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The violence of development: Guerrillas, gangs, and goondas in perspective

Gareth A. Jones and Dennis Rodgers¹

Abstract: *This chapter analyses the intuitively compelling assumption that violence is inimical to development. Ever since Marx argued that the development of Europe proceeded through “primitive accumulation”, many writers from a wide range of theoretical perspectives have in fact regarded development as inherently reliant on coercion and force. The chapter provides a brief survey of arguments that violence is linked with development before outlining three examples – the cases of guerrillas, gangs and goondas - that, we argue, exposes the more productive associations of violence. We accept that not all violence is developmental, but the chapter highlights the importance of being able to understand the conditions and forms under which violence might or might not be progressive, and how and why development becomes linked to violence, and when this relationship potentially dissipates.*

“Dangerous human proclivities can be canalized into comparatively harmless channels by the existence of opportunity for money-making and private wealth, which, if they cannot be satisfied in this way, may find their outlet in cruelty, the reckless pursuit of power and authority, and other forms of self-aggrandizement.”

- John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, 1936: 374)

(1) Introduction: Violence and development

There has been a growing debate during the past decade or so in development studies regarding the nature of what is generally referred to as the “security-development nexus” (Buur *et al.*, 2007; Duffield, 2007). Although different conceptions of this nexus exist, a mainstream consensus seems to have emerged – especially within policy circles – whereby ‘conflict’ is broadly seen as a phenomenon that is the opposite of ‘development’. This particular vision of things was pithily summarised by Collier *et al.* (2003: 3), when they contended that “war retards development, but conversely, development retards war”. Certainly, according to data provided by the 2008 Report on the *Global Burden of Armed Violence*, the monetary value of lost productivity due to premature deaths worldwide might fall between US\$95 and US\$163 billion per year (Geneva Declaration, 2008). Moreover, as the UN Millennium Project (2005: 183) observed, “of the 34 poor countries farthest from reaching the [Millennium Development] Goals, 22 are in or emerging from conflict”, and more generally, studies have suggested that so-called ‘failing’ or ‘fragile’ states have the

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worst record in conventional development terms (Kharas and Rogerson, 2012). From this perspective, as the World Bank's 2011 *World Development Report* on "Conflict, Security, and Development" made plain, the need to "accept the links between security and development outcomes" would seem obvious (2011: 276; for critiques, see Jones and Rodgers, 2011; Watts, 2012).

As the quote by John Maynard Keynes above highlights, however, such a vision of things is by no means new. Keynes was writing in the aftermath of the Great Depression and was effectively warning that without the promise of future prosperity then base human instincts might threaten violence, authoritarianism and corruption in the future. His observation of course proved prescient but it overlooked the fact that "cruelty, the reckless pursuit of power and authority, and other forms of self-aggrandizement" constitute a fairly accurate précis of the colonialism that was arguably the origin of the exceptional economic growth enjoyed by Europe during the latter half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th (see Davis, 2001; Rodney, 1972). Certainly, as Karl Marx (1967 [1887]) famously discussed in Volume 1 of *Capital*, there can be little doubt that Empire constituted a major spur for the extension of endogenous European capitalism.

Marx focussed principally on the way the resources from Empire provided the basis for factory production in Europe in the form of raw materials, and how this reorganisation of production entailed immense "social turmoil" in class relations, but he was very aware that the process of capitalist accumulation was far more destructive in the colonies. Writing in the pages of the *New York Daily Tribune*, for example, Marx (1853) noted how the British Empire was inducing the near total dismantlement of the economic, social and cultural fabric of "Hindustan". Mike Davis (2001) goes even further, and argues that economic development in Europe was in fact actively predicated on the calculated, even deliberate, inducement of death through food scarcity leading to mass starvation. He points particularly to three separate but interrelated global famines that occurred in 1877–78, 1888–91, and 1896–1902, and left between 30 and 60 million people dead in what is now called the 'Global South'. Davis contends that the conventional explanation for these famines, that they were an unfortunate consequence of El Niño, ignores the role of colonial rule in converting land from subsistence to export crops, removing trees to build railroads, changing irrigation patterns that flooded lands, undermining tribal and village institutions, increasing taxation and holding back relief programmes that interfered with the "economic laws" of laissez-faire capitalism.

