

CHAPTER 4 : SOCIAL VIOLENCE

In February 2011 four men in Guatemala City were apprehended by a group of local residents, beaten, drenched in petrol and set alight. They had been accused of stealing a vehicle delivering flour to a bakery. (*BBC News*, 22 February 2011).

Also in February, but three years later, a mob in the Nigerian capital of Abuja dragged fourteen young men from their homes late at night and beat them with nail-studded clubs and whips in a wave of homophobic violence following the passing of anti-gay legislation in the country (Nossiter, 16 February 2014).

And on another continent, violence by so-called football ‘hooligans’ marred the Euro 2012 football tournament in Ukraine. They attacked non-white fans; waved anti-semitic banners; mimicked monkey noises and threw bananas at black players (BBC Panorama, 2012).

These are three examples of social violence, ranging from vigilantism in Guatemala, to hate crime in Nigeria, to football violence in Ukraine. The violence in these examples is undeniably different in terms of the targets, the context of the violence and the underlying social tensions which it originates from. And yet, there are important similarities between them which make them different from the other two types of violence (political violence and violent crime) which are of interest to this study. Firstly, the violence in all three these examples is horizontal insofar as it is not directed at the state, but at another group or

individuals (criminals, the gay community and non-Europeans, respectively) in the community or broader society. Secondly, it shares the aim of influencing the dynamics and cohesion of the particular society by discouraging certain activities or by targeting a particular social group. This violence is therefore related to maintaining or asserting some form of social control, or to put it in another way, to achieve some measure of social change in favour of a crime-free/heterosexual/white society, respectively.

This social violence is underpinned by latent social tension and conflict between groups in society. It is typically horizontal violence within society is not directly aimed at the state. Here it is worth making an important point with regards to the state's relationship to social violence: the state may not be the target in social violence, but it could be a perpetrator thereof. So-called 'social cleansing' activities by the army in El Salvador where street children and the homeless are targeted (Perez, 2003) is clearly not political in that it is not targeted at political opponents, but instead, this violence has social aims.

Social violence thus differs from political violence because it does not directly challenge the authority of the state. Also, in order to distinguish social violence from economic violence, this study postulates that social violence lacks the primary economic motivation inherent to violent crime.

This chapter argues that war and the political violence which accompanies it create the conditions for social violence to occur both during the war and after. Four central characteristics of New Wars theory (which has been discussed in some detail in chapter 2) will be used to guide this analysis: state weakness, the civilianisation of war, the role of identity politics and the political economy of war.

The symbiosis between political violence and social violence will be illustrated by examining two examples of social violence in post-war societies: firstly, vigilantism by

Loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland and secondly, xenophobic violence in South Africa.

A series of 30 interviews and ethnographic research with civilians living and working in Loyalist areas in Belfast in 2004 provided insight into the relationships between the community and Loyalist paramilitaries. It is useful to say something about the timing of this research: it took place six years after the signing of the peace accord and at the time of accelerated peacebuilding and reconstruction activities in Northern Ireland. It was also a time of increasing Protestant dissatisfaction with the dividends of the peace process as the accord was being implemented and high levels of distrust in the new, restructured Police force, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The subsequent analysis will show how four aspects of contemporary conflict (state weakness, the civilianisation of war, the role of identity politics and the political economy of war) can illustrate and explain the links between political and social violence – both during and after the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Xenophobic violence in South Africa is the second example of social violence used in this chapter. This is a more complex case study to use in the argument about the linkages between political and social violence. Unlike paramilitary violence, which has a clear presence during the conflict and afterwards, xenophobic violence in South Africa is largely a post-conflict phenomenon. In the Northern Irish example, the relations between war and post-war violence are relatively clear. In the South African case, these links are more obscure, but the analysis will illustrate that even when post-war social violence seems to be the product of exclusively post-war dynamics, there are still noteworthy links with conditions created during the conflict. It is, indeed, very rare for violence in post-war societies to stand in total isolation from the political violence that characterised the conflict.

