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The Politics of Urban Violence: Challenges for Development in the Global South

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Abstract At the start of the twenty-first century, urban violence represents one of the most significant challenges for development across much of the Global South. This essay introduces a new framework for analyzing the politics of urban violence that combines a subnational comparative perspective with multi-method and multi-level approaches. The empirical contributions to this special issue analyze the politics of urban violence and its consequences for development in major cities across Africa, Latin America, and South Asia. First, the contributors show how variation in the nature of relations between states and local armed actors poses distinct implications for several outcomes, including patterns of violence, associational life, and economic markets. Second, the volume unpacks how the integration of developing world cities into both licit and illicit global economic flows impacts local patterns of and political responses to violence. And, third, the contributions identify how actors and interests that operate at multiple territorial and institutional scales influence the local dynamics and consequences of urban violence.

Keywords Urban violence · Development · Cities · Global South · Order · Armed actors

Introduction

At the start of the twenty-first century, two phenomena increasingly characterize the Global South: urbanization and violence. Levels of urbanization in developing regions are unprecedented. Between 1950 and 2000, the percentage of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean residing in cities increased from 41 to 76 % (PRB 2010). By 2050, people living in cities in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa will account for 60 % of each region's population, and nearly 70 % of the Global South's total population will reside in cities (UN-HABITAT 2009). The emergence of new and growth of existing

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metropolises has made cities in the Global South increasingly fertile terrain for the study of varied dimensions of the politics of development, including clientelism (Auyero 2001; Gay 2006; Pasotti 2009), the provision of public goods and services (Herrera 2013; Post 2009; Resnick 2012), economic policymaking (Goldfrank and Schrank 2009), informal markets (Cross 1998; Simone 2002), and good governance (Gilbert 2006). In particular, the turn toward cities has produced a flourishing body of research on the opportunities and challenges for the political incorporation of the urban underprivileged and the deepening of local democracy in Africa (Cherry et al. 2002; Simone 2004; Heller 2003), Latin America (Avritzer 2009; Baiocchi et al. 2011; Collier and Handlin 2010; Dietz 1998; Fung 2011; Goldfrank 2011; Holston 2009; Wampler 2009), and South Asia (Appadurai 2002; Roy 2003; Weinstein 2009). In parallel, there has emerged a literature that views intense violence and widespread insecurity as the other defining features of major cities in the Global South.

The developing world's urban century is turning out to be an intensely violent one. While population growth concentrated in the Global South is increasingly urban (Satterthwaite 2007), Africa and Latin America are also among the most violent regions in the world, with homicide rates over twice as high as the global average (UNODC 2011: 9). Victims of lethal urban violence in the Global South tend be among the most vulnerable segments of society: the poor and the young. There is consequently a pressing need to better understand the factors that shape urban violence and its repercussions for development. What types of local armed actors emerge in urban spaces where the state is absent, weak, or complicit in local violence? How do distinct relations between states and armed actors shape the nature of localized orders and the prospects for development? How do entrenched institutions and circuits of local power influence political responses to urban violence?[1] What constraints and opportunities does economic globalization pose for efforts to confront urban violence? This special issue of *Studies in Comparative International Development* tackles these questions and contributes new insights to our understanding of the challenges that the politics of urban violence pose for the quality of democracy and trajectories of development.[2]

The analyses included in this volume draw on fresh research carried out in seven cities across Africa, Latin America, and South Asia. The special issue emerged out of an international conference held in April of 2011 at Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies, entitled *Violent Cities*: *Challenges of Democracy, Development and Governance in the Urban Global South*. The conference brought together academics and policymakers to discuss the origins and consequences of urban violence as well as the promise and limitations of emerging responses. Collectively, the articles introduce a new analytic framework for studying the politics of urban violence that combines a *subnational comparative perspective with multi-method and multi-level approaches*. Applying the framework to a cross-regional sample of cases yields several key findings. First, the contributors show how variation in the nature of relations between states and local armed actors has distinct implications for several outcomes, including patterns of violence, associational life,

[1] Institutions are defined as the "humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North 1990: 3).

[2] See O'Donnell et al. (2004) on the concept of the quality of democracy.

and economic markets. Second, the volume unpacks how the integration of developing world cities into both licit and illicit global economic flows impacts local patterns of and political responses to violence. And, third, the contributions identify how actors and interests that operate at multiple territorial and institutional scales influence the local dynamics and consequences of urban violence. Applying this framework to the empirical study of several major cities yields provocative findings that point to exciting new lines of future research on the political drivers of urban violence in the Global South.

The next section defines key concepts and expands on the strengths of the analytic framework. The third section reviews the existing literature on cities, violence, and development. The fourth section draws on the contributions to theorize the politics of urban violence and the challenges it poses for development. And the conclusion proposes several directions for future research.

Concepts and Methods

Violence, Order, and Cities: Key Concepts

Broad conceptualizations of violence encompass a wide range of phenomena. Structural violence captures the range of physical and psychological constraints imposed on underprivileged sectors of society by the dominant political, social, or economic institutions (Galtung 1969). Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004): 1) refer to this as the "violence of poverty, hunger, social exclusion, and humiliation."[3] Cultural violence is defined as any aspect of culture that sanctions or legitimizes either the existence of structural violence or an act of direct physical violence (Galtung 1990). These broad conceptualizations stress that violence is predicated upon asymmetries of power between aggressors and victims, but run the risk of "conceptual stretching" (Sartori 1970) because they can interpret a seemingly endless array of phenomena as violence.[4]

The contributors to this volume consequently rely on a more circumscribed definition of violence as the use or threat of physical force to inflict bodily or psychological harm against an individual, community, or social group.[5] By not folding power asymmetries into the definition of violence, the contributors gain analytical leverage to explore how violence both shapes and results from contentious power relations between the state and society, within the state itself, and among distinct societal actors. In her article on violence and localized orders in Lagos, Nigeria, and Nairobi, Kenya, LeBas shows how varying sets of relations between

[3] In her seminal anthropological study set in Northeastern Brazil, Scheper-Hughes (1993) also refers to this as "everyday violence."

