Introduction: security in the vernacular and peacebuilding at the margins; rethinking violence reduction

Jeremy Lind & Robin Luckham

Published online: 22 Feb 2017.

Submit your article to this journal ⬚

Article views: 863

View related articles ⬚

View Crossmark data ⬚

Citing articles: 1 View citing articles ⬚

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS · Check for updates

Introduction: security in the vernacular and peacebuilding at the margins; rethinking violence reduction

Jeremy Lind and Robin Luckham

Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK

ABSTRACT

This article introduces a *Peacebuilding* special issue on rethinking security, peacebuilding and violence reduction in the light of Sustainable Development Goal 16 on 'promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development'. The special issue presents new analysis and case studies, which aim to challenge and refresh the established policy consensus around violence reduction and security. They are distinctive in focusing upon the vernacular or local understandings of those at the receiving end of direct and structural violence; and in analysing the insurgent margins where violence and insecurity are most concentrated.

Introduction

Reducing armed violence and ensuring security have emerged as major areas of development policy and programming over the past two decades. Yet since the end of the cold war overall violence has been on a long-term downward trend, despite localised pockets of acute conflict as well as the present escalation of political violence in the Middle East and North Africa. The emergence of violence reduction as a development issue marks a belated recognition of the devastation already inflicted by decades of warfare in the developing South during the cold war, the aftershocks of which have rumbled on ever since. It also reflects a wider understanding of the changing nature of armed violence, including the fact that it does not neatly fit categories of 'war' or 'peace' but more closely resembles a situation of persistent violent insecurity. According to some estimates armed violence affects a quarter of the world's population[1]; and this figure would be still higher if one included homicides and other forms of violence. The belated arrival of violence and more widely insecurity as central concerns of development theory and practice reflects an understanding that we are living in an interconnected and precarious world. Most recently this has been brought home by fears of 'terrorism', and the ever-expanding anti-terrorist agenda, by the transnational spread (real and imagined) of Islamist militancy, by upheavals in the Middle East and by the refugee crisis with its multiple ramifications for European cooperation.

CONTACT Jeremy Lind ✉ j.lind@ids.ac.uk

[1]World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/the World Bank, 2011).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have formalised violence reduction into a global objective. Goal 16 of the SDGs is explicit in '… promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'. This reflects a conclusion reached earlier in the World Development Report (WDR) 2011 on *Conflict, Security and Development* that violence is not a problem afflicting poor countries alone, but is an issue for the entire international community. Like the WDR 2011, SDG 16 emphasises that the capacity of any society to cope with violence and build sustainable peace, depends on a number of key elements, which inform a seeming consensus around how to approach violence. As well as the creation of legitimate and effective institutions, these elements include strengthening access to justice and security systems; extending economic opportunities and employment, especially for young people; and fostering societal resilience, both through institutions and through better targeted development interventions in support of peace and security.

This best practice paradigm holds significant appeal for policy-makers. It helps establish priorities and directs trends in research funding and advocacy efforts. It offers explanations for complex dynamics and trends to a wider public. And it provides conflict-affected states a reference point when seeking support and funds. The focus on addressing and mitigating violence has also brought a largely welcome shift in emphasis away from state fragility and state-building. However, it is striking that the SDGs themselves avoid any reference to security, even citizen and human security. Security is a politically controversial concept, and development analysts and practitioners have become increasingly wary of 'securitising' development. Yet security remains essential to any discussion of how violence (including the violence of those who act in the name of 'security') can be brought under control and its impacts on the lives of poor and vulnerable people can be diminished. Our argument in this special issue is that many of the key questions revolve around how security is defined, by whom and on behalf of whom.

The focus of this special issue: security in the vernacular and insurgent margins

This collection concentrates upon violent settings that do not necessarily fit standard conceptions of 'fragile' or 'conflict-affected' states but that nonetheless are characterised by conflict and violence of varying forms and intensities. Its purpose is to detail new conceptual insights and empirical evidence of contemporary armed violence and state, non-state and citizen responses to it across a variety of political settings. We argue that the turn to addressing and mitigating violence in development thinking and practice, while welcome, has tended nevertheless to be approached within confined and sometimes unhelpful explanatory and policy frames, in which violence is conceptualised narrowly and is seen either as a variable to be explained by social scientists or as a problem to be 'fixed' by the international community and development agencies. The prevailing emphases on narrow causation of civil wars, aggregate indicators, rebel motivations, and so-called 'external stressors', conceal a more complex multi-causal, multi-level story.

