 election season, but the record remains dismal, especially when it comes to investment in local capacity.

47. Interview, Luanda, March 2012.

48. Interview, Luanda, February 2012.

49. The situation of senior technical staff was even worse: 97.5 % worked at the provincial level, 2.5 % at the level of municipalities, and 0% at the level of communes; see MAT and PNUD, *Desconcentração*, p. 74.

50. M. Bowerbank, *For the English to See: Decentralization and Institutional Choice in Angola*, MSc thesis, University of Oxford, 2010, p. 32.

Interviews with Ministry of Territorial Administration (MAT) officials mostly put these delays and contradictions down to lack of human resources, and point to the optimistic goal of the National Plan for Administrative De-concentration and Decentralisation: to "gradually" proceed towards a model of local governance that pulls together elected municipal governments, traditional authorities and "civil society"⁵¹. At the forefront of this agenda since 2008 is a respected technocrat, Bornito de Sousa. In reality, it is the provincial governors, who answer directly to the President, calling the shots; as discussed next, traditional authorities are powerless; there is no medium-term prospect of municipal elections; and the *Conselhos de Auscultação e Concertação Social* (CACs), the consultative organs for engagement with "social forces", are either transparent MPLA vehicles or peripheral for decision-making. Most importantly, political decentralisation has been cautiously postponed: the regional disparities in MPLA support make it reluctant to provide rivals with locally legitimate platforms. Even the more limited focus on the "deconcentration" is faced with hesitation by Luanda, all the while embracing its language. Moonlighting this pseudo-decentralised governance one finds a party apparatus where the real power resides. As Bowerbank notes, the mislabelled process of "decentralisation" is in fact a strategy of administrative occupation designed to "extend the state apparatus, increase the size and support of the party" and, in resource-rich areas, "guard access to valuable natural resources that fund the activities of the party-state"⁵².

Traditional Authorities

A second dimension in the strategy of occupation is the cooptation of traditional authorities. As of May 2012, 41,554 recognised traditional authorities out of an estimated total of 50,000 were on the government's payroll at a cost of some 8 billion kwanzas per month⁵³. This strategy is as ambivalent as the legacy it is built on. Contrary to the British emphasis on indirect rule, which preserved or invented a regal status for indigenous leaders and often had

51. Interviews with two MAT officials, Luanda, February and June 2012.

52. Bowerbank, *For the English to See*. The role of decentralisation in advancing state power has been identified by analysts in other contexts; see, e.g., R. Otayek, «Décentralisation et résilience des autoritarismes en Afrique: une relation de cause à effet?», in M. Camau et G. Massardier (dir.), *Démocraties et autoritarismes*, Paris, Karthala, 2009, p. 121-140.

53. Interview with MAT official, Luanda, June 2012. This includes more than 7,500 in the fractious province of Uige alone. "Because there is money involved, traditional authorities are mushrooming all over the place, many of them with competing claims! The situation in Uige is a real mess", this official noted.

them perform many of the quotidian tasks of imperial administration, the Portuguese afforded them little authority or social deference. Governing Angola through a European administrative grid, the Portuguese nonetheless utilised often reconstituted “traditional” chiefs, or *sobas*⁵⁴, as agents for fiscal extraction and the organisation of compulsory labour. As a modernizing liberation movement, the MPLA shared many Portuguese assumptions about the backwardness of traditional society, and as a vanguard party, it had no patience for other sources of authority. But policy towards the *sobas*, in consonance with its approach to the rural world more generally, was more about neglect than Mozambique-style relentless repression⁵⁵. This made it relatively easy for the MPLA to shift gears as it came to understand the usefulness of traditional authorities. This strategy of engagement is not a neo-traditional turn infused with sudden respect for “authentic” structures. It is part and parcel of the broader party-state strategy for reinforcing its presence in the periphery⁵⁶.

