Armed Violence Taking Place Within Societies: SALW and Armed Violence in Urban Areas

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I. Introduction

Violence is an endemic, holistic and crosscutting phenomenon with varying characteristics across contexts. Although there are important distinctions between violence, conflict, and crime, definitions often overlap. Violence is usually classified as the use of physical force, which causes hurt to others, however it may also include cultural and structural aspects, such as exclusion, marginalisation, inequality, and injustice within social or economic structures (Galtung, 1996; Moser and Holland, 2004; Rodgers, 2003).

This chapter focuses upon physical violence, specifically small arms and light weapons (SALW) related violence in the urban context of non-conflict countries. During the last decade, violence in non-conflict situations has become increasingly acknowledged as a core development and security issue (Stewart et al., 2001; Collier et al., 2003; Rodgers, 2003; McIlwaine and Moser, 2003). Notwithstanding, armed violence in urban settings has often been neglected in SALW research. This chapter aims, in part, to redress this oversight.

The range of 'violence types' makes categorisation difficult. Distinct variants of violence, however, can be identified:

a) *economic violence* includes organized crime, common crime, robbers, delinquents, and all the violent acts motivated by material gain;
b) *social violence* includes gang violence, common crime, ethnic violence, sexual violence, and domestic violence;
c) *political violence* refers to state and non-state violence, political assassinations, guerrilla conflicts, and all the actions driven by the will to hold or win political power;
d) *institutional violence*, refers to acts perpetuated by states and other institutions, including private sector and community vigilantism (Moser and Rodgers, 2005).

These types of violence can be present in both rural and urban settings and often intersect, rendering absolute differentiation problematic and clear distinctions arbitrary. Moreover, definitions of 'urban' and 'rural' vary from country to country (Moser and Rodgers, 2005); the boundaries between the two settings are often blurred (Tacoli, 1998) even within the same nation. Rural and urban areas are rarely separate entities; they are linked and interdependent. Notwithstanding, some generalisations may be made: gang violence is more an urban phenomenon whereas guerrilla violence is usually found in rural areas. Similarly, *common* crime is more an urban phenomenon whereas *organized* crime can be present in both settings.

Cities and their peripheries often contain unsafe spaces in which robbery and violent crime are more likely to occur, although, the general assumption that rural areas are more peaceful is far from accurate. The spatial factors contributing to violence are therefore critical, in particular where there is little confidence in the state's security provision (Moser and Rodgers, 2005).

The measurement of armed violence is both difficult and contested: reliable information is often absent and different cultural definitions of crime and violence make comparisons problematic. Moreover, governments, especially in developing countries, are sometimes reluctant to accurately record data regarding violence and urban crime rates because they may deter tourism or development efforts, may uncover their lack of capacity or the insufficiency of their efforts to take remedial action, or may reveal the involvement of state actors in the violence. As a consequence, mortality statistics, in particular the homicide rate, are commonly used as a proxy for the incidence of armed violence.

Similarly, a definition of organized crime which applies to all contexts is not possible. In this chapter, we adopt the UN classification, according to which an "organized criminal group" shall mean 'a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences...in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit' (UNGA, 2000).

This chapter examines these issues through two case studies of urban centres in non-conflict countries that are currently experiencing a high degree of gun violence: Naples, Italy and Nairobi, Kenya. Much of the urban violence in Naples (under the name of the Camorra) is related to a multiplicity of competing urban gangs. In Nairobi, the urban violence is often associated with youth militias, organized groups or non-state actors.

The Camorra of Naples has been chosen as a case study because, although relatively unknown outside of Italy and neglected by academic research, it remains the most powerful and violent *urban* criminal movement in Southern Italy. The Mungiki in Nairobi have been selected as an example of an urban non-state actor assuming responsibility for public services that are traditionally associated with the state, highlighting the challenge of failing statehood experienced in many African countries.

At first glance, the situation in Naples hardly appears comparable with the urban insecurity in Nairobi. In the developed world, armed violence is often considered less dangerous or more easily managed. In reality, however, the numbers of people killed by the Camorra are comparable to those of a civil war (Saviano, 2006). Moreover, in both centres, armed violence negatively impacts upon governance, social services, economic production and communal cohesion. In essence, violence, death, and insecurity are common experiences in Naples and Nairobi. For this reason, a comparison should facilitate understanding of the wider socio-cultural, economic and political factors, and processes that underlie the use of SALW and urban violence.

Urban insecurity in Italy

The Two 'Italies'

Although a direct correlation between poverty, inequality, and armed violence is contested, the three phenomena often overlap. In Naples, the pitiful living conditions of the urban poor undoubtedly heighten the potential for crime. To understand the relationship between the proliferation of SALW and the urban gangs of Naples, it is thus essential to understand the wider economic context.

