The Nexus of Violence, Violence Research, and Development

Introduction to the Focus Section

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This focus section of the *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* is dedicated to violence and violence research in the Global South. It examines the causes, forms, perpetrators, processes, and outcomes of violence. While the contributions go into detail on what is commonly understood as politically motivated violence, they also examine societal, criminal, urban, and gendered violence, as well as the involvement of youth. Four articles explore the significance of violence in specific regions: Africa south of the Sahara, West Asia and North Africa, East Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The authors describe and assess the state of research within and about the different countries. Two further articles review the body of research on the causes of civil war, which has been the dominant issue in much violence-related research on the global South since the end of the Cold War.

The driving idea behind this focus section on violence in the global South was our concern with the nexus between development and violence. In many developing countries violence constitutes a central political, social, and economic problem. On the individual level, the experience of victimization through physical violence is a severe burden. Beyond survivors' trauma and harm, it is society as a whole that bears the cost of violence. Economically weak societies have the greatest difficulties responding to these challenges. Indeed, many societies in the global South face severe endemic forms of violence. Despite a reduction in the frequency of civil wars over the last twenty years, violence rates have remained constant or even risen considerably. The different forms of social, political and criminal violence are often mutually reinforcing, in effects termed "spirals of violence" or "cultures of violence" (Ayres 1998; Buvinic and Morrison n.d.; Heinemann and Verner 2006; Solimano 2004). Despite the severity of the problem, academic and political responses have been slow, inadequate, or non-existent. By providing a relatively broad perspective on the different forms of violence across the global South, we seek to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of violence in its different forms, causes, and outcomes. We hope that the contributions we have brought together in this focus section will assist future comparative research that brings together different strands and areas of research, and thereby helps to develop cross-cutting political initiatives for reducing violence in the global South.

The societal damage done by violence may be divided into three categories: Where violence prevails, development structures are undermined, poverty is aggravated, and states and civil societies come under pressure (WHO 2002; UNDP 2006; Institute for Economics and Peace 2010). Direct and indirect costs for the affected societies are immense. Lost economic growth due to societal violence amounts to 10–30 percent of GDP. In its 2010 report, the Global Peace Index estimates the total cost of violence for 2006–2009 at $28 trillion worldwide. A reduction of 25 percent would yield a gain of more than $7 trillion that

could be spent for other purposes. Violence therefore is a heavy structural economic burden for societies. Violence diverts investment resources away from development.

Many authors demonstrate a convincing, mutually reinforcing relationship between poverty and violence. Poverty leads to violence, and violence intensifies poverty. It is no accident that countries with a low level of economic development and strong social inequality have the greatest problems with violence. Violence also leads to serious deformation of social structures, to a significant increase in social inequality, and to even more unequal distribution of income and wealth (DIW 2009; Groot, Brück, and Bozzoli 2009). Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) add to this relationship the fact that severe inequality likely leads to violence. This is not only true for the OECD countries. The insights are even more pronounced for the countries of the global South. Violence within societies worst affects those parts of the population that cannot safeguard themselves due to poverty or lack of resources. Therefore, at the same time, violence foils all efforts to reduce poverty.

On the level of societal and state institutions, democracy and the rule of law are regularly delegitimized, paralyzed, or made dysfunctional by high levels of intra-societal violence. Where people live in conditions of fear and insecurity, democratic political systems become destabilized. Civil society organizations, including the media, may no longer be able to fulfill their task of controlling the state and enhancing political debate if they are themselves threatened. State security organs confronted with high levels of (criminal) violence often themselves turn into risk factors. In many countries, police and other armed forces do not provide security, but are a main source of insecurity.

In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, violence and its effects are no longer restricted to single countries. Phenomena such as transnational criminality, drug trafficking, the spillover of armed conflicts into neighboring states, and international terrorism are among the international costs. Countries in both the global South and the North must respond to such threats. The control of violence and its effects has become a major issue for the OECD states, often under the label of "security." If informed by research, they may able to develop differentiated sets

of interventions instead of simple repression. Beyond control of violence, however, the global North has a particular responsibility to tackle the causes of violence. In the face of global economic crisis resulting largely from economic policies in the global North, international organizations like WHO, UNDP, and the World Bank (2011) have repeatedly warned against worsening violent disintegration processes within already heterogeneous and fragmented societies in the global South.

