The vast majority of African countries frequently experience some form of organised violence, such as belligerent street protests, riots, vigilante action or militant labour strikes. In some African countries gangs, violent organised criminal groups, death squads, militias and rebels are active. Some recent examples include: Lethal protest in Egypt following a military coup d’état; the persistent subverting impact of militias and insurgent groups in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo; rhino horn poaching in Southern Africa; the significant destabilisation of areas in Mali, the Central African Republic, Somalia, Nigeria, Darfur and South Sudan due to the actions of insurgent groups; the use of private and armed security organisations in many Africa countries; frequent destructive community protest violence in South Africa; and terrorist actions in West Africa (Boko Haram) and Eastern Africa (Al-Shabaab).

There are essentially four principal lenses that are adopted in the literature on non-state organised violence in Africa, which are: organised crime; terrorism; armed conflict; and weak or failed states. This inter-disciplinary course will provide you with an opportunity to familiarise yourself with, and critically reflect on this literature – the concepts, theories and published research and commentary on organised violence in Africa.

*The course will not promote a particular point of view in relation to organised violence, but will seek to understand the origins, trajectories and implications of a range of approaches.*

**Assessments**

**Assessments for the course will consist of the following:** Two essays of 3 000 words (30%); a research policy paper of 6 000 words (55%); a class presentation (15%).

**Essays (30% of final grade)**

- Each student will be required to prepare **two essays**, no longer than 3 000 words each (typed, 1.5 spaced, A4 pages with a 12 point font), on any of the stipulated essay topics. These essays should provide a critical commentary on the prescribed readings, take into account previous class discussions, and where appropriate, draw on additional research material. Each essay will be worth 15% of the final grade for the course.

- **A hard copy of the essays must be submitted, in class, at the start of the session for which the essay topic is assigned.** An electronic copy of the essay must also be
submitted online onto Vula (http://www.vula.uct.ac.za) by 8am on the day on which the essay topic is assigned (or the day before). It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that s/he is able to access Vula and to be able to upload essays onto the site.

**Research Policy Paper (55% of final grade)**

- The research policy paper should be on a topic directly related to organised violence in Africa, approved by one of the course convenors. The paper should also provide an assessment of how the relevant stakeholders should address the organised violence problem that is the focus of the paper.
- Papers should be between 5000 and 6000 words (typed, 1.5 spaced, A4 pages with a 12 point font).
- The paper is due on **Monday, 19 October before 16h00**.
- The paper must be submitted online on Vula and a hard copy submitted to Doris Mwambala, Administrative Assistant, Room 6.35, Centre of Criminology, Law Faculty.

*Late submissions of essays and the final policy paper are subject to a penalty of 5% per day up to a maximum of five days. Extensions will not normally be approved. Essays and policy papers will not be accepted without a cover sheet, signed plagiarism declaration and a structured reference list.*

**Class presentation (15% of your final grade)**

- Individual class presentations will take place on Thursday, **22 October**.
- These presentations will be based on each student’s policy paper and should be no longer than 20 minutes in length.

**DP requirements:** Satisfactory attendance and participation at lectures and submission of all assignments.

**Class Schedule**

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**VACATION: 29 August to 6 September**

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**30 July – Seminar 1: Introduction and theoretical framing**

(Guy Lamb & Julie Berg)

This seminar will focus on interrogating the concept of ‘organised non-state violence’. It will set the scene for the remainder of the course, as it will address the various theories and ideas that have informed this concept, such as ‘collective violence’. It will also reflect on the
principal lenses that have been adopted in the literature to study non-state organised violence.

Readings


6 August – Seminar 2: Protest violence and organised state responses (Julie Berg)

Most African countries have experienced protest violence in one form or another either in response to the decisions or (in-)actions of government and/or private sector business; external factors (such as food price increases); intra-community dynamics and conflicts; or the outcome of elections. The literature on protest violence suggests that violence at protest events is often the result of a dynamic process resulting from the interaction between the security forces and protestors. The majority view is that if the security forces (police) use force against protestors, then the protestors are likely to respond with violence. Such violence has, for example, emerged within the context of public marches; rallies; demonstrations, looting and labour strikes; and can, for instance, take the form of fighting, assault, sabotage, arson and even armed violence. There is often a leadership component to protest violence, which significantly contributes to protest strategy and orchestration. The historical literature reveals that protest violence is often the origin of other, more coherent forms of organised violence, such as armed insurgency.