Italy is generally perceived as a rich, well developed country but in reality the northern and southern situations are radically different. The South (encompassing Basilicata, Campania,[1] Calabria, Apulia, Abruzzo, Molise, Sicily and Sardinia) and the North have experienced different degrees of economic development for centuries. According to the Italian National Office of Statistics (ISTAT), 31 per cent of families in Sicily (the poorest region in Italy) were living under the poverty line in 2006. The GDP per-capita in the South is 38 per cent less than in the rest of Italy and the southern regions are an average 13 per cent less productive than the northern areas (Rapporto Unioncamere, 2006). Explanations regarding the causes of the differences vary (Perrone, 1913 cited by Eckaus, 1961); efforts to mitigate the problem (including the EU supportive projects of the 1990s) have effectively failed. The question has become a national issue, coining the expression *questione meridionale* (southern matter).

The considerable difference in relative economic and human development between the North and the South is generally attributed to the difficulties experienced by an agrarian and pastoral South in competing with an industrial and modernized North. Some scholars argue, in line with a widely held belief among southern people, that the disparities are related to the commercial exploitation of the South in a form of domestic neo-colonialism (Abulafia 1977). Some claim that Italian government attention has been directed mainly to the development of the North and that politicians consider the South only as a 'problem'.

The socio-political data mirrors the economic situation. There is a consistent discrepancy in the level of education and access to basic education across the 'two Italies'. The South has the highest school drop-out rate in Europe (22 per cent: 18 per cent for girls; 26 per cent for boys) and the highest percentage of illegal work[2] (ISTAT, 2006). In Southern Italy, only 5 municipalities out of every 100 have a bookshop; 112 municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants do not contain a single bookshop (Italian Association of Editors, 2006).

A recent survey published by Eurobarometro reveals that most Italians perceive their country to be insecure. Only 11 per cent of Italians (compared to a 21 per cent European average) consider it safe to walk in the dark and less than 10 per cent believe their justice system to be well run. In 2001, 53 per cent of the population said they were 'really afraid' of organized crime; in 2003, the percentage

rose to 60 per cent (Censis, 2007). According to the Eures-Ansa Report (2006), 58 per cent of homicides in Italy occurred in the South; an astonishing 1,200 people were killed in 5 years (almost 3 deaths every 3 days). The role of fire arms is predominant in the South: 324 people out of 346 were killed by guns (ECplanet, 2007). With 88 recorded killings in 2005, Naples is the homicide capital of Italy, accounting for over half of organized crime-related homicides in the country.

Gun battles amongst rival gangs, dozens of murders, robberies in central shops and stores, delinquents chasing one another across narrow streets are not scenes of a Hollywood movie, rather the terrifyingly scenario of a normal day in Naples.

Southern Italian organized crime

> *All the people that I know are dead or they are in prison. I want to be a boss. I want to have supermarkets, shops, factories, I want to have women. I want three cars, I want that when I go in a shop they respect me; I want stores everywhere in the world. And then I want to die. But in the way a real man dies, a man that has really power. I want to die being killed.*
>
> Letter written by a child (Saviano**,** 2006)

Italy is the homeland of the most powerful organizations in the European criminal underworld. Italian criminal organizations—together with the Chinese and the Japanese—are the most ancient and resilient criminal phenomena in the world. Four groups dominate the Italian criminal world. The generic term 'Mafia' is commonly used to refer to all forms of Italian organized crime. The Mafia, however, is a Sicilian phenomenon with rural origins; it has peculiarities that cannot be transferred to the Neapolitan Camorra, the Ndrangheta in Calabria, or the Sacra Corona Unita in Apulia. The focus on a Mafia-type organization oversimplifies and misleads analysis. Neapolitan criminality is not a 'fenomeno Mafios' (Mafian action). This must be acknowledged before effective and sustainable solutions to the armed violence can be found.

Each of the four principal criminal organizations in Italy control a geographic territory, assume a specific 'division of work', and area of intervention. All extend their influence to the national and international arenas. The most common offences are: fraud; robbery; cargo theft; kidnapping for ransom; demands for *pizzo* (protection payments). The organizations also dominate the production and distribution of illegal services and goods, including money-lending, drug-running, and gambling.

The activities of the Camorra ostensibly resemble those of the other Italian criminal organizations, but there are significant differences. The Ndrangheta, the Sacra Corona Unita, and Cosa Nostra are all hierarchically structured with clearly defined divisions of tasks and responsibilities, plus a commitment to total secrecy. The Camorra, on the other hand, comprises of a body of clans and gangs,[3] united more by the specificity of their criminal actions and a common area of operation than by a shared organizational structure (Sales, 2006).[4] This lack of structure is a weakness of the Camorra rendering it vulnerable to attacks from the inside. Notwithstanding, its decentralised nature is also its strength; its fragmentation has effected a unique capacity to adapt to different situations and a willingness to deal with all forms of illegal activity.

