Violence, Security and Democracy: Perverse Interfaces and their Implications for States and Citizens in the Global South

Jenny Pearce and Rosemary McGee with Joanna Wheeler
February 2011

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Summary

How does violence affect the everyday lives of citizens in the global South? Researching this theme under the aegis of the Violence, Participation and Citizenship group of the Citizenship DRC coordinated by IDS, we generated some answers, but also more questions, which this paper starts to explore. Why have democratisation processes failed to fulfil expectations of violence reduction in the global South? How does violence affect democracy and vice versa? Why does security practice in much of the global South not build secure environments? When examined empirically from the perspectives of poor Southern citizens, the interfaces between violence, security and democracy – assumed in conventional state and democratisation theory to be positive or benign – are often, in fact, perverse.

Empirically-based reflection on these questions leads us to two propositions, which the paper then explores through the use of secondary literature. In essence:

Proposition 1: Violence interacts perversely with democratic institutions, eroding their legitimacy and effectiveness. Democracy fails to deliver its promise of replacing the violence with accommodation and compromise, and democratic process is compromised, with citizens reacting by withdrawing from public spaces, accepting the authority of non-state actors, or supporting hard-line responses.

Proposition 2: Security provision is not making people feel more secure. State responses to rising violence can strengthen state and non-state security actors committed to reproducing violence, disproportionately affecting the poorest communities.

These 'perverse interfaces', we argue, warrant research in themselves, rather than minimal or tangential consideration in research on democracy, as tends to be the case. Further research needs to adopt fresh epistemological, method- ological and analytical perspectives and seek to re-think and re-frame categories and concepts, rather than working within the received wisdoms of state and democratisation theory.

Keywords: citizenship; violence; security; democracy; democratisation; state.

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Acknowledgements and authorship

1 Introduction: a tale of two propositions

How does violence affect the everyday lives of citizens in countries, regions and cities of the global South? This has been the central theme of five years' work in the Violence, Participation and Citizenship (VPC) group of the Development Research Centre (DRC) on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability,[1] an international research partnership coordinated by IDS from 2000–2010. While other DRC researchers studied new forms of citizenship that could help make rights real, the VPC group undertook projects in four countries to examine how violence affects the exercise of meaningful citizenship and how efforts to open space for citizenship in such contexts affect the use of violence.

We set out to explore these dynamics in partnership with organisations and community members in Brazil (Rio de Janeiro), Jamaica (Kingston), Mexico (Chiapas and Guerrero States) and Nigeria (Kaduna, Kano and Plateau States). Our investigative frame, developed as a group, was a set of questions about the scope for participatory social action, the exercise of citizenship, and processes of peaceful social transformation in contexts of violence. Our substantive findings have been presented in a range of outputs (www.drc-citizenship.org and www.ids.ac.uk/go/idspublication/violence-social-action-and-research) and a series of methodological findings about researching and acting in violent contexts published as an *IDS Bulletin* (McGee and Pearce 2009).

1.1 From the micro to the macro

All the countries where we worked were considered democracies. The existence of multiple forms of violence did not preclude that characterisation. Nor did the fact that security provision seemed to be fostering violence rather than diminishing it. This led to important questions about the relationship between security, democracy and violence. Some perspectives on security provision have suggested that its defining goal should be the reduction of violence and the enabling of democratic participation and meaningful exercise of citizenship rights (Abello Colak and Pearce 2009). The contexts in which we worked suggested that security provision did quite the opposite. Through micro-level research, we began to explore how the macro-level political and security context connected with the everyday violences experienced by our research participants.

Two concrete propositions emerged, which are the focus of this paper. Firstly, state 'security'-oriented responses to violence can undermine key democratic principles, vitiating political representation, and eroding the meanings and practices of democratic citizenship, so that classic understandings of state

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1   See www.drc-citizenship.org/About_us/index.htm

formation – with their stress on legitimate monopolisation of violence – fall apart. In other words, security policies can interact perversely with democracy. Secondly, security provision can also be perversely related to violence itself. Rather than reducing violence, state security actors – sometimes in cooperation with non-state actors – can foster the reproduction of violence in the name of providing security.

These two propositions constitute the 'perverse interfaces' of our title. Examination of them holds the promise of deeper understanding about the relationship between states and citizens in the global South. Our concern is not with security institutions as such and their relationship to democratic institutions, a subject which has been well explored elsewhere.[2] Our interest is in the interfaces between the three phenomena of violence, security and democracy. By 'interface', we mean a point at which two things – actors, systems, organisations – not only connect but interact. We contend that the interactions between them produce effects that are relevant for the nature or quality of one or other or all of them: in particular, effects that are potentially or actually detrimental to the exercise of rights and democratic freedoms and ultimately the opportunities available to the poorest sectors of society. Why is it that democratisation processes have failed to fulfil the expectations of violence reduction in the global South? How does violence affect democracy, and democracy affect violence? Why, despite strong donor support for security sector reform, does security practice in many parts of the global South still fail to build secure environments?

To establish the state of knowledge on these questions we conducted a review of the literature on the relationships between conflict, violence and democracy (Barrett 2009a, b, c, d). This revealed that distinct literatures on violence, security and democracy each exist, but none attempts to draw together ways in which high levels of violence may be reproduced by state as well as non-state security regimes, or how this affects the prospects for democracy or in turn is affected by the way democracy functions in the given context. Also, much literature focusing on the global South is primarily concerned with armed conflict and the impact of democracy on armed conflict, rather than with the more multifaceted forms of violence characterising many regions of the global South, and their impact on democracy, and vice versa. If the full significance of high levels of violence in the global South is to be appreciated in terms of both state formation processes and the exercise of meaningful citizenship, then the subject matter needs to be broadened beyond conventional armed conflict, and historical and contemporary examples from the global North need to be brought in for the light they can shed on how war and violence relate to state formation processes.

All in all, a grounded analysis of the interfaces between violence, security and democracy is currently absent from contemporary knowledge on the global South. This Working Paper is an initial exploration of these interfaces, building on the VPC field research and an analytical review of secondary literature in the field.

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2   See, for example, Luckham (2009) on the connections between security and democracy.

1.2 Our conceptual and analytical approach

In the citizen-centred view of development espoused by the DRC (Gaventa 2005; Eyben and Ladbury 2006), democratic states are not built through institutional evolution alone: organised citizens play a role. Where violence impedes citizen action, it also limits the development of democracy. Citizenship cannot be exercised in meaningful ways if people fear for their safety. The VPC group as a whole has sought to understand democracy, citizenship and violent conflict from the perspectives of poor and marginalised citizens largely through fieldwork; and then inductively build up situated, richly contextual analyses of the relationships between these phenomena as lived experiences.

The analytical perspective we adopt in this paper firmly reflects this citizen-centred view. It approaches the subject matter from a perspective of understanding complex interactions rather than seeking to reduce violence, security and democracy to causally-related abstract phenomena. The goal is not to treat some dimension of democracy as the dependent variable and manipulate independent variables representing other dimensions, so as to draw conclusions about the impact of, for instance, corruption on government effectiveness, or of violence on political stability. Our analytical perspective resonates with the recent challenge issued by the Centre for the Future State DRC to policymakers to learn to take 'an upside-down view of governance' so as to understand it better (Centre for the Future State 2010). It also calls to mind the principle of 'bottom-up state building' (Alda and Willman 2009), which is increasingly invoked by aid agencies despairing over the futility of pursuing conventional governance programmes in contexts where the character of the real-life state refuses to fit any mould familiar from state theory. One consequence of our analytical approach, and what motivates this paper, is that violence, security and democracy emerge not as distinct spheres of human experience but as themes needing to be explored together and in terms of their mutual interactions and impacts on each other.