Implicit in this vision is that *sobas* are not popular representatives or even-handed intermediaries between the authorities and the populations, but disseminators and enforcers of state directives at the local level where the state is otherwise absent. Information that flows upwards, including intelligence about opposition activity or the presence of Congolese illegal migrants, pertains exclusively to the interests of the state rather than those of populations. As in all dimensions of post-war rural life, the borderline between party and state is almost meaningless, so it is not surprising that these salaried *sobas* have also acted as electoral agents for the MPLA, not only delivering community votes but also often preventing opposition groups from campaigning at the local level⁵⁷. *Sobas* who are given state support are assumed to be MPLA party members, and membership of the Associação Angolana de Autoridades Tradicionais (a de facto wing of the party for controlling and institutionalizing domination of traditional authorities) comes with a party membership card.

Despite relentless instrumentalisation, the *soba*-state relationship is more complicated than meets the eye. It is hard to generalise about traditional authorities in view of the very different degrees of social legitimacy they

54. There are different designations for traditional authorities according to region and ranking; *sobas* is the most prevalent one and usually used for generic discussions of traditional leaders.

55. A. Orre, “Fantoques e Cavalos de Tróia: Instrumentalização das Autoridades Tradicionais em Angola e Moçambique”, *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 16/17, 2008, p. 141-78. Even in the socialist years, Presidents Neto and dos Santos held meetings with traditional authorities.

56. While Unita’s wartime approach to traditional authorities is beyond the scope of this paper, I thank Fernando Florêncio for pointing out that the rebels also made extensive use of them for the purposes of “indirect rule of populations and territory”.

57. Interviews with Unita and PRS provincial secretaries, Dundo, Lunda Norte, November 2011.

enjoy according to locality, the impact of the war, and the extensive social transformation of the last decades that saw the multiplication of competing claims and many *sobas* move to Luanda⁵⁸. However, in most areas, the state-*soba* relationship is as much about the state seeking out the *sobas* as the *sobas* actively soliciting state patronage. Pacheco notes that, from the perspective of the *sobas*, "there are certain advantages to 'being' State, in terms of capacity to impose, prestige and security"⁵⁹. A high official complained, "We now have more *sobas* than population: there has been an explosion of traditional authorities [and as everyone thinks that] the state is their father, they want a piece of the cake"⁶⁰. In this regard, most *sobas* fall very much into the same category as other regional elites and not a few opposition politicians: their most pressing concern is personal inclusion in the circle of regime beneficiaries⁶¹.

In an important article, Orre interprets the post-war *soba*-state relationship rapport as entailing a sort of bifurcation of Angolan nation-building: contrary to the modernising discourse, the party-state is in effect building an archaic rural bubble⁶². This may well be the goal. The doctoral thesis of Carlos Feijó, until 2012 one of the President's key advisors and a major architect of the state's "peripheral" policy, is a sustained defence of this approach, if argued in terms of "legal pluralism"⁶³. However, the binary assumptions about two different spheres, urban and rural, the latter of which can be durably tamed, are belied by the degree of social change, including the on-going rural exodus, and by the MPLA's own uncompromising modernism. The state resorts to the *sobas* and other tactically adequate means but only insofar as they allow it to expand its writ. But rather than fossilising the countryside by giving *sobas* real power, deference and the means for a neo-traditional space, the MPLA drastically caps their real role to dimensions it can manipulate: the cheap uniform that *sobas* resent is a sign of subservience, their meagre salaries are often unpaid or pocketed by provincial officials, and at every turn *sobas* are clearly outranked by the party-state.

58. F. Pacheco, "Autoridades Tradicionais e Estruturas Locais de Poder em Angola", paper presented at Friedrich Ebert Stiftung workshop, 2002, is an excellent analysis of traditional authorities.

59. Pacheco, "Autoridades Tradicionais", p. 10.

60. "Acham que o estado é pai". Interview with João Fukungo, Secretary of the Lunda Sul Provincial Government, Saurimo, July 2011.

61. J. Alexander, "The Local State in Post-War Mozambique: Political Practice and Ideas about Authority", *Africa* 67 (1), 1997, p. 1-26 also perceives local elites as motivated by the desire for inclusion in the state instead of seeking to "oppose or reform it".