Readings


Mochizuki, K. (2009) ‘Opposition Movements and the Youth in Nigeria’s Oil-Producing Area:


13 August – Seminar 3: Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) (Julie Berg)

Private security companies of various sizes and affiliations operate in virtually every country in Africa, typically providing protection and armed response services to the wealthier segments of the population and the business community. Private security personnel have been implicated in excessive use of force and human rights abuses throughout Africa. Private security companies and personnel in Africa have also been involved in mercenary activities, counter-terrorism training for repressive regimes, attempted coup d’états, as well as anti-piracy operations. Some private security companies and contractors have been implicated in violations of UN arms embargoes. Currently there are lively debates on how to best regulate such companies, particularly in conflict situations.

Readings


20 August – Seminar 4: Gangsterism (Don Pinnock)

Gangs are typically (but not exclusively) groups comprised of juveniles and young adults, which are predominantly excluded from participation in mainstream economic opportunities, and are drawn from socially disorganised communities. Gangs take many forms, which are influenced by a myriad of environmental conditions. Gang behaviour also varies, but often involves and/or facilitates delinquency and violence, with some gang formations being involved in organised crime. In fact, some theorists suggest that gangs are “the socialisation agents for the graduation of young delinquents to organised crime”. In some settings, particularly in slum areas and prisons, gangs have become institutionalised. Gangs operate in most major cities in Africa, engaging in activities ranging from petty crime, extortion and protection rackets to highly organised violent crime. Nonetheless, research
(particularly comparative research) on gangs, gang dynamics and gang activities is underdeveloped in most African countries, with the exception of South Africa, where this phenomenon has been studied relatively intensively from a variety of disciplines, including criminology, sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics and historical studies. The central theme of this seminar will be: What are the underlying causes of adolescent violence and gang formation?

Readings


27 August – Seminar 5: Insurgents and rebel groups
(Laura Freeman)

Rebellion and insurgency, in various guises, exist in more than half of Africa’s states. From terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram and al-Shabaab, to secessionist movements in Western Sahara and Somaliland, to rebel formations in Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Central African Republic (CAR), violence is used to reach political (and other) ends across the continent. In this seminar, we explore and interrogate the three core explanations for rebellion in Africa. The first set of causal explanations focuses on the greed of modern day insurgency. The second centres on the role of identity (ethnicity, religion, clan etc.) and difference in determining conflict. The third focuses on the weakness of the African state.

Readings


10 September – Seminar 6: Organised crime and protection economies
(Mark Shaw)

Judged on statements from international and regional organisations and resolutions of the Security Council, organised crime is increasingly of concern in Africa. There is a considerable theoretical literature on organised crime more generally, but comparatively little written on the concept as it applies to Africa. So, can a term that was coined in relation to a phenomenon once seen only as confined to Europe and North America be easily applied to Africa? And, if we are to apply the term, what can we learn from writings on “organised crime” from other places with similar characteristics of weak statehood that are found in Africa? Could organised crime in fact be integral to the process of African state building? Whatever the theoretical route we take, developing an adequate conceptual framework is vital: the issue (however defined) will likely be critical to understand if we are to better analyse Africa and its relations with the wider and increasingly globalised world. The seminar will explore some of the conceptual challenges related to defining the contours of “organised crime” in the African context, and by so doing, suggest some possible alternative approaches.