1.3 What we do in this paper

In the remainder of this introduction, we outline briefly the development of the VPC group's conceptual framework and research agenda. The next sections of the Working Paper discuss our two propositions in turn. In each section, we first give an account of how the proposition unfolded from our field research. Insights from the research are presented and drawn on illustratively, along with relevant data from other projects within and related to the DRC (e.g. McGee and Pearce 2009).[3] We then explore the proposition using conceptual and theoretical literature, 'holding a dialogue' between our empirically-derived

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3   For the VPC publication 'Violence, Social Action and Research', *IDS Bulletin* 40.3, editors McGee and
     Pearce invited VPC researchers plus non-VPC researchers working in violent contexts in South Africa,
     Colombia, El Salvador and Sri Lanka to write about their research methodology. Although the research
     on which these articles were based was conducted beyond the bounds of the VPC, we therefore refer
     to these published articles in our discussions of VPC work.

proposition and the conceptual and theoretical literature on democracy, democratisation, development and violence, bringing to bear insights from this literature to deepen the proposition and build up a contemporary picture of the state of knowledge about the relationships between violence, security and democracy. We conclude in Section 3 with a bolder proposition, substantiated by the dialogue: that classic definitions of the State which assign to it the legitimate monopoly of violence in a given territory, are called into question by contemporary realities in many parts of the global South, in particular the kinds of environments we are describing. This proposition calls for new approaches to such contexts, with much greater sensitivity to the factors and actors which are fuelling violence and insecurity and support for those seeking to limit or eliminate them.

1.4 Violence, Participation and Citizenship (VPC): research in the heartlands of violence

In much of the DRC research, violence emerged indirectly as a variable which affected the political processes under study. The VPC research group was the only one to focus on violence *per se*, and bring it into the foreground as a variable in understanding democracy and citizenship. The group focused its field research in Jamaica, Brazil, Nigeria and Mexico, and later extended its collaboration to researchers in other countries (Colombia, South Africa, El Salvador and Sri Lanka) in the context of its exploration of methodologies for researching violence. All these countries are considered to be 'democracies'. Apart from Jamaica, Sri Lanka and Colombia, they mostly underwent transitions to democracy in the 1980s and 1990s. Sri Lanka and Colombia have established electoral systems but have both been immersed in protracted civil war, in the former case brought to a close in 2009. Jamaica has a long-established party system but also a history of violent enclaves in which politicians initially built violently partisan cultures in the country's poorest urban areas, which over the last decade or more have been taken over by drugs trafficking and gangster mafias.

The VPC group developed innovative methods for researching with the 'researched' in order not only to generate mutual understanding about violence, but also to reflect on social action within violent contexts. We asked how, in contexts of violence, people can and do begin processes of social action aimed at diminishing violence and building citizenship. Our understanding of violence was informed by earlier work on socialisation spaces, power and violence, and intergenerational transmissions of violence through time and space (Pearce 2006; 2007). In our first workshops, the group engaged with these ideas in an iterative fashion, which generated new insights on these phenomena from different contextual perspectives, as well as new questions to frame the field research (Pearce 2008).

The VPC group did not align itself with one definition of violence. Instead we acknowledged diverse definitional approaches which could illuminate particular aspects of violence in the different research sites. At the theoretical level, we drew variously on definitions of violence as direct intentional physical hurt on

the body of oneself or another; as symbolic and 'a form of power' according to Bourdieu (2004); and as cultural and structural violence, differentiated by Galtung (1969), in which premature illnesses and death can be attributed to structural inequalities and oppressions. We studied violence in both its chronic[4] and its acute manifestations and in terms of both physical and psychological intentional effects (Pearce 2009: 6). Each researcher built, informed and extended his/her own understanding of violence through empirical work. Notes from VPC meetings illustrate the range of contexts for the group's empirical work on violence, and a corresponding range of perceptions of its meaning and of the significance of how it is defined and operationalised (Pearce 2008: 2–7).

The research was micro-level, focusing on everyday individual and community experiences of violence, in private as well as public spaces and their impact on participation and the meaningful exercise of citizenship. The fieldwork generated a body of ethnographic data around how people experience violence across the spaces of socialisation, particularly those of home, school and neighbourhood. In some contexts, violence has its own lexicon and language, such as *parlache*, the slang of Medellín's urban poor, which is replete with expressions for violence. We developed insights into the relationships of power and authority to violence, particularly in contexts of chronic violence. We found various patterns of authority emerging in such contexts, where state and non-state actors compete to become security providers and protection suppliers.

We became very interested in the impact of violence at this everyday level on the nature of democracy and state formation and state-building underway in each of the contexts. An assumption is often made that state formation, state-building and democracy will ultimately reduce violence. It became increasingly obvious that we were observing the embedding of violence ever deeper within society, particularly in the everyday lives of the poorest. Most of the VPC research found violence to play an ongoing role in the formation and maintenance of the states where the research was conducted; state formation or democratic transitions and consolidation processes to be somehow connected to the persistence of violence in micro-level everyday experience; and a key factor in citizens' perceptions of and relationships with the state to be the state's performance as regards violence, including the kind of security the state sought to provide and the way it provided it. There was a complex social basis for the distinct perceptions. The poorest, who experience insecurity on a daily basis, can be as inclined as the wealthier sectors, to support authoritarian and repressive solutions. However, these do not have to come directly from the state. When violent non-state actors offer solutions to everyday problems of insecurity and economic survival, they may win social

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4   Chronic violence is a term to describe contexts in which levels of violence are measured across three dimensions of intensity, space and time. A working definition is where rates of violent death are at least twice the average for the country income category, where these levels are sustained for five years or more and where acts of violence not necessarily resulting in death are recorded at high levels across several socialisation spaces, such as the household, the neighbourhood, and the school, contributing to the further reproduction of violence over time (Pearce 2007: 07). Such high levels may be recorded in sub-national contexts as opposed to countrywide averages.

support even when they end up in conflict with the state. The more difficult phenomenon to explain is why others in such contexts continue the search for non-violent solutions. These examples of citizens' social action in violent contexts informed a key finding of the research: that democratic civil participation is possible even in violent contexts and is a foundation for new kinds of responses to the problem. This is where the group's methodology and conceptual framework enable it to bring into focus forms of social action which outsiders rarely see when they categorise violent neighbourhoods.

It was evident from our research that levels of violence were not diminishing but increasing in most of the VPC field sites, and in those of other researchers with whom we collaborated. Surveys we conducted showed that many people felt unsafe in parts of their community, with women and young people under the age of 30 feeling this particularly strongly (Justino, Leavy and Valli 2009: 46). In Jamaica, for instance, only 44 per cent of children felt safe as school and 48 per cent per cent in their community. In Mexico, 28 per cent of respondents reported violent episodes in the family, often linked to alcohol consumption. At the same time, people drew solace and strength from their community relations. Faith in the ability of the state to protect them was not apparent in these communities (*ibid.*).

Given that most of the countries where we worked had been through democratic transitions or, as in the case of Jamaica, had a prior history of electoral politics, it was reasonable to ask why democracy had not reduced or tamed this violence. Also, given the emphasis on security sector reform by external donors since the democratisation processes of the 1980s got underway in the global South, why did our field sites show ever increasing insecurity, often attributable to state as well as non-state armed actors, who offered forms of 'protection' that themselves generated insecurity? It appeared conceivable that the high levels of violence reported in national level statistics might be outcomes of more democracy, rather than aberrations.

At the joint launch of two *IDS Bulletin*s in May 2009 (McGee and Pearce 2009; Luckham *et al.* 2009) on 'Violence, Social Action and Research' and 'Transforming Security and Development in an Unequal World' respectively, we debated these questions in a wider forum. Attention focused on how different understandings, experiences and contexts of violence relate to ongoing debates about the meaning and practice of security; and how security policy and practice might be conceived as enabling of citizen participation rather than about repression and punishment (Abello Colak and Pearce 2009). It became apparent that under regimes of 'security provision' that lacked this approach, violence tended to reproduce itself rather than diminish, with state and other actors playing key roles in that reproduction, albeit in different forms across the case studies. This led us to our two themes, on the interfaces between democracy and violence and security and violence, respectively. Each of these will be explored through the generation of propositions arising from the field work and subsequently refined and revised through the relevant academic literature.