Numerous critical writers – such as David Harvey (2005), Tania Murray Li (2009), and Saskia Sassen (2010), for example – have echoed Marx's line of analysis, arguing that contemporary capitalism effectively constitutes an updated form of "primitive accumulation". In the name of development, Special Economic Zones, mining concessions, agri-business, major infrastructure and real estate projects involve the deliberate dispossession of resources, especially land, from the poor through state-led combinations of legal measures and coercion (Cáceres, 2014; Hsing, 2010; Jones 1998; Levien, 2013). In many ways, as Robert Bates (2001: 34) put it more broadly, economic production and capital accumulation have always been underpinned by various forms of instrumental violence, to the extent that "coercion and force are as much a part of everyday life as markets and economic exchange". In other words, contrary to Keynes's view that order and peace are achieved through opportunities for money-making, Bates suggests that order, violence and economic accumulation generally operate together and in synch. This is something that obviously has significant implications for contemporary development agendas, potentially undermining the current consensus that negatively associates violence and development, but also highlighting that development is not necessarily a benign process, and generally involves both winners and losers.

Seen from this perspective, it can be argued that violence is in fact at the centre of development processes, and this both implicitly and explicitly. Implicitly, we only have to

think of the case that Frantz Fanon (1961) famously made over half a century ago justifying anti-colonial violence as a legitimate reaction to imperialism's brutal production of "the Wretched of the Earth". Although the legitimisation of violence has fallen out of fashion in the contemporary period, Fanon's general line of thinking arguably continues in the form of debates about "structural violence" (see Farmer, 1992 & 1996). Explicitly, however, it is perhaps in relation to so-called "non-state armed actors" that violence emerges most clearly as a major developmental issue. Part of the reason for this is the widespread notion that there has been a global decline of state authoritarianism in the past few decades. Whereas states in the past were generally the principal institutional vectors for instances of large-scale violence such as those associated with colonialism, the end of the Cold War is generally perceived as having constituted the culmination not only of a long process of decolonisation but also the beginning of a world-wide wave of democratization, and concomitantly a transformation in the political economy of violence (Allen, 1999; Kruijt and Koonings, 1999; Westad, 2005). In particular, planetary brutality is now understood to stem mainly from non-state sources, such as militias, gangs, drug trafficking organisations, or "global ideological struggles" – i.e. guerrilla groups and terrorist organisations (World Bank, 2011: 54).

It is interesting to note that these non-state armed actors are more often than not seen as inherently non-development, insofar as they are generally considered to be parochial in nature, predicated on a 'spoils politics', and concerned with extraction rather than production (Hazen, 2013). There is however an established body of literature that considers violent non-state armed actors in much more productive terms, including for example Charles Tilly's (1985) famous work on "war-making and state-making as organised crime", where he explicitly traces the developmental aspects of non-state armed actors from a historical perspective, or Vadim Volkov's (2002) analysis of "violent entrepreneurs" and the benefits that can accrue to patrons and associates in weak state contexts. This chapter inscribes itself within this tradition, and explores different articulations of three major forms of contemporary non-state violence, namely guerrillas, gangs, and *goondas*, in order to propose a more nuanced conception of the potential relationship between non-state armed actors, violence, and development than is currently mainstream within development studies.

(2) Guerrillas

Guerrillas are often considered to be fundamentally ambiguous in nature. Certainly, it is common to hear the expression – originally inspired by the work of Walter Laqueur (1977) – that "one man's guerrilla is another's freedom fighter" used to suggest that the underlying dynamics of guerrillas are relative. This implicitly challenges the notion that guerrillas might be developmental, insofar as development is generally seen as a normative process, although to a certain extent the real issue here is more the fact that "History is written by the victors" – to quote another famous expression – and unless guerrillas win, they will inevitably be portrayed negatively. Having said this, guerrilla-like phenomena are by no means new. As Eric Hobsbawm (1973: 165) has pointed out, comparing guerrillas and social bandits, "every peasant society is familiar with the 'noble' bandit or Robin Hood who 'takes from the rich to give to the poor'..." – a form of redistribution that is arguably fundamentally developmental in nature, albeit rather local in scope. Hobsbawm (1973: 166) however goes on to suggest that contemporary guerrillas are fundamentally different. In particular, their

"novelty is political, and it is of two kinds. First, situations are now more common when the guerrilla force can rely on mass support... It does so in part by appealing to the common interest of the poor against the rich, the oppressed against the government; and in part by exploiting nationalism... The second

political novelty is the nationalization not only of support for the guerrillas but of the guerrilla force itself... The partisan unit is no longer a purely local growth; it is a body of permanent and mobile cadres around whom the local force is formed.”