Violence Research in the Global South

It may be regarded as established fact that certain problems of development are most fruitfully and sustainably resolved by the concerned societies themselves. Also regarding the nexus of violence and development, the ideal path would be for research to be conducted primarily from within societies struggling with forms of intra-societal violence. The geographical contributions in this focus section therefore also provide an overview about the specific situation of violence research within the countries they survey. It is no surprise that the situation for violence research at universities and academic research institutions differs widely, depending for example on the general level of development, the liberal or illiberal constitution of society, the democratic or authoritarian character of the state, the overall level of violence, the kind of violence involved, and public awareness of violence as a central problem.

Overall, despite the scale of the problem, violence research is nearly non-existent in many developing countries. Where such research exists, researchers themselves have to deal with serious challenges. It is often undertaken on an ad-hoc basis with rigid financial budgets but without adequate institutionalized structures. In many countries there is a complete lack of empirical research. In others it is dangerous to study violence because powerful groups in society or the state fear discovery of their involvement. For example, it is not unusual for journalists who investigate violence to suffer attack precisely because they shed light on forms of violence in a way that constitutes a threat to strongmen or formal political authorities.

There is no general relationship between the occurrence or visibility of violence in a society and the degree of in-

stitutionalization of violence research. Violence research is by far the most intense and most thoroughly institutionalized in North America and Western Europe, where societies endure comparatively low levels of violence. Our survey shows that the situation for institutionalized violence research in the global South is best in Latin America, which has long faced tremendous levels of violence, but also has a long endogenous social science tradition of its own. Still, it is individual scholars at universities (rather than dedicated research institutes) who do most of the impressive research with a specific focus on violence. On the other end of the spectrum we find certain Arab states, where even the most basic research on violence is difficult due to the authoritarian state. Institutionalization is weakest in sub-Saharan Africa, due to lack of material resources and state repression. With the exception of some countries in Latin America, India and its neighbors, and South Africa, our knowledge about violence in most of the developing world therefore generally stems from international institutions in North America and Europe. Partially redressing the balance, scholars socialized in the global South but based in these northern institutions provide important and detailed insight into the dynamics of violence in their countries of origin.

The sorry state of violence research in the global South has two further implications: On the one hand, there is very limited capacity for scientists in developing countries to tackle violence, analyze root causes, look at opportunity structures, and develop constructive intervention programs. On the other, the dissemination of academic research results to an interested public or to state authorities is almost non-existent. Police forces resort to repressive and unproductive means not only as a rational tool, but also because they lack practical knowledge of preventive or constructive measures to deal with violence in society.

Comparing the different situations of violence research in different regions of the developing world, we can draw the following conclusions:

• There are great differences between the various regions of the world and even between countries within a region. In general, Latin American countries are better off; academic

output increased enormously during recent decades and research has been greatly professionalized. Although sub-Saharan Africa is hard hit by different forms of violence, we find many countries without any violence research. This situation reflects the low level of institutionalization of social sciences in general. In the Arab countries politically adverse conditions are the main reason for the long absence of violence research across the whole region. Current developments with anti-regime protests and social uprisings may in the mid-term enhance the possibilities to establish conflict and violence research.

• In most of the developing countries of Africa and Asia there are huge discrepancies between local and international violence research. In general, most of the knowledge about these countries produced by international organizations and research institutions in the global North adheres to academic standards, is more thoroughly researched and reviewed, and allows for comparison across countries and regions. This has important negative consequences, because scientific findings from abroad are much less suited for stimulating public or political debates within a country. Violence research is likely to gain more attention and legitimacy when it comes from within the society rather than from abroad.

• The local acceptance of violence research depends on a variety of factors that are almost unchangeable in the short run. In many societies there are cultural or religious taboos against talking about certain forms of violence, or even acknowledging specific behaviors as violent. In these and other cases, paternalistic or authoritarian regimes forestall debates about violence and its consequences for the victims and for society at large. In repressive political systems, or where criminal organizations have a measure of authority over society, hegemonic discourses produce a culture of fear that eventually leads to strong self-censorship.