Vigilantism in Northern Ireland

The low intensity conflict in Northern Ireland involving the British state (and its agents, the British army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary [RUC]); the Republican paramilitary groups (predominantly the Provisional Irish Republican Army [IRA]) and the loyalist paramilitaries started in the late 1960s and ended formally in 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. The contested position of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, rather than part of the Irish Republic, lay at the heart of the 'Troubles', as the conflict was euphemistically known. The IRA waged a violent campaign to defend the catholic community from attacks and ultimately, to end British rule in Northern Ireland, whilst the loyalist paramilitaries ostensibly defended the majority Protestant community's interest in remaining part of the UK and protected them from attacks by republican paramilitaries. In the three decades of violence, almost 3 600 people were killed and many more injured. Of these, the Loyalist paramilitaries had killed 1 048 people, including Protestants and Catholics (Fay et al, 1997).

In this section, the focus is on the occurrence of social violence in the loyalist community in the Northern Irish capital, Belfast. The term 'loyalist' refers to a particular identity group in the Northern Irish conflict.¹ As a group, loyalist identity is demarcated by three factors: firstly, they are overwhelmingly Protestants and therefore constitute part of the religious majority in Northern Ireland. Secondly, politically, they are in favour of Northern Ireland remaining part of the United Kingdom. Yet, it is worthwhile noting that the relationship between Loyalists and the British state (and the Police) can become tense at times. Jim McAuley (2004) describes loyalists as 'those unionists who give primary allegiance to the political entity of Northern Ireland, even if this may mean confrontation with the government of the United Kingdom'. This emphasises the potential for conflict between loyalists and the British state and the extent of the tension in this relationship will become clear as the analysis progresses. Dixon (2001, p.6) adds that they are willing to

advocate militancy, and even violence, in support of Northern Ireland's constitutional position in the Union. Thirdly, they are mainly working-class communities – in contrast to 'unionists' who are often middle-class protestants (who also support the Union with Britain). Loyalists are thus working class protestants who are willing to take a militant approach to protect the status of Northern Ireland in the Union.

Paramilitaries originated from this identity group in response to a perceived threat by Republicans. The rise of paramilitaries took place in the context of a growing mistrust in the intentions of the British state and its commitment to protecting the loyalist community. Loyalist paramilitarism since 1969 encompassed a range of organisations (Bairner, 1996; Bruce, 1992; 1994)². These included the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) and various splinter groups which were often used as clandestine fronts to carry out less routine acts of violence, such as the Red Hand Defenders or the Ulster Freedom Fighters.

Over the course of the conflict and the peace process the loyalist paramilitary organisations' use of violence changed (Jarman, 2004; Moran, 2004). The loyalist paramilitaries have used violence in pursuit of a variety of goals, both before and after the Good Friday Agreement. These goals were at times economic in the interest of their organised criminal activities, and sometimes political in their opposition to the Republican paramilitaries, and their violence served social goals when used to establish and maintain social control within their communities and within their organisations (Steenkamp, 2008). But, it is their use of social violence as exemplified in their vigilante activities, which is the focus of this chapter. Here they use violence to police petty crime and deviance in their communities, which will be labelled 'vigilantism' in this study.

Johnston (1996) defines vigilantism by emphasising that it is premeditated action (and therefore requires some element of planning); it is carried out by private citizens who act

voluntarily; and it has a large degree of 'citizen autonomy' and thus does not require state involvement or support. In addition, he says, vigilantism involves violence (or the threat thereof); it is a reaction to transgressions of established norms, such as embodied by crime and social deviance and lastly, it offers a sense of security to participants and other members of the community. The vigilantism by loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland fit these criteria.

Loyalist paramilitarism has a long association with vigilantism. The UDA (one of the largest paramilitary groups) started out in the 1970s as an amalgamation of vigilante groups. Initially, as Monaghan (2002:49 and 2004:456) points out, these neighbourhood patrols were in assistance of the RUC as many offenders were handed over to the Police, but loyalist paramilitaries increasingly policed the streets themselves as Protestant mistrust towards the state grew in tandem with the evolving conflict. The increase in loyalist punishment shootings and beatings after the Anglo-Irish Agreement reflects this (Monaghan, 2002, p.51). This agreement between the British and Irish governments in 1985 recognised the Irish government's interest in the conflict and while the Agreement was unpopular by both loyalists and republicans, it was perceived by many loyalists as a weakening of the British government's commitment to Northern Ireland.