Seen from this perspective, modern guerrillas can plausibly be conceived as fundamentally developmental in a much broader way. On the one hand, this is simply an extension of the general notion that revolutions can be intrinsically developmental, insofar as they might free a given population from a situation of oppression or constraint. Even if in reality this is all too frequently a rather conditional claim (see Trotsky, 2004 [1936], for the original statement on the question), one could argue that this makes revolutions a fundamental reflection of Amartya Sen’s (1999) conception of “development as freedom”. On the other hand, it is striking how yesterday’s victorious guerrillas often become the drivers and beneficiaries of tomorrow’s economic development in many countries. Although this is by no means always the case – see Hoffman (2011), Utas (2014) – this certainly occurred in Nicaragua, where the FSLN guerrilla came to power in 1979 before then losing elections in 1990. Although the FSLN was voted back into office in 2006, during its decade and a half out of power, its cadre became the nucleus of a newly emergent “national bourgeoisie”, as Florence Babb (2004) and Dennis Rodgers (2008, 2011) have highlighted. At the origins of this particular development is the fact that the FSLN had not expected to lose the elections in 1990 and faced a critical dilemma following its defeat. As Sergio Ramírez (1999: 55), FSLN vice-president of Nicaragua between 1984 and 1990, described in his memoirs:

“the fact is that *Sandinismo* could not go into opposition without material resources to draw upon, as this would have signified its annihilation. The FSLN needed assets, rents, and these could only be taken from the State, quickly, before the end of the three month transition period [before formally handing power over to the victorious opposition]. As a result there was a hurried and chaotic transfer of buildings, businesses, farms, and stocks to third persons who were to keep them in custody until they could be transferred to the party. In the end, however, the FSLN received almost nothing, and many individual fortunes were constituted through this process instead.”

This somewhat unedifying episode in the FSLN’s history is known as the ‘*piñata*’,² and effectively created the nucleus of a *Sandinista* economic group. Media reports have identified over 50 businesses directly associated with the FSLN, including financial service providers such as Fininsa or Interfin, the Victoria de Julio and Agroinsa sugar refineries, INPASA printers, media outlets such as the Canal 4 television station or the ‘Ya!’ radio stations, as well as Agri-Corp, the biggest distributor of rice and flour in Nicaragua with a US\$100 million turnover (Mayorga, 2007: 92-4). During the mid-1990s there furthermore emerged an organised ‘Sandinista entrepreneurs bloc’ (*bloque de empresarios sandinistas*), led by the former FSLN *commandante* and member of the National Directorate Bayardo Arce Castaño, who is a major stake-holder in Agri-Corp – run by his brother-in-law, Amílcar Ibarra Rojas – and is also associated with the real estate development company Inversiones Compostela, run by his wife, Amelia Ibarra de Arce, which has over US\$4 million worth of investments in Managua. Other members of this group include the prominent *Sandinistas* Dionisio Marengo and Herty Lewites, for example. The group is the financial lifeline of the

² A *piñata* is a decorated *papier-mâché* figure filled with sweets, which often features at parties in Latin America. It is struck with a stick by a blindfolded person until it breaks open and its contents spill out, at which point a scramble ensues as people attempt to grab as many treats as possible.

FSLN, particularly at election time. In 2000, for instance, it raised almost US\$2 million to finance Lewites' campaign to be elected mayor of Managua (see Rodgers, 2011, for further details).

