



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Political Geography

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/polgeo

Subnational governance and conflict: An introduction to a special issue on governance and conflict

Clionadh Raleigh ^{a,*}, Andrew Linke ^b

^a University of Sussex, United Kingdom

^b Department of Geography, University of Utah, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 16 May 2017

Received in revised form

6 September 2017

Accepted 20 September 2017

Available online xxx

1. Introduction

The focus of this special issue is how the subnational political geography of countries reflects directly on conflict patterns. The recent subnational turn in conflict research emphasizes that a range of conflict forms and types occurs within states, beyond crude civil war and peace dichotomies. But few conflict theories directly engage with the structure of political orders, the multiplicity of agents involved in violence and the presence of dynamic, subnational political relationships that give rise to distinct, and co-occurring conflicts. The articles presented here focus on contexts where the variations in formal and informal governance and conflict intersect through competition over local power, state consolidation and the political order. In training their attention on these settings and political geographic themes, the special issue authors offer new perspectives on violence in DR-Congo (Vogel, 2017), India (Naseemullah, 2017), Philippines (Eastin, 2017), Kenya (Lind, 2017), Bosnia (Dulić, 2014), and the Caucasus region (Bakke et al., 2017). Each article effectively challenges typical interpretations of governance as centralized, exclusive, unified, homogenous, and static. All of the authors understand political power through alternative perspectives, not all of which are compatible with a traditional political science or international relations agenda of universal generalization and cross-national representativeness. However, these alternative concepts of power complement how conflict research has developed over the past decade.

A subnational politics perspective explicitly interprets

statehood and governance as a function of social relationships, and specifically as a volatile, intra- and inter-elite competition over control and consolidation of formal and informal institutions. Our application of subnational politics to conflict builds upon the 'power topography' literature, which reinforces how and why the reach of the state is territorially uneven and heterogeneous (Linz & Miguel, 1966 on Spain; Kohli, 1987 and Singh, 2015; on India; Migdal, Kohli & Shue, 1994 across the developing world and Boone, 2003 on West Africa; O'Donnell, 1993 on Latin America). The power topography research too often interprets subnational governance in terms of a binary distinction between state presence and absence. Theoretical frameworks drawn from the core tenets of human and political geography (eg. Agnew, 1987; Agnew, 2005; Elden, 2009; Painter, 2010; Pred, 1984) help improve upon these shortcomings.

Subnational political geography concerns the distribution of power, including its historical origins, contemporary applications, influential agents, networks, and the manner in which these forces manifest and interact in social and geographical space (both territorial and relational). This framing elucidates the complex agreements and competition that exist between national governments and subnational actors, or between different subnational actors, and which underlie political orders, socioeconomic development and patterns of violent conflict. Such a conceptual framework is required to understand the consequences of political topographies, including the different forms of local rule that emerge (see Mamdani, 1996; Boone, 2003), whether an area is likely to receive development aid (Easterly, 2008; Abdulai & Hickey, 2016), enjoy meaningful representation in national government (Carbone, 2009), host distinct conflict forms (Raleigh, 2014), contribute or detract from the stability of the international state system (Clapham, 2009), experience military intervention (for Pakistan, see Naseemullah, 2014), and extend or limit the reach of state power (for the Horn of Africa, see De Waal, 2015). Further, subnational power relationships and state-elite dynamics have critical implications for state building (Tilly, 1985), the development of state-society relationships (Scott, 1998), meaningful and enduring economic development (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) and violence reduction through state sovereignty (North, Wallis, & Weingast, 2009).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: c.raleigh@sussex.ac.uk (C. Raleigh).

2. Subnational governance

Developing states vary in the breadth of their capacity and legitimacy across territory, where capacity is defined as the ability of a regime to sustain its power, control territory and monopolize violence; and legitimacy describes whether the government is regarded as a valid and legal representation of the state authority. Subnational governance is often understood in terms of the central government's capacity across territory. Yet capacity is variable on several levels: regimes may be present, but have a negative capacity and legitimacy; they may be absent, but have indirect capabilities through allies; or non-state and unaligned agents (not allies) may fill a central state vacuum. To capture these subnational variations, we argue that capacity and associated 'state strength' are the end product of three intersecting attributes: scope (presence), depth (will to engage), and form (the types of subnational engagement in an area, or the strategies of governing). The variation in governance scope, depth and form explains the diversity and multitude of subnational governance institutions across developing states, as well as the variable authority of local and regional elites.

On the subnational level, who has authority, and how they practice it, is a function of the political importance of regions, the political networks of influential communities and elites living there, and the relationship between elites and the national regime. Demography, historical political relationships with the central authority, the availability of valuable natural resources, and the ability to organize violent resistance to outside authorities, allow elites to leverage political influence for autonomy, territorial control and local enrichment. In response to variable subnational powers, regimes supplement, complement and accommodate elites through the provision of positions in government, and public goods, including security, market access, infrastructure, and development assistance.

