International Alert.

PEACE FOCUS | JULY 2013

CRIME, VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT

RETHINKING PEACEBUILDING TO MEET CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

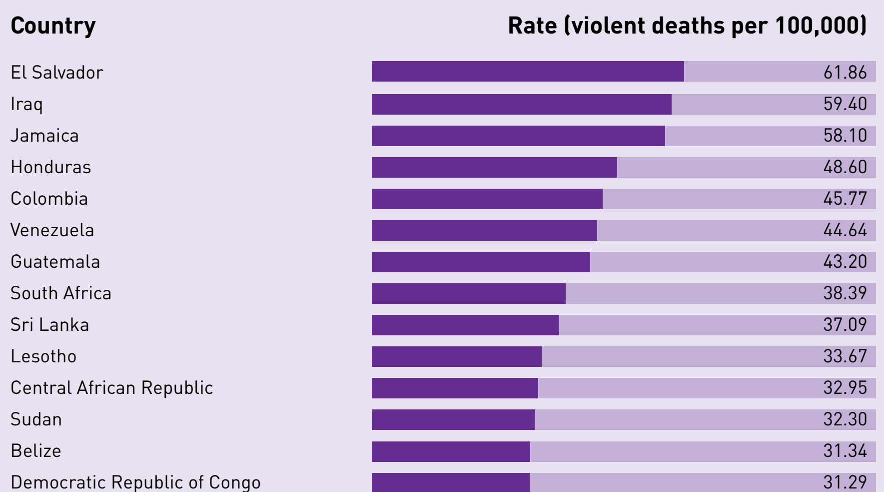
Conflict deaths are decreasing as a result of fewer civil wars and interstate wars. However, a quarter of the world's population still lives in the shadow of different types of organised violence, notably violence perpetrated by criminal groups and urban violence. This suggests shifts in the constituents, landscape, cycle and dynamic of organised violence. While there are examples of engagement with criminal groups, very little is understood regarding what works when it comes to bringing these groups "back into the fold". Furthermore, strategies for responding to criminal groups in conflict environments are largely developed without taking into account the experience that exists at the community level in responding to gang and urban violence – as seen, for instance, in the United States.[1]

THE NATURE OF PERVASIVE VIOLENCE

Interstate war has declined dramatically since the two world wars of the first half of the 20th century. Major civil conflicts increased during the post-colonial and Cold War era, peaking in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since 1991–1992, when there were 21 active major civil wars (i.e. those with more than 1,000 battle deaths a year), the number has fallen to less than 10 each year since 2002. The annual number of battle deaths from civil war fell from more than 160,000 a year in the 1980s to less than 50,000 a year in the 2000s.[2]

However, despite this achievement, more than 1.5 billion people continue to live in areas affected by fragility, conflict or large-scale, organised criminal violence. While the average annual global violent death rate between 2004 and 2009 was 7.9 per 100,000 inhabitants, a total of 58 countries exhibit violent death rates above 10 per 100,000 inhabitants. Moreover, 14 countries witness annual violent death rates above 30 (see figure). Most of these countries are not affected by violent conflict in the traditional sense, but are experiencing different types of pervasive organised violence associated with gangs, criminal groups and violent protest. The regions most affected by lethal violence are Central America, with an average regional death rate of 29 per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by southern Africa (27.4) and the Caribbean (22.4). At the other end of the spectrum, all western European countries experience annual violent death rates below three per 100,000 inhabitants.[3]

While the figures do not include indirect conflict deaths, such as increased suicides or child morbidity, one estimate puts the average annual number of battle deaths in recent years at possibly between 10 and 20 percent of those violently killed in ostensibly non-conflict environments.[4] In other words,



1 J. Cockayne (April 2013). 'Chasing shadows', forthcoming in RUSI Journal.
2 World Bank (2011). *World Development Report*. Washington DC. p.52.
3 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (2011). *The global burden of armed violence 2011*. Geneva. pp.60-61. Available at http://www.genevadeclaration.org/?gbav-2011
4 For more information, see http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/armed-violence/conflict-armed-violence.html
5 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (2011). Op. cit.

organised violence continues to affect many people's lives, despite the decline in conventional conflicts. Violence is present in post-conflict societies where it may be relevant to speak of a "violent peace". In fact, the observation that the level of violence often increases in the aftermath of an armed conflict has been one of the triggers for the growing interest in, and concerns about, the amorphous nature of violence. However, violence also surges in countries that do not have a conflict history.