[4] Indeed, the conceptual challenges associated with broad definitions of violence raise a dilemma analogous to that in the literature on democracy wherein "thick" definitions of democracy include phenomena such as social equity, which consequently constrains our ability to understand how democracy as an independent variable affects social equity as a dependent variable. See Collier and Levitsky (1997) for more on the debate regarding distinct conceptualizations of democracy.

[5] This definition is based on the conceptualization advanced by the World Health Organization (WHO 2002: 5).

the state and local armed actors operating in urban peripheries condition patterns of violence that affect local associational life. Moncada examines how relations between powerful business interests and local governments in three Colombian cities shape the nature and trajectory of local policy responses to violence in ways that preserve or erode the historically privileged position of business in local politics. In her analysis of urban violence in India, Weinstein looks within the state to show how struggles between the municipal, regional, and national levels of government to establish and retain political power explain violent slum clearances in Mumbai over the course of the twentieth century. And, in his research in two of Rio de Janeiro's favelas, Arias finds that varied relations between armed actors and the state produce equally distinct patterns of interaction between armed actors and the communities in which they reside and operate. In brief, by treating violence as both an independent and dependent variable, the contributors add to our understanding of the complex linkages between violence and power.

A second concept that we must define is order, which refers to the formal and informal governing arrangements that structure political, associational, and economic life. Order is often conceptualized by the absence of its seeming antithesis: violence. The articles included in this special issue challenge the conventional wisdom that associates violence with disorder, as well as the popular logic that often leads to cities in the Global South being branded with labels such as "world's most violent city" or "murder capital of the world," and which thus equate the relative absence of violence with order. Instead, this volume confirms the point made by Kalyvas et al. (2008: 1) that the "domain of 'normal' politics that constitute what we think of as order" is often sustained by the strategic use or threat of violence to manage conflict.

Finally, cities are defined as administratively delineated territorial units with a high density of population. City boundaries, however, are fluid. In many countries, densely populated cities sit at the center of larger metropolitan areas that fuse small municipalities with the larger city (Parr 2007: 382). Across the developing world, region-based urbanization is unfolding wherein technological, economic, and demographic linkages expand the formal and informal influence of large cities over neighboring geographies, including rural areas (Aguilar et al. 2003: 4).[6] Most of the urban population in the Global South is located in relatively small cities with populations between 100,000 and 250,000 residents and in towns of less than 100,000. Yet, there are more than 400 large cities with populations over 1 million, and three fourths of them are in low- and middle-income countries. Moreover, one out of eight urban residents in the Global South lives in a mega-city with a population over 10 million (Montgomery et al. 2003: 16). Table 1 provides demographic, political, and economic snapshots of the seven cities included in this special issue.

[6] Roy (2005: 149) introduces further complexity into the discussion of fluid rural–urban borders by arguing that these spaces are the frontlines of informal urbanization characterized by the growth of informal housing and land markets alongside emerging elite subdivisions that are privately guarded and enjoy formal legal land tenure.

Table 1 Overview of cities

Country	City	Total population (millions)	Population as percentage of total urban population (%)	Political position	Contribution to national GDP (%)
Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	11.9	7.2	State capital	8.2
Colombia	Bogota	7.4	20.8	National capital	25.4
	Cali	2.4	7.1	Department capital	10.0
	Medellin	3.6	10.6	Department capital	13.2
India	Mumbai	19.4	5.1	State capital	6.3
Kenya	Nairobi	3.1	34.4	National capital	20.0
Nigeria	Lagos	10.7	13.9	Former national and regional capital[a]	25.0

Sources: All population data except for Nairobi is from 2010. Data for Nairobi is from 2009 and provided by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (http://www.knbs.or.ke/Total%20Population%20Distribution%20by%20Sex,%20Household%20Type%20and%20County.php). Population data for Bogota is provided by the *Secretaría de Planeación* (www.http://www.sdp.gov.co/portal/page/portal/PortalSDP) and all other data is from the United Nations Population Division online database (http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/unup/index_panel3.html). GDP data for Rio de Janeiro is from 2012 and provided by the Brookings Institution (www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2012/11/30%20metro%20brazil%20economy/overview). GDP data for Colombia is from 2012 and provided by the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadisticas (www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/pib/departamentales/B_2005/Resultados_2010.pdf). Data for Cali and Medellin is at the department level. Data for Mumbai is for 2007 and provided by UN-Habitat (2011, The Economic Role of Cities). Data for Nairobi is for 2008 and provided by UN-Habitat (2011, The Economic Role of Cities). Data for Lagos is for 2010 and provided by the Lagos State Public-Private Partnership Office (2011) available at http://www.icrc.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/ICRC-PPP-Forum-June-2011v3-Ayo-Gbeleyi.pdf. All online data accessed on August 9, 2012.

[a] Lagos was the capital of the state of Lagos until 1975, and the Nigerian national capital until 1991

Each city represents a substantial portion of the urban population in its country, from 5.1 % in Mumbai to 34.4 % in Nairobi. Three of the cities—Lagos, Mumbai, and Rio de Janeiro—are mega-cities. All hold significant political power by virtue of being either a national capital, such as Nairobi, or a regional capital, such as Medellin. The cities' contributions to their national economies vary from 6.3 % of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by Mumbai to over one quarter of Colombia's GDP by Bogota. Violence features prominently on the agendas of local politicians, grassroots civil society, and the private sectors within each city. International aid agencies, increasingly concerned with the obstacles that violence poses for development, have launched interventions in several of the cities.[7] In Nairobi, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports extensive data collection on local criminal violence to inform citizen security policymaking and foster greater coordination between local government officials and civil society on violence prevention efforts. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) recently announced a citizen security initiative in Rio de Janeiro based on the IDB's past work in Bogota, Cali, and

[7] On Rio de Janeiro, see http://www.iadb.org/en/news/news-releases/2010-12-09/brazil-favelas-inter-american-development-bank,8828.html. On Nairobi's Safer Cities initiative, see http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=1647&catid=375&typeid=13. Accessed on May 8, 2012. See also World Bank (2011).