The collection is distinct with respect to its *positionality*, its *geographic and spatial focus*, as well as its *epistemological foundations and methodological approaches*. In terms of positionality, the contributions to the collection deploy an understanding of *security in the*

vernacular to shift the analytical as well as moral compass towards those who are supposedly 'secured'.[2] They often face direct and structural violence on a daily basis. They navigate their insecurity in ways that find little or no reflection in the dominant state security narratives, or indeed in more universal conceptions of human or citizen security.

In south-western Madagascar, for instance, Huff describes[3] how internationally supported conservation efforts, taking place in parallel with extractive development of titanium and other mineral deposits, have inflamed sometimes violent local disputes around land and resource claims. These disputes tend to be viewed by the government, its various investor partners and even environmentalists as disturbances that can be overcome in time through the modernising influences of economic development and international conservation – rather than as a *sitzkrieg*, or a geographically situated and protracted manifestation of slow-burning violence. Largely missing from the state-centric and corporate-friendly policy approaches followed in Madagascar has been a sensitivity to vernacular understandings of how disputes play out and security is negotiated at local levels.

Those who feel most marginalised tend to lack the quality and substance of citizenship, as well as being most exposed to violence. Thus, as multiple contributions to the collection show, security in the vernacular connects to multiple social imaginaries, including the interplay of national, ethnic, religious, gender and other identities, and how they play out in the multiple hierarchies of governance, politics and citizenship. This is illustrated in Lind et al's account of Kenyan state security policies towards the perceived threat of Al-Shabaab attacks, and of Somali and Muslim reactions to these security policies.[4] Kenya's security decision-makers frame their policies around a discourse that 'sees' outsiders, namely Somalis, as a threat, both internally and with regard to conflict spillovers from Somalia, justifying a raft of security and policing measures that are seen to target Somalis and Muslims more widely. In turn Somali and Muslim perceptions of state security measures are shaped by historical experiences of unequal citizenship and state violence, particularly against Somalis during the *Shifta* irrendentist insurgency when large parts of Kenya's Somali-inhabited North-Eastern Province were under emergency rule until 1991. Kenya's state security policies have played directly into Al-Shabaab's tactical approach to renew violent insurgency at Kenya's margins by localising its jihad in experiences of marginalisation and unequal citizenship experienced by Kenya's Somalis and Muslims.

A major challenge for researchers and policymakers alike is how to listen and respond to the great variety of ways people navigate the terrains of war and violence and conceive their own security. Such local knowledge offers grounded understandings of the dynamics and complexity of many violences and can be deployed to evaluate efforts to address and mitigate these violences, notably when the benefits of security and the burdens of insecurity tend to be unequally shared. It can also be used to diagnose and minimise the tensions that arise, even when security is negotiated through community institutions that involve local participation and demonstrations of citizenship, as is brought out especially clearly in Oosterom's study of hybrid or customary security arrangements in South Sudan's Eastern

[2]For further discussion of 'security in the vernacular' and how it differs from related conceptions of human security and of citizen security, see Robin Luckham, 'Whose Violence, Whose Security? Cn Violence Reduction and Security Work for Poor, Excluded and Vulnerable People?' in this Special Edition.

[3]See Amber Huff, 'Black Sands, Green Plans, and Vernacular (In)Securities in the Contested 'Margins' of Southwestern Madagascar' in this Special Issue.

[4]See Jeremy Lind, Patrick Mutahi and Marjoke Oosterom on Killing a Mosquito with a Hammer': Al-Shabaab Violence and State Security Responses in Kenya' in this Special Issue.

Equatoria state.[5] These local arrangements have been largely successful in protecting local communities, including women, from the surrounding violence stirred up by the country's civil war, yet have done so by maintaining a social order, kept in place by notions of masculinity, which subordinate women, restrict their mobility and leave them at risk from domestic violence.

A critical element of the 'security in the vernacular' perspective, which the collection also highlights, is agency – both of those suffering violence and of those perpetrating it (or those who do both). Those who are vulnerable and insecure are not just social categories but real people, groups and communities who respond to, cope with and challenge the social conditions which make them vulnerable and insecure in many different ways. However, the contributions to this collection suggest the need for caution about the assumption found in some of the literature on participatory development and on peace-building that citizen engagement will by itself counter violence and generate peaceful and pro poor outcomes.