Seized heroin rocks. Afghanistan, 2010 © David Gill/Development Pictures

WHAT THEN IS VIOLENT CONFLICT?

With the end of the Cold War and the increasing impact of globalisation, the space within which we need to understand and mediate conflicts is changing and will continue to change. Key elements of the global and dynamic context we currently live in include: the consequences of 9/11 and the "war on terror", and how these altered relations between Muslim and non-Muslim communities as well as attitudes to security; the global financial crisis, the radical deficit reduction, and cuts to public services and jobs; the growth of social media, like Facebook and Twitter, that are easy to access but difficult to monitor, and which feed citizens' awareness of and demand for alternative models of governance; and increased economic and political interdependencies which ensure that shocks multiply rapidly at a global level.

All of these elements challenge the capacities of formal states, which often have less capacity than is expected of them. On the one hand, the state system is becoming stronger, as demonstrated by the existence of more and more states (the United Nations was founded in 1945 by 51 members; in 2012 it had 193 members), and state sovereignty remains an important commodity. On the other hand, the state system can also be seen to be weakening, with many states' ability to control territories and people declining.

Violence is no longer the exclusive preserve of the traditionally powerful state actors, but rather an increasing option for a multitude of actors in pursuit of all kinds of goals.[6] The paradox seems to be that the global security environment continues to give nation states responsibility for stability at the very same time that nation states are increasingly incapable of providing acceptable levels of security, prosperity and political identity.[7]

With the state's monopoly on violence being challenged, new actors emerge to fill the void. In places with very little state presence, there are often

Country spotlight: Mali

One of the trafficking routes for cocaine travels from Latin America, via the West African coast, to northern Mali and from there across the desert to the Mediterranean coast and eventually Europe. In Mali, the organised trafficking of drugs and state complicity in the trade played a key role in the breakdown of trust in the government and corrupted the military forces. This in turn led to the January 2012 revolution and the March 2012 coup. In this sense, Mali points to the negative impact criminal groups can have on conflict exit and recovery. Due to the easy access to external funds for the ruling elite, their relationship with the domestic constituencies has over time become less important. Development of the north of the country has not been a priority for a long time. The steady sources of finance available to Ansar Dine, AQIM and other groups have also provided incentive structures that have contributed to the current situation in Mali.

Mali therefore raises central questions about how to achieve peace in a context where the actors include so-called drug dealers, criminal groups and terrorists. Targeting these governance structures using a purely counter-terrorism approach risks having negative effects unless the benefits and the services that have been provided – such as security, employment and even to some extent normative frameworks – are integrated into or replaced with a peacebuilding strategy and approach. As part of a peacebuilding approach, it will also be necessary to identify incentives to bring criminal groups and other "alternative governors" into a peacebuilding process. Outside interveners will need to explore further to what extent there is a peace dividend that is going to be persuasive for these actors and what such a peace might look like (see our Peace Focus paper, *Crisis in Mali*[8]).

6 C. Moser and D. Rodgers (2005). *Change, violence and insecurity in non-conflict situations*. ODI Working Paper 245. p.22.
7 S. Metz (2007). *Rethinking insurgency*. Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute. p.10.
8 Available at http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/crisis-mali

Region spotlight: The informal economy in Mindanao

International Alert recently published a book on the informal economy in the Philippines Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, entitled *Out of the shadows: Violent conflict and the real economy of Mindanao*.[9] One of the book's case studies – 'The "real economy" and strongman rule in Mindanao: Sub-national statebuilding in conflict-affected areas' – discusses how kidnappings for ransom directly link to power dynamics, enabling local bosses to engage in fundraising for their election campaigns. The security vacuums created by military offensives of rebel and terrorist groups have left gaps that enable kidnapping groups to strike. At the same time, prolonged and unresolved ceasefires combined with poorly designed demobilisation campaigns have led to big numbers of unemployed young men, who can as a result be harnessed for criminal activities. The study also highlights how one critical determinant of kidnapping incidents is that those involved in the trade are more firmly embedded in the local communities than the military, police or justice authorities – blurring the lines between state and criminal actions. The criminal actors can therefore derive benefits from being legitimate and illegitimate at the same time.