62. Orre, "Fantoques e Cavalos de Tróia". Angolan critics argue that the policy on traditional authorities empowers male, older rulers in aspects of local governance to the detriment of the young and females, recurrent concerns in the literature on traditional authorities in contemporary Africa.

63. C. Feijó, *A Coexistência Normativa entre o Estado e as Autoridades Tradicionais na Ordem Jurídica Plural Angolana*, Coimbra, Almedina, 2012.

Discharge of state responsibilities

When referring to the state in the periphery, official rhetoric focuses exclusively on the role of public authorities. In fact, as in the colonial era, the state discharges substantial prerogatives to private organisations and individuals who fulfil tasks that the state cannot or will not perform. This includes different modalities, from private companies taking over swathes of territory to the creation of personal feuds and the lawless behaviour of security companies in diamond-rich areas. They share two characteristics. The first is that they enjoy powers that are normally the preserve of the state, including over the means of coercion; the second is that, far from being competitors of the state, they are mandated by it, *de jure* or *de facto*, and perform tasks that advance, often counter-intuitively, the power of the party-state in the periphery. The institutional absence of the state does not mean the absence of its regulatory power and the role of unofficial agents is instrumental to the advancement of the state rather than a sign of assertion by non-state social actors.

The most prevalent such strategy is that of having corporations, in the context of mineral extraction or (to a lesser extent) agribusiness, become *de facto* powers. A major example is Catoca, the world's fourth largest open air diamond mine, an Israeli-Brazilian-Russian consortium that started operating in Lunda Sul in the mid-1990s in the heat of war. Others include Odebrecht, the Brazilian conglomerate that is the country's largest private sector employer, and its growing role in Malanje, or the Israeli LR Group's flawed agricultural development projects in Kwanza Sul, Lunda Norte and elsewhere.

The creation of personal realms through land expropriation and mineral extraction started in the 1990s by several high profile generals, police officials and provincial governors. It has increased considerably since 2002, partly as a sustained MPLA policy of buying off the men in uniform. General-cum-politician Higino Carneiro's stranglehold over his home region of Calulo in Kwanza Sul is a prominent example: owning the local football club and having fenced in much of the good land, he runs everything from banking and retail trade to hotels, and the municipal administrator happens to be his brother. This sort of feudal domain is happily accepted by the party-state, as Higino delivers the MPLA vote. The analysis of these fiefdoms is beyond the scope of this article, but by 2011, the area of arable land distributed to regime cronies exceeded the amount of land controlled by Portuguese settlers in 1975⁶⁴.

64. JMJ Angola, *Análise do Sector de Agricultura*, p. 22.

At the violent end of the spectrum of discharge one finds the role of private security associated with diamond production, especially in Lunda Norte. These firms are closely linked with the protection of diamond fields, many of which are owned by Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) generals. The behaviour of outfits such as Teleservice and Alpha 5 is indicative of a brittle, fluid order in areas over which the state has historically had a weak hold. A recent investigation showed the extent to which these firms exercise the power of life and death over the populations of rural Lunda Norte and the Congolese illegal migrants they catch⁶⁵. Unsurprisingly, it also unmasked their sustained collaboration with the FAA both in hunting down illegal miners and in establishing protection rackets that enable illegal mining⁶⁶. In a further twist, while the FAA is de facto privatised, the provincial government partly subcontracted the armed forces' core function in a border region – border control – to the LR Group, the Israeli defence outfit⁶⁷.

Lack of state knowledge

The strategies discussed thus far illustrate the broad range of tools deployed by the state to maximise its presence. What these strategies do not provide is a knowledge base for quotidian, bureaucratised governance. If the state's approach to knowledge is faulty even at the core, in the periphery it is blinkered to an extreme; in vital dimensions, it does not "see like a state"⁶⁸. The state is obsessed with political intelligence and deploys a cast of foot soldiers – police, SINFO, *sobas*, MPLA structures and associated organisations, private security – for that purpose. Otherwise its ignorance is absolute. As an opposition official complained, "Without communications infrastructure and without the census, the provincial government does not know the population [and] has no idea what goes on 100 km from here"⁶⁹. The statistical apparatus is such that no one knows how many Angolans there are. Key aspects of scientific knowledge – in hydrology, geology, agronomy, public health – remain dependent on outdated colonial-era research. Furthermore, the "state doesn't know that it doesn't know"⁷⁰: these matters are either

65. R. Marques, *Diamantes de Sangue*, Lisbon, Tinta da China, 2011.

66. Marques, *Diamantes de Sangue*, p. 75.

67. C. Mendes, "Angola boosts security at border with Congo to help secure diamond fields", *Bloomberg News*, 2 August 2011.