• The legitimacy of institutionalized research on violence within the countries of the Global South depends not only on general knowledge about the detrimental aspects of violence for economic development and social progress but also on the general level of support that the social sciences enjoy in the academic field. The existence of

more or less strong social science departments seems to be a prerequisite for the successful establishment of violence research units. The better the social sciences are established, the more probable is the presence of violence research in a country.

· To this day, we have in most of the developing countries a strong contrast between the occurrence of violence and the absence of institutionalized scientific violence research at universities or other academic institutions. Although there has been some progress during recent years, there is still a lot of work to do. Many social scientists from the global South are effectively integrated neither in international scientific networks nor in regional initiatives and forums. The lack of staff, equipment, and financial backing has to be overcome if violence research from the global South is to intervene in public discourse or public affairs. It should also be stressed that research on social conflicts and violence is an essential element for the constructive resolution of violent conflicts and economic and social development at large. Therefore, the international community should strengthen efforts to establish institutions of violence research within the countries of the global South and to improve conditions for violence research.

The latter aspects belong to the strong motivation for the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG) at the University of Bielefeld to establish an International Centre for Violence Research to facilitate international cooperation and exchange for violence researchers from all around the world, but primarily from the global South. The centre is designed as a platform and forum to establish and foster violence research within the developing countries themselves. The articles that follow are partly a direct result of this initiative. They serve to provide a clearer picture of the state of the art with regard to violence research in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Some Introductory Remarks about the Articles

The articles in this focus section approach phenomena of violence from a multi-angled perspective. Four of them tackle the issue from a regional point of view, surveying Africa south of the Sahara, West and South Asia, Northeast

and Southeast Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Area studies have a long tradition in the social sciences, which, although entailing many difficulties such as lack of communication between experts in different areas, also offers the advantage that within their geographic range scholars often engage in debates beyond the narrow confines of their specific subject and communicate with scholars working on related topics within the same region. Area studies are thus well situated to capture the contextual structures of phenomena of violence, but tend to hinder cross-regional comparative approaches. Similar phenomena of violence, as the contributions in this focus section confirm, occur in different regions, if often during different historical periods. Two thematic contributions serve as examples of comparative violence research: one on the diffusion of violent conflicts within particular regions, the other on the connection between natural resources and political conflict. Alongside their important topical insights, these articles illustrate the opportunities and difficulties of multi-case comparisons.

The articles in this volume concentrate on the articulation of violence as physical violation of bodily integrity. Following Heinrich Popitz (1992, 48), we define violence as "power in action" *(Aktionsmacht)*. According to Popitz, violence may be understood as a power resource that greatly increases the chance of enforcing one's will with immediate effect. Violence is physical assault that results in deliberate bodily injury to others. We adhere to this narrow definition of violence, because compared to more wide-ranging concepts of violence it has the advantage of clearly delineating a manageable field of analysis and not blurring the difference between action-power and structural power.

By contrast, the concept of structural violence, which Johan Galtung (1969, 114) defines as violence that is "built into the structure, and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances," widens the scope of the term to a point where it becomes too vast to handle. While we agree that violence is institutionalized in relationships of domination, to understand every aspect of power relationships as violence invites analytical confusion between causes, consequences, structures, and actual incidences. Only a narrowly circumscribed concept of violence

allows us to analyze connections between physical assaults and structural pressures and constraints. Furthermore, because the definition of violence is not only disputed in academic debate, but also subject to cultural evolution, comparability across continents depends on a cross-culturally applicable definition of key terms.

As another "disclaimer," we note that although violence research encompasses sociological, political, historical, social psychological, criminological, and health aspects, the articles in this section are mainly written from a political science, sociological, and historical perspective. The literature selection surely has a bias towards these disciplines. Our authors have, however, included at least some basic insights from other disciplines.

The area specialists who wrote for this focus section were asked to provide relatively broad literature reviews. First, they look at specific articulations of violence, so as to outline common ground for potential future comparative approaches. The main review articles thus take into consideration four major dimensions: social violence, political violence, gender aspects of violence, and youth as perpetrators or victims of violence. Secondly, the authors were asked to select from among the various violence-related topics and bodies of literature those which they thought particularly relevant in the respective regions, those that stir controversial debates, and those that appear most fruitful for further research. Despite their broad approach, however, none of the articles can claim to comprehensively cover the entire spectrum of violence research in its region.