Generally, all four criminal organizations survive on fear, corruption, and a high degree of immunity. They depend upon the tacit support of the local communities, the so-called *omertá* (a conspiracy of silence), and their ability to divide the law-enforcement authorities and government officials into the *avvicinabili* (approachable) or corruptible and *non-avvicinabili* (not approachable) or incorruptible.

The use of extreme violence is a common feature, although different codes of behaviour exist. The principal goal of Camorristi is money; the gun is the mechanism by which money is obtained and respect gained. The Camorra, therefore, kills in the open. The Mafia, on the other hand, kills only in situations of extreme danger; perceiving excessive use of violence to be counterproductive, adversely impacting upon their linkages to the established government. For this reason, the Mafia is only visible to civil society when it kills well-known personalities: 'excellent cadavers' such as politicians (Stille, 1996). Conversely, the Camorra is constantly visible, enjoying a level of immunity until or unless a certain threshold is reached beyond which the violence is no longer tolerated and its function as 'regulator of disorder' has become ineffective.

The Camorra on the streets

> *"[The] main preoccupation for the camorristi, after all, has always been to portray themselves to the Neapolitans, as members as a kind of aristocracy of the people, voluntary guardians of order and spontaneous distributors of justice, ready to intervene when the order and justice of the State is shown to be deficient."*
>
> Paliotti (2006)

The Camorra operates in Naples and the *piano campano* (an area surrounding Naples with a radius of 40 km). Its influence, however, reaches beyond the nation's borders (Di Fiore, 2006). The gangs in the *vicoli* (streets of the old centre) look for institutional protection but are sufficiently robust to be able to survive without it. The gangs in the hinterland retain 'political' relations which are more akin to the Mafia (Sales, 2006). The focus of this paper will remain on the urban Camorra, as the most powerful and dangerous of the two.

In Naples, there are more than 100 clans composed of around 7,000 affiliates. The average Camorrista dies between the ages of 15–30 years. Many start to work for the Camorra aged 12 as drug-peddlers (the baby-peddlers). After a few months, the bosses give them a motorcycle and a gun (automatic or semi-automatic). Many become drug addicts (Saviano, 2006). Bosses that reach the age of 60 have usually spent years in prison or live in secret; Raffaele Cutulo, one of the most popular bosses, for instance, spent 25 years in gaol.[5]

The leadership of the Camorra is not hereditary nor is it founded upon blood affiliation; a boss must prove him or herself the most fierce, violent, strong, and capable. Women have always enjoyed a central role in the Camorra; they are often bosses and hold guns. The gang war at Quindici (near Avellino) currently raging between two families is directed by women fighting for power. Rosetta Cutolo as sister of Raffaele Cutolo, one of the most important bosses of the Camorra, was considered to be the real brain of the organization Nuova Camorra Organizzata during the 1970s. The Camorra is thus egalitarian, without restrictions of blood, age, or gender.[6]

Violence, often extreme, is the principal characteristic of the Camorra. It is a violence without political aim, directed against rival clans or internal enemies. Unlike the Mafia, the Camorra kills not only a rival clan's immediate family members but also their girlfriends or acquaintances. For example, Gelsomina Verde was killed because she was the girlfriend of Gennaro Notturno close to the Scissionisti (a gang led by Raffaele Amato) and Salvatore Abbinante was murdered because he was the nephew of Raffaele. Both were completely unconnected to the Camorra. The homicides are not studied or planned. Murder is the answer to a 'wrong behaviour', such as an abuse or a mistake, a dispute resolution mechanism, or a means to steal business. Compared to other forms of criminal organizations in Italy, homicides perpetrated by the Camorra demonstrate two anomalies: the high number of prison guards murdered; the high number of people killed by mistake or in the cross-fire, often children. The first can be explained by the importance placed by the Camorra of exercising power over those places in which crime originates. The second is caused by: insufficient attention (the importance to shoot rather than specifically target the enemy); the tendency to operate in the open, aware that there may be collateral damage; and the extensive use of cocaine.

Violence, guns, and the public display of power therein are the foundations of the Camorra. Naples political economy has witnessed several dramatic transformations and transitions in which SALW have featured in various respects and to varying degrees. In the last five years, the number of firearm-related violence in Naples has experienced a marked increase, often without receiving commensurate coverage by the nation's media.[7]

The issue of SALW possession in Naples is complicated and often underestimated. It is a common perception that a Neapolitan is only a real man if he posses a gun.[8] To legally own a gun in Italy, one should obtain a *porto d'armi* (weapons licence) from the Italian Police Head Quarters or a *nulla osta alla detenzione* (a document of permission). The latter is only awarded if the applicant can prove his/her capacity to use the weapon and does not hold a criminal record.[9] La Repubblica reports, however, that handguns can be easily bought over the Internet and delivered to one's home, without a licence or authorisation (Luglio, 2007).