2 Does democracy reduce violence?

VPC research showed that the activities of non-state violent actors can have very direct impacts on the experience and quality of democratic governance. The 'dons' in Kingston, the militias in Rio, the paramilitaries in Medellín (Baird 2009: 76; Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris 2007), acting with state sponsorship or under the state's blind eye, actively intervene in procedural democracy, for example by using real or threatened force in electoral processes in favour of the incumbent government, elected representatives or candidates to election. Research in Jamaica reveals:

> [The donmen] have been used to influence […] constituencies in the voting. They are armed and can be mobilised by political parties and are under the command of an area leader […], armed, monolithic, belonging to one or other party, under the command of a donman.
>
> (Professor Horace Levy, 20 April 2007, authors' interview notes)

Trade-offs between crime protection for the wealthy and human security for the poor appears to be part of the political strategy of parties, politicians and other state actors. The 'garrisons' of inner-city Kingston originate in social housing communities set up by two political parties. Intrinsic to their crime and armed conflict dynamics is their function as electoral constituencies, mobilised by political parties via armed 'area leaders' operating with the complicity of the police, who deliver the inhabitants' votes (Professor Horace Levy 20 April 2007, authors' interview notes). Paramilitary groups in Medellín, Colombia, embedded in communities, wield the threat or exercise of violence as part of a logic of local political control (Baird 2009), in which the state is implicated through its tolerance of – or, as some argue, collusion with – such groups as part of a broader counterinsurgency logic in the country. The role some paramilitary have played in funding candidates of the right at election times brings these dynamics directly into the political sphere (Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris 2007). In the case of Rio de Janeiro's state-sponsored militias, Wheeler observes how the Rio militias use the existing machinery of political clientelism, such as relationships with political parties, and their ability to mediate access to government and infrastructure, as a means for perpetuating their control. The political-territorial dimension of their control is reinforced by the use of visible and physical symbols: they deliberately occupy the physical spaces of governance such as residents' association buildings, and mark their control through a physical presence in the form of patrols, cameras, barriers and wall murals.

Living in the midst of violence transforms citizens' perceptions of their physical and political environment. This takes various forms, but in the long run can weaken commitment to democracy and encourage people to support forms of authority which guarantee stability of sorts, although backed by threat and coercion. When citizens lose faith in the state as a provider of security, contracting privately provided security arrangements and retreating into gated communities is only an option for the middle and wealthy classes (Moncrieffe 2009: 68 on Kingston, Jamaica; Wheeler 2009: 11 on Rio de Janeiro). Poor

and marginalised citizens resort to other coping strategies, various kinds of which were identified in VPC and other DRC research: withdrawal into a truncated form of citizenship; accepting the parallel authority of non-state violent actors; and supporting or even implementing themselves hard-line and authoritarian 'security' policies and actions.

Faced with pervasive danger and the visible and symbolic appropriation of the physical spaces of citizenship by armed actors, citizens in Rio's favelas withdraw from public spaces and from using public facilities, leaving them to the militias and drugs gangs (Wheeler 2005 and 2009). Inner-city residents in Kingston observe limits on physical and social space imposed by the violent actors, which circumscribe their social encounters as well as their movements (Moncrieffe 2008: 17). Cortez Ruiz's research in Mexico attests to the difficulties social organisations experience in trying to increase their effectiveness by working collectively because of intimidation and mutual lack of trust (Cortez Ruiz 2009). Abah and Okwori's research in Nigeria attests to an extreme form of withdrawal into versions of citizenship based on severely truncated spatial and geographical dimensions:

> A new settlement pattern has emerged in Kaduna, Kano and Plateau as a result of the spate of violent eruptions. Some people have moved to enclaves where they feel safer. These are well-known as Muslim or Christian areas and each side is afraid of venturing into 'enemy' territory.
>
> (Abah, Okwori and Olubo 2009: 21)

Elsewhere, rather than withdraw into versions of citizenship that are spatially restricted or qualitatively truncated, people reach and maintain states of co-existence with violent actors and actions. A community organisation in a neighbourhood of Medellín, Colombia, where paramilitaries grew up and went to school with organisation members and are firmly socially embedded, consciously employs a strategy of '*bailándolos*' or 'keeping them sweet' – literally, taking them for a dance (Baird 2009: 74). This consists of maintaining open dialogue with them to help identify possible threats to the organisation's security, while maintaining a critical distance from their paramilitary activities and sometimes denouncing these. Moncrieffe's research on gangs in Kingston reveals a distinction in local perceptions between 'community gangs' and 'criminal gangs'. The former are 'those who want an alternative' and, although known to be armed and involved in petty crime, also 'get involved in defending the community'. As such, they are perceived by some residents as allies against the 'criminal gangs' and by some 'good police' as 'guys [who] are trapped and can be turned round' (Moncrieffe 2008: 40).

'Parallel communities' have emerged in some locations, involving competing forms of governance in voids left by the state but which meet basic and security needs through violent tactics. In these parallel governance structures, the service provision or dispute resolution roles of official governance structures are severely compromised by the violent or insecure context. Citizens turn to any actor who will guarantee a measure of stability, even at the cost of democratic freedoms. Thus insecurity and perverse security provision can enhance demands for authoritarian and hard-line responses, further

weakening democracy building. When the social organisations of townships like Khayelitsha, South Africa, stray beyond peaceful and legal means and express their demands for improved services through violent protest, they enjoy the support of a full quarter of the residents surveyed (Thompson and Nleya 2010).

These observations offer insights into the real scope for people to exercise democratic rights in violent contexts, and into how they perceive and experience democracy and its accessories. They lead to the first proposition.

2.1 Democracy and violence: exploring the interface

Proposition 1: Violence interacts perversely with democratic institutions, eroding their legitimacy and effectiveness. In such contexts, the idea of democracy fails to live up to its promise of replacing the violent resolution of conflict with accommodation and compromise, and thereby reducing violence. Indeed, political representatives themselves make use of state or non-state violence for political and sometimes electoral ends. Democratic process is compromised as citizens react by withdrawing from public spaces and solutions, accepting the parallel authority of non-state armed actors, or supporting hard-line and authoritarian responses in the name of security.

The micro level field research generated a proposition about the macro level interfaces between democracy and violence which, in essence, contests the assumption that the coexistence of violence with democracy is unproblematic. In order to explore this proposition further, we discuss it here in the light of recent academic debates on the relationship between the two.

There has been a resurgence of interest within the academic community in the relationship between democracy and violence in recent years, which has involved a revision of the accepted wisdom that democracy reduces violence and civil war. The 'third wave of democratisation', which was associated with the end of the Cold War, gave rise to optimism and the idea of the 'democratic peace'. This proved to be seriously misplaced. The post Cold War world ushered in brutal internal wars across many parts of the Global South, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, dubbed 'New Wars' (Kaldor 1999) because of their intrastate character, massive human rights violations and connections to organised crime. Though levels of armed conflict have declined, levels of violence remain very high.[5] This section will first of all look at four quantitatively based studies on the relationship between democracy, armed and political violence. It will then widen the discussion to social violences and democracy.

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5   The WHO (2002: 10) put the average rates of violent death in low income countries at 32.1 per 100,000 compared to 14.4 in high income countries.