The study concludes that the reason why the political authority has failed to subdue and incorporate Mindanao's informal economy into the statebuilding project is largely because the real economy plays a role in strengthening the resources and power of local strongmen, political elites and clans. The informal economy acts as a powerful legitimising agent that is founded upon the social contract between elites and their followers. This contract allows local strongmen to corner government budgets and development funding for the region, as long as local people have the means and space to engage in local economies with little interference from the state. In Mindanao, good governance has thus been replaced by freedom from state intervention. Moreover, the illicit economies are regarded as completely legitimate, as long as the local population can engage in them themselves. This also means that subduing the illicit economy will force citizens to make economic demands of the local elites and wean themselves off the control of local strongmen towards the sub-national state – or alternatively towards rebel or other armed groups. The way you engage with the informal economy in Mindanao – in other words any change from the status quo – therefore holds a great amount of conflict potential.

alternative structures. Such structures are provided by tribal, ethnic, cultural and religious figures, as well as organised criminal networks, gangs or jihadist organisations that supplant the functions of the state and even sometimes serve as stabilising factors in insecure environments. This complex web of informal networks and patronage systems, which may act as governance mechanisms, needs to be taken into account when looking at the importance of the state as an institution. Sometimes, the institution of the state is not the most important body in terms of upholding the monopoly of violence in all of its territory, providing services, employment, normative frameworks and so on. Moreover, it is sometimes difficult to identify the boundaries of where the state begins and ends vis-à-vis informal networks, patronage systems and criminal organisations. It is in this fuzzy space that new and often criminal actors thrive – actors who are crucial to peace and violence, but with whom we are not used to engaging as part of our peacebuilding responses.

Violence is no longer the exclusive preserve of the traditionally powerful state actors, but rather an increasing option for a multitude of actors in pursuit of all kinds of goals.

These actors include organised criminal networks, gangs and violent extremists that co-exist and reinforce each other. In a globalised world, international narcotics traffickers are increasingly able to take advantage of the relatively cheap and deregulated political marketplace to either install themselves in government and secure the allegiance of local powerbrokers, factions within government or even entire states.[10] The global political economy also enables armed insurgents to use transnational trafficking as a source of finance for their activities. Armed political conflicts often link to transnational terrorism in both the operational and strategic sense, further eroding conventional boundaries between political and criminal violence. Seemingly arbitrary violence may therefore also serve political purposes in line with the goals of armed groups,[11] and political actors may be as motivated by profit as by political objectives.

Civil war has traditionally been treated – by peacebuilders, international organisations and governments – as a phenomenon different than other forms of large-scale violence, including gang activity, violence linked to trafficking, and local, rural and urban violence. The ways in which states have responded to different types of violence have been rooted in an analysis of whether the violence was organised (collective) or interpersonal (individual), and whether it was conflict (politically motivated) or criminal (economically motivated). When motivations come from political grievances, violent disorder is labelled "conflict"; when the motivations are seen as arising from profit, we label it "crime".[12] This labelling also

9 For more information, see http://www.international-alert.org/news/out-shadows
10 A. de Waal (2009). 'Fixing the political market place: How can we make peace without functioning state institutions?', Fifteenth Christen Michelsen Lecture, Bergen, 15th October 2009, Chr. Michelsen Institute. p.17.
11 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (2011). Op. cit.
12 J. Cockayne and A. Lupel (2011). 'Introduction: Rethinking the relationship between peace operations and organized crime', in J. Cockayne and A. Lupel (Eds.) *Peace operations and organized crime*. Routledge. p.5.

determines whether the response will be focused on peace or on justice.