Thus in the very different contexts of conflict involving Boko Haram and the LRA, Dowd and Drury identify important similarities in how vulnerable communities have reacted to the inability of governments to protect them from violence by exercising their agency and forming local vigilante and defence militias. Whilst these community self-defence formations emerge from complex negotiations between communities, and state and non-state providers of (in)security, they tend to feed into further cycles of violence and exacerbate civilian vulnerability. Similarly, community-based security provision by the *amangat* in Eastern Equatoria offers contradictory lessons in both protecting women and others in local communities from the worst impacts of the violence spreading across South Sudan; at the same time as continuing to restrict the agency of women themselves. Similar contradictions arise in relation to the agency of young Kenyan men joining Al-Shabaab or young Nigerian men joining Boko Haram. On the one hand, they violently challenge the patterns of exclusion which entrap them. On the other hand, in doing so they interact with state violence and unequal local power relations so as to reinforce cycles of violence, which harm, displace and impoverish large numbers of people who have limited or no means of protecting themselves.

That is, re-centring analysis around the vernacular understandings and agency of people and groups at the margins neither implies that their agency is non-violent nor that it is non-exclusionary. The crucial questions rather concern how to identify and reinforce those forms of local agency that build peace, fortify social justice and promote inclusive politics. This is addressed most specifically In McGee's analysis of multifaceted violence in Buenaventura on Colombia's Pacific Coast, in which she considers what in practice 'seeing like a citizen' has involved for those seeking through acts of everyday resistance to create credible alternatives to direct and invisible or structural violence in the city.

In their *geographical and spatial focus*, the papers in the proposed collection address situations of violence at geographic and political margins. We introduce the idea of *insurgent margins* to enable focus on violences that occur in states and areas not normally considered fragile or experiencing open violent conflict in addition to those torn apart by such conflict. The concept places the focus upon geographical margins, where violence traverses national boundaries, and affects groups whose identities do not correspond neatly with the territories of states, as in Kashmir, the Somali-speaking areas of Kenya and Ethiopia or the borderlands

---

[5]See Marjoke Oosterom 'Gendered (in)security in South Sudan: Masculinities and Hybrid Governance in Imatong State' in this Special Issue.

between north-eastern Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon. But at the same time, it also permits analysis of social margins or places and spaces (e.g. neglected urban areas) in which people and groups are peripheralised and violence occurs, such as the inner-city neighbourhoods of south-central Mumbai, which were engulfed in sectarian violence during the early 1990s, with municipal police engaging vigilante groups in fierce fighting. As Gupte argues,[6] the provision of security and policing in these areas reflects historical and political processes of Mumbai's development, and the complex social orders and local power relations governing the city's poor neighbourhoods. Policing of the unrest, involving cooperation and symbiosis with vigilante groups, reflected an imposed state-centric infrastructural order on the one hand, and on the other, informality that enabled vigilante activity and disrupted police operations. In the city's margins, the lived experiences of violence and security are formulated out of highly localised processes, and driven by local actors.

Hence conceptually, we define insurgent margins as the spaces, places and contexts in which violence occurs and interconnects, including the complex interplay between local struggles at the margins and in wider national, regional and global spaces. Margins refer not only to remote rural areas; they also refer to socially and politically constructed spaces, which might exist in distant borderlands as well as the neighbourhoods of capital cities. The notion of 'liminality' recalls how marginality is produced over time through a combination of the state's targeting and/or benign neglect of certain populations and groups.[7] Hierarchies of citizenship are an enduring feature of many margins, established through state practices that target particular groups seen as threatening, deny certain fundamental rights that are bestowed on the wider public, and characterised by development processes that value certain areas and populations as being intrinsically of higher value.

This collection of articles thus details violence across diverse political settings that have in common experiences of marginalisation and exclusion from central state power as well as the existence of parallel structures that provide the basic functions of governance and security, particularly in places where the state either is unwilling or unable to do so. The paradoxical nature of statehood in many of these places is such that, whereas the state is often removed from people's daily lives, it also exerts considerable influence over local power configurations as well as being directly involved in the perpetration of violence itself, giving rise to feelings of mistrust and feeding perceptions of the state as a biased conflict actor rather than a neutral arbiter of tensions and violence.