After the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, loyalist paramilitaries continued their use of violence. Between 1998 and 2006, they committed 674 shootings and 670 beatings (PSNI Report 2006)³. Moran (2004) argues that the paramilitaries have increased their social policing role after the Agreement in response to rising rates of 'ordinary decent crime' and in the context of continuing loyalist mistrust towards the Police⁴. This continued involvement in social violence has been characterised by a change in method: paramilitaries were now more likely to issue punishment by way of beatings, rather than shootings – probably in an attempt not to be seen as breaking the ceasefires (Monaghan, 2002,p.51 and Knox, 2002, p.176).

As multi-party negotiations ensued in the 1990s and the IRA's ceasefires seem to hold, the loyalist paramilitaries followed suit and scaled back their use of political violence. However, they remained active violent organisations and expanded their involvement in organised crime. Officially, their post-peace accord use of violence has been classified as either 'security-related' attacks (referring to violence which can threaten the political stability of the agreement, where a member of the catholic community or security forces is targeted) or 'punishment' attacks (referring to violence against their own organisation or community) (Jarman, 2004 and PSNI report 2002/3). This binary classification of violence was intended to enable calculations about the threat of violence to the peace process, but gives little indication of the motivations behind their use of violence, or its impact.

According to the categorisation of paramilitary violence as 'security-related' or 'punishment', their vigilante violence can be categorised as 'punishment attacks'. This violence might not directly fit the parameters of the conflict as tension between republican/catholic and loyalist/protestant political interests, but has certainly been shaped by the broader ethnic conflict and the peace process that ensued. Paramilitaries punished offending community members who were believed to be involved in crime and anti-social behaviour by imposing curfews, issuing warnings and threats, carrying out beatings and threats and even exiling or executing the culprits (Silke, 1998). These punishments were a response to actions which have been labelled 'civil crime' (actions that supposedly threaten the social fabric of the community such as petty crime and joyriding) or 'political crime' (actions which can be interpreted as directly damaging the paramilitary organisation itself by, for example, not obeying orders or stealing money from the organisation) (Silke, 1999).

A Belfast resident recalls his witnessing of a punishment attack by loyalist paramilitaries:

‘ The one and only punishment shooting I witness, quite by accident, was I went past an alleyway one morning, this man was being shot in both ankles. The guy with the gun waved me on to get lost, but I was frozen on the spot. I have never seen anything like that before. The blood was everywhere. And this guy had stolen money. The guy with the gun went away and I got the ambulance. The man ended up on a stick for life. He stole money in one of the clubs.’ (Belfast Interview 8).

The paramilitary attack described above seems to have been in retaliation for ‘political crime’: in this case, stealing from the paramilitary-run social club. However, in this chapter, the focus is on the paramilitaries’ vigilantism and their punishment for ‘civil crimes’, rather than their attempts to maintain internal organisational cohesion and control.

The central argument in this study is that the linkages between political violence and other types of violence which are cultivated and consolidated during the war, often outlast the conflict and can explain why post-war societies can be such violent societies. In this example of violent vigilantism by loyalist paramilitaries, a similar pattern emerges.

Four characteristics of new wars theory can be used to explain the persistence of this vigilantism into the post-Troubles period.

State weakness

State weakness manifested itself in Northern Ireland in the armed challenge to the state which characterised the Troubles, the perceived inefficiency of the police and the police’s acceptance of alternative sources of social policing.