Reliable data regarding gun-related offences is difficult to find: the Italian Government does not distinguish crimes involving the use of firearms.[10] The Ministry of Interior claims the result is the same regardless of the instrument used.[11] The Italian police thus focus on combating criminal activity, paying secondary attention to the presence and the type of weapons involved. Notwithstanding, in the Neapolitan context, there appears a linkage between SALW availability and crime. The majority of the conflicts amongst the Camorra involve the use of firearms; they may not be a prerequisite for violence in Campania but clearly they play a central role.[12] The *lupara bianca* (killing someone via strangling or

suffocation)—the common Sicilian way of eliminating enemies—is rarely used by the Camorra. They elect to use arms, especially during inter-clan warfare, such as: short barrel guns (.38 calibre and 357 Magnum handguns); power explosives; assault rifles (AK 47s); grenade launchers and anti-tank rocket launchers.[13] Hand bombs are preferred by the bosses of several clans (Saviano, 2006). The Camorra is heavily involved in weapons trafficking and acquisition, sourced from Eastern Europe, in particular Albania. They also manufacture their own arms, the *o'tubo* (a hand-made long gun constructed from two connected pipes). It is easy to produce, inexpensive, and highly effective; its main advantage, however, is the ease by which it is destroyed after a killing.

Empirical research related to the number and types of firearms involved in organized crime, as well as the correlation to increases in violence, in particular gang warfare, is urgently required. Arms proliferation leads to insecurity and a lack of confidence in state institutions, motivating people to regulate problems by themselves often using armed violence. The Camorra currently operates as a state-within-a-state. It possesses: territory; a population; an army; specific rules to contain public disorder; a monopoly on violence and taxation.[14]

For a long time, the Camorra has been considered a minor evil thanks to its capacity to 'regulate the disorder' and even to create order from disorder (Sales, 2006). Throughout much of the history of Naples, this criminal organization has been able to maintain a fairly high level of security in a high stress environment characterised by overpopulation and unemployment. For this reason, the Camorra has been tolerated despite its use of (illegitimate) violence (Sales, 2006; Saviano, 2006). Today, the Camorra is still pervasive and getting stronger. Despite this, within the past few years, some members of Neapolitan civil society have begun to challenge the Camorra authority. Ordinary men, women, and priests attempt to combat corruption, usury, illicit trafficking (especially in drugs), and violence, through awareness-raising campaigns and public demonstrations against the Camorra.

It is however extremely difficult, for many impossible, to remove the Camorra from Naples. Local people are still 'governed' by its rules; the pizzo (protection money) is largely paid and the omertá (rule of silence) is a huge obstacle. Often interventions of police officers are impeded by popular revolts (DIA, II semester). The Camorra provides security and work opportunities for its affiliates and even plays a range of security and governance roles for the Neapolitan population as a whole. The Camorra are protected. Even simple actions, such as talking or writing about the organization, can have consequences. For example, following the publication of a detailed book on their activities, the author received anonymous death threats, has been forced to travel with escorts, and now lives in a secret location. Citizens find it difficult to reconcile the official law of the State and the unwritten law of the Camorra. The omertá is not necessarily a total acceptance or support of the actions of the Camorristi, but rather derives from fear and broadly accepted rules of conduct, regardless of their legality. The Camorrista is someone not only to respect but also to imitate (Di Fiore, 2006).

Whilst Naples is a city within a relatively developed European state, levels of poverty and associated problems of unemployment, poor education provision and so forth underlie high levels of urban violence. The primary element of such violence is organized crime in the form of the Camorra. This body of over 100 clans and gangs routinely uses extreme violence for profit rather than political gain. The Camorra, in spite of its loose structure, functions as a state-within-a-state on the streets of Naples. It provides order, through its unwritten laws and violent enforcement. Whilst further research is needed, it is clear that small arms are the weapons of choice for the Camorra, with a predilection for violence not seen amongst some of the other organized criminal groups in Italy.

SALW and urban insecurity in Nairobi, Kenya

Kenya and its ungoverned urban spaces

Kenya is a developing country with a population of 35,000,000 people and a life expectancy of 49 years. At 74 per cent, adult literacy in Kenya is higher than many of its neighbouring countries (World Bank, 2007). Approximately 58 per cent of the population live in poverty and the rate of mortality of children under five is 111 per 100,000. Of the urban population, 70 per cent have access to medical facilities within 4 km, yet in the rural areas only 30 per cent have similar access (WHO, 2006). Pastoralists dominate the large, yet marginal areas of the country, living in impoverished conditions, extremely vulnerable to drought. Kenya hosts some 251,000 refugees, mostly from bordering Somalia and Sudan (UNHCR, 2005).