68. J. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998.

69. Interview, António Tchikanawe, PRS official, Saurimo, July 2011.

70. Interview, NGO official, Luanda, July 2010.



deemed irrelevant or not perceived as a priority. While this limits what the state can achieve in the periphery in terms of developmental governance – particularly in agriculture – it is not a major hindrance in terms of the current priorities.

Some state policies reveal ignorance and arrogance to an equal degree. Take the policy of “village reunification” in the East, which was often championed by Rosa Pacavira, the President’s social sector advisor until 2012. This entails placing spread-out populations in model villages with “modern amenities”. The potentially disruptive impacts are legion. In multiethnic provinces such as Moxico, “Bringing hunter-agriculturalists together with fishermen-agriculturalists and hunter-apiculture peoples is fraught with misunderstanding and potential for conflict”⁷¹. In regions with itinerant agriculture, population clustering results in the reduction of available areas for cultivation and the exhaustion the land that gets cultivated. In addition, a brute fact has been wilfully thrown aside: the history of forceful removals to deny sustenance to insurgents, from late colonial policy to the MPLA’s own brutal population uprooting in the last years of the civil war. The government insists that resettlement is voluntary and many people are keen on it on account of service-delivery promises made, but the decision to resettle is based on consultation with the *sobas* not the population. The developmental failures of villagisation (in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique etc.), which are known to the MPLA elite, further underline this agenda’s political – i.e., controlling the periphery – as opposed to economic or social goals.

Finally, a key factor in state-rural society relations is the cultural distance between civil servants and the locals. This may not be the case in core regions of MPLA governance but in remote regions many agents of the state do not speak the local languages. On more than one occasion I have heard civil servants privately complain about the “natives” being “different from me and you” as well as homesickness and resentment at the long distance from “home”, which often means Luanda⁷². The parallels between the colonial administrators marooned in Eastern Angola in the great fiction of Castro Soromenho and the complaints of present-day officials are disconcerting⁷³, down to the use of the same language and even the perception of what their mission amounts to.

71. Interview, local official, Luena, September 2012.

72. Interviews and conversations with municipal- and provincial-level officials, various locations, 2011 and 2012.

73. See, e.g., C. Soromenho, *Viragem*, Lisbon, Cotovia, p. 57.

ANGOLA-STYLE EXPANSION OF THE STATE

This brief study of Angolan post-war politics in the periphery argues that there is a central state project of occupying abandoned regions and establishing the sort of state grid that briefly obtained in the late colonial years. For the first time since 1975, Angola is, in the words of an historic MPLA figure, "truly reunified", with an end to "not only two armies, but literally, two states and two administrations [...] Angolans are now effectively within the same territory, unified and indivisible, under the same symbols and the same state authority"⁷⁴. This is articulated by the MPLA party-state in a context of hegemony and resource wealth that enables the sidelining of "liberal peace" models and the pursuit of its own, alternative agenda. Making sense of this territorial takeover means coming to grips with very different and apparently contradictory dynamics: high-modernist rhetoric and ambitions coupled with a brazen degree of discharge to private entities; frontier conquest and elimination of rivals with shrewd Ottoman-style negotiation with significant local actors⁷⁵; a meticulous concern with political intelligence and resource extraction unmatched by a concern with "seeing like a state" in other dimensions. This agenda resorts to the "available models of state-building"⁷⁶, which are overwhelmingly those of the colonial state, for matters ranging from legislation and relations with traditional authorities to private sector engagement. I argue that there are striking continuities in the relationship between the centre and the hinterland, particularly at the level of elite theories of governance vis-à-vis the periphery.

