

EVENT OUTLINE

THE CURIOUS CASE OF ADOLESCENT DEMOCRACY AND PROTRACTED VIOLENCE

Wednesday 10 October 2018, Ghent | *Thursday 11 October, Brussels*

Summary

On 10-11 October 2018, Ghent University and Clingendael's Conflict Research Unit will bring together researchers, policy- and opinion-makers to discuss the related occurrence of democracies, elections and protracted violence from the perspective of international peacebuilding.

A full-day workshop in Ghent on Wednesday 10 October will have an academic orientation with the aim of deepening the conceptual understanding of 'violent democracies'. A half-day workshop on Thursday 11 October in Brussels will have a more applied aim, namely to discuss how policies and initiatives within the United Nations and European Union can take better account of the phenomenon of 'violent democracies'.

Introduction

As noted by different authors and reports, homicide rates in multiple Latin-American easily surpass the average death rates in many conflict zones.¹ These elevated levels of violence need to be located in Latin-America's broader democratic transition that has created new tensions in a context of high inequality, poverty and a multiplicity of coercive organization. Some authors even refer to 'violent democracies',² indicating that the persistent violence in several Latin-American countries cannot be explained away by pointing at some sort of notion of 'incomplete democracies'. Instead, they suggest that the use of violence has become nested in the heart of the democratic state and forms an inextricable part of competitive electoral processes.

Zooming out of the Latin American continent, similar phenomenon can also - albeit with some variations - be observed in other parts of the world. In South Asia (e.g. India and Bangladesh), so-called 'communal violence' and electoral politics have long been intricately connected. Violence also appears to be systematically interwoven with the body politic in Southeast Asia (e.g. the Philippines). For example, President Duterte was elected in 2016 on a platform of violence as exemplified by one of his campaign lines: 'there will be blood'. Vigilante groupings revived in its wake. Africa has been much less debated from a 'violent democracies' perspective, but it does feature cases like Kenya and South Africa that pointedly show how democracy and protracted violence can go hand in hand.

¹ United Nations on Drugs and Crime (2013), *Global Study on Homicide*, Vienna: UNODC

² Arias and Goldstein (2010), *Violent Democracies in Latin America*, Duke University Press.

Questions to explore

In the two workshops, we will examine the contours of a global version of the notion of 'violent democracy', i.e. beyond Latin-America. We will focus on the following questions:

- What linkages exist between emergent democracy, socio-economic status (middle-income versus lower-income) and violence?
- Why do many democracies find it hard to stem violent organized crime, electoral violence, vigilante / police killings, and sometimes even insurgency?
- How are diverse coercive organization (not) integrated in democratic/electoral practices?
- What could be the policy implications of these issues for the international peacebuilding agenda?

By analyzing these matters, the workshop aims to advance our insights into how different types of violence that occur in the political order of 'violent democracies' can be addressed.³ It also seeks to problematize the persistent peacebuilding focus of the international community on state fragility since the 1990s, and its oversized emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa in particular. In addition to the 'fragility-skewed' diagnosis of the problem of global violence, the international response also requires reconsideration as efforts to develop democratic institutions as a fix for instability have consistently dissipated. Finally, the crisis-orientation of the fragility paradigm overlooks the fact that violence has proven to be endemic in a set of relatively stable middle-income democracies. In short, it may be time to correct the emphasis on the 'fragility-poverty-conflict' paradigm and to re-engage the with 'democracies-middle income-violence' conundrum.

Program

With the above in mind, we will organize two related events. To start with, an academically-oriented workshop at Ghent University on 10 October will unite a number of academics together to discuss the questions listed from a more theoretical angle. Our working method is to use case studies to trigger discussion. For this purpose, we will bring 6 case study experts together to lead an intensive day of discussion.

As follow-up, a policy-oriented workshop in Brussels on 11 October will bring a number of policy-makers, opinion-makers and international NGO's together to connect our more conceptual discussion with existing policy frames and practical realities.

³ Van Veen, E., *The state and the future of conflict*, The Hague: Clingendael, 2017, online: <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/state-and-future-conflict> (accessed 20 February 2017).

PART 1: Academic discussion in Ghent on Wednesday 10 October 2018

Venue: Meeting Room, Department of Conflict and Development Studies, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Ghent University, Universiteitstraat 8, 9000 Ghent (Belgium)

Time	Issue	Topic	Speakers
09:00-17:00 - Academic workshop @ Ghent University			
09:00-09:30	Welcome and Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do we mean by 'violent democracies'? Working assumptions and hypotheses 	Jeroen Adam (Ghent University)
09:30-10:15	Case study 1: Guatemala	See 'questions to explore'	Margit Ystanes (University of Bergen)
Coffee Break			
10:30-11:15	Case study 2: Philippines	See 'questions to explore'	Steven Schoofs (Ghent University) Joel Ariate (University of the Philippines)
11:15-12:00	Case study 3: Kenya	See 'questions to explore'	Naomi van Staple (Universiteit van Amsterdam)
Lunch Break			
13:00-13:45	Case study 4: Bangladesh	See 'questions to explore'	Bert Suykens and Jullian Kuttig (Universiteit Gent)
13:45-14:30	Case study 5: DR Congo	See 'questions to explore'	Kasper Hoffman (University of Copenhagen/Ghent University)
Coffee break			
14:45-15:30	Case study 6: El Salvador	See 'questions to explore'	Chris van der Borgh (Universiteit Utrecht)
Coffee break			
15:45-17:00	Wrap up and discussion		Jeroen Adam (Ghent University) & Erwin van Veen (Clingendael)

Conference dinner, venue to be confirmed

PART 2: Policy and practice discussion in Brussels on Thursday 11 October 2018

Venue: Regus, Rond Point Schuman 6, Brussels (map [here](#)).

Time	Issue	Topic	Speakers
13:30-18:00 - Policy and practice workshop @ Brussels (Chatham House rules)			
13:30-13:45	<i>Welcome and Introduction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do we mean by 'violent democracies' and what policy dilemmas do they evoke? Academic reflections from previous day 	Erwin van Veen (Clingendael) Jeroen Adam
13:45-14:30	Case study 1: Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the policy view on the democratic development of this country, barriers and how it can be stimulated? What is the policy frame for understanding its persistently high levels of violence? What role is there for international support, diplomacy and aid from a SDG16 perspective? 	Ned Dalby (International Crisis Group) Short reflection by Naomi van Stapele (University of Amsterdam)
14:30-15:30	Case study 2: Bangladesh / Myanmar	Same questions as above	Renata Lok-Dessalien (UNDP) Edin Elgsaether (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy) Short reflection by Bert Suykens (Gent University)
Coffee break			
16:00-16:45	Case study 3: Political corruption, crime and conflict	Same questions as above	Catalina Uribe Burcher (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) Short academic response
16:45-17:30	Case study 4: Israel	Same questions as above	Pieter Dronkers (PAX) Short academic response
17:30-18:00	Provisional synthesis	Broad reflections on key policy issues and existing international engagement; Initial inventory of common features of violence in relation to democracy development	Benedetta Berti (Independent analyst) Erwin van Veen (Clingendael)

Please register by emailing Jeroen Adam (Jeroen.adam@ugent.be) for the academic part;
Erwin van Veen (even@clingendael.org) for the policy part

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