The obvious question concerning this emergent *Sandinista* national bourgeoisie was whether it has been in any way 'progressive', in the pro-nationalist, anti-imperialist Leninist sense of the term, that is to say, whether it became the lynchpin for a process of productive capital accumulation and national development that has been sorely lacking in a post-revolutionary Nicaragua that has 'mal-developed' along neo-liberal lines favouring transnational rather than national interests. The answer is clearly no. Far from seeking reform, what Edelberto Torres-Rivas (2007) famously labelled "right-wing *Sandinismo*" instead established a political-economic settlement whereby Nicaraguan elite and FSLN businesses derive a low-level of profit from exclusive monopolies over protected sectors of the domestic market, disconnected from transnational imperatives. This is a strategy more familiar to 19th century hacienda-style capitalism than any form of progressive capitalism, and to this extent, far from constituting the accession to power of a developmental national bourgeoisie – and even less a return to the utopian politics of Nicaragua's past – the FSLN's electoral return arguably ultimately constituted little more than a wry illustration of Marx's (2004 [1852]: 3) famous aphorism that "great historic facts and personages recur twice... once as tragedy, and again as farce". The greatest irony, however, is that this elite oligarchy is in many ways reminiscent of the political-economic settlement established by the Somoza dynastic dictatorship that held sway over Nicaragua between 1934 and 1979 – and which gave rise the *Sandinista* guerrilla violence in the first place. Seen from this perspective, it is legitimate to wonder if and when a new guerrilla cycle might open up in Nicaragua.

(3) Gangs

Images of urban gangs as the embodiment of a modern-day barbarism are common on cinema and television screens, in magazines and on-line games. Gang member are most usually presented and perceived either as evil and deranged sociopaths, or as the exemplification of an anomic and senseless violence in a world that is increasingly characterised by the loss of traditional socio-political reference points. This view is further reinforced because gangs are conventionally considered as emerging in spaces that lack the tangible signs of development – i.e. in ghettos, slums, or council estates – and are therefore thought to be a response to a lack of accumulation or mechanisms through which to (re)distribute societal wealth such as the welfare state, for example. Nevertheless, a number of studies have also explored the ways in which gangs can be considered as developmental in scope, and as institutional vehicles for economic accumulation.

Although studies most consistently reflect on the cultural and sociological motives for young men to join or form gangs (see e.g. Jensen, 2008), within these narratives is often an economic rationale, the desire to survive in harsh conditions or to 'get out' by making it big (Anderson, 1999; Contreras, 2013; Sánchez-Jankowski, 1991). In most cases, this has involved what might be termed "petty capital accumulation", as most gang activities involves small-scale, localized crime and delinquency such as theft and muggings, as well as, sometimes, extortion and racketeering (Fleisher, 1995; Rodgers, 2006; Thrasher, 1927), although there is a long tradition of studies highlighting how gangs can also facilitate more lucrative economic activities such as drug dealing (Bourgois, 1995; Padilla, 1992). Certainly, gangs can further and protect economic activities through the use or threat of violence which, in economic terms, operates to protect market position and enforce contracts (Beckert and Wehinger, 2013). At the same time, however, gangs need to be careful on how and how much

violence is deployed so as not to draw attention from police or security agencies or the retaliation of local communities (Sánchez Jankowski, 1991; also Anderson, 1999).³

Although gangs are occasionally analysed as proto firms – and the comparator is often mafia organisations – there is a fairly large body of literature that shows that the profits of crime are usually low and generally very unevenly distributed. As Steven Levitt and Sudhir Venkatesh (2000) have highlighted drawing on the latter’s research with a Chicago gang, the profits of street-level drugs trade is only just above viable alternative sources of income due to the fact that “the problem of crack dealing is [that] ...a lot of people are competing for a very few prizes [and] ...an immutable law of labor [is that] when there are a lot of people willing and able to do a job, that job generally doesn’t pay well” (Levitt and Dubner, 2005: 105). Dealers also have to suffer losses from the protection payments demanded by police and ‘stick ups’ by other gangs (Contreras, 2013), as well as the fact that the ties between members limit opportunities for many to use their involvement in criminal activity to ‘get out’. The classic example in this respect is provided by William Foote Whyte (1993 [1943]: 108) in his classic analysis of gangs in the ‘Italian Slum’ of 1930s Boston. As Whyte notes, the leader of the ‘corner boys’ known as ‘Doc’ is both intelligent and successful at what he does but loyalty to the gang and the neighbourhood operates to diminish his social mobility.