Disappointment at the failure of democratisation to reduce armed violence led to studies seeking more reliable insights into whether there is such a thing as a 'democratic peace'. Hegre *et al.* (2001) took data from 152 countries over the period 1816 to 1992 to explore whether historical evidence confirms that the process of democratising results in civil peace. They focus on civil war, defined in terms of military action, involvement of the national government, effective resistance (ratio of fatalities of the weaker to the stronger forces) and at least 1,000 battle deaths (*ibid.*: 36), and sought to move beyond the existing body of research which had correlated levels of democracy with internal (armed) conflict. Observing that semi-democracies [6] – those regimes intermediate between democracy and autocracy – have a higher risk of civil conflict than either extreme, they sought to establish whether this observation meant that states in political transition experience more violence; in other words, whether the problem is regime change or level of democracy. They conclude that semi-democracies or intermediate regimes are indeed most prone to civil war, but that the risks diminish as the society moves back or forward to either democracy or autocracy. However, the latter offers increased risks of renewed civil unrest and democracy increases the possibility of stability. The short term effects of democratisation are similar to that for autocratisation, but, the authors argue, (*ibid.*: 43) the long-term effects are different:

> The most reliable path to stable democratic peace in the long run is to democratise as much as possible. A change in that direction ensures the strongest ratchet effect in terms of consolidating political institutions and makes it less likely that the country will slide back into a state in which it is more prone to civil war.

> (*Ibid.*: 44)

Two other quantitative analyses of the relationships between armed conflict, violence and democracy have suggested that the effects of democracy on violence are more complicated, particularly in ethnically divided countries of the global South. Stewart has explored the connection between horizontal inequalities (inequalities in economic, social and political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups – see Stewart 2008: 3) and ethnic and religious armed conflict in a volume of essays dedicated to this theme (Stewart 2008). Østby, in the same volume, focuses on the relationship between horizontal inequalities, conflict and political conditions, that is, the impact of regime type. She uses data on civil conflict in up to 55 developing countries between 1986 and 2003 [7] (Østby 2008). She proposes that 'it is democratic regimes that suffer from the most serious effects of horizontal inequalities' (p 139), and challenges the assumption that democracies are by definition

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6   The idea of 'semi democracy' is not fine-tuned and many authors in the debate on democracy and
     violence tend to rely on the formal procedural qualities of democracy rather than the approach of this
     Working Paper which emphasises the substantive meaning it gives to citizenship and social action.

7   Østby used data from the Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset which includes every armed conflict
     between a state government and an organised opposition group that caused at least 25 battle related
     deaths per year, a much lower threshold than the Hegre *et al.* study, but still focussed on battle related
     deaths, i.e.armed conflict.

more responsive than autocracies to group grievances. While democracies with low horizontal inequalities are the least at risk of conflict, those with high levels of such inequalities are particularly at risk despite democratic rule and political inclusion. Democracies do not by definition satisfy basic needs universally and ensure equity. In a democracy, opportunities and grievances are both present. Although it is claimed that democracies offer peaceful mechanisms through which to influence public policy, Østby suggests that if these do not then reduce the gap between the expected and actual outcomes for the relatively disadvantaged group, the outcome may be greater frustration and conflict.

Therefore, the violence potential of socioeconomic horizontal inequalities may be stronger for democracies and semi-democracies than for autocracies, it is argued. This enables us to ask questions about the high levels of violence which have accompanied elections in some parts of the global South around ethnic divisions. In 2007 electoral violence hit the headlines in Nigeria and Kenya. It appears that groups with a strong sense of grievances may be 'willing to accept democratic institutions in principle', but 'not be willing to accept the transfer of power that is involved' (Østby 2008: 140). Stewart *et al.* in the same volume conclude their analysis of the political dimensions of horizontal in equalities in relationship to violence risks by pointing to the design of the electoral system and rules of political competition, the composition of the executive and the way decisions are taken, the decentralisation process and employment policies toward the bureaucracy, the police and the army (Stewart *et al.* 2008: 306). They also include the issue of citizenship, drawing on an essay in the same volume (Gibney 2008) which argues that as citizenship confers control over key social, economic and political goods, its distribution and meaning will be very pertinent to the discussion of horizontal inequalities and the propensity for violence and armed conflict. In other words, the character of the state and the meaning of citizenship, in addition to regime form, are highly significant to the discussion of violence and armed conflict, seen through the lens of horizontal inequalities analysis.

Collier's (2009) discussion of democracy and violence is also statistically based, focused on the 'bottom billion', those people living in the poorest countries in the world. Collier argues that there are two basic reasons why political violence should decline with democracy: accountability and legitimacy. Governments in democratic environments should be driven to perform better for ordinary citizens because of the electoral imperative. Democracies therefore improve government performance and thus reduce the sources of grievance which can generate anti-government violence. In a democracy, citizens agree to some basic rules around the right to a mandate for a democratically elected government; opposition to those rules cannot legitimately extend to the use of violence. Collier set out to test these arguments using data for most countries in the world since 1960, taking a broader view of political violence than armed conflict, and including assassinations, riots and guerrilla activity as well as civil war. He found that democracy reduced the risk of political violence in middle-income countries, but significantly increased it in countries with per capita incomes below USD 2,700, or USD 7 per person per day.

In these poorest countries, argues Collier, the logic of accountability and legitimacy do not work in the same way as in wealthier countries. Amongst the

factors he identifies are the information flows: voters cannot always assess responsibility for economic crisis, which quite often is due to international market factors such as commodity price crashes rather than government performance *per se*. Secondly, Collier cites the tendency to vote according to ethnic loyalty as a particular limitation on the fulfilment of democratic potential which remains common across the 'bottom billion'. As votes become 'simply frozen in blocs of rival identities' (*ibid.*: 27), they lack sensitivity to government performance. Collier gives the example of Kenya, whose election in 2007 was marred by the deaths of some 1,000 Kenyans in ethnic violence. The Kenyan economy had previously been enjoying the fastest growth for two decades, and this had benefited not only the Kikuyu in power, but also the Luo in opposition, However, there was no way the latter were going to vote for Kibaki, the candidate of the Kikuyu. Such factors also encourage the government to reward their loyal, ethnic followers rather than govern for everyone, thus also undermining the idea of the state as provider of public goods and encouraging corruption.

The literature we have reviewed so far draws our attention to weaknesses in democracy, particularly in ethnically diverse societies, in guaranteeing civil peace. The argument that such peace is more likely the more established the democracy, and that autocracies are less likely to guarantee long term peace, is still on the table. Collier looks at societies where democracy does not go much further than elections: the story is more positive where there are real checks and balances in place (*ibid.*: 44). He finds that not only have elections hindered economic reform processes, they have given positive incentives to bad government. His conclusion is stark: 'Democracy, at least in the form it has usually taken to date in the societies of the bottom billion, does not seem to enhance the prospects of internal peace. On the contrary, it seems to increase proneness to political violence. Probably related to this failure to secure social peace, democracy has not yet produced accountable and therefore legitimate government' (*ibid.*: 49).

The weight given to ethnic identity in this argument echoes the sentiment of Michael Mann that ethnic conflict is the 'dark side of democracy' (Mann 2005). Mann maintains that democracies harbour the risk that majorities will tyrannise minorities, a danger exacerbated when demos is conflated with ethnos. Of course, there are counter arguments which suggest that there are many triggers to such dangers which do not reside in some essentialist character of ethnic loyalty (Turton 1997), and indeed trace some of the problem to the conscious manipulation and politicisation of those loyalties by colonial powers and political leaders. But the debate highlights the ongoing tensions between different notions of democracy and citizenship and whether in practice democracy encourages real power-sharing between people of different identities, beliefs and values. Where it does not, the likelihood of violence is greater.

To fully grasp the implications of these insights, we need to return to the question of definitions of violence. Hegre *et al.* (2001) and Stewart (2008) focus on armed violence, while Collier (2009) broadens this somewhat to political violence. However, the VPC research was concerned with much wider manifestations of everyday violence, and in particular the recurring and

reproducing forms of social violence. While Hegre *et al.* use 'domestic violence' – rather unconventionally – to refer to internal war, the VPC group sought greater terminological precision, putting 'violence' into the foreground of the analysis rather than 'war'. For the VPC, internal violences encompass both war related deaths but also non war related deaths, and the latter includes high levels of violence in interpersonal and intimate socialisation spaces as well as those of community and neighbourhood, including school, prisons and other socialisation spaces where violence can easily become embedded and even chronic.