Kenya is ostensibly a stable country; a multi-party democracy without war since the independence struggle against the British during the 1950s.[15] Underneath, however, Kenya hosts many conflicts, most of which take place in the urban areas. It is on these that the remaining sections that the remaining sections of the chapter will focus.

In Kenya, many urban areas especially in the various slums of Nairobi remain ungoverned by formal state authorities. The provision of basic services, including security, is neglected by the state and therefore privately run by various social and criminal organizations, such as vigilante movements or militias. This situation occurs in many states within sub-Saharan Africa, commonly referred to as 'fragile', 'failed' or 'failing yet functioning in it's own way' (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Abbink, 2001; Mbembe, 2001).

> Organized violence regulates large parts of society in Africa and is being marshalled for the pursuit of well-defined economic or other goals. While government resources are economically limited and mismanaged by a small elite, resources of parallel organizations are growing, and violent ways to get it are increasingly common.
>
> (Chabal and Daloz, 1999)

Approximately, 20 per cent of Kenya's population live in urban areas (World Bank, 2007). The largest urban centre is the capital, Nairobi. With a population of some 3-4,000,000, it is one of the largest and most violent cities in Africa. Apart from the affluent neighbourhoods in the north of the city, most of Nairobi consists of slums. Some 1,000,000 people inhabit the Kibera slum, which is East Africa's largest informal settlement (Hugenberg et al., 2007, p. 413).

Ever since the nineteenth century, Nairobi has experienced substantial and rapid growth, paralleled by a massive increase in crime (Katumanga, 2005b). Small arms are readily available from Kenya's war-torn neighbours and are trafficked across porous borders. However, high availability of firearms is not a prerequisite for urban violence, as this case study will demonstrate.

In 2006, the Kenyan Police recorded 72,225 crimes in Nairobi: 1286 murders; 33 cases of manslaughter; 326 suicides; 1,291 rapes; 13,186 cases of assault, 3,594 cases of 'robbery with violence'; 158 carjackings; 7,420 cases of house-breaking or other forms of burglary; 289 cases of drug trafficking (Kenya Police, 2007). Given the 'ungoverned' nature of much of Kenya, it is likely that these figures vastly underestimate the number of crimes perpetrated. Notwithstanding, the murder rate remains higher than almost all developed countries but significantly lower than many countries with very high levels of homicide (and associated gun violence).

Hugenberg et al. (2007) outlines the fates of 120 patients admitted with firearm injuries to Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi between 1 January and 30 June 2006. Of these, 93 were discharged, 11 died, and 16 remained in hospital at the conclusion of the study. As patients who were killed outright would not have been admitted for treatment to the hospital, the total firearm mortality in the city is likely to be much higher. Of the 120 patients, Hugenberg et al. (2007, p. 413-14) identify an almost 10:1 male to female ratio, an average age of 32 years, and claim that 85.5 per cent of victims were shot by criminals. Of those who were able to name the location of their injury—approximately 87.5 per cent of the entire sample—70 per cent referred to an inner city area of Nairobi, 82 per cent of which occurred in low-income neighbourhoods.

Of the 62 patients that provided information on their household income, 47.5 per cent earned less than KSH 5,000 per month (USD 75) and 24.6 per cent earned between KSH 5,000 and 10,000 (USD 75–100). For many, the financial burden of these injuries is difficult to endure; the average hospital bill for gunshot wounds is approximately KSH 16,401 (USD 224). Hugenberg et al. (2007, p.415) note that a patient living below the poverty line would need to allocate all of their household income for six months to meet these costs. Gunshot survivors and their families may thus be forced into criminality.

Types of crime and accessibility of firearms in Nairobi

A UN household study of Nairobi conducted by Stavrou in 2002 suggests that 29 per cent of those surveyed had been victims of robbery in which violence or the threat of violence was used and 13 per cent reported being the victims of a personal assault. In all cases of violent crimes (mugging, robbery, hijack, and physical assault), a significantly higher proportion of males compared to females were targeted. Moreover, 27.6 per cent of respondents said their households had experienced at least one burglary during the previous year.

Other surveys find similar levels of crime across Kenya's urban centres. According to the Kenyan Crime Survey (Muchai, 2002) most prevalent are: robbery (accounting for the majority); domestic and family-related violence; gang violence; ethnic or political violence; banditry; and carjacking. The Security Research and Information Centre (SRIC), one of the few Kenyan organizations to collate data on armed violence in the country, counted almost 300 cases of robbery out of 826 crimes in 2002 (Muchai, 2002).

To extrapolate survey results to a whole population is methodologically problematic. Notwithstanding, police statistics suggest only 0.24 per cent of the population of Nairobi experienced crime in 2002, a significant underestimation compared to the numbers reported in the UN survey and the aforementioned Kenyan-wide studies, and an indication that the majority of crimes go unreported in Kenya's ungoverned spaces.