In recent years, much attention has fixated on Islamist violence, and particularly the transnational linkages amongst different groups as well as the ideological and doctrinal content of these groups' agenda. The papers in our collection develop a different focus by uncovering the roots of wider transnational violence, jihadi and other, in sub-national struggles and inequalities, historical cycles of unrest and state violence. This is evident in Kenya, as described by Lind et al.,[8] where past experiences of state violence against Somalis are a tableau against which recent anti-terror police raids on Somali and Muslim neighbourhoods, as well as stop and search operations and extrajudicial killings of prominent clerics, are interpreted and experienced by Somalis and Muslims.

The collection also challenges the perceived exceptionalism of Islamist violence, notably by highlighting parallels between insurgent margins in north-eastern Nigeria and northern

---

[6]Jaideep Gupte 'The Streets Are Ours: Mumbai's Urban Form and Security in the Vernacular' in this Special Issues.
[7]Lisa Cliggett, 'Access, Alienation, and the Production of Chronic Liminality: Sixty Years of Frontier Settlement in a Zambian Park Buffer Zone,' *Human Organization* 73, no. 2 (May 2014): 128–40.
[8]Lind et al., Op. cit.

Uganda. In both regions, as described by Dowd and Drury,[9] there are similarities in underlying conditions of collective mobilisation, including intra-regional, sub-national variation in political inclusion and marginalisation, feeding into a concentration of local grievances, mobilised under a broad narrative of identity, belonging and victimhood by Boko Haram (in Nigeria) and the Lord's Resistance Army (in Uganda). Both groups share similar geographic profiles of violence, characterised by diffusion into marginal areas and across borders into neighbouring states, where violent strategies to sustain the group, and increased targeting of civilians outside their original support base, were further exacerbated. Ongoing insurgency in both regions clearly illustrates that state security strategies have consequences and costs for civilian protection, as does support for, or reliance on, non-state paramilitaries.

Our focus on insurgent margins in sum emphasises the spatial networking of violence across national boundaries, including adjacent 'borderlands' and a variety of sub-national spaces where 'security' is mediated through a variety of actors existing alongside the state. It fits into a wider shift in analysis and policy away from the exclusive focus on states (fragile and otherwise), their institutions, monopolies of violence and capacities to deliver security. For it cannot be assumed that states (even democratic states) are always benign; that their writ extends equally to all social groups and parts of national territory; and that they are necessarily capable of and interested in delivering public goods and extending their protection to all their citizens.

Insurgent margins connect readily with the emphasis of security in the vernacular on **who** suffers violence (or inflicts it), **how** and **where**. The *longue durée* of regional, national and local insecurity in many places suggests that recent violence is seldom a critical rupture with past patterns of violence but, rather, builds on earlier cycles of exclusion, unrest and violence. The failure of states and of international agencies to address deeply rooted marginalisation and insecurity, and their reliance on repressive security policies to respond to insurgencies, often provide a starting point for further violence. Hence, more attention needs to be focused on local histories of violence and how they intermesh with wider national and global shifts where violence has spread. In focussing on insurgent margins, the papers in the collection suggest that long-term solutions to addressing violence in each country must recognise long-standing political grievances; must confront the legacies of past violence, especially towards minority populations; and must address enduring patterns of 'horizontal' inequality.

The papers in the collection also draw upon the distinctive *epistemological foundations and methodological approaches* emerging from an increasingly vibrant and interdisciplinary research literature on the multiple forms of violence at the margins. They draw on a range of social science disciplines, including political science, human geography, social anthropology and history. In partial contrast to the emergent paradigmatic perspective on armed violence reduction referred to earlier, the papers reinforce the case made by Luckham in the first paper of this collection for more complex multi-causal and multi-level research and analysis on how violences reverberate between local, national and global levels. The remaining contributions to this special issue are grounded in micro-level fieldwork, which places the main focus on local dynamics and the vernacular understandings of those facing violence at insurgent margins. McGee makes a strong case for action research, both as a methodological tool to uncover the invisible forms of power, which underwrite direct as

---

[9]Dowd and Drury, Op. cit.

well as structural violence; and as a focus for citizen engagement in confronting and dele-gitimising those who most profit from violence.