Medellin, which were among the first cities in Latin America to receive foreign aid to develop local-level policy responses to urban violence and have since become central references in a process of policy diffusion that has exported their policy responses as models to other cities across the Global South.[8] The analyses and findings presented in this volume are thus relevant for understanding the politics of urban violence in other developing world cities.

Methods: A New Analytic Framework for the Study of the Politics of Urban Violence

While much of the extant research on urban violence attempts to generalize on the basis of single case studies, the contributors to this special issue employ *systematic comparative perspectives*.[9] Several of the contributors conduct comparative analyses not only across cities but also within them over time,[10] as well as among contrasting neighborhoods in the same city. A comparative perspective enables the contributors to hold constant variables that are associated with rival explanations, adjudicate between competing hypotheses, and develop new explanatory frameworks to be further tested and refined in future research. In addition to the methodological advantages that a subnational comparative perspective offers (Snyder 2001), contemporary demographic and economic trends, the wave of decentralization that has invigorated city politics in the Global South, and the concentration of violence in urban settings all underscore the need for a vertical shift from the national to the subnational level in research on development.[11]

The authors use a *diverse range of research methodologies*, from in-depth interviews and participant observation to original surveys and archival research, to unpack the complex nature of the politics of urban violence. Drawing on multiple methods and triangulating varied forms of data help overcome some of the significant challenges that scholars of urban violence face in disentangling the complex and often hidden interactions between licit and illicit actors and interests. Finally, the contributors situate and conceive of violence as existing within and impacting *multiple territorial and institutional levels*. By approaching violence as an unbound phenomenon, meaning that both violence and its origins and consequences often fail to adhere to jurisdictional boundaries within states, the volume challenges our traditional understanding of violence as, for example, rural versus urban, or local versus national. Recognizing the unbound nature of violence highlights the intergovernmental dimension of the politics of urban violence, but, more broadly, underscores the fact that actors whose authorities and interests are located at varied territorial and institutional levels of the state can be impacted by violence that takes place in settings distinct from the ones in which they reside.[12]

[8] On policy diffusion, see Brinks and Coppedge (2006) and Weyland (2005).

[9] For a discussion of the challenges and opportunities of conducting comparative urban research across countries and regions, see Robinson (2011).

[10] On within-case analysis, see George and Bennett (2005: 170–81).

[11] See Moncada and Snyder (2012) for an overview of the subnational turn in comparative politics.

[12] In his analysis of subnational authoritarianism, (Gibson 2013: 16–17) draws a distinction between the site of political action, which refers to the specific territorial arena where a political act takes place, and the scale of political action, which refers to the varying territorial units impacted by a political act in a specific site.

Cities, Violence, and Development: Literature Review

This section reviews the various lines of existing research that examine the linkages between cities, violence, and development. The first part discusses the role of cities in theories and debates regarding political and economic development at the national level. The second part considers research on the relationship between urbanization and violence. The third section takes up the emerging literature on the politics of urban violence.

The Role of Cities in National Trajectories of Development

Cities are not foreign to the literature on development. Yet, much of the extant research on development has approached cities—and more specifically, actors within cities—as one among several variables to help explain national trajectories of democratization and economic development. Early development economics viewed the emergence and growth of cities as encouraging evidence of national transitions from traditional primary commodity to industrialized economies (Lewis 1954). The growth of overcrowded informal settlements on the margins of cities across much of the Global South starting in the mid-twentieth century, however, raised concern regarding the threats that over-urbanization—characterized by high levels of unemployment, poverty, and informality (Firebaugh 1979)—posed for economic development (UNESCO 1957).[13] Proponents of the "urban bias" theory, meanwhile, argued that national monetary policy favored well-organized and powerful urban industrialists while constricting the potential revenue that agricultural exporters could secure in the global markets, thus further diminishing the capacity of national economies to realize sustained economic growth (Lipton 1977).[14]

Classic comparative studies on political development also looked to varied urban social actors and interests to explain contrasting patterns of national-level institutional modernization. Weber (1958) viewed urbanization in the Western world as integral for the emergence of the notion of citizenship. Tilly (1990: 51) understood cities as centers of capital that played crucial roles in the broader process of state formation in Europe. Moore (1993) argued that the balance of power between rural landowners and urban dominant classes was crucial in shaping the distinct paths to national political modernization. In a challenge to Lipset's (1959) thesis that economic modernization sustains democracy, O'Donnell (1973) showed how the urban bourgeoisie, along with the military and technocrats, were instrumental in establishing bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Brazil and Argentina following the exhaustion of import-substitution industrialization. And, in their comparative historical analysis of the relationship between development and democracy across Europe and Latin America, Rueshemyer et al. (1992) found that the advancement of democracy hinged on late capitalist development's strengthening of urban professionals as part of the broader national middle class. There is a long tradition within the existing literature on development of looking to cities to explain economic and political transformations at the national scale. In this volume,

[13] For a seminal critical assessment of the theory of over-urbanization, see Sovani (1964).