The case for wider definition is twofold. Firstly, we would argue that the reproductive qualities of violence can only be fully understood by taking into account the multiple forms of violence and the differential social impacts. Secondly, because these other forms of violence in fact account for many more deaths than conflict related violences. The Global Burden of Armed Violence report (Geneva Declaration 2008) has produced the most systematic overview of this yet. Their statistics show that over 740,000 have died every year directly or indirectly from armed violence in recent years, both conflict related and non conflict related. 540,000 of these have been violent deaths, while others have been the victims of the indirect impact of wars on civilians, such as malnutrition, dysentery and other illnesses.[8] Between 2004 and 2007, 'only' 52,000 of the 540,000 violent deaths were conflict related. This is a conservative estimate as these are the recorded figures, but as the authors conclude, it is clear that the overwhelming source of violent death in the world is not armed conflict (*ibid.*: 2). The authors' definition of violence ranges from large-scale war-related violence through inter-communal and collective violence, organised criminal and economically motivated violence, political violence by groups and individuals competing for power, to inter-personal and gender-based violence.[9] The authors calculate that the annual cost of violence in non-conflict settings due to violent deaths and in terms of lost productivity is US$95 billion, but may rise to US$163 billion or 0.14 per cent of annual global GDP (*ibid.*). These figures do not include the impact of injuries and psychological trauma on individuals caught up in the midst of these violences.

If we compare Collier's 'bottom billion' with country-level homicide figures, then it becomes apparent that a focus on the 'bottom billion' does not lead to a full appreciation of the dimensions of violence facing humanity and particularly that part of humanity living in the global South. Firstly, figures for homicidal violence are high in most of the selected 'bottom billion' countries, suggesting that not just political violence but social violence is pervasive there. Secondly, violence

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8   This corresponds to some extent to definitions of structural violence, i.e. avoidable and premature deaths due to the embedded inequalities and lack of public prioritisation in a given society. However, these deaths occur outside as well as inside war situations.

9   The broad definition of violence used by the authors is 'The intentional use of force (actual or threatened), with arms or explosives, against a person or group that undermines people-centred security and/or sustainable development' (Geneva Declaration 2008: 2). This definition combines components of direct physical, cultural and structural violence, which were included with different emphases in the VPC research.

is pervasive not only in 'bottom billion' countries. Table 2.1 compares levels of social violence (measured in terms of homicides) in selected 'bottom billion' countries with data for the middle-income countries where VPC research was conducted. The middle-income countries exhibit high levels of violence. Some of them have emerged from (Guatemala and Sri Lanka) or are in the midst of (Colombia) civil war, others not. All of them are considered democracies.

Much of the violence is accounted for by the spread of drugs trafficking and other illicit activities, which have a great deal to do with failures in economic policy and the provision of jobs and services in the poorest areas of rapidly urbanising societies. Drug-trafficking makes available the means (i.e. guns) for violent expressions of such grievances, and accounts for high levels of violence in struggles over turf and drug-trafficking corridors. However, explanations are still needed for why it has had such deep effects in certain social locations, drawing in poor and frustrated young men attracted by the possibilities of quick riches and status. There is also a connection between the higher-income, drug-producing and -trafficking and violent societies and Collier's 'bottom billions', some of which cocaine traffickers from Colombia have turned into platforms for drug exports, notably parts of West Africa. In turn, these connections have huge impacts on the consumer, importing, high-income countries, where gun crime and violence in poor and socially deprived enclaves of big cities is closely associated with the drug trade.

In other words, we cannot see violence only in terms of armed and political violence concentrated in the war-torn impoverished countries of the global South. Social violence is very high in relatively wealthy (lower middle/middle income), highly unequal but 'democratic' countries of the global South. Its reproduction through security policies implemented by state and non-state actors, often in the name of a war on drugs and illicit crime, has global, if differential, repercussions on violence and social problems in the low- and high-income countries of the world.

War histories and authoritarian or dictatorial legacies are part of the explanation for the high levels of social violence in these wealthier countries of the global South. In countries recovering from civil war, the connections between civil- war-related violence and non-civil-war-related violences are strong (Moser and McIlwaine 2001). The legacy of violence will not necessarily be halted by a negotiated agreement or pact between previous combatants. In fact, the converse is likely to take place. Living with protracted everyday violence in multiple forms has profound impacts on the fabric of society as well as individual life stories, with strong potential for intergenerational transmissions of violence through gendered socialisation processes (Pearce 2007). Young men are often encouraged to interpret their identity as males in terms of their willingness to use violence, as is clear from powerful evidence of the role of young men as both perpetrators and victims. Worldwide, the perpetration of homicide is highest among males aged 15–29 years (19.4 per 100 000), followed closely by males aged 30–44 years (18.7 per 100 000) (WHO 2002: 10).These tendencies are not transformed overnight. In addition, protracted armed conflicts have deep impacts within state institutions and on state actors and leave fertile ground for the criminal activities which often

Table 2.1 Non-war violence: homicide levels in selected 'bottom billion' countries and lower-middle/middle-income VPC research countries [10]

Country	GDP per capita IS$	Intentional homicide rate per 100,000 population Low estimate/ high estimate
Afghanistan	366	5.2/36.0
Bolivia	1,720	3.7/5.3
Cambodia	711	3.7/18.5
Chad	770	19.0
Cote d'Ivoire	1,137	45.7
Democratic Republic of the Congo	182	35,2
Eritrea	336	15.9
Guinea	386	17.3
Kenya	783	6.7/20.8
Nigeria	1,370	1.8/17.7
South Africa	5,678	39.5/69.0
Jamaica	5,438	33.7/55.2
El Salvador	3,605	56.4/57.5
Mexico	10,232	10.9/11.3
Brazil	8,205	26.2/30.8
Colombia	5,416	45.5/61.1
Sri Lanka	2,013	6.9/7.2

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2008. The first ten countries are from Collier's (2009: 238) list of 58 bottom billion countries. The rest are seven of the eight middle income countries which were included in the VPC research (Nigeria, the eighth, is in the bottom billion).

10 These UNODC data are compiled from several datasets, hence there is a 'low' and a 'high' estimate. UNODC does not include deaths from armed conflict where killings are committed by more or less cohesive groups of up to several hundred rather than by individuals or small groups. It does include domestic disputes that end in a killing, interpersonal violence, violent conflicts over land resources, violence between gangs over turf or control, and predatory violence and killing by armed groups. Homicide statistics are recognised as a fairly robust indicator of high levels of other forms of violence (Elsner 2008). GDP per capita figures are taken from http://data.worldbank.org/ indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD (accessed 15 December 2010)

flourish in such contexts. This is also true of countries emerging from various-forms of authoritarianism and institutionalised violence (e.g.state generated human rights abuses). Norstrum (2004) has looked at these 'shadows of war', and argues in relationship to post-apartheid South Africa:

> It's very hard to define the complex relations of a society or state that is technically at peace (by virtue of a formal settlement) while still operating through war-forged institutions (by virtue of practicalities instituted in conflict that have remained unchanged). Yet in these transitional times, we can uncover answers as to why war-style human rights violations continue after a war has ended, and why civil violence and organized crime frequently skyrocket with the signing of a peace accord or a widely supported political transitions. In these conditions the complexities of power become apparent, as old and new forms of authority coalesce into hybrid and unexpected forms of governance.

> (2004: 145)

Norstrum quotes from Brandon Hamber, who took his studies of violence and political transition in South Africa to Brazil and concluded starkly 'New forms of violence follow the move to democracy' (*ibid.* 2004: 152). Such a proposition has also been argued in relationship to Russia (Pridemore and Kim 2006), a case which further strains the assumption about the relationship between violence and democracy. The authors concede that the transition in Russia was weak in a number of measures of democratisation, but the general trend was towards political competition, moral individualism and the free market. They test Durkheim's hypothesis that acute political crisis results in increased homicide rates because it threatens previous shared sentiments and collective norms. The Russian homicide rate more than tripled between 1988 and 1994, and even though it decreased afterwards, it was still twice as high in 2000 as a decade earlier. In their statistical analysis at national and regional level, the authors control for other factors which might influence the homicide rate, such as socio-economic factors and alcohol consumption in order to isolate the effects of political change. While this study does not precisely confirm Hamber's assertion, it does suggest that rapid transitions can generate increased social violence in certain cultural contexts, in particular where previous collective social norms and traditions have been violently disrupted.