There is a history of dissatisfaction with policing in Northern Ireland, which continued into the post-war period. In 1998, at the time of the signing of the peace accord, 77 per cent of protestants in Northern Ireland expressed satisfaction (recorded as either ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’ in the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey) with the RUC. Six years later,

by 2004, only 57 per cent of protestants thought that the new, reformed police force (the Police Service of Northern Ireland, PSNI) did a 'fairly' or 'very good' job in their area and 64 per cent thought this was the case across Northern Ireland (NISRA, 2004). These figures do not distinguish between middle-class and working-class protestant areas, and the latter are more likely to be loyalist communities which typically have a more fraught relationship with the police. The tension in this relationship is often clearly visible on the streets of Belfast when loyalist mobs stone the Police during protests. This continues to recent years, for example in August 2013 when 56 police officers were attacked with bricks, bottles and fireworks during clashes with loyalists (Legge, 9 August 2013) .

During the Troubles, loyalists increasingly lost confidence in the British state's commitment to the integrity of a United Kingdom with Northern Ireland as part of it, and this was reflected in their growing distrust of the police force in favour of increased reliance on the paramilitaries. The paramilitaries enjoyed a significant level of legitimacy in their role of protectors of the community against the political threat and 'people just thought of them as their protectors. They felt that this was the only thing between us and the Republicans. Because we never felt that the Police was ready to protect us' (Belfast Interview 3).

This shift in reliance upon the British state in favour of a reliance on the paramilitaries related to protection from republican threat and to social policing. After the Troubles, the ensuing police reform widened that gap between loyalists and the police, largely due to loyalist dissatisfaction with the dividends of the peace and a sense of 'loss' in the peace process vis-à-vis the Republican community (Steenkamp, 2009).

In addition to the loss of trust in the political intentions of the state, the police are often seen as ineffective and under-resourced.⁵ There is a pervasive belief amongst civilians in Northern Ireland that the paramilitaries' vigilantism in the form of punishment attacks on

‘ordinary, decent crime’ (Moran, 2004) is effective in providing retribution and as a deterrent to such unlawful behaviour and that they are, ‘in effect, a police force’ (Belfast interview 12).

Several respondents emphasised the immediacy of paramilitary vigilantism which seems to be highly valued.

‘The problem is also with the police. They don’t do anything. Like these kids who ride on the quad bikes on the sidewalks. They are not allowed to do that, but if you report it to the police, they will not do anything. But if you go around the corner and speak to some paramilitary, they’ll have their man take the bike off them. There will be action immediately. All the police will say is that they’ve got no resources. That’s why the youths have no respect. You hear about people beating up pensioners. You ring up about it, they’ll take a report. But if you go and report it to the club, they’ll all get the ringleaders in and they’ll get the answer about who dunnit (*sic*), and put them out of this district. It might be a bit harsh, but at the end of the day, there’s no-one else to turn to. The police won’t lift them. They talk about the due process of law. The law, I understand that. You need the law. But the process of law here is not very good and takes a year whereas this process is instant’. (Belfast Interview 21 with an ex-prisoner).

Some interviewees claimed that the police at times accept the authority of paramilitaries as leaders in their communities and have been known to turn a blind eye to their social policing role (Belfast interview 20; Belfast interview 19).

In the face of the immediacy of paramilitary vigilantism and its delivery of harsh punishment, there was a considerable degree of public support for paramilitary vigilantism. There was a pervasive notion that the victims of vigilantism ‘must’ve deserved it. There’s no

smoke without fire. The general line is that it wouldn't happen for nothing.' (Belfast interview 7). This resonates strongly with Colin Knox's (2001) conclusion that communities view the victims of punishment attacks as 'deserving victims' for whom the vigilante justice is justified.

State weakness provides a major explanation for social violence during the conflict and afterwards in Northern Ireland. The state's inability to provide legitimate, effective policing to loyalist neighbourhoods is an important factor in understanding the public support for paramilitary vigilantism in the form of 'punishment attacks'. During the Troubles, loyalist paramilitaries were heavily involved in political violence as they waged an armed campaign against the Republican paramilitaries. This in itself, is indicative of a weakness in the state's armour since it was losing the monopoly on the use of violence. But, as has been emphasised in chapter 2, state weakness also refers to the state's inability to provide services, 'political goods', to its citizens. In this aspect too, it is quite obvious that the British state lost some legitimacy in the eyes of loyalist communities over the course of the conflict and paramilitaries stepped in to take over some of the policing functions of the state in their own communities. Loyalist paramilitaries stepped in to fill a double vacuum: providing protection from an external, republican threat; and providing protection from an internal threat of low-level non-political criminality.