[14] Bates (1981) found that central governments in Africa used agricultural marketing boards to capture revenue generated from the sale of cash crops and direct these profits to cities in order to maintain artificially low food prices for urban consumers, support urban industrialists, and preclude the emergence of political opposition. Recent studies that analyze the discourse and lending portfolios of international aid agencies find that the urban bias persists (Jones and Corbridge 2010).

however, we use the politics of urban violence as an analytic lens to shed light on the complex and emerging challenges to development *within* cities.[15]

Urbanization and Violence

In examining the relationship between urbanization and violence, scholars have focused on the association between city size and violence. In one of the first cross-national studies on violence, Archer and Gartner (1987: 103–16) found that larger cities exhibit higher homicide rates than smaller cities. Zooming in on Latin America, Gaviria and Pagés (2002: 190–95) show that households in cities with over 1 million residents have a 71 % higher risk of being the victims of a criminal act than households in cities with populations between 50,000 and 100,000. Explanations for why large cities tend to have more crime and violence than small cities range in nature from structural to individual. While larger cities provide greater returns to criminal activity due to the concentration of wealth, criminals may also conclude that the higher density of population in large cities represents a bigger pool of suspects within which to hide and decrease the chances of being apprehended.[16]

Others studies examine the relationship between violence and the pace of urbanization. Cornelius (1969: 833) referred to this line of research as consisting of "urban-instability-crisis-and-chaos" theories, which proposed that rapid shifts in population from the countryside to cities produced political violence due to relative deprivation,[17] the disjuncture between traditional rural kinship systems and the demands of urban life, and the politicization of migrants' grievances by radical urban political movements.[18] Several subsequent studies that examined the political attitudes and behaviors of the urban poor (e.g., Cornelius 1975; Eckstein 1977; Nelson 1979; Perlman 1976) showed that, contrary to the received wisdom that the urban underprivileged are perpetually poised to reject the dominant political order, the urban poor are instead incorporated into politics through extensive patron–client linkages.

Finally, scholars have also explored the relationship between socioeconomic inequality and violence. Many studies build on criminological and sociological theories that seek to assess how the interaction between varied factors at the individual, community, and structural levels facilitate or constrain deviant behavior in urban settings. Social disorganization theory argues that the concentration of economic disadvantage and social heterogeneity within cities, coupled with the lack of stability in residential occupation, produces community disorganization and the breakdown of social control, facilitating crime and violence (Shaw and McKay 1942).[19] Using household survey data from 39

[15] Of course, the trajectory of development within cities has implications for the prospects of development at the national level as well.

[16] See Glaeser and Sacerdote (1999) for a statistical analysis on the relationship between city size and crime.

[17] On relative deprivation, see Gurr (1970).

[18] See Davis (2005: 93) for a discussion of the reasons why predominantly U.S. scholars looked to Latin America for this line of research.

[19] The World Health Organization's (2002) landmark report on violence as a threat to public health developed an ecological model to explain violence as the interaction between varied structural and individual level factors. Bronfenbrenner (1977) originally developed the ecological model to explain human development.

developed and developing countries, Lederman et al. (2002) find that social capital, measured as community trust, has a robust negative effect on the incidence of homicides.

Scholars also look to the built environment to explain urban violence. Broken windows theory (Kelling and Coles 1996), which heavily informed the famed through the controversial revitalization of New York City in the 1990s, proposes that physical indicators of urban disorder, such as abandoned housing or vagrancy, signal a lack of social control that increases the incentives for engaging in anti-social behavior, including crime. The policing responses that followed from broken windows theory, including approaches such as zero tolerance policing, generated significant controversy due to their tendency to target low-income and particular ethnic and racial populations (McArdle and Erzen 2001).[20] The contributors to this volume acknowledge the roles that the scope and pace of urbanization as well as inequality and the built environment play in shaping the dynamics of urban violence. However, we build on these lines of research by approaching violence as *politically* constructed and managed in order to generate a more complete understanding of urban violence.

The Politics of Urban Violence: Causes, Consequences, and Policy Responses

Building on the research discussed above, recent literature has centered on the politics of urban violence. This research seeks to identify the political causes and consequences of urban violence, as well as the factors that shape the fortunes of policy responses to stem it. The focus on causes has also led scholars to seek to understand acts of popular justice. Research shows that communities undertake popular justice not only to combat criminality and a sense of insecurity (Anderson 2002; Baker 2002) but also to express a range of broader political grievances, including alarm at the erosion of traditional mechanisms for maintaining social order (Buur 2008) as well as political marginalization by the state (Goldstein 2004).[21] Recent research on urban violence within contexts of ethnic conflict finds that distinct types of associational networks have equally varied implications for whether ethnic conflict turns violent (Varshney 2002).[22] Many scholars look to state institutions for insights into the causes of urban violence: the police is one of the key institutions responsible for citizen security but is also among the most notorious perpetrators of urban violence in the Global South (Ahnen 2007; Brogden and Shearing 1993; Chevigney 1995). Here, scholars analyze how politicians and social sectors facilitate the use of extra-judicial violence (Huggins 2000), the historical influence of the military on police (Bayley 1993), and the experiences of police officers as they struggle to balance the constant threat of violence and pressures to democratize (Denyer Willis, forthcoming).

[20] For several discussions on the racial dimensions and implications of urban violence as carried out by both state and non-state actors in the Global South, see Amar (2010), Moncada (2010), Samara (2010), and Vargas and Amparo-Alvez (2010).

[21] In her study on lynchings in rural communities in Guatemala, Snodgrass Godoy (2006) finds a similar pattern of underprivileged segments of society that have historically been the victims of state violence using lynchings as political acts in rejection of their victimization and continued political marginalization.

[22] Varshney's (2002) work on ethnic conflict and violence also reveals how political violence in India, popularly perceived to be a rural phenomenon, is actually heavily concentrated in a several cities.