The role of arms in Nairobi violence

One of the hotspots for the trade and illegal supply of small arms in Nairobi is the neighbourhood of Eastleigh, commonly referred to as Nairobi's 'firearms supermarket'. The estate was once a well regarded area, inhabited by middle-income civil servants, but it changed in the early 1990s after an influx of refugees from the war in Somalia. Former soldiers of the fallen Somali Barre regime established a lucrative illegal trade selling guns to gangsters, attracting organized crime to the neighbourhood.

Guns of every description are available for sale and hire in Nairobi. The G3 and the AK-47 are the most popular; costing up to KSH 102,600 (USD 1,541) for a bank robbery on condition that 10 per cent of the loot is handed over to the gun owner. As the average slum dweller or matatu tout (bus operator) earns between KSH 100–300 a day (USD 1,45 – USD 4,3); the G3 or AK-47 is beyond the reach of most. Each bullet in an AK-47 magazine containing 20 rounds is sold for KSH 2,000 or USD 30. Colt revolvers, Berettas, Ceskas, and sub-machine guns are hired for up to KSH 30,780 or USD 462.[16]

The Kenya National Focal Point reports that approximately 6 per cent (180,000) of Nairobi residents have access to firearms. Stavrou (2002, p. 37) states that only three per cent of respondents claim they carry a firearm 'on occasion'. Similarly, Jefferson et al. (2002) declare only two per cent of females and four per cent of males surveyed said they carry a firearm. They admit that it is probable that respondents under-reported their level of firearm possession but nonetheless, it is still plausible, that general firearms ownership in Nairobi is below ten per cent. Such figures are corroborated by Stavrou's study (2002, p. 57) in which sticks, knives, and physical strength are more commonly used in assaults.

Surveys thus indicate that only a small proportion of Nairobi residents carry firearms, suggesting there is no direct correlation between gun ownership and high levels of crime. Nonetheless, there is a clear relationship between the availability of semi- and fully-automatic weapons in Nairobi, the proliferation of violent crime, the expansion of organized crime and impunity for violent acts. Firstly, most criminal acts are not undertaken by individuals but by groups, significantly increasing the destructive potential of a single weapon. Secondly, the leasing of weapons allows individuals that cannot afford to buy arms to obtain them on short term basis, allowing one weapon to be used by numerous assailants in many different crimes. Katumanga has identified the Kenyan police as a significant source of leased guns (Katumanga 2005a, p. 215). Thirdly, the availability of firearms enables the perpetration of larger crimes, such as car-jackings, roadblocks, and thefts from buses. Such offences require a higher degree of organization. Finally, the relative 'disarmament' of the majority of Nairobi's population ensures that a criminal gang, even if it only possesses one firearm, will be able to overpower their victims. A small number of guns can be used to terrorise a large number of people.

There is evidence that firearms are frequently used in Nairobi. Jefferson et al. (2002, p. 4) find that 22 per cent of respondents reported 'hearing gunshots often or all the time' and a further 40 per cent said they hear gunshots 'sometimes'. Similarly, Stavrou (2002) finds that 52 per cent of survey respondents regularly hear gunfire. These large numbers suggest that whilst comparatively few Nairobi residents possess firearms, those that are in circulation are used frequently.

Gangs in Nairobi: the Mungiki case

Nairobi harbours a diverse mix of urban gangs, vigilante groups, and other social organizations that have monopolised the use of force and provision of security. In the governance vacuum, some of the latest youth gangs to emerge within the Nairobi area include: Geri ya Urush (Urush gang); Geri ya Ngei (Huruma gang); Geri ya Bangla (Bangla gang); Vijana wa Darfur (Youth of Darfur); the Harare; the Albania; the Balkans; and the Matragos (Daily Nation, 2007). Each gang possesses specific characteristics, most names relate to: a location; an ethnic group; a national or international political event; a politician or political party. For example: the *Baghdad Boys* were formed in 1991 at the height of the Gulf War; the *Taliban* was established shortly after the US invasion in Afghanistan; *Jeshi la Mzee* was created to support former President Moi and counter-democratic movements in the early 1990s. Katumanga (2005a) notes that such groups can be hired by politicians to attack their opponents for as little as KSH 250 (USD 4). The *Mungiki* are the most notorious, long-established and

controversial of all, located in various parts of the urban slums such as Kariobangi, Embakasi, Mathare Valley and Kibera.[17]

The activities of the Mungiki and many of these urban gangs vary from managing local tenant-landlord conflicts or providing vigilante justice and security to the control of public and social services such as transport, garbage collection, public toilets and electricity supply. Traditional state-related functions have thus become part of new power configurations, wherein alternative social organizations and groups assume control with often bitter and uncontrolled consequences.