Nevertheless, in different circumstances, gang involvement in the drug trade has been shown to generate and distribute benefits for members and the wider community. In his study of the dynamics of a drug dealing gang in a poor neighbourhood in Managua, Dennis Rodgers (2007: 79) highlights how “drug-fuelled economic development extended far beyond just those directly involved in the trafficking, to the extent that from a nucleus of about thirty 30 individuals up to 40 per cent more households in *barrio* Luis Fanor Hernández were visibly better off than in non-drug-dealing neighbourhoods”. This points to the fact that the developmental potential of drug dealing by gangs is less a function of either the activity itself or the gang, but more the context within which it occurs. Drug dealing in Nicaragua occurs within broader economies that are more impoverished, more segmented, and where the cost of living is lower than in the US, which is why drug dealing is both more lucrative and its profits are shared beyond a small, exclusive group (see also Zaluar, 2001, for a similar situation in Brazil). What this highlights is the fundamentally contingent nature of developmentalism, which far from being normative is actually highly relative, and dependent on the broader societal political economy.

The last point to consider then is whether gangs have the interest or capacity to radically alter that political economy. In his classic manifesto, *The Wretched of the Earth*, however, Franz Fanon (1990 [1961]: 54) acknowledged that what he called the gangster was often “a thief, a scoundrel or a reprobate”, but he also contended that when the gangster’s violence was directed against colonial authority, it became imbued with popular legitimacy through a process of “automatic” identification, and the gangster as a result “lights the way for the people”. As Steffen Jensen and Dennis Rodgers (2008: 233-34) highlight, however, “even if gangs can be seen as potentially offering a glimpse of the possibility of emancipatory social change, the tragic truth is that in the final analysis their existence [more often than not] actively suppresses the perception of such potential transformation”. They instead propose that gangs are perhaps better seen as “war machines”, because they “are really not fighting ‘for’ anything but themselves. Although they can plausibly be said to be fighting ‘against’ wider structural circumstances of economic exclusion and racism, most of the time the behaviour patterns of gang members are clearly motivated principally by their own interests rather than the active promotion of any form of collective good” (2008: 231).

³ Linked to this, gangs often perform ‘social responsibility’, therefore, by supporting community projects or as benefactors of festivals, parties and responding to disasters. In so doing, gangs have been conceptualised as parallel or alternative states (Arias, 2014; RAND, 2012; Zaluar, 2001).

(4) *Goondas*

Our final articulation of non-state violence considers the figure and role of the “*goonda*” or “*dada*”. In line with Hobsbawm’s social bandit or Fanon’s conception of the gangster, *goondas* have been a long-standing feature of the social imaginary of violence, masculinity and politics in South Asia. They are a frequent presence in newspapers, comics, movies – such as *Company* (2002) and *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) – and novels – such as Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* (1995). The *goonda* represents the classic characterisation of the criminal underworld, with figures such as Karim Lala, Chhota Rajan, or Dawood Ibrahim nationally and internationally famous (Prakash, 2010). Ibrahim, in particular, has featured prominently on the FBI’s ‘most wanted’ lists and has been linked to Al-Qaeda and the Pakistan’s intelligence services, something that reflects the furthest extreme of a categorisation of *goonda* that ranges from neighbourhood ‘heavy’ to gangster to terrorist. The *goonda* has in fact long had a difficult relationship with political power and the state. During British colonial rule, *goondas* were singled out as the embodiment of elite and middle class anxieties, in part for their involvement with the illegal trade in alcohol, gambling and prostitution. In this imagination the *goonda* was cast as the strong “up-countryman”, predisposed to violence, and with little respect for authority.

Actual knowledge of *goonda* backgrounds, activities and motives, however, were, as Sugata Nandi (2010) notes, based on anecdote and accusation, often from merchant organisations threatened by their influence. The real fear of the colonial state was the potential for *goondas* to become key figures in political society, a shift that seemed to have been achieved before independence. The concern with the political power and networks of the *goonda* in more contemporary context has tended to focus on their relations or complicity with the state. In post-Independence India, the notion of a Weberian-style developmental state was quickly undermined by the reliance on networks of nepotism, patrimonialism and mutual benefit to get things done. Studies showed how everyday politics, corruption and crime were mutually constitutive, with the *goonda* linking politicians and bureaucrats to criminal organisations, and vice versa (Berenschot, 2011; Michelutti, 2008). Indeed, although the *goonda* and *goondagiri* (thuggery) were not the preserve of a single party or faction within the state, Rohinton Mistry adopted the popular term “*Goonda Raj*” to describe the dominance and practices of the Gandhi family in 1970s politics (see Tarlo, 2003). The world’s largest democracy appeared to be run through corruption and violence to the benefit of political elites, union leaders, licit and illicit business interests.