In peacebuilding, we have tried to analyse conflict integrating both political and economic motives. However, the interconnectedness of different manifestations of violence and the prevalence of non-conventional conflict actors mean that there are good reasons for abandoning these distinctions altogether. Armed political violence cannot be regarded as a standalone conflict, but is rather one out of several manifestations of a deeper struggle. Furthermore, urban violence and violent crime are a concern for peace and security – and hence for peacebuilding.

Post-election violence. Kenya, January 2008 © Julius Mwelu/IRIN

IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACEBUILDING

The context is therefore evolving. Those perpetrating violence are motivated by different factors, and many previously illegitimate actors are emerging as increasingly important institutional players. This has led to new patterns, where criminal, urban and gang violence, as well as violent extremism and terrorism, are challenging the state's monopoly on violence. This reflects an adaptation to a changing global political economy. The role, use and manifestations of violence have not necessarily changed, but our assumptions about them and how they interconnect and exploit options for the transnationalisation of profit and violence have.

In response – whether in peacebuilding, law enforcement, government or development organisations – we need to evolve with the context we are working in. This includes both the context within the states and regions we are working in, but also in the broader sense. We often talk about "fragile and conflict-affected countries" being our focus, but like others are increasingly moving towards "fragile and violence-affected *situations*". This will necessitate a review of what we work on and where. We need to cast a wider net to take into account the many places where people live under pervasive violence. This means breaking down silos between different responses to violence.

Presently, the political landscape is dominated by distinct security agendas when it comes to addressing criminal violence. The dominant approach to tackling issues such as organised crime, gangs, piracy and terrorism has typically focused on hard security and the rule of law. This has proved to be particularly problematic in environments with contested justice systems or weak links between law enforcement agents and the population.[13] In addition, law enforcement agents are in some contexts heavily engaged with agents of crime and therefore hardly suited to combat them.

We need to cast a wider net to take into account the many places where people live under pervasive violence. This means breaking down silos between different responses to violence.

The failure of existing law enforcement responses to contemporary violence (e.g. the"war on drugs") has led to heightened interest and concern from development actors (e.g. see the *World Development Report 2011*). Parts of the UN and other stakeholders recognise that economic development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is threatened by different kinds of contemporary organised violence, notably transnational organised crime. Therefore, countering it must form part of the development agenda. However, while the development camp's focus on structural causes has gained some momentum with the *World Development Report*, there is no consensus on whether criminal violence means that there is a need to work differently. This includes whether the dominant focus on traditional fragile states is actually right and what lessons can be learned from the *World Development Report* besides the necessity of institution building.

Arguably, the international system is not succeeding in articulating holistic solutions to the daunting problem of organised crime, because the security-development divide is not being bridged. Multilateral institutions, particularly the UN, therefore need to be encouraged to adopt more holistic measures for addressing contemporary manifestations of violence. Partly, there is a need to fill the gap in adequate crime-sensitive analysis – to strengthen analytical capacities based on sound empirical evidence.

13 R. Locke (2012). *Organized crime, conflict and fragility: A new approach*. New York: International Peace Institute. p.1.

City spotlight: Manchester

Urbanisation is a key part of the changing context in which peacebuilding operates, bringing new challenges in terms of conflict, violence and urban governance – and for citizen security in particular.[14] Cities are often the playgrounds of various economic entrepreneurs, ranging from gangs to drug traffickers, and criminal politicians to militias. Although the United Kingdom and many western European countries do not witness the same levels of violence as, for example, some countries in Central America, modern global cities such as Manchester have suffered from years of gang warfare.

During the 1990s, Manchester witnessed years of inter-gang warfare that affected entire communities and led to the city gaining an international reputation. Still today, there are areas in Manchester that tell tales of social deprivation, including Moss Side and parts of Salford. Approximately 60 percent of shootings in the city are gang related and the drug market in Manchester is seen to be intricately linked to gangs.