While this Working Paper focuses on the global South rather than Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Pridemore and Kim's argument resonates with the fate of parts of the global South, which were encouraged to make rapid political as well as economic transitions in the 1980s and onwards. This combination of transitions and the disruptions to communal ways of life and of generating the means to life, may well explain something of the high levels of violence recorded in some parts of the global South.[11] It also draws attention to the impact of war on population displacement and movement, which involves

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11 It has also been argued, drawing again on Durkheim, that the liberation of collective bonds ultimately leads to declines in homicide rates (Elsner 2001: 632).

dramatic and traumatic shifts in ways of life and the values they give rise to and reflect. These ideas all strengthen the propositions about the 'danger zone' of intermediate states of democratic transition (semi-democracy) even in lower-middle to middle-income countries.

Again we return to the question of definitions, this time of democracy. The extent to which violence might escalate or at least not diminish much in democratic contexts, depends on assumptions about democracy. Collier emphasises that inclusive elections can actually contribute to violence. What happens if one extends the understanding of democracy beyond procedural components, such as free and fair elections, to its full meaning and potential? Karstedt (2006) has explored some of the sociological changes which underpin and are in turn fostered by democratic political orders compared with autocratic ones, seeking to identify generic features of democratic societies which contribute to relatively low levels of violence and features that increase violence. She stresses the non-state and non-institutional features of democracy and autocracy, that is, the social mechanisms, values and practices. She does not limit herself to the global South. Her understanding of democracy is that it is fundamentally a project of inclusion. (*ibid.*: 57), something that inevitably gives rise to tensions between the goal of social integration and the recognition and even encouragement of individual choice and autonomy. She concludes that:

> Democracies have a potential for waves of violence, or even continuously high levels of violence, if the built-in tensions of the liberal inclusionary project reach temporarily or continuously high levels.

> (*Ibid.*: 60)

This echoes the conclusion of Østby (2008: 155) with respect to democracy, violence and horizontal inequalities: 'countries with sharp socioeconomic horizontal inequalities, despite democratic rule and a seemingly politically inclusive system, may be particularly at risk of conflict'. Other evidence shows that inequalities of all kinds correlate strongly with violent crime (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). The combination of increased individualisation and expectations within democratic societies on the one hand, and the frustration of these by unequal social structures and opportunities on the other, appears to generate increased levels of violence in the global North as well as the South. This is further exacerbated when the model of liberal inclusion is challenged by systematic ethnicised discrimination. But even in consolidated and advanced democracies, where liberal inclusion is only practiced in terms of formal political rights rather than substantive social and economic ones, levels of violence can rise. Karstedt adds the point that this can be intensified when the process of commodification through market individualism is not 'counter-balanced by values of the common good and civic attitudes' (*ibid.*: 60).

A final study which deserves more attention than can be given here, is that by North, Wallis and Weingast on *Violence and Social Orders* (North *et al.* 2009). This volume puts violence at the centre of the analysis, in this case as part of an ambitious historical review of how societies confront the problem of violence, and raises deep issues of definition too, this time of 'state' and

'society'. Their questions go to the heart of those coming out of the VPC micro level research. By what logics do social orders emerge to contain violence? By discussing 'social orders' rather than regime form, they effectively pose a range of distinct questions about the various ways in which violence is contained or not contained in any given society. The authors understand social orders as the patterns of social organisation which 'simultaneously give individuals control over resources and social functions and, by doing so, limit the use of violence by shaping the incentives faced by individuals and groups who have access to violence' (p xi). They describe 'natural states', where a dominant coalition of elites protect each other's privileges and access to resources, while building incentives for elite cooperation, for example to safeguard their rents from the impacts of ongoing violence. These can be relatively stable but not static states, and occur in a variety of modes (*ibid.*: 21). The authors explore potential transitions from fragile to mature natural states. Of particular interest in this book is that the authors do not assume a 'single actor' model of the state, so that, instead, shifting elite alliances can be identified as the incentives to refrain from violence emerge. Amongst these elites are violence specialists, leaders of organisations which remain able and willing to use violence and transform themselves into institutions that serve not society as a whole, but elites, who might cooperate but also fall apart at given moments. The authors argue that 85 per cent of the world's population and 175 countries live in varied forms of 'natural states' (*ibid.*). By contrast, 'open access states' control violence through a different logic, constructing powerful military and police bodies which serve the political system and use deterrence and punishment. In other words, formal institutions control violence via their capacity to enforce rules impersonally (*ibid.*: 16). This North et al. approach encourages us to look at the elite coalitions and pacts which lie behind the approach to violence in any given society, rather than the existence or not of procedural forms of democracy.

How then do we answer our question, does democracy reduce violence? North, Wallis and Weingast suggest that perhaps this was never the right question in the first place. At the very least, the answer is such a highly qualified 'yes' that we do better to pose another much more open question: what are the social conditions and political arrangements which contribute to the reduction of violence? We must include not just war related armed violence but wider measures of violence, which actually account for most violence in the world. There are clearly added difficulties when democratisation is taking place after war and prolonged periods of authoritarian government. These legacies limit the impact of democratic change on violence reduction and can even fuel new forms of social violence. The inequalities associated with ethnic and other group fragmentations are another significant variable. Elections are not enough and can in fact be violence-inducing; wider institutional arrangements and checks and balances are required as well as attention to the distribution and meaning of citizenship. But finally, even in polities with fairly stable democratic arrangements, and including so-called advanced democracies, violence remains an actual and potential risk where individualisation (both economically and socially driven) generates ruptures in previous social bonds without countervailing efforts to build common civil bonds, and/or where inequalities in

group and individual opportunities remain high. If we take the North *et al.* approach, we might shift the question entirely. Rather than regime form, we might explore the agreements made between the powerful in any given society and whether such agreements lead to states where the rule of law is valued or where violence is merely contained through relatively fragile, transient elite pacts. This approach is consistent with the findings of the VPC that despite democratic institutions, violence remains an embedded form of human interaction, in particular for the most marginal citizens but also – if not always overtly – for the elites which control the polity. The rule of law and the impersonal, rule-based use of violence are not priorities for elite coalitions bent on managing their own competition and guaranteeing their rents.

These qualifications to our question are highly significant and raise important issues about the formation and building of states and about the prospects for meaningful democracy in contexts of high levels of violence, which is constantly reproduced and diffused particularly amongst the poorest. Security arrangements are an important measure of how the state responds to these persistent violences and whether they are contributing to this reproduction and diffusion. The next section explores some of the dilemmas around security provision in some of the most violent 'democracies' in the world where the VPC conducted its field research, and generates the second proposition to be explored through the academic literature.

3 Do security policies and practices reduce violence and deepen democracy?

Our VPC field research revealed that security provision is protecting the interests of some sectors of the population against violence by using violence against other sectors, or by exercising active complicity or passive tolerance of other non-state actors who do so. This dynamic is evidently linked to political processes and contributes to shaping the nature of the state.

Across a range of contexts, the state's security forces are seen to protect the interests of the government itself, or of transnational or local private capital allied to the state, rather than the public, especially the low-income or socially marginalised public. The highest-profile case of this covered by DRC research is the Nigerian Federation and certain States prioritising the protection of transnational oil exploitation operations in the Delta region of Nigeria over and above citizens' protection and their basic welfare needs (Osaghae 2010; Abah and Okwori 2006). Here zero-tolerance state protection of the oil industry against vigilantism is seen to exacerbate sectarian tensions between citizens. A variant closer to vigilantism is the Niger Delta militias, who quickly abandon their discourse of representing citizens' interests against predatory foreign capital and become self-serving pariahs (Abah and Okwori 2006). A lower-profile example of the same phenomenon is the case of alliances formed

between state actors and local urban developers to harass and ultimately dislodge slum-dwellers in Bangladesh (Kabeer and Haq Kabir 2009).