The 'Mungiki' did not begin as many other urban gangs in Nairobi; the movement has a much longer cultural history then most other militias who have remained predominantly localised in nature. As a semi-religious and cultural-ethnic protest movement, the Mungiki originated in the rural areas of the Rift Valley in the early 1990s. As Kikuyu victims of the first and second ethnic clashes after the introduction of a multi-party democracy in 1992 and 1997, the Mungiki revolted against land eviction and oppression by the political elite. In the slums of Nairobi and adjacent urban areas in Kenya's Central Province such as Muranga, Thika, and Nakuru, the Mungiki quickly spread and became a large, yet decentralised urban movement.

During the early 1990s, the 'third wave of democratisation' in sub-Saharan Africa led to new phenomena of political violence, informal repression, and ethnic clashes (Kirschke, 2000). Kenya was in political turmoil, undergoing a transition from a one-party state to a multi-party democracy. During the 1992 elections, President Daniel arap Moi formed ethnic youth militias (taken from the Masai and the Kalenjin) in the rural areas of the Rift Valley to instigate violence against his principal competitors for power, the Kikuyu.[18] The strategy was repeated during the 1997 elections, costing the lives of hundreds of Kikuyus, Luos and other ethnic groups.[19]

Mungiki is a Kikuyu word that stems from the root terms *muingi* and *irindi*, meaning masses or people. The Mungiki has a strong ethnic character, mainly reviving a new form of ethnic chauvinism and fundamentalism among the poor Kikuyu. For Mungiki members, the name expresses a feeling of community and sharing, asserting 'we are the people'. The term reflects a desire to seek recognition in society despite a history of marginalisation.[20] This ethnic and cultural sentiment was successfully claimed and used by the Mungiki to mobilise the victims of political violence, the unemployed and landless slum youth during the 1990s. Meetings, prayer sessions facing Mount Kenya, baptism ceremonies, female circumcision, and oath rituals were facilitated and sponsored by key figures of the Kikuyu business and political elite and successfully mobilised thousands of urban Kikuyu slum youth.

Over the years, the Mungiki developed into an influential non-state actor, monopolising security and other social services, predominantly in the urban areas. It has created a parallel governance structure, including an elaborate tax collection and judicial system.

> Mungiki followers reign supreme within the city slums, notably Mathare in the east of the capital. Here they provide illegal water and electricity connections to hundreds of makeshift shacks...Residents of the slums also have to pay a levy to the sect to be able to access communal toilets and for security during the night in the crime infested slums…Working in a tight, disciplined manner, the 'Mungiki' have taken over the provision of security, water, electricity, management of transport services in parts of the capital city, and replaced administration chiefs and assistant chiefs in matters such as the arbitration of family disputes.
>
> (Daily Nation, June 2007)

> There are three governments in Kenya. There is the Kibaki government. There is the local government. Then there is the Mungiki government.
>
> (Daily Nation, June 2007)

The purchase, supply, and use of small arms by Nairobi vigilantes and militias such as the Mungiki remains largely uninvestigated. Notwithstanding, there is evidence that weapons play a part in their acts of violence, whether collectively bought, kept on loan or 'leased' by the police, a business patron, or political ally. A Nairobi citizen in a national newspaper referring to state allegations of widespread weapons possession by the Mungiki stated that 'with claims of rampant police corruption in Kenya and allegations that weapons have been planted, it is impossible to know who to believe' (Daily Nation, 2007). Similarly Anderson (2002, p. 547) notes that 'vigilante groups in Nairobi are invariably armed, yet the police do not apprehend them for the carrying of those arms, which tends to confirm the public perception that the authorities are happy to condone the activities of the vigilantes.'

Weapons are not a prerequisite for the urban killings and raids, as pangas and knives are still frequently used. However, the increase of violence can be connected with the increased use and availability of firearms.

Lack of government and police control combined with high levels of corruption have resulted in the rise of militia and vigilante groups in Nairobi's slums since the 1990s. On the one hand gangs such as the Mungiki and its members are perpetrators of urban violence, on the other they protect people in areas where the state have failed to do so because of mismanagement, misbehaviour, corruption and/or a lack of political will. Because of this informal and 'double-sided' position, it is difficult to challenge or form policies to integrate these urban gangs and non-state actors, yet it seems unavoidable if one wishes to resolve the problems of urban violence in sub-Saharan Africa.

Conclusions

Long-term unemployment and social exclusion leave youths with few other options than to resort to violence and crime. City youth often become members of violent gangs because they cannot attend school or find employment. Urban unrests and criminal violence impede the economic and social advancement of cities; insecurity and widespread corruption deters foreign investment and paralyses the economy. The unemployment rate and poverty consequently grows, heightening the motivation for criminal behaviour and violence.