Concern with understanding the origins of urban violence has also led scholars to focus on local armed actors, particularly youth gangs (Winton 2004: 173).[23] Some scholars examine the reproduction of violence at the level of individual gang members (Baird 2012); others combine a focus on individual and organizational factors to account for variation in the types of gang violence (Ismail 2009). Recent work traces the emergence and violent practices of youth gangs back to the erosion of neighborhood cohesion under the pressures of persistent poverty, deepening inequality, and the inability or unwillingness of the state to meet the needs of its most vulnerable populations (Jones and Rodgers 2009; Rodgers 2006).[24] Other studies examine how variation in the structure of local illicit markets and the existence of state-sponsored cartels based in urban centers, to engage in varied forms of violence (Rios 2012; Snyder and Duran-Martinez 2009).[25]

Research on the politics of urban violence has also focused on its consequences for communities, the state, and state–society relations. Violence and insecurity can negatively impact existing stocks of social capital (McIlwaine and Moser 2001) within underprivileged communities.[26] Other studies employ qualitative participatory research methods to identify how similar forms of violence are experienced by distinct social groups, including the elderly, women, and children (Moser and Von Bronkhorst 1999; Moser and McIlwaine 2004).[27] Scholars have also unpacked how socioeconomic elites reshape the urban built environment in response to violence and fear of victimization (Agbola 1997; Caldeira 2001), leading to the growth of privately policed residential areas inaccessible to the majority of the population, yet situated next to informal settlements and criminal hot spots stigmatized as off-limits to the general public.[28] Finally, a key consequence of urban violence is its enervating effects on the state's institutional capacity as it diverts scarce resources that could be used to

[23] Young men between the ages of 15 and 29 are predominantly the perpetrators and victims of violence in the developing world See World Health Organization (2008) available at http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/mortality/en/index.html. Accessed on March 10, 2013.

[24] Other studies focused on Central American youth gangs (Arana 2005; Cruz 2010) explain their origins by looking to the interplay between international factors, namely the deportation of young gang members from the United States, particularly from California, back to Central America in the mid-1990s, and domestic political strategies, including hardline policy responses by the region's states. The focus on youth is particularly important given evidence experiencing violence alters youth psychologically and physiologically in ways that can make them more prone to engage in aggressive behavior in the future (Farrington 1998).

[25] Leeds (1996) provided a seminal analysis of the micro-level political ramifications associated with the influx of cocaine and drug traffickers into Rio's favelas.

[26] For a review of the literature on social capital and development, see Woolcock and Narayan (2000).

[27] See also Rotker (2002) for additional examples of this type of research. And for a discussion on the methodological challenges and opportunities associated with using participatory methods to study urban violence, see Moser and McIlwaine (1999).

[28] On stigmatization of urban areas, see Moser (2004: 93). Rodgers (2004) provides a fascinating analysis of how elites are "disembedding" strategic parts of the Nicaraguan capital city, Managua, as part of their strategy to reduce vulnerability to criminal victimization. Of course, it is not only elites that can reshape the urban environment in response to insecurity. Amidst the spike in drug-related violence that Ciudad Juarez in Mexico experienced between in the late 2000s, low- and middle-income communities began setting up physical barriers to regulate access to their neighborhoods and thus keep thieves and other criminals out. Recent work by Auyero and Burbano de Lara (2012) builds on the concept of infrastructural violence, which refers to the ways in which the poor conditions of urban infrastructure (e.g., roads, bridges, sidewalks, etc.) regulate the lives of the underprivileged (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012), to explore the interplay between infrastructural and criminal violence in Buenos Aires.

finance social development. The seeming inability of the state to respond effectively to violence can also erode its legitimacy (Koonings and Kruijt 2007) and, more broadly, support for democracy (Pérez 2003/04).[29]

And finally, research on the politics of urban violence has focused on the factors that shape the fortunes of policy responses to violence. In particular, research has advanced our understanding of the political barriers to police effectiveness and accountability, including decentralization and electoral competition (Davis 2006), variation in modes of transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes (Call 2002), conflictive relations between levels of government under federal versus unitary political systems (Eaton 2008), challenges to collective action among pro-reform segments of society (Fuentes 2005), and clientelism and patronage politics (Hinton 2006; Sabet 2012; Ungar 2011).[30] Other scholars analyze the fortunes of state initiatives to stem crime and violence and improve public perceptions of security by fostering improved relations and collaboration between the police and communities (Arias and Ungar 2009; Frühling 2007; Moncada 2009). A point of consensus among police-reform studies is that the success of such efforts requires coordination between grassroots civil society that can facilitate community buy-in of reform efforts and political incumbents with the political will to overcome resistance posed by opposing interests (Arias and Ungar 2009: 425).[31] This special issue builds and extends on these lines of research within the literature on the politics of urban violence by examining how relations between states and local armed actors affect dimensions of development, how the integration of developing world cities into the global economy intersects with local violence to produce both order and disorder, and the ways in which actors and interests operating at varied geographic and institutional levels of the state impact the political and dynamics of urban violence.

Localized Order and Development: Contributions to the Study of the Politics of Urban Violence

States, Armed Actors, and Localized Orders

Table 2 identifies three shared research themes and findings evident across the articles in this special issue. One critical finding focuses on and unpacks the nature and consequences of relations between local armed actors and the state. The diverse range of local armed actors appearing in this volume—from drug gangs in Rio de Janeiro to urban militias in Lagos—carry out diverse functions, including the strategic use of violence against particular political or social segments of society and the collection of "taxes" on behalf of the state. The contributors find that violence is the principal way local armed

[29] Bateson (2012) finds a statistically positive relationship between criminal victimization and political participation in Latin America.

[30] See Bailey and Dammert (2005) and Hinton and Newburn (2008) for comprehensive edited volumes on police reform in the Global South.

[31] The focus on cooperation between reformist political authorities and grassroots civil society parallels that found in the literatures on the value of state-society synergy for developmental outcomes (e.g., Evans 1996; Tendler 1998) and urban participatory politics in the Global South (e.g., Baiocchi et al. 2011; Goldfrank 2011; Heller 2001).