Far from universally resented, this asymmetrical dispensation encounters some desire for incorporation on the part of Angolans. For war-weary rural populations, there is little ambiguity about the state's coercive and extractive goals. However, many yearn for the sort of things – electricity, schools, healthcare – that only modern, service-delivery states can provide. Neither are the masses, and especially young men, immune to the prospect of modest rewards (e.g. receiving money or gifts for attending MPLA rallies) that can be had by engaging with the party-state. For their part, well-placed individuals perceive this increased presence as a source of personal advancement. Even apparently oppositional or secessionist movements have accepted that political

74. Lopo do Nascimento, "O país começa agora?", *Política internacional*, 25, 2002, p. 115.

75. K. Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994.

76. C. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975, p. 82.

struggle is “itself centralised”⁷⁷. The power of the centre and the prospect of oil money are drivers of social aspirations; “even when perceived negatively, state norms penetrate society”⁷⁸. They thus shape the field of concerns, expectations and actions of the periphery, which is becoming ever more closely tied to it⁷⁹. Local actors are agents in their own subordinate inclusion in the party-state order and can actively construct a role for themselves within it, but in the circumscribed terms it allows⁸⁰.

The MPLA’s state building agenda is overtly committed to relentless modernisation but two contradictions are nested at its centre. The first is the historical assumption, hiding behind claims of state universality, of the superiority of the Portuguese-speaking, urban and coastal core of the state vis-à-vis the “primitive” periphery. The idea of Angola embodied by the MPLA sees the country first and foremost as a product of Portuguese imperialism, with cultural and political convergence as a work in progress. Some parts of the country and society represent “Angola” more than others. Luanda and the long-colonised areas constitute the pinnacle of what is “modern” and “national” as well as the historical “Angolan” culture favoured by the MPLA. This is undergirded by an unstated standard of civilisation whereby urban Angolans with “modern” deportment are deemed more “Angolan”, while those who are, in a word, more “African”, and rural types above all, are of lesser social import. This dichotomy is a defining if implicit tenet of “Angolanness” as perceived by the MPLA leadership. Viewing itself as the only movement whose nation-building aspirations transcend exclusionary boundaries, the MPLA has a strong belief, strengthened by the 2002 victory, in its own legitimacy to guide Angola into modernity. As in other African states led by “enlightened” movement parties, this necessarily plays out as a coercive project in the rural world.

The second contradiction is that the ubiquitous modernising rhetoric does not materialise in consistent attempts at modernisation of the periphery; instead, “‘development’ [is] virtually coterminous with control”⁸¹ of rural

77. M. Mann, “The Autonomous Power of the State”, *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 25 (2), 1984, p. 206.

78. Hibou, *Privatisation des États*, p. 55. In Cahen’s felicitous expression, this leads opposition parties to take “the enemy as model”, and mimic the mannerisms and internal organisation of the MPLA; see M. Cahen, “The Enemy as Model: Patronage as a Crisis Factor in Constructing Opposition in Mozambique”, OXPO Working Papers, 2011.

79. Interviews with local- and provincial-level opposition officials, various locations, 2011 and 2012.

80. See B. Hibou, *La Force de l’obéissance. Économie politique de la répression en Tunisie*, La Découverte, Paris, 2006, for a study of “voluntary servitude” and the mechanisms of power and domination “beyond the most brutal repression”.

81. C. Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia”, in W. James *et al* (eds.), *Remapping Ethiopia*, Oxford, James Currey, 2002, p. 17.

populations and the expansion of the party-state. As an Angolan intellectual put it, "Luanda absorbs the lifeblood out of the countryside, the resources, the people [...] the state project of people in power is very narrowly based, socially but also geographically"⁸². The language of systematisation and nation building hides an enduringly binary vision of the cities and the countryside, where the latter is to provide the party-state with reliable vote banks and a quiescent population. As mentioned above, this bifurcation scenario may well reflect the party-state's goals for the regions under "peripheral administration" but its static assumptions are belied by the extraordinary degree of social transformation of the past decades. As the Luandan state seeks to master the periphery, Luanda itself is changing under the weight of the rural exodus. This medium-term logic amounts to a mechanism of internal integration but one that undermines the existence of a contained rural space. The party-state itself unwittingly contributes towards this. The eccentric modernising projects of the reconstruction era, for instance, are increasingly present in the hinterland, and larger towns and provincial capitals are being modernised into aspiring mini-Luandas, absorbing rural populations in the process⁸³.