In inner-city Kingston, Jamaica, the police, far from investigating and addressing crime, are reported to act as 'gangstas' or hired guns for those with grudges against their neighbours (Moncrieffe 2008: 34). In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as a historical legacy of the social positioning and methods of the police under the twentieth century military dictatorships, many police 'have not made the transition from protecting the state, as was their role in the time of dictatorship, to protecting its citizenry, and especially its low-income citizenry, who continue to be treated as the enemy, as was the left during the military regime' (Leeds 2007: 28).

In many of the settings researched, insecurity relating to state action or inaction is occurring in a context of increasing privatisation of security. This is part of the global tendency summed up by Luckham in which the state shares the control of force with 'a very diverse range of 'non-state actors': private security firms, mercenaries, militias, self-defence forces, vigilantes and even criminal mafias' (Luckham 2009: 7). While the tendency responds to many and complex global, national and local dynamics (Abello Colak and Pearce 2009), abuses by state security forces such as those cited above contribute to the acceptance and social legitimacy of vigilantes, paramilitaries, militias and gangs. 'Security' functions may be delegated, officially or extra-officially, by state to non-state actors, who may be legal or illegal; or they may be taken up by non-state actors, operating in a vacuum where effective state action is not forthcoming. These settings are thus characterised by uneasy mixtures of forms of security provision and a fluidity of actors' positioning within them.

To take the highly illustrative case of Rio de Janeiro, in 2005 groups of men armed with police equipment began to invade and take control over *favelas*, expelling or killing those associated with the drug trafficking factions, and suppressing open drug trade. These militias, as the media have labelled them, are composed of a mixture of off-duty, retired, or suspended military and civil police officers, prison guards and firemen. Within two years of taking over the first *favela*, the militias controlled 171 communities across the city (Wheeler 2009: 11). The militias pose an awkward problem for the city and state governments, charged with the responsibility for public safety. On one level, the militias appeal to the reactionary and politically powerful elements of society that believe that more repressive policies are needed to halt the violence spreading from the *favelas* to the rest of the city. On the other hand, the militias are not under the control of the government and are testament to the lack of accountability and corruption within the existing police and security forces. The authority of some militias is increasing within favelas due to the way that the militias use violence strategically to repress the drug trade. Other uses of violence can detract from this authority. Their connections with the police and the state also enhance their authority, as they are perceived as implicitly sanctioned by the state. Their efforts to take control over existing patronage systems, government benefits and other community-based organisations are tactics employed to bolster their legitimacy and their control. Militia leaders employ a discourse of providing social benefits and of non-violence as a

means of building legitimacy more broadly, but in practice their perceived or ascribed legitimacy relates to public security. 'We are the legitimate community leaders here – we are putting the residents' association to rights, we are organising things, because before there was a connection between the [community] association and the traffickers' (Wheeler, interview notes, Rio de Janeiro, 14 December 2006).

In the township of Khayelitsha, South Africa, street committees that form to address legitimate basic needs such as public service provision are prompted by the lack of effective state crime prevention policies to stray into the realm of extra-legal 'security' provision, to some residents' relief and others' disapproval (Thompson and Nleya 2010).

DRC research which captured soaring levels of crime and fear in the township of Khayelitsha, South Africa, did so against a backdrop of the Security Minister declaring that citizens unhappy with the country's security and crime situation '[…] can continue to whinge until they're blue in the face […] or they can simply leave this country' (News24.com cited in Thompson and Nleya 2010). The priority Khayelitsha residents give to crime debunks the prevalent narrative that the social outcry over crime emanates from disaffected whites, rehearsed here by the Security Minister. His statement can be read as the ultimate dereliction of the state's duty to protect, instead asserting that citizens who feel un-protected should stop being citizens, by going elsewhere.

Analysts of violence have noted how state violence and tolerance of violence, even when exercised in the name of security provision, tend to give rise to mimetic forms of violence between citizens at many levels and in multiple spaces of socialisation (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 1). Given the prevalence of state violence or state-tolerated violence in all these contexts, the generation of mimetic violence between citizens appears to be a further way in which state action or inaction on violence reproduces rather than limits it. In turn, this has serious implications for the exercise of meaningful citizenship. DRC research has captured multiple instances of violence wielded by some people against others in very diverse social settings. In some, the victims are those perceived as outsiders or Others, for instance xenophobic attacks against immigrant labourers in South Africa (Robins and Colvin 2010) and mob violence between Christian and Muslim youths in Kaduna, northern Nigeria (Harris 2009). In others, they are subordinates in gendered power relationships within the household, for instance in urban El Salvador (Hume 2009), rural Mexico (Cortez Ruiz 2009) and Bangladesh (Kabeer, Huq and Haq Kabir 2009; Huq 2005).

The gendered dimensions of the violent reproducing qualities of security provision in the research sites are striking. Gender-based violence within the home is an area on which many states have historically limited their own jurisdiction or claimed that they have no effective influence. Across the VPC and DRC research, gender based violence remains extremely high at the same time as ignored by state security forces. Attempts by women victims in Bangladesh to access justice or safety are met with state impunity (Kabeer, Huq and Haq Kabir 2009). In El Salvador, the impunity is compounded when state security actors respond to women victims' pursuit of justice by appealing

to idealised gender roles and family models, to dissuade the women from pursuing their claims against the 'father of their children' (Hume 2009). There is evidence of security forces encouraging the 'male warrior' ideal as part of their security strategy: for instance, the Kingston police are reported to suggest self-protective action to male youths who report violent incidents, by appealing to macho self-images (Moncrieffe 2008: 34).

These examples illustrate the way violence is reproduced through state security provision in the contexts where we carried out field research, and the effects this can have on community, social and political life at the local level. They lead us to our second proposition.

3.1 Security and violence: exploring the interface

Proposition 2: Security provision is not making people feel more secure. State responses to growing levels of violence involve strengthening state and non-state security actors committed to the reproduction of violence, affecting disproportionately the poorest communities.

The provision of security and the legitimate monopoly of violence are two vital components of state formation and building processes. Collier considers that security alongside accountability is essential to a country's development, and societies of the 'bottom billion' have been unable to supply either (Collier 2009: 189). However, although Collier would undoubtedly argue that their high levels of poverty and low growth make them the most important cases to focus on round the world, it is not only the 'bottom billion' that are facing serious problems with respect to these two key components of democratic development. Many middle income countries are facing serious problems with respect to both security and accountability. In such countries, higher average per capita incomes mask high levels of inequality which shape the way security is provided and to whom, the character of participation in politics and hence the political accountability dimension, and ultimately the nature of the state and citizenship.

As highlighted by VPC research, once the state loses or relinquishes its monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, a range of implications for everyday democratic citizenship ensue. 'Partial policing' and the privatisation of the security function affect democratic citizenship on several levels. If the state's performance is looked at from the point of view of the security of ordinary citizens, its interventions in the name of security are often responsible for heightening insecurity. Unaccountable security and police actors, when not themselves committing violent acts and crimes against citizens as in Rio, or directly exacerbating violent outbreaks between different groups of citizens as in the Niger Delta, are condoning violent reprisals as in Kingston, or normalising gender-based violence, as in Bangladesh. The neglect of the civil dimensions of democratisation lead Caldeira and Holsten to argue in respect of the Brazilian democratic transition that:

> Although […] political institutions democratize with considerable success, and although they promulgate constitutions and legal codes based on the rule of law and democratic values, the civil component of citizenship remains seriously impaired as citizens suffer systematic violation of their rights […]. Narrowly political definitions of democracy – those that ignore the civil component of citizenship and its constituent elements of justice and law in the real lives of citizens and states – overlook these dilemmas.
>
> (Caldeira and Holsten 1999: 692)

The authors conclude that the form of democracy which emerged from this is 'disjunctive'.