Table 2 The politics of urban violence and challenges for development: research themes and key findings

Research themes	Key findings
States, armed actors, and localized orders	Local armed actors use violence to establish control over urban spaces.
	The nature of relations between the state and local armed actors influence the dynamics and patterns of urban violence.
	Collaborative relations between the state and local armed actors can constrict the potential for political and social development by limiting the autonomy of politicians and civil society.
	Conflictive relations between the state and local armed actors can produce relatively less restrictive conditions on local political and associational life.
	Political and societal actors can use violence actors to build, preserve, and threaten localized orders with varying implications for political, social, and economic development.
Economic globalization, urban violence, and global cities	The integration of cities into illicit global markets has transformative implications for local labor, the built environment, and class cleavages.
	The pressure to transform developing-world cities into global cities can intersect with the politics of urban violence to generate both beneficial and detrimental consequences for development.
Multi-level territorial and institutional politics	Political struggles between actors located at varying territorial and institutional scales influence the dynamics and patterns of urban violence.
	Local actors can strategically enter into or build multi-level coalitions to strengthen their position within the politics of urban violence.

actors exert power within a given territory and secure the cooperation—either voluntary or forced—of local residents. The focus on the link between territorial control and localized order parallels recent research from the civil war literature, which argues that variation in levels of control by both insurgents and state security forces over rural territories yields distinct patterns of violence (Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas and Kocher 2009). While the conditions under which distinct orders emerge and collapse in contexts of civil war has only recently begun to be explored (Arjona 2010; Staniland 2012; Mampilly 2011), constructing localized orders in densely populated urban centers rather than sparsely populated and remote rural enclaves presents both states and local armed actors with a range of distinct challenges and opportunities.

Among the factors that make cities such complex settings to build order are the steady influx of new arrivals from the countryside, high levels of social heterogeneity, the density of civil society, the use of cities by powerful transnational criminal groups as platforms to coordinate their global operations and illicit markets, the interconnections between major cities and both licit and illicit global economic flows, and the multiple layers of political and socioeconomic interests that converge within cities. Amidst this complexity, how do localized orders regulate the distribution of authority over local governance, economic markets, and associational life?[32] Several contributors trace variation in localized orders back to the nature of relations between the state and local armed actors. State–local armed actor relations are characterized by a

[32] For a discussion on civil war violence in urban contexts, see Staniland (2010).

multitude of interactions that vary in nature across both space and time and can range from active partnership to mutual tolerance to violent discord. To gain analytical leverage over these interactions and their consequences for development, the contributors focus on two overarching ideal-type relations between the state and local armed actors: collaborative and conflictive.

Collaborative relations generate varied rents for state and local armed actors. The state, and more specifically competing political elites, can utilize local armed actors to wield violence to obtain votes and economic spoils from underprivileged communities, to reshape electoral geography by strategically displacing populations loyal to political opponents, and to provide security to political supporters. Principal among the rents that collaborative relations afford local armed actors is the freedom to engage in lucrative illicit activities. Yet, collaboration often leads to restrictions on the autonomy of local political actors and civil society, posing barriers for local development.

In Rio de Janeiro, Arias finds that militias leverage collaborative relations with the state to displace political authorities and civil society and assume leadership positions in the territories under their control. The state is hence relieved of its responsibility to provide security, while protection rackets register financial gains through the extortion of local businesses without fear of state reprisal. LeBas identifies a similar dynamic wherein collaboration between the Nigerian state and militias in Lagos inhibits the autonomy of local politicians and civil society while assuming and benefitting from functions that are the state's responsibility, including the collection of taxes from slum residents. The Nigerian state, meanwhile, reaps political dividends as the relative peace in the slums under militias' control generates increased perceptions of state legitimacy. Collaborative state–local armed actor relations limit the potential for autonomous political activity and associational life while generating incentives for local armed actors to rely on measured forms of violence to foster and regulate local economic markets to maximize the amount of wealth available for taxation.[33]

Conversely, conflictive state–local armed actor relations can generate less restrictive conditions on associational life. When the state is not an ally but an adversary, local armed actors adopt more surreptitious practices in their daily operations and exhibit diminished capacity to maintain order. Hence, conflictive relations can produce a more leveled distribution of authority between local armed actors and communities. This dynamic is most evident in the case of Rio de Janeiro's drug gangs, which operate at odds with the state and garrison the territories under their control to limit the incursion of state security forces and illicit competitors. Yet, conflictive relations with the state can paradoxically provide local political officials and community leaders increased autonomy in exchange for serving as intermediaries between the drug gangs and the state. In Nairobi, LeBas finds that the deterioration of relations between the Kenyan central government and urban militias forced the latter to restructure their organization into individual cells with limited visibility and engagement—a sharp contrast to earlier periods when collaborative relations with

[33] Local actors in contexts of collaborative relations consequently resemble Olson's (1993) stationary bandits that use coercive force to shape local order, but also to ensure economic success in the territories under their control.

the state enabled militias to closely regulate associational life. While conflictive relations constrain the ability of local armed actors to shape localized order, the resulting autonomy that communities obtain is not only limited but also fragile, as gains in autonomy can be offset by the collateral damage generated by violent local clashes taking place between the state and armed actors.

Actors can also use violence to preserve pre-existing orders that favor their political interests. Weinstein shows how different levels of the Indian state engage in violent slum demolitions in Mumbai to maintain localized orders vital for political power. While municipal governments deployed demolitions to preserve valuable networks of patronage politics, the central government used slum demolitions to signal its formal political authority amidst swelling popular protest in response to mounting evidence of public-sector corruption. Across the state-led demolitions, the broader implications for development remained constant: the failure of the state to advance concrete solutions to the city's housing crisis, overcrowding, and the political exclusion of a sizeable portion of Mumbai's population.

Finally, violence can also threaten pre-existing orders. Moncada shows how urban violence carried out by youth gangs linked to the drug cartel in Medellin, Colombia, in the early 1990s was perceived by the city's powerful industrial sector as evidence that the exclusionary order through which the private sector had maintained social control and a privileged position in local politics was collapsing. The reformist response to violence in Medellin, proposed by a unique coalition between the national government and local civil society, further alarmed business because it emphasized the redistribution of political and economic resources to the city's underprivileged. Moncada's analysis shows how violence is not only integral for building and maintaining localized orders but can also threaten orders within developing-world cities and trigger mobilizations for their preservation by vested interests, including the urban private sector.