Moreover the papers underscore the case for political economy and power analysis approaches that look at how people actually experience, engage in and respond to vio-lence, rather than proceeding from *ex ante* assumptions based on rational actor models of social behaviour (as implied in 'political marketplace' thinking that is currently *en vogue*).[10] This focus on what we call vernacular understandings contrasts as well with much current thinking about human and citizen security by emphasising the everyday, particular and contested nature of the different forms of security, rather than narrowing these into uni-versal entitlements that flatten the multiple ways people experience, protect themselves and resist direct and silent violences at specific times and places. Although 'security in the vernacular' is by no means identical to related concepts such as 'seeing like a citizen' or 'everyday resistance', it shares in common with these a focus upon empirical investigation of the lenses through which vulnerable people and groups living at the margins themselves view their own predicaments, their resilience and their capacities for social mobilisation, resistance and citizen action. The concept of liminality deployed by Huff not only fore-grounds the relentless pressures in Madagascar from global resource extraction and statist visions of national security that press upon vulnerable people and groups at the margins. It also hints at the potential dislocations of social order and dissolutions of traditional and other hierarchies, which simultaneously close and open spaces for change.

At the same time, this collection insists on complex analysis of varying and constantly evolving violences in particular places, including how direct and structural or silent vio-lences interconnect. Issues are raised about the place of violence in reinforcing varying forms of visible and invisible power; about how and for whom violence works; and about its intersections with the various forms of economic regulation, profit seeking and rent-ex-traction, which prevails at the margin – addressed most specifically in the contributions by Huff and by McGee.

Rather than confining themselves to short-term accounts of particular crises and violent episodes, the contributions to this collection attempt to analyse the longer term historical trajectories and cycles by which violence is diffused within and across national boundaries, as described in the papers by Lind et al. and by Dowd and Drury; is harnessed in support of diverse forms of exploitation; is embedded in durable disorder or what Huff calls *sitzkrieg* at the margins; and in some instances is challenged or countered, as in the case of McGee's case study of citizen action against violence in Buenaventura, Colombia. In Kenya, the targeting of Somalis in state security responses to the threat of Al-Shabaab (described by Lind et al.) perpetuates historical continuities in how the centre relates toward the periphery, which include state bureaucratic practices of control (alongside the use of state violence) shaping 'hierarchies of citizenship' that continue to disadvantage Kenyan Somalis. Yet historical changes can also open spaces in which abusive forms of power, both visible and invisible, can both be uncovered by social scientists as well as be challenged by social activists 'seeing like a citizen' as in Buenaventura, Colombia. All the contributions recognise, and try to grapple with, the immense methodological and political challenges of deconstructing the historically constituted relationships between violence, power and security.

---

[10]De Waal Alex, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and The Business of Power* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2015).

Brief outline of the collection

Contributions to the proposed collection cover a breadth of situations, stories of armed violence happening in the world today, and of methodological approaches.

The collection commences with a conceptual essay by Robin Luckham, on *Whose Violence, Whose Security? Vernacular Perspectives on Violence Reduction*. This spells out the security in the vernacular perspective used by other contributors to this collection, and situates it within ongoing debates about the multiple forms of violence and their interconnections with social identities and hierarchies of power and citizenship, including how these play out at local, national and global levels.

The paper by Jeremy Lind, Patrick Mutahi and Marjoke Oosterom on *Killing a Mosquito with a Hammer': Al-Shabaab Violence and State Security Responses in Kenya* both introduces the idea of insurgent margins, and narrows this down in an analysis of violence in Kenya focusing upon Al-Shabaab. It challenges the distinctions between 'internal' and 'external' stresses or sources of violence, and in particular prevailing stereotypes about the transnational spread of Islamist insurgency. Neglect of deep-seated injustices and the marginalisation of Kenya's ethnic and religious minorities, along with repressive state security policies seen to target Somalis and Muslims, have paved the way for Al-Shabaab to foment a violent insurgency at Kenya's margins. The legitimate need to strengthen security, while providing support for state interventions that are ostensibly for this purpose, contrasts with the counter-productive targeting of Somalis and Muslims more generally. Stemming Al-Shabaab's influence will require better understanding how violence and security are seen and experienced at the margins, which might also uncover ways of building peace that would have credibility in Somali and Muslim communities as well as in the wider context of Kenyan politics.