Yet, there should be no doubt that the paramilitaries' involvement in social violence and vigilantism was beneficial to them: it provided them with an opportunity to maintain dominance in their communities, which in turn, was beneficial to their political position and power – and by implication, beneficial to their use of political violence.

As the political dynamics in Northern Ireland shifted from conflict to peace, the external, republican threat of violence and the political challenge to state legitimacy shrunk. Yet, the internal threat from low-level criminality expanded and the newly reformed PSNI

remained ineffective in addressing this lawlessness. Consequently, loyalist paramilitaries continued their internal policing role – in some cases, even with the acceptance of the state. The weak state thus served as a catalyst for loyalist paramilitaries to engage in both political and social violence during the Troubles. As the levels of political violence declined in tandem with an unfolding peace process, the paramilitaries' use of social violence continued in the context of perceived police inefficiency and continuing mistrust towards the state.

The civilianisation of war

The increased participation of civilians in armed conflict is another characteristic of new wars and serves to explain the symbiosis between social and political violence as it was used by the loyalist paramilitaries.

‘Lots of people would like you to believe that paramilitaries are these blood thirsty creatures and that’s because they put on their hoods and prowl the streets, beating young people up just for the sake of it. That’s not the case. Paramilitaries are under extreme pressure from the communities. They’re not strangers: they’re your next door neighbour, the woman across the street.’ (Belfast Interview 5).

This emphasises the close ties between the community and the militants, due to the central role of civilians in political violence. They are ‘their cousins, their brothers, their sons’ (Belfast Interview 17). These bonds and the loyalty that this shared history inspires have outlived the war and contextualise the likelihood that civilians will call upon these organisations to address low-level crime.

‘Virtually everyone in this area has lost a loved one, or had an injury or been imprisoned. There is still that legacy in their mind of loyalty to that person who had suffered to defend them. You owe it to that person to defend the organisation they served in.’ (Belfast interview 17).

These historical ties between the community and the paramilitaries could partly clarify the basis for the paramilitaries' continued prominence in loyalist communities and the tacit (even if reluctant) acceptance of their involvement in various types of violence, including organised crime.

The significant level of civilian involvement in war, in combination with the prominence of identity politics, explains the direct ties between communities and paramilitaries. Paramilitaries consist of civilians, not professional soldiers, and operate predominantly from residential, urban areas. In addition, the fact that conflict was waged in civilian-populated areas and that civilians were often the targets of this political violence, also explains the community's reliance on the defence provided by organisations such as the paramilitaries. These bonds and relationships between community and paramilitaries were forged during the violent conflict and continue afterwards in the context of ongoing political insecurities within the loyalist community.

The role of identity politics

The third characteristic of contemporary conflict which can explain the prevalence of social violence in Northern Ireland during and after the Troubles is the importance of identity politics. Group identity was undoubtedly integral to the conflict, which has routinely been labelled 'ethnic violence'; a 'religious conflict' or an 'ethno-national' conflict. The fault lines in the conflict ran ostensibly along religious lines (protestant vs catholic), but were, in fact, underpinned by competing nationalisms: loyalty towards the British Crown or towards the Irish Republic, respectively. Political parties in Northern Ireland have long represented these identity cleavages. For example, more moderate Nationalist interests were represented by the Social Nationalist Labour Party (SNLP) and the more extreme Sinn Fein represented more militant Republican sentiments (and was widely believed to be the military wing of the PIRA). On the predominantly protestant side, identity politics was waged by the more

moderate Unionist parties, such as the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), and the more hard-line Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Many residents in loyalist communities would vote for Unionist parties – the DUP in particular. There were some smaller political parties with close ties to the loyalist paramilitaries, such as the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), but their electoral support was limited at the best of times and has dwindled considerably in recent years. Jim McAuley (2004 and 2005) and Jon Tonge (2004) have detailed patterns in support for Unionist and Loyalist political parties over the course of the peace process and analysed the ways in which loyalist parties struggled to compete with their unionist counterparts. Longitudinal studies by the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey⁶ since 1998 confirm the salience of identity politics with virtually no Catholics reporting affinity with the unionist or loyalist political parties, and vice versa. This continued into the post-Troubles phase and Northern Ireland remains very much – at least in its patterns of political party support – a deeply divided society.