Economic Globalization, Urban Violence, and Global Cities

Over four decades ago, the urban studies literature began to situate cities within the broader processes of global economic expansion and development (Castells 1972; Harvey 1973). Since then, much of the global cities literature has been based on analyses of the integration of major U.S. and Western European cities into the formal international economy (Friedmann and Wolff 1982; Friedmann 1986; Sassen 1998). The predominant focus on a few urban centers, such as New York and London, has produced an artificial division between cities viewed by scholars as intricately intertwined with and thus integral to globalization, and "non-global" cities that are seen as relatively immune to international forces (McCann 2002; Robinson 2002, 2008). Other currents in the global cities literature posit that developing-world cities will simply follow in the footsteps of their U.S. and European counterparts and embark on a linear path of urban internationalization.[34] Both perspectives, however, overlook the political challenges and opportunities particular to cities in the Global South as they are exposed to international market demands and pressures by local elites to integrate into the global economy.

[34] See Olds and Yeung (2004) on this point.

The transformative impact of economic globalization on cities in the Global South is evident in shifting urban geographies (Grant and Nijman 2002), economies (Aguilar et al. 2003), and demographics (Benton-Short et al. 2005).[35] This volume highlights the potential analytical dividends of increased dialogue between scholars of global cities and those of the politics of urban violence. Illicit economic flows impact many of the dimensions of urban development at the center of the global cities research agenda, including the composition of local labor markets, the urban built environment, and social polarization.

Much of the global cities literature highlights how economic integration reshapes local labor markets by generating jobs in the finance and business service sectors and reducing employment in traditional manufacturing jobs (Hamnett 1994). Yet, the exposure of developing world cities to illicit global markets, such as the narcotics trade, also has varied effects on urban labor markets, from absorbing unemployed young men into the ranks of local armed groups to limiting the chances for formal employment due to decreased physical mobility as a response to fear of victimization. Evident across the papers by Arias, LeBas, and Moncada is the idea that a surplus of underprivileged young men who are locked out of formal labor markets is a key pre-condition for the formation and evolution of violent local armed actors. Additionally, the severe financial strains on informal micro- and small businesses, which are often targeted for extortion by local armed actors, introduce further uncertainty into local labor markets.

While the global cities literature discusses how integration into the world economy reshapes the urban built environment in ways amenable to the needs and preferences of the local professional class and foreign capital (Sassen 2000: 82–83), illicit economic flows can also transform the built environment. As major developing-world cities become nodes in illicit global markets, one of the most visible side effects is evident in local real estate markets that become fertile grounds for the laundering of unlawful profits, often through the construction of luxury housing and high-priced professional office space.[36] The recent influx of Colombian drug trade profits into Panama City, for example, has fueled a boom in the building of sky-scrapers that not only promises to indelibly reshape the city's skyline but also threatens to catalyze a real estate bubble based on speculative investment.[37] Through a more micro-level approach, Arias shows that local armed actors in Rio de Janeiro contributed to localized real estate bubbles by engaging in land appropriation as part of their efforts to maintain and benefit from territorial control.

Several contributors also build on previous research that examines how urban political and business interests deploy powerful policy discourses linked with the imperative of building global cities to legitimize self-regarding activities (Parnell and Robinson 2006: 339). Weinstein argues that the Indian state uses the discourse of global cities to justify slum clearances as a necessary cost in the march toward modernization and the transformation of Mumbai into a global city following the

[35] See Davis (2005) for an overview of the evolution of research on the linkages between developing world cities and the global economy.

[36] In the late nineteenth century, Shanghai's key role as a transit point for the then British-sponsored opium trade led to the investment of drug profits into the construction of "grandiose architecture" on prime riverfront real estate (Nijman 2007: 100).

[37] Reuters. "Construction Boom in Panama is Built on Drug Money." December 30, 2007.

"model of Shanghai."[38] Yet, when the proposed infrastructural or commercial developments do not follow after the slum clearances take place and substantial numbers of vulnerable residents have been displaced, it becomes evident that the dispossessions are instead rooted in the preservation of the existing political order. Moncada argues, however, that the pressure to become a global city can generate local political openings that enable the advancement of innovative policy responses to urban violence. In the cases of Bogota and Medellin, internationally oriented service sectors mobilized to advance policy responses to urban violence that were integral to rebrand their cities and attract foreign investment. Yet, the resulting policy responses were not only pivotal for improving local investment climates but also had substantial implications for local democracy and the distribution of political power.

Finally, research on global cities also considers how the restructuring of local labor markets contributes to social polarization and inequality through the concentration of urban job growth at the low and high ends of the employment ladder (Friedmann 1986: 77). Research on the politics of urban violence identifies how the sudden influx of illicit profits into a city can disrupt exclusionary localized orders when local armed actors embedded within underprivileged communities secure large amounts of capital and, consequently, influence and power. In Rio de Janeiro, the financial rents that drug gangs and police-linked militias extract from territories under their control enable them to either entice or force the traditional political class into ceding authority over the formal levers of political power in exchange for a share of the political and economic spoils. The case of Medellin illustrates how conflictive relations between the state and local armed actors can tap into underlying class cleavages and broadens the scope of the conflict to include issues of inequality and political marginalization.[39] This volume thus identifies points of intersection for increased exchange between scholars of global cities and the politics of urban violence that could provide deeper understandings of urban politics in the Global South.

Multi-level Territorial and Institutional Politics

Though this volume focuses on violence within cities, the political forces that shape the dynamics of and responses to urban violence unfold across multiple territorial and institutional scales. The contributions assembled here show how attention to politics at various territorial and institutional scales yields analytic insights that can help account for otherwise puzzling patterns of urban violence. To explain violent slum demolitions in Mumbai, Weinstein shows that it is necessary to look within the state at the political battles between varying levels of government to preserve existing institutions that shape political order. Without deploying a multi-level lens, it would not be possible to explain the empirical dynamics of urban violence that Weinstein observes in Mumbai.