The geographical contributions each begin with a historical overview. The historical development of violence is particularly pertinent because violence and its different forms change in occurrence, intensity, and repercussions. There are also trends of increasing or decreasing violence over time, and some societies that were once more or less peaceful became more violent due to particular events (and vice versa). Understanding such developments requires at least a brief historical contextualization. We thus asked authors to take a closer look at what has changed in society and how forms of violence, as well as research on violence, have changed over time.

A second important aspect is to explain phenomena of violence as dynamic processes involving various actors. This implies looking for causes of specific forms of violence, and the conditions under which they occur. Furthermore, it is important to understand the violent processes themselves as well as their structural contexts and actor constellations. Finally, the consequences of violence need to be analyzed.

A third point of reference for the articles is academic debates and societal discourse. Across societies and historical periods, neither is the meaning of violence undisputed, nor are there clear cut definitions of violence. There are contradictory explanations for the origins and causes of violence as well as contrasting views with regard to its legitimacy. The articles thus also describe the controversies and discussions around violence within the countries of the global South.

In their review on violence and violence research in Africa south of the Sahara, Alex Veit, Vanessa Barolsky, and Suren Pillay set out to identify the most prominent fields of research, tracing the connections between violence and politics during different historical phases. They show how a comparatively high rate of political violence and large-scale civil strife contrasts with a very low level of local research. Most research on violence is undertaken in institutions outside of Africa, with South Africa representing a notable exception. Differentiating between political violence, criminal violence, and youth violence, they describe developments and analyze the debates of recent decades. They argue that violence research has recently gained important insights by moving beyond a focus on political violence and civil war. However, what appeared to be a privatization of violence may more fruitfully be understood in the context of a reformulation of state-society relations. Because violence is at the very heart of this relationship, research that takes the institutional context into consideration has the potential to improve knowledge about causes, processes, and consequences of violence, and also provide important insights on the political and institutional landscape of the continent.

Boris Wilke, Jochen Hippler, and Muhammad Zakar provide a historical and structural overview of violence research in West and South Asia, including North Africa.

They show that social sciences as a whole are weakly institutionalized in West Asia (with the exception of Turkey), and that this is even more true for violence research. Many universities and research institutions are badly underfunded and cut off from international research networks, and face other reasons that impede violence research. Concrete conditions vary from country to country, but the result is similar to Africa: Most of the research on different forms of violence is done by foreign scholars or by local academics working abroad, and many analyses originate from journalists or civil society activists. Dealing with what is in general a highly conflictive region, the authors concentrate on political violence (inter-state and intra-state conflicts), without neglecting forms of religious violence, youth violence, and domestic or gendered violence. Their treatment of two different regions within Asia opens up interesting comparative perspectives. But most of the reviewed studies remain descriptive in character. While there are some important studies on political violence, youth violence and domestic violence have long been neglected despite their prevalence. In some South Asian countries, such as India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, violence research is more thoroughly institutionalized. However these institutions tend to focus on state-centered, policy-oriented security studies. It is almost only in India that scholars (attached to the Subaltern Studies school) employ a sociologically and historically informed perspective on violence within society.

Violence research in Northeast and Southeast Asia has traditionally focused on political violence too, as Oliver Hensengerth shows in his overview. The importance of political violence comes from the violent history of most countries in the region since World War II. Hensengerth covers ethnic and religious violence, secessionism, violence by the state, the Indochina Wars, and internal political conflicts. In contrast to these forms, youth, urban, and domestic violence have only recently become part of the scientific discourse. Youth violence seems to occupy only a marginal role, with problems of youth often discussed only in relation to political events. That has to do with the paternalistic authoritarian context of many societies in the region. Historically, we can identify the important impact and legacy of colonialism on current conflict patterns,

leading in many countries to questions of violent nation building. Hensengerth differentiates regime survival, state integrity and identity questions, ethno-religious violence, and political Islam. All forms apart from political violence are understudied. Urban violence is a relatively recent phenomenon, but with the growth of the cities important problems are arising. Domestic violence is an issue in all countries, but it could not be discussed everywhere. Youth violence is the most neglected form of violence. Although there are important differences with regard to violence and violence research within the region, there are some important institutions at least in the more developed countries.