The role of the *goonda* to preserve the system within a set of tacit and possibly more explicitly agreed upon rules was however a poorly kept secret. In 1993, following the bomb blasts in Mumbai, the government succumbed to pressure to investigate the relations between leading crime bosses such as Dawood Ibrahim, widely implicated in the bombings, and state officials. A 1995 report by committee chaired by the Home secretary, Shri N. N. Vohra, confirmed suspicions of a state colonised by criminal groups, and of crime organisations run by leading politicians.⁴ It did not however explore how economic, political and civic life beneath the level of national institutions relied on the pervasive figure of the *goonda*. Certainly, there is plenty of evidence that *goonda* “musclepower” is deployed to lean on politicians, union bosses and business people in order to enforce deals and remove opposition to reforms, the acquisition of resources, or favours (Berenschot, 2011; Levien, 2013; Michelutti, 2010), and *goondas* have attained key roles in major economic sectors such as

⁴ The Vohra report was deemed so sensitive that only a short and bland summary was released in 1995. The detailed annexes remained secret for 20 years until a Supreme Court direction restricting disclosure was overturned following a Right to Information Request.

coal mining, forestry, transport, real estate and construction, the film industry and finance (Bharti 1989; Prakash, 2010; Weinstein, 2014). Referring specifically to the North Indian state of Jharkhand, Andrew Sanchez (2010: 167) in fact goes so far as to argue that “*goondas* may well play an integral role in the state’s political, industrial and financial infrastructures”. This kind of “co-operation” between *goondas*, the political class, and capital blurs the boundaries between state and society, dictates the temporal intensity and spatial unevenness of development, and is “indispensable” to mediating limited resources and state capacity (Berenschot, 2011: 275; see also Hansen, 1991).

To this extent, it can be argued that *goondas* play a fundamentally developmental role. This is something that also becomes apparent when considered in light of *goonda* relations with the poor. The *goonda* can be identified with a clientelism that might, from time to time, serve to redistribute resources to the poor or facilitate access to the state. *Goondas* can also mobilise communities to demonstrate or even riot in order to show their loyalty to a politician but also to express anger at state inaction. As Ward Berenschot (2012) observes in the context of Ahmedabad, *goondas* thereby offer communities reliable, speedy and cheap access to the state (and concomitantly enhancing the reputation of local politicians whom they are associated with as ‘getting things done’). Certainly, there is no doubt neighbourhoods with a close relation to the *goonda* can often ensure an uninterrupted supply of services, from water services, rubbish collection or the resolution of property disputes, as well as less interference from the state’s oversight of informal activities. Such ability to distribute resources feeds the popular imaginary of the *goondas* as hero (Prakash, 2010). Having said this, gaining resources for one community might involve the removal of resources from another, and *goondas*’ capacity to exert ‘muscle’ is just as often wielded against their community, for instance in working for landlords to evict tenants or determine the allocation of public housing, medical services and jobs. In India, these forms of discrimination are most often caste and religion-based; hence, the *goonda*’s capacity to protect or to mobilise problematically often requires setting Hindus against Muslims, or vice versa, for example (Berenschot, 2012; Sen, 2007).

The power of the *goondas* derives from the poverty of their surroundings, and their ability to open out political and economic opportunities is often related to a wider context of ethnic politics. But it is not just this, as Thomas Blom Hansen (1991) intimates when he describes what he calls the “*dada-ization*” of the *Shiv Sena*, the Marathi political party in Maharashtra. He points to the fact that its leadership changed from politicians with a business background to individuals of more popular origins who also had more criminal connections and a greater enthusiasm for violence. Hansen for example traces the rise of Anand Dighe in Thane, a suburb of Mumbai, and his use of populist “street politics”, takeover of festivals and public ritual, and recruitment of young *sainiks* (cadets), some of whom would be visibly armed at events. For Dighe, violence supported a masculinist image as a “saint-warrior” and confirmation of his criminal connections, and therefore established his leadership.⁵ As Hansen (1991: 120, 231-2) argues, the style of *Shiv Sena* brought forth a “Hobbesian theatre of power” that combined spectacle, sectarianism and violence in “pure politics”.