2.1. Scope

Scope concerns the physical and territorial reach of the state, and characterizes the physical range of state activity from the central regime's perspective. Scope variation has been attributed to the political economy of a state (Boone, 2014); the infrastructure of control (Herbst, 2000); or social geography and the distribution of ethnic communities (Cedarman, Gleditsch, & Buhaug, 2014).

However, it is the limits of state scope that has garnered the most attention in academic studies: the 'ungoverned space' argument suggests that the absence of the state is associated with the rise of uncontrolled disorder. This blunt concept ignores why the central state may be effectively absent in an 'ungoverned' location; but at least three reasons suggest why it may be strategic, rather than a result of weakness: a government may have limited logistical means (see Bakke et al. 2017 for *de facto* states) and position itself to maximize control over population rather than land (see Herbst, 2000 for this argument); a government may have little will to engage in governing in certain places, leaving the territory deliberately unincorporated in the central security regime (see Lind, 2017 for governance effects of devolution in northern Kenya); or a regime's ability to govern may be comparatively weak relative to the influence of existing subnational elites (as in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, see Vogel, 2017).

These interpretations of capacity stand in sharp contrast to frameworks exclusively focusing on central state authority, institutionalization, and physical capacity, with its associated focus on state absence, vacuums, failure, and fragility (see Thies, 2010; Sobek, 2010; de Rouen et al., 2010). Traditional interpretations argue that increases in state scope are necessary to support stable governance strategies, where logistically strong and omnipresent

states are considered safer and less likely to devolve into sectarian or civil conflict (see Fearon & Laitin, 2003) (see Fig. 1), and weak and narrowly present states inconsistently govern their territory and are plagued by multiple domestic and international threats to their stability. Conflict emerges from a vacuum of state presence, facilitated by mechanisms of exclusion or political, economic and social neglect. In this vacuum, political violence is motivated by a goal to 'act as' the state. Extending this conceptual model to its logical conclusion, rural and peripheral areas are at the greatest risk of experiencing civil war, or perhaps any conflict. But there are many more variations to the scope and depth of formal governance across subnational regions than either 'ungoverned' or present.

2.2. Depth

The depth of state authority is a measure of the will to govern and engage with local populations; it is a function of the central regime's interest in monitoring or policing residents of an area and the state's willingness to represent the varied political, social, and regional affiliations of citizens in national institutions. It is a complement to the physical presence of authority, and depth is vital for an accurate interpretation of governance. Regimes are not neutral in their representation and actions within states (Cedarman et al., 2014), and this is emphasized through the spatial expression of preferential treatment, clientelism and patronage. The outcome of depth is how embedded regimes are in the governance of an area.

Across Africa and Asia, a wide and growing literature has characterized how variation in state depth and the national regime's local affiliates create unique forms of control. These literature explore the contested nature of governance, public authority and security, and label the manifestation of national governance depth and local elite contexts as 'hybrid' or 'twilight institutions' (Lund, 2006), 'governance without government' (Menkhaus, 2007; Raeymaekers, Menkhaus, & Vlassenroot, 2008), 'real governance' (Olivier de Sardan, 2009; Titeca & de Herdt, 2011) 'negotiated states' (Hagmann & Peclard, 2010), 'mediated states' (Wennmann, 2009), 'and 'institutional multiplicity' (Goodfellow & Lindemann, 2013), quasi-statehood, parastatehood, informal institutions, and limited statehood (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009).

Understanding the spectrum of governance depth is consequential because the characteristics of subnational political agents that challenge central authority can strongly diverge from national norms and institutions. The type of relationship formed from local

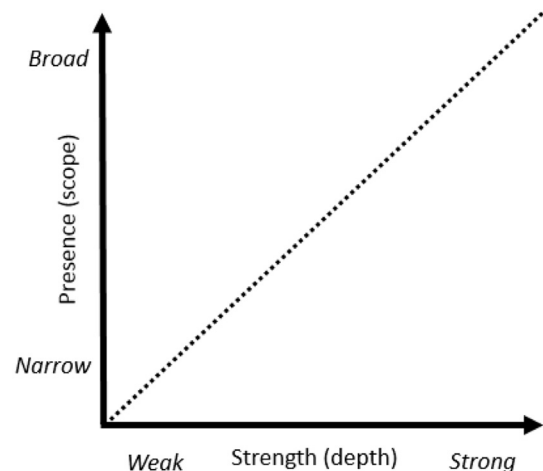


Fig. 1. The customary linear interpretation of state presence (scope) and strength (depth) across territory.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7492761>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7492761>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)