Readings:


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**17 September - Seminar 7: Organised crime, terrorism and conflict**

(Mark Shaw)

We have explored the concept of organised crime in several seminars. But can the issue of organised crime be linked to issues of conflict, insurgency or terrorism in Africa? That is increasingly the tenure of statements that are made from the capitals of developed countries and from the UN itself. Security Council Resolution 2195 (introduced by Chad and passed in December 2014) explicitly makes the link as does the report (albeit more carefully) that the UN Secretary-General produced in response. But what does this mean in reality? How are these different challenges interwoven? What are the implications for both our understanding of the various concepts and policy responses if indeed there are important connections? The seminar will explore the evidence and conceptual linkages between organised crime, conflict and terrorism. We will then examine in greater detail the case of instability in the greater Sahara region as a case study of a possible example where there is an overlap between all three phenomena.

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In the past ten years, many South African communities have witnessed a surge in illegal drug use. Consummate to this increase, the country has also witnessed a) an increase in the number of illegal production facilities (especially with regards to methamphetamine and methqualone [mandrax]), and b) an expansion/entrenchment of distribution networks. While there is a growing literature on the multiple and diverse impacts of illegals drugs on individuals and society, few have specifically engaged with the manner in which the illegal substance economy, as a form organised crime, operates and continues to flourish in South Africa specifically and Africa more broadly. In this seminar, we will broadly explore how the illegal drug economy has developed, some of the thematic patterns that are emerging from new research, and how this information might be used to more effectively regulate and control drugs on the continent.

Readings


Organised environmental crime presents a multi-layered threat to human security including the extinction of species and irreversible damage to the ecosystem, yet it has been dismissed as a low priority by law enforcers up until recently. Poaching was once considered an opportunistic crime but growing demand for wildlife products has triggered a professionalisation and increasing involvement of “organised crime” in poaching, rendering the illegal wildlife market one of the most significant and lucrative illicit markets in the world. Within the southern African region, the poaching and trafficking of wildlife has increased at a frightening rate over the past decade. The trade in ivory between Africa and Asia is highly organised, and elephant populations have been dramatically reduced in several countries, most notably in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. South Africa has lost close to 4 000 rhinos since poaching numbers surged in 2008. Not only species of charismatic megafauna such as elephants and rhino are affected but cheetahs, pangolins, cycads, abalone, lions and many others have
become the prey of organised poaching and trafficking networks. Both state actors and non-state groups have been gearing up to disrupt illegal supply chains with limited success and unexpected consequences. Responses to wildlife trafficking have become highly militarised while national criminal justice systems have been slow to respond. This seminar will explore the nature and composition of organised environmental crime, and why illegal wildlife markets are proving so difficult to disrupt.

Readings:


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**8 October – Seminar 10: Xenophobia and xenophobic violence**

(Guy Lamb & Laura Freeman)

Across Africa, we see various formations of xenophobia and contestations around citizenship, nationalism, and belonging. Discourses of ‘autochthony’, ‘native’, ‘citizen’, and other insider/outsider distinctions determine access to state resources and political and civil rights. In many cases, this has led to violence – both structural and physical – against (perceived) non-nationals. Identifying these common themes, and understanding similarities and differences between cases, will be the aim of this seminar.

Readings


Vigilantism (or community justice or popular justice) has occurred in most African countries with varying degrees of severity. This social phenomenon, which pre-dates the modern state, entails the collective pursuit of: self-defined justice, revenge, the policing of social norms and morality, and/or the meting out of punishment without legal authority. In vigilante episodes, the accused is often denied the opportunity to contest the charges. Judgement and punitive action is usually swift (if not instantaneous), and often results in the assault, injury or killing of those implicated in criminal actions or other transgressions. Vigilantism is prevalent in contexts characterised by the shared perception that crime, insecurity, unexplained events and non-conformist behaviour are drastically undermining social cohesion. This is often combined with weak government control, and/or the perception that government security and law enforcement agencies or inept or corrupt. Vigilante groups may either regard the government (particularly the criminal justice system) as being illegitimate, or the government may implicitly/clandestinely support the actions of the vigilantes. Vigilante actions have also emanated from, or been fuelled by a breakdown in traditional institutions for resolving disputes, disciplining wrongdoers, and maintaining the overall social order. In addition, vigilante groups in certain areas have been mobilised around issues related to perceived witchcraft.

Readings