According to Peter Imbusch, Michel Misse, and Fernando Carrión, and contrasting with the other continents, Latin America and the Caribbean have a very lively research community on nearly all kinds of violence. The fact that the subcontinent has a long history of violence has inspired many researchers to ask questions about the meaning, causes, and social and economic implications of violence. Although the structural situation for violence research is very different in the various countries due to specific histories of violence, authoritarian traditions, cultural aspects, etc., there are many local researchers that address political violence, domestic violence, and youth violence. It is the recent experience with large-scale political violence, for example the brutal dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s, and the tremendous rise in social and criminal violence thereafter, that has alarmed people and the states and provoked social scientists to do more research on this important field. As a result of these efforts, the volume of research is huge and literature surveys are liable to fill whole books. The authors have written a concise overview of the general state of violence research in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as covering the extent and differentiation of the phenomenon in single countries. Complementing the other articles in this section, they also address causes and determinants of violence, the social costs of violent crime, and strategies against violence in more detail. Due to the enormous amount of violence, in-depth studies come not only from Latin American scholars but also from international organizations and academic institutions in North America and Europe. Despite this attention, there

are few genuine centers for violence research on the subcontinent.

Comparative findings on specific issues in conflict and violence research may well apply also to violent phenomena outside the global South. Given however that the large majority of contemporary wars, armed conflicts, and violence takes place in the global South, the following authors of the focus section provide further important insights. Nadine Ansorg concentrates on what may be called "bad neighborhoods," regions where one or more countries are affected by civil strife. These are more likely to be found in economically marginalized areas of the world. Similarly, natural resources play a far more determining role in countries of the global South, both regarding their importance for national economies, and their impact on the likelihood of armed conflict. Thus the contribution by Gitta Lauster, Stormy-Annika Mildner, and Wiebke Wodni on the nexus between armed conflict and natural resources is of great relevance for a focus section on the global South.

Nadine Ansorg's contribution argues that, despite the avalanche of research on the topic, it is still not evident how militant violence diffuses into the immediate neighboring countries of violence-affected states. Furthermore, the emergence of regional conflict systems remains puzzling from a comparative perspective. Empirically, it seems clear that since World War II, the major actor groups in wars are not only state armies, but also a variety of non-state armed organizations. The latter often develop relationships beyond their national borders, out of which regional conflict systems emerge. Focusing mainly on African cases, but also looking at West Asia, she shows that conventional theories fail to transgress the boundaries of methodological nationalism, a prism that takes state borders as determining structures for violent conflict as a given. Furthermore, existing studies tend to focus on particular factors, or do not take into account the process character of regional

conflict developments. They are therefore unable to adequately explain international or local dynamics of violent conflict.

In their article on natural resources and conflict, Gitta Lauster, Stormy-Annika Mildner, and Wiebke Wodni focus on the role of natural resources, and argue that existing comparative studies do not really define what they mean by scarcity or abundance of natural resources. The findings from these studies are thus not only conflicting, but also non-comparable. The neo-Malthusian argument that armed conflicts are caused by a scarcity of resources seems to have been largely refuted. However, the argument that an abundance of natural resources, for example diamonds, is a causal factor for the emergence of civil wars, has been more successful. But even the most prominent proponents of the thesis agree by now that it is problematic to infer the motivation of warring groups from deposits of natural resources or to conclude that rebel "greed" causes armed conflict. At present, research indicates that resources are merely a structural condition that facilitates, but does not cause, civil war. The authors argue therefore that comparative approaches on the resource-war nexus need to be improved.

The focus section on "Violence and Violence Research in the Global South" thus provides manifold insights into the dynamics of violent conflicts, but also challenges for cross-regional comparative analyses. Together, the contributions demonstrate that such research needs to be clear about definitions and variables, sensitive to cultural, social, and political contexts, and understand that phenomena of violence have a history. While this may sound like the proverbial squaring of the circle, the focus section also shows that similar phenomena of violence can be found in many different societies and during different historical periods. We hope that it might instigate further comparative research across regions of the global South (and the North) that might help to reduce the negative impact of violence on social and economic development.

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