The importance of identity politics in the country during and after the conflict can explain the position of strength which loyalist paramilitaries occupy in their communities. They are seen as the main protectors against physical attack from the other (republican) community. One interviewee put this close-knit relationship between paramilitaries and the identity community into the context of the political conflict:

‘Loyalist paramilitaries are seen as bulwark against republicans. And I must say, paramilitaries in these areas are not men from Mars. They live in the community, they are part of the community and people in the community accept them. Less now than before (*during the Troubles*), but still.’ (Belfast interview 18)

The fragmentation of the broader society along sectarian lines creates conditions within which paramilitaries become the defenders of their community. This use of political violence in defence of their group provides opportunities for their use of social violence too.

Several interviewees claimed that punishment attacks are underpinned by a considerable degree of organisation and structure. If these claims are to be believed, loyalist paramilitaries do not engage in flash mob vigilantism. This is consistent with Johnston's earlier definition of vigilantism as requiring a level of planning and organisation. One interviewee explained that paramilitaries would issue official 'warning letters' to repeat offenders before they are exiled.

The following extract from one of the interviews (respondent 2 in this interview is a paramilitary member) elaborate on the level of organisation that paramilitary vigilantism presumably entails⁷:

Respondent 2: You have to understand something. If someone gets a bad beating or kneecapping or something it's not for something petty. You have to accept that. If someone is a repeat offender and did something particularly serious, it justifies that. Most people in the community will accept at the end of the day that they didn't get it for nothing.

Respondent 1: There are scales.

Respondent 2: There are scales and levels.

Respondent 1: Sexual things and things regarding children and so on, that's the highest scale. Petty crime, that's not a shootable offence. Anti-social behaviour would be a knock on the head. And a knock on the head the next time, and then eventually an eviction. It doesn't always boil down to every offence gets a

kneecapping. Sometimes the punishment is immediate if it is a shootable offence such as robbery or children being interfered with. There's not really time to get proof. It's a catch-22 situation. If you don't admit the crime, they will shoot you with a larger bullet, and if you admit the crime, then they will shoot you with a smaller bullet. So, you will only have a wee small hole and not a big hole.

Respondent 2: That's the way it is. But then again, people know that. If you were brought up in this area, you would know that's the way it works. (Belfast Interview 19)

This last sentence summarises the underlying mechanism of the success of this vigilantism: the implication is that insiders – those individuals who belong to the identity community (in this case, loyalists) where the paramilitaries are major sources of social organisation – understand the rationale, rules and mechanism (the 'scales and levels') of this kind of social violence. There is an underlying assumption that, because you know the rules, you will accept this violence.

The political economy of war

The last characteristic of new wars theory which can shed light on the relationship between political and social violence is the reliance of armed militant groups on organised crime for funding purposes.

The loyalist paramilitaries had some involvement in organised crime during the Troubles, but this has increased significantly since the peace process. Observers (Silke, 1998 and 2000; Moran, 2004 and Organised Crime Task Force, 2005) have described, in detail, the trajectories of paramilitary involvement in smuggling, extortion, racketeering, tax fraud, drinking clubs, robberies, counterfeiting and the drug trade.

Since the 1970s, loyalist paramilitaries have been involved in organised crime for fundraising – extortion and blackmailing, in particular. In Northern Ireland too, peace has been good for business. As their involvement in political violence declined, the paramilitaries became increasingly focused on their organised crime activities. By 2003, the Organised Crime Task Force which was set up to address rising organised crime in Northern Ireland, reported that loyalist paramilitaries were responsible for over 80 per cent of extortion cases. Loyalist paramilitaries have tallied up an estimated £6.5 million in one year from extortion and protection rackets alone (*BBC News*, 11 June 2003). Successive reports of the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) which was tasked with monitoring the paramilitaries' use of violence after the peace accord, confirmed their deep and sustained involvement in drug dealing and in 2006 the IMC concluded that 'in some parts of the organisation (*the UDA*), criminality can be described as endemic' (IMC Tenth Report, 2006:p.17).