The contribution by LeBas yields insights into how relations between the state and local armed actors operating at distinct territorial levels can intersect in different ways within cities and affect the dynamics of violence and order. Through controlled comparisons of two similar cities in different countries, LeBas obtains analytic

[38] On the discourse of global cities, see McCann (2002).

[39] Roldán (1999: 171–74) provides an illuminating analysis of these dynamics in Medellin.

leverage on how the contrasting positions of the Kenyan and Nigerian central governments vis-a-vis urban militias produce varied patterns of local violence. In Kenya, the national government's hardline position toward the militias leads to violence that claims local victims and compounds the sense of insecurity. By contrast, the Nigerian government's explicit strategy of co-opting and collaborating with the militias yields comparatively less indiscriminate violence. In both cases, the stability of relations between the central governments and militias is vulnerable to tenuous political alliances and loyalties that shift over time. Indeed, LeBas notes that whereas in the 1990s the Kenyan central government was able to constrict the militias' use of indiscriminate violence, by the 2000s the breakdown in relations between the armed actors and national political leaders freed the militias from such restrictions.

Attention to interests and actors at multiple territorial and institutional scales also advances our understanding of the role that multi-level political coalitions play in the politics of urban violence. The contribution by Moncada underscores the potential for multi-level coalitions to influence the nature and trajectory of local policy responses to violence. Members of coalitions that span territorial levels can leverage partnerships with actors at distinct scales to access resources they would otherwise lack and strengthen their own political positions. In analyzing the case of Cali, for example, Moncada finds that business interests in favor of coercive responses to local violence actively pursued strategic partnerships with the national government to increase the political pressure on and opposition to a reformist local government. Local grassroots civil society can also secure strategic benefits from allying with national political actors and institutions. In Medellin, grassroots civil society organizations partnered with the national government not only to advance a reformist policy response to urban violence but also to obtain greater local legitimacy and visibility at a time when leaders were being targeted for assassination by local armed actors and elements of the police. The case of Medellin, however, also highlights the limitations of multi-level coalitions, as the partnership between local civil society and the national government was ultimately unable to overcome entrenched opposition of local business in collaboration with local government. The analysis thus indicates that multi-level coalitions must still negotiate powerful local institutions and interests in order to realize their political objectives.

Future Research

This special issue provides fresh insights into the politics of urban violence and the challenges it raises for development in the Global South. The findings collectively suggest a number of promising areas for future research. First, there is a general need for more empirical research and collection of data on the varied actors and relations at the center of the politics of urban violence. The dangers associated with conducting research in contexts of intense violence, coupled with the often illicit and hidden nature of the relations between the relevant actors, pose numerous obstacles in this regard. Nonetheless, both the special issue and previous studies (e.g., Arias 2006; Rodgers 2006) highlight how combining multiple methods—including deep ethnography, archival analysis, and participant observation—can advance our empirical knowledge and theoretical understanding of the politics of urban violence and its consequences for development.

Second, among the key findings is the centrality of the relationship between the state and local armed actors for explaining patterns of violence, the dynamics of order and disorder, and a range of outcomes that affect the prospects for development. The importance of state–local armed actor relations within the politics of urban violence underscores the need to develop a more dynamic understanding of the conditions under which these relations emerge, evolve, and deteriorate. By disaggregating the state in order to explain patterns of violence, several contributors highlight the potential to apply a similar approach to local armed actors.[40] LeBas's analysis alerts us to the danger of assuming that the origins, internal structure, and guiding principles of local armed actors can be traced back to one overarching characteristic, such as ethnicity. Disaggregated approaches to the study of insurgent groups have shown how competing factions within rebel organizations affect the construction of alternative governance systems (Mampilly 2011).[41] As Arias shows, moving beyond a unitary conceptualization of local armed actors and instead disaggregating them into distinct levels of authority, decision-making, and functions helps account for shifts in the nature of relations between local armed actors and the state and, in turn, the consequences these shifts pose for development. Moreover, a disaggregated approach enables us to relax the assumption that collaboration or conflict between the state and local armed actors reflects a structured and intended form of interaction, and instead allows for the possibility that these relations are the outcomes of clashes between competing interests that exist within both.

Third, several contributors raise broader questions about the role of communities in the politics of urban violence. What roles do communities play in facilitating or constraining the efforts of local armed actors to establish localized orders? What are the implications of community strategies toward local armed actors for patterns of urban violence? While local armed actors provide a range of goods and services, including security, to the communities where they operate, the provision of these resources can also be a response to local demand making and strategizing. Additional research from the viewpoint of community members could help establish the range of strategies that segments of local communities—including business owners, social organizations, and youth—deploy to negotiate violence and interact with local armed actors. Complementing a top-down perspective on relations between the state and local armed actors with a bottom-up analysis of relations among segments of communities and local armed actors will allow for a more robust understanding of the politics of urban violence and its consequences.

Fourth, while urban violence features prominently on the twenty-first-century development agenda, this special issue underscores the importance of situating violence in its historical context. Longitudinal studies can yield valuable empirical data and observations, which can then be used to devise stronger tests for our theories and hypotheses on the origins, dynamics, and politics of urban violence. Studies of urban violence that employ a historical lens alert us to the continuing influence of longstanding institutions of political and social order on present-day expressions of urban violence.

[40] On the analytical value of a disaggregated approach to state when analyzing its interactions with societal actors, see Migdal (1994: Chapter 1).

[41] Other civil war studies have also yielded insights into how variation in the internal structures of rebel groups shapes their use of violence (Weinstein 2006).

And finally, this special issue highlights the need for additional cross-regional comparative analysis on the politics of urban violence. Much of the research on urban violence, local armed actors, and citizen security is segmented into regional silos. The findings presented in this volume illustrate the potential analytical dividends that can be gained from comparing cities across national settings. Cross-regional comparisons will enable us to test the boundaries of existing theories and advance our understandings of the factors that shape patterns of violence, the evolution and decay of localized orders, and their implications for development in the Global South.

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