Caitriona Dowd and Adam Drury's comparison between the Boko Haram rebellion in Nigeria and the LRA rebellion in Uganda *Marginalisation, Insurgency and Civilian Insecurity: Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army* continues much the same line of argument, both in challenging the view that Boko Haram's violence can be treated solely as a function as its anti-Western Islamist agenda, and by linking the violence of both groups to historically rooted and geographically defined patterns of exclusion, which have been turned into widely diffused narratives of identity and victimhood. It highlights as well the importance of detailed analysis of how the objectives, recruitment patterns and organisation of insurgencies, and their violence against civilians, changes over time in response to the exigencies of war and survival; the complex interactions of rebel or non-state forces with the security campaigns and security strategies of the state security institutions confronting them; and the ways initially localised campaigns have spread across national boundaries.

Amber Huff's piece, *Black Sands, Green Plans, and Vernacular (In)Securities in the Contested 'Margins' of Southwestern Madagascar*, details the intimate connections between natural resource extraction, environmental degradation, the impoverishment and disenfranchisement of rural people and increases in both structural and (to an extent) direct violence – that is, rather than open civil war, *sitzkreig* or prolonged trajectories of silent and visible violence. State–society relations are tenuous in a context of 'chronic liminality', a situation of normalised insecurity and instability at the margins, shaped by intermittent and inconsistent cycles of intervention, penetration and neglect by capitalist developers,

NGOs and state actors. Intensification of patterns of exclusion and dispossession in the name of sustainable development in the region contrast sharply with the situated knowledges, embodied experiences and vernacular notions of security, freedom and violence of those whose livelihoods and communities are being torn apart.

Rosie McGee also addresses the relationship between direct and silent or structural violence in *Invisible Power and Visible Everyday Resistance in the Violent Colombian Pacific*. Violence in the Colombian port city of Buenaventura spiked in 2013–2014, bucking a trend of decreasing levels of violence in the country overall in the past decade. The mainly Afro-Colombian population was living in neighbourhoods where armed control was contested in frequent local battles between irregular paramilitaries involved in drug trafficking through the port and smaller scale trafficking in the city. This violence unfolded against a backdrop of major port re-development and modernisation, entailing strong pressure on the Afro-Colombian coastal community to accept relocation to an inland housing estate. Far from acquiescing to the 'invisible power' of structural violence, a network of Afro-Colombian activists sought to 'stay in the territory' in the face of open, direct, interpersonal violence, disconfirming, de-legitimising and demobilising structural violence.

Marjoke Oosterom's piece on *Gendered (in)security in South Sudan: Masculinities and Hybrid Governance in Imatong state* analyses the complex interplay of vernacular understandings and local agency within customary or hybrid security structures. 'Able men' (*Monyomiji*), mobilised through their age cohorts in the 'amangat', a customary decision-making body that provides protection and defence have largely succeeded in managing to insulate local communities in Eastern Equatoria state from the forms of violence that affected the state since the end of the civil war. However, she argues the *amangat* functions so as to exclude women and reproduce notions of masculinity, which women experience as a source of insecurity. These hybrid forms of local security provision restrict the mobility of women and maintain a social order in which women continue to be vulnerable to domestic violence and enjoy considerably less room for manoeuvre than men.

In his analysis of *The Streets Are Ours: Mumbai's Urban Form and Security in the Vernacular* Jaideep Gupte scrutinises the interface between violence and security provision in a situation – of fierce fighting between urban vigilante groups and armed police in 1992–3 – falling short of declared armed conflict. The violence occurred in a context in which the state and urban authorities had only selectively been able to impose 'legibility' in the more formalised sections of the city, allowing various forms of non-state or hybrid security provision to flourish at the margins, including the vigilante groups, who oscillated between symbiotic relationships with the police and violence against them. Prevailing conceptions of who protects and who is protected are shaped on the one hand by the urban forms demarcating and regulating urban spaces and on the other hand by urban residents' own vernacular understandings of the everyday violence and insecurity they face, including that inflicted by those claiming to protect them.

Disclosure statement

Funding

Notes on contributors

Jeremy Lind is a research fellow at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University. He is a human geographer specialising in conflict, peace and security dynamics in the Horn of Africa. Focusing on pastoral societies in the region, his work bridges the political economy of conflict, local peacebuilding, and livelihoods and social protection.

Robin Luckham is an Emeritus Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, where he has been based since 1974. Following the publication of his book *The Nigerian Military* in 1971, he has researched and published extensively on civil–military relations, militarism, political violence, democratization, security and development, security sector governance, security 'from below' and peacebuilding.