Recent research as part of the Afrobarometer has measured the relationship between public safety and the experience of crime and attitudes towards democracy through national opinion surveys (Fernandez and Kuenzi 2006). Between 2000 and 2003, overall satisfaction with democracy in Nigeria fell from 85 to 34 per cent. Fernandez and Kuenzi find that perceptions about the government's performance in relation to crime reduction have a major impact on their overall satisfaction levels with democracy:

> it appears that […] Nigerians' attitudes toward democracy are not so much affected by objective conditions as by perceptions of government performance. It is the perceived capacity of government to bring down crime rates that appears to drive attitudes toward democracy, not personal experience with crime.
>
> (*ibid.*: 12)

Even if people have not directly suffered from crime, their perception of whether the government is able to respond to crime and guarantee security is central to their confidence in democracy.

We want to explore the possibility that it is not just the failure of the provision of security as a public good, as in Collier's argument, but that the problem is the particular kind of security provision. Rather than a public good, such provision has, in the contexts of VPC research at least, been aimed at protecting and promoting partial interests, those essentially of the elite groups who control or benefit directly from the state. This conclusion is somewhat consistent with the above-cited arguments of North *et al.* according to which the social orders concerned have protected the exclusionary interests of elite coalitions rather than establishing legitimate violence-reducing mechanisms which benefit all.

The VPC contexts of high levels of horizontal and other inequalities, some in the midst of civil war or recovery from civil war, all raise serious questions about the driving force behind state security policies. As described earlier, in our field research we observed perverse relationships between state and non state armed actors to the detriment of democratic process. As violence erupted in Kingston, Jamaica in mid-2010, it was reported that the drug trafficker, 'Dudus' Coke, whose extradition provoked the armed violence between the security forces and the trafficker's followers, was known as the 'president' in

the poor communities he controlled. The poor, it was reported, defended the man who essentially governed them. He in turn was known to have close connections with politicians, including the Prime Minister whose constituency the trafficker controlled. A Guardian newspaper article quoted a woman who had marched in support of Coke: ' "Dudus has been good to us," says Margaret, who will not give her second name for fear of reprisals. "He look after us. Everyone. He is the government here (in Tivoli Gardens) because the government don't care about us, the poor. The government betrayed him"' (McGreal: 2010).

There is a lot of evidence from other sources that current security approaches in many parts of the global South do not work for the people who experience insecurity most intensely, and that this encourages them to turn to various forms of coercive authority for order. These are commonly the poorest, who cannot afford private security provision and must depend on ill-funded and often corrupt and abusive public security delivered through non-state armed actors, in some cases contracted by the state. Where they are not state-contracted, the state often turns a blind eye to their activities unless provoked or pushed to act, such as in the case of the Jamaican drug lord when the US pressed the government to extradite the individual.

Other academic case studies support this argument, such as a study of the Bakassi boys and vigilantism in Nigeria (Smith 2004). This anthropological study explored the relationship between the state and these vigilante groups which by 2000 operated in several cities in south-eastern Nigeria, and which gained the support of local politicians because of their popularity amongst people for the instant justice they meted out to suspected criminals. Echoing our own approach, Smith argues:

> […] the popularity of violent vigilantism in Nigeria must be understood as part of a complex intertwining of peoples' experiences of everyday violence and the particular political structures and symbolic systems that both produce this violence and provide the means to interpret it… it is necessary to see this popularity as an act of political imagination – one that simultaneously drew on the realities of everyday political violence that underlie inequality in Nigeria while also distancing people from them…understanding the complex confluence of political processes, symbolic meanings, and everyday experience that can make some forms of violence popular offers the best hope for constructing alternatives.

> (*ibid*.: 449)

In the VPC research, we focussed a great deal on working with people who are deeply troubled by the violence of their neighbourhood, using the DRC's 'seeing like a citizen' approach. However, in the absence of security which enables them to act as citizens, it was clear that many had come to accept the security imposed by violent state and non state actors. Security provision, it increasingly appears in these contexts, is extending the acceptance and use of unlawful violence in the name of security provision. It is this process which leads us to question whether the Weberian definition of the state is still relevant to these contexts today.

4 Conclusion

The VPC research focussed on everyday violences, but discovered that we could not make sense of them in isolation from the political and security environment provided by the state. Our research group worked initially in relatively established democracies (Jamaica) and those who have made transitions from authoritarian or single party regimes over the last two decades.(Nigeria, Mexico, Brazil). The categories used here are the established contemporary categorisations of political regimes, but they are strongly contested by our findings. For our VPC publication on researching violence (McGee and Pearce 2009), we incorporated other scholars, some working in similar contexts (South Africa), and others in war-torn or war-recovering countries (El Salvador, Sri Lanka and Colombia). All these cases are lower-middle to middle-income countries. All have high levels of violence of different kinds and security practices which appeared to be fostering violence rather than diminishing it. Hence our exploration here of the relationship between violence, security and democracy.

Recent research has already questioned the notion that democracy reduces violence, particularly in the poorest countries and where horizontal inequalities are entrenched. We have sought to broaden the argument. Violence persists in democratic contexts, even as countries move out of so-called transition phases. Regime form *per se*, especially when defined without reference to the substantive and meaningful exercise of citizenship, does not enable us to understand the logic of violence reproduction which we observed. We would argue that in some contexts, the security policies aiming to address persistent violences often perversely encourage them, and stunt the democratic components of the polity, without necessarily implying a reversion to autocracy. Democratic regime forms can co-exist with high levels of violence, and security provision can perpetuate the latter rather than providing the conditions for the former to develop. The risks of ongoing violence are true not only for the poorest and war-torn countries of the world, concentrated in Africa, but also for lower-middle to middle-income countries, where high levels of violence point not merely to criminality and illicit activities but to some deep problems in the interfaces between violence, security and democracy.

We contend that these problems reflect substantive challenges to the way state formation and state-building processes have been traditionally understood and how they are playing out in the world today. The VPC research suggests that in some contexts today, the assumption of benign patterns of interaction between violence, democracy and security needs to be rethought. Even in some middle-income countries, the perverse interfaces between democracy, security and violence are distorting the very logic of state formation and state building as hitherto understood and hence the environment in which citizenship is exercised. The notion – and emerging evidence – that elites can form coalitions even in apparently democratic regimes, which then fail to legitimately mono-polise violence over the territory, suggests that we cannot view states as travelling on some inevitable trajectory towards a Weberian norm (Pearce 2010).

One outcome is that citizens commit themselves less and less to the idea of the rule of law, which in practice offers little protection, and search for their own security provision. The state's legitimacy as a political and social authority is progressively weakened and the idea of democracy loses its appeal as a political ideal. Non-state actors using force, whether contracted by the state or autonomous or antagonistic to it, acquire an authority that is incompatible with the exercise of democratic citizenship by all, and particularly by poor and marginalised citizens who remain vulnerable to the inadequacies of publicly provided security and the unaccountable actions of non-state armed actors.

We hope to have made a compelling argument about the perverse interfaces between violence, security and democracy, and to have linked violence in a counter-intuitive and counter-theoretical way with both security provision and democratic state formation. Our conclusions point to the need for further research, and in a different epistemological, methodological and analytical mould from most existing research on the nature of democracy and processes of democratisation.

VPC and DRC research has shed some light on the gamut of strategies citizens adopt to cope with situations of violence and with their states' responses to these. The strategies range from making do via self-protection and self-censorship, through enlisting in other actors' projects of alternative 'security', to outright rejections of the democratic nation-state project of which they find themselves part. These strategies can be divided into those which constitute constrained forms of citizenship, and those which constitute struggles for 'alternative' citizenships beyond the confines of conventional or legal channels. Both these kinds of strategy warrant more study, undertaken from 'citizen' vantage-points. We need to rethink our categories and assumptions, rather than try to fit the awkward facts into existing categories. Seeing violence as citizens do enables us to see how neither democracy nor security thinking are tackling one of the major constraints to human development of our time.

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