Where is this leading? From the narrow perspective of "state-building" as institutional and administrative creation, the policies outlined above increase the state's capacity to project power yet fall short of producing a bureaucratised apparatus of everyday governance. From the perspective of "state formation" as a much broader "unconscious and contradictory" historical process⁸⁴, however, we are witnessing nothing less than the recreation and consolidation of an integrated political space and economy. In view of the dominant MPLA ideas about centre-periphery relations, however, it is unlikely that this will result in broad-based rural development. Optimists might interpret this process as similar to the transformation of "peasants into Frenchmen" described by Eugen Weber⁸⁵: a stern central state, often brutal and always impatient with local particularities, but pushing forward a civic project of nation-building. In Angola, however, there is no civic project or investment in people. The state is dilating not like nineteenth century France in Auvergne but more in the manner of the colonial state⁸⁶, and in the process creating a society of subjects rather than citizens.

82. Interview, Luanda, June 2012.

83. See R. Soares de Oliveira, "Illiberal Peacebuilding in Angola", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 49 (2), 2011, p. 287-314.

84. P. Berman and J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, volume 1, London, James Currey, 1992, p. 5.

85. E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1976.

86. Tilly notes that expansion "from a highly organized center into a weakly organized periphery" is a rare historical pattern that only became the "dominant experience [...] in European colonial expansion". Tilly, *The Formation of National States*, p. 24.



The key question is whether the dynamic studied here is irreversible or can recede back into core areas, as it has in previous historical rounds of Angolan state-making and unmaking. As in the late colonial period, improvements in communications and in state technologies of outreach mean that many of the traditional limitations of broadcasting power across space have less currency at present. But there are several threats here. The quietist post-war decade during which the MPLA enjoyed virtually no social contestation is likely to fade into a much more polarised climate that will attenuate state autonomy and the asymmetry of state-society relations. Amidst fast social transformation, rural populations and especially the young may turn against a central state that rhetorically upholds national integration but *de facto* rules the periphery on a different basis. This is a real possibility if the MPLA does not define its interests in terms broader than those of political control and resource extraction. There is also the danger of a reversal in the state's fiscal position. The financial resources now available are extraordinary but a lasting collapse in oil prices could lead the central state to radically curtail its sphere of concern back to its heartland. Finally, there is the risk that the rewards of the despotic power created by the state do not turn into infrastructural power and instead get "carried off into civil society by their own agents"⁸⁷ in ways that transcend state-controlled discharge. These potential trends do not point towards yet another contraction of Angolan state-making in the periphery, but they do inject a sense of contingency into the Hegelian pretensions of Luandan decision-makers ■

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Résumé

«O Governo Está Aqui»: la formation de l'État en sa périphérie dans l'Angola de l'après-guerre

Pendant les 27 années que dura la guerre civile angolaise, jusqu'à 80 % du territoire nominal angolais resta hors du contrôle de l'État central. Cependant, après 2002 et la victoire remportée sur les rebelles de l'Unita, le régime MPLA, riche

87. Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State", p. 211.

de son pétrole, s'engagea avec enthousiasme à bâtir un prétendu « État moderne » sur l'ensemble du territoire angolais. L'effort consacré à sortir des enclaves qu'il avait longtemps contrôlées pour occuper un vaste territoire faiblement peuplé, étendre l'administration civile et reconstruire ses infrastructures représente une dynamique politique majeure de l'Angola d'aujourd'hui. Cet article tente d'analyser ce développement à travers le prisme des ambitions de l'État, de sa trajectoire historique et de ses relations centre-périphérie.