As a modern and global city, Manchester has both geographies of centrality and of marginality with pockets of deprivation, isolation and disconnectedness. The existence of gangs can therefore be placed within a context of marginalisation and social change that puts particular emphasis on young people. The intersection of youth with other socio-economic categories, such as race and class, also brings its own difficulties. This adds further to feelings of frustration, marginalisation and discrimination.

Within a context of deprivation or conflict – where the state does not provide an accessible route towards social mobility through education or jobs – urban males (mostly but not exclusively) can become locked into the social position of youth without the possibility of achieving adulthood. Gang membership can therefore be considered a social navigation strategy: a way for youth to survive and forge a future for themselves in a context of marginalisation.[15] Similarly, violence can be framed as part of an urban sub-culture in deprived areas, a culture that creates alternative authority structures and hierarchies. These are parallel to those hierarchies in formal society that often exclude and marginalise uneducated and unskilled young people.

There is also a need to produce tested, practical guidance tools for programming.[16]

A range of tools have been developed in different sectors which could prove useful if brought together. These tools include: early warning systems from the protection sectors; risk assessment tools from the police; the innovative community policing project spearheaded by Viva Rio; the violence interrupting pioneered by Cure Violence; as well as the work of many other community organisations, including those focusing on urban architecture ("crime prevention through environmental design") and innovative sports programmes. This knowledge needs to be integrated into a holistic response that marries development and security approaches to contemporary violence. There is much the peacebuilding community can learn from such a process.

What then would peacebuilding have to bring to such an integrated approach? The answer to this question lies in conflict analysis and peacebuilding frameworks. Even though we as peacebuilders have not traditionally focused directly on criminal actors, we have developed and piloted conceptual frameworks to deal with conventional types of conflicts which will add insight into the motivations and identity issues behind criminal violence. Understanding criminal violence from a conflict perspective can therefore open new and innovative ways of addressing it.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the nature of pervasive violence, peacebuilding needs to throw its net wider, to encompass all kinds of pervasive violence in society as part of its remit. This means that peacebuilding organisations should work more deliberately on other types of organised violence and in a sense rethink peacebuilding – focusing not only on conventional conflict settings, but also targeting unconventional types of conflict.

Arguably, the difference between being a gang member in Rio and a child soldier in a civil war is small – and for people living in ostensibly violent environments, it does not matter much whether it is in a context of warfare or urban violence. Nevertheless, more thought has to be put into how peacebuilding can better respond to the changing landscape of organised violence.

In light of this, International Alert is exploring and researching innovative peacebuilding solutions at the interface between crime, violence and conflict.

14 See R. Muggah (2012). *Researching the urban dilemma: Urbanization, poverty and violence*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre. p.iii.
15 H. Vigh (2010). 'Youth mobilisation as social navigation. Reflections on the concept of dubriagem', Cadernos de Estudos Africanos (online), No. 18/19, pp.140-164. Available at http://cea.revues.org/68
16 J. Cockayne (2011). *State fragility, organised crime and peacebuilding: Towards a more strategic approach*. NOREF Report. One example of helpful guidance is the International Peace Institute (IPI) guide, *Spotting the spoilers: A guide to analyzing organized crime in fragile states* (Mark Shaw and Walter Kemp). This guide was published in 2012 specifically to fill the gap in analytical tools focused on organised crime as part of the IPI project, 'Peace Without Crime'. The project is designed to strengthen the capacity of multilateral organisations regarding organised crime.

International Alert helps people find peaceful solutions to conflict.

We are one of the world's leading peacebuilding organisations, with nearly 30 years of experience laying the foundations for peace.

We work with local people around the world to help them build peace. And we advise governments, organisations and companies on how to support peace.

We focus on issues which influence peace, including governance, economics, gender relations, social development, climate change, and the role of businesses and international organisations in high-risk places.

International Alert is grateful for the support from our strategic donors: the UK Department for International Development UKAID; the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland.

The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of International Alert, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of our donors.

International Alert.
346 Clapham Road, London SW9 9AP, United Kingdom
Tel +44 (0)20 7627 6800, **Fax** +44 (0)20 7627 6900
info@international-alert.org
www.international-alert.org

@intalert /InternationalAlert

ISBN: 978-1-909578-20-3