The wide availability of SALW in both case studies acts as a multiplier of violence especially at the community level; upward spirals of insecurity are caused by an acceptance of violence as a legitimate way to settle disputes or as the only way to protect oneself. Thus, violent conflict becomes ever more lethal, crime ever more violent, and livelihoods ever more insecure.

The Camorra and Mungiki share certain key characteristics. They both possess a cell rather than vertical structure. Their fragmentation is not only the cause of a major social danger (they are more effective in undertaking criminal activities), but also of an incredible resilience over time. Both use armed, often extreme, violence.

The targets of violence are, however, different. The Camorra gangs, in contrast to the Mungiki, have no tradition of political crimes, their violence is generally directed against rival clans or internal enemies. Moreover, the Camorra carries out its actions in the public eye, whereas the Mungiki prefer secrecy. The former seeks visibility in order to demonstrate its power, in disregard of the government. The latter desires a degree of invisibility to enable continued link-ups with various political patrons and established businesses.

Both the Camorra and the Mungiki can be considered as a state-within-a-state. In the absence of a strong central government, the gangs have claimed territory, population, security and judicial services, a taxation system, and a monopoly on violence.

More then 50 per cent of the world's population now live in cities, where urban gangs and violence are on the increase. It is therefore important to understand the underlying social and political processes in these areas, be they in the developed or developing world. Thus a new proactive agenda involving innovative areas of social research, including policy and community-based solutions, must be formulated. It is imperative to find answers to one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century, affecting the lives of millions of people around the globe.

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[1] Naples is the capital of the Campania region.

[2] Work under the legal age or not carried out according to Italian law.

[3] The dynamism of the Camorra, the multiplicity of clans, and its consolidation through the prison-system complicate attempts to identify its origin. Some historians consider the trial known as the 'grande mamma' (1819–1820), as the birth of the Camorra; others look to the time of the Spanish rule of Naples, approximately five centuries ago (Paliotti, 2006; Di Fiore, 2006).

[4] There are, in fact, gangs of Camorristi: the 'Camorra' describes the activities that the *Camorristi* carry out. A *Camorrista* is the criminal involved in the organized crime in Campania.

[5] All the members of the Camorra have a nickname that refers to a physical or behavioural characteristic. Raffele Cutulo o Pruffesore (the Professor, because he was the only one able to read and write), Edoardo Contini is called o' Romano (habitant of Roma), Giuseppe Nisso o' Nasone (the Big Nose) and so on.

[6] Interview with Mr Fabio Giuliani, member of the Association Libera, 13 August 2007.

[7] Interview with a member of a local organization that fight against Camorra, June 2007.

[8] In Naples, the real *guappo* (man of honour) possesses a gun. Men reach this status only after the first homicide and imprisonment is a necessary stage.

[9] Written communication with Paolo Sartori, Interpol, 28 June 2007.

[10] Written communication with an official of the Ufficio relazioni Esterne del Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza (Italian State Department of Public Security), 16 May 2007.

[11] Interview with a police officer, June 2007.

[12] People have raised questions regarding the clans' possession of arms, often following the discovery of caches or the failure to recover murder weapons. Many local people believe that the Camorra's weapons are hidden in the caves surrounding Naples or underground. In April 2007, a journalist suggested that a number were secreted under the water of Lake Patria, namely handguns, single and double barrel guns, and bazookas (De Rosa, 2007).

[13] Interview with a police officer, June 2007.

[14] Naples is cyclically affected by the problem of waste management, which is almost exclusively controlled by the Camorra. Almost every year photos of streets littered with untreated rubbish are published. Attempts to solve the problem have been ineffective. This year the alarm raised international attention, causing the intervention of President Napolitano who called for a temporary reopening of previously closed dumps.

[15] This chapter was drafted before the political conflict erupted following the contested outcome of the election in December 2007.

[16] Special input by James N'dungu, Kenyan researcher in Nairobi.

[17] Special input by Patrick Mutahi, Kenyan researcher in Nairobi.

[18] The Kikuyu are the largest ethnic group in Kenya.

[19] There are many parallels with the 2008 Kenyan political crisis, where ethnic instigations have flared up once again, principally as a result of the power struggle amongst the political elite: the Luo's (Raila Odinga); the Kikuyu's (President Mwai Kibaki); and the Kalenjins in the Rift Valley (William Ruto).

[20] This marginalisation was predominantly felt among the urban poor and the evicted Kikuyus of the Rift Valley. This conflict dates back to the Maü Maü, which was in essence a Kikuyu struggle against the British; the Kikuyu elite that took over power after independence in 1963, however, never rewarded the Maü Maü fighters. This sentiment of inter-ethnic marginalisation among the Kikuyu is felt by many of the Mungiki followers.