(5) Conclusion

Understanding the political economy of contemporary development demands that we consider the role of violence and the actions of non-state armed actors in a more nuanced manner than is generally the case. Rather than simply seeing these solely as sources of destruction and impoverishment, we also need to consider the conditions under which they

⁵ At the same time, *Shiv Sena* also cultivated support among women, some of whom were prominent in demonstrations and violence against Muslims, gaining a sense of empowerment, freedom to move in public space and respect as “gangsters” (Sen, 2007).

can be linked to development processes, even if often in an uncertain manner. In this chapter we have focussed on just three types of organisations that have violence as central to their *modus operandi*: guerrillas, gangs, and *goondas*, and explored how these could be considered developmental from the perspective of capital accumulation or political governance. We could have considered many others: vigilantes, drug trafficking organisations, pirates, youth brigades, to name but a few. We could also have considered violence from a different perspective, the meanings and affect of violence, its organisation and coherence, and its relation with peace, the importance of demography, youth and gender, to law and human rights, and its prevalence, distinctiveness and purpose over time and across space, between public and private spheres or neighbourhood and nation-state. Current debates, perhaps best encapsulated by the World Bank's 2011 *World Development Report*, have however focused on the negative relationship between violence and development, and this whether from an economic or political perspective. These tend to be overly simplistic and moralistic in their approach, and tend to ignore how many non-state armed actors are deeply involved in developmental processes around the world, and have been for a long time.

Our exposition of guerrillas, gangs, and *goondas* highlights a number of important correctives to the prevailing wisdom that violence is the opposite of, or a hindrance to, development in all its forms. While we acknowledge that violence is often destructive and anti-developmental, if the primary measure of development is simply taken as capital accumulation – as it all too often is – the examples highlight how being, or being closely related with, a violent non-state actor provides opportunities for income-generation or wealth acquisition. In some cases, gangs for example, the developmental benefits are hard to establish. Success will depend on access to activities such as the trade in drugs, smuggling or protection, and the consistency of returns can be undone by changing motives or tactics of law enforcement and community reaction. If the empirical case is tenuous, however, ethnographic evidence shows strongly that a belief in the development potential of gang involvement is often a leading motive. Part of the attraction is that these actors emerge from or are embedded in local social and political formations, and compared with the state can be regarded as reliable and predictable in an uncertain world. People are fully aware that a warlord, gangster, or strong man is not a normative social agent, but they often act – or promise to do so – in predictable ways. This is often in sharp contrast to the actions of the state which, at least from the viewpoint of the community of support, appears to act in an arbitrary fashion and without reference to the best interests of the area.

Our analysis also shows that what are often referred to as 'non-state' armed actors do not operate consistently against the state but more usually at its margins. Gangs rarely operate as a deliberate challenge to the state but they often exploit opportunities to operate as parallel or alternative sources of political and economic power in circumstances where the state has limited presence or more usually limited legitimacy. *Goondas*, on the other hand, act in *defiance* of state norms but are central to the state, as the Vohra report outlined. They simultaneously serve to limit the legitimacy of state institutions and work in the service of state actors. Although guerrilla insurgencies generally do operate against the state, once they have achieved their aims of overthrowing an authoritarian regime, guerrillas generally then work with the state, often with the specific intention to recalibrate state-citizens relations and a country's political and economic terms of development. Subsequently, however, this developmentalism can become more parochial, as the Nicaraguan *Sandinistas* illustrate well, having used political power to extract resources from and through the state, in part as a manoeuvre in preparation for a period in political opposition but in some cases for more avaricious self-serving motives.

Nicaragua is by no means unique in this respect, of course – one only has to think of Angola, Indonesia, Mozambique, South Africa, or Vietnam, among many others, for example

– and starkly highlights an important question to consider in relation to the connection between violence and development, which concerns its primary institutional vehicle. There is a long-standing theoretical and empirical tradition, from Hobbes to Tilly, that has argued for a historical understanding of state formation as being predicated on violence and coercion, and when seen from the perspective of gangs, *goondas*, or guerrillas, little seems to have changed in to the twenty-first century. Although the latter are generally perceived in a very negative manner, and more often than not receive the greatest proportion of blame for instances of global violence – along with terrorists and extremists – ultimately if contemporary development – including especially capital accumulation – remains a violent and exclusionary process, this is perhaps less the fault of non-state actors such as gangs, *goondas*, or guerrillas, but rather of states, who institutionally embody the particular relationship between violence and development.

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