There was a very strong corresponding popular belief amongst residents in loyalist areas that paramilitary involvement in organised crime – and in drug dealing, in particular – has increased since the peace process.

'The people who are in it now are in it for the reason that, before the ceasefire they were robbing banks for the cause. They were pocketing at least 25 per cent of the proceeds themselves, and people didn't care where the money was going. After the ceasefire, they could no longer justify robbing a bank to buy arms, because the conflict was over. But they were used to their high lifestyles from the proceeds they were pocketing, so the paramilitaries have now diversified into mafia-style activities.' (Belfast interview 17).

Two interesting aspects of paramilitary organised crime appear: firstly, that their organised crime (robbing a bank, in this case) enjoyed some level of political legitimacy

during the conflict. The war and their involvement in political violence shrouded their organised crime in a cloak of acceptability, as another interviewee explained:

‘Paramilitaries were dealing with drugs all through the Troubles, but it wasn’t highlighted then. People just thought of them as their protectors. They felt that this was the only thing between us and the Republicans.’ (Belfast interview 3).

The second aspect regarding paramilitary organised crime is the popular belief that they have lost the political legitimacy which their organised crime might have enjoyed during the conflict. Many respondents argued that the paramilitaries are now only ‘in it for themselves’.

Another aspect to this argument is that the paramilitaries’ role during the Troubles acted as a restraining factor in their involvement in drug dealing as it would draw police attention to their other activities (Belfast interview 7). With the peace process, these constraints have disappeared. One interviewee explained that

‘North Belfast, in particular, has become very big on drugs. People stand on the streets and sell it as if it’s second nature. I don’t know if the paramilitaries are directly dealing with drugs. The people, who deal it, have the licence, so to speak. They are allowed to do it, for a percentage of the money. Nothing in drug dealing happens without the paramilitaries knowing about it. Since the ceasefires, drug dealing has increased. The paramilitaries aren’t so busy any longer, and they need to find other things to do and ways to make money.’ (Belfast interview 6).

The political economy of war, and peace, is a contributing factor to social violence in two ways. Firstly, it is in the paramilitaries’ economic interest to maintain social control and loyalist misgivings towards the Police worked in their favour. This mistrust translated into a

diminished Police presence and involvement in their communities, which is conducive to organised crime.

Secondly, their use of vigilantism further maintains their reign of fear in the community, and serves as a pretext under which they can intimidate potential economic rivals. Similarly to the preliminary conclusions drawn in the previous chapter about the FSA's future involvement in organised crime, there was a strong sense amongst the interviewees in Belfast that the paramilitaries' involvement in organised crime will continue. Furthermore, a strong belief emerged that they will gradually mutate into purely criminal organisations which will be 'mafia-style, well armed, well trained' (Belfast Interview 18).

The example of loyalist paramilitaries' use of social violence (in the shape of vigilantism) illustrates the symbiosis between their involvement in political violence during the conflict and their use of social violence. The Troubles provided them with the legitimacy to maintain social control. The elements of state weakness, the prominence of identity politics in Northern Ireland, the large-scale involvement of civilians in conflict and the organisations' organised criminal activities during the conflict, created the context for their continued use of social violence after the conflict.

Xenophobic violence in South Africa

Another example of the symbiosis between political and social violence after war comes in the form of anti-foreigner violence in South Africa. In May 2008, South Africa made international headlines as pogroms targeted foreign Africans who have been living and working in the country. Over the course of a few weeks, 62 people were killed and hundreds more attacked and dozens raped. Houses and businesses belonging to migrants were destroyed or looted. Around 35 000 people became internally displaced, while thousands more queued at borders to return to their country of origin.

In an interview, a Zimbabwean male community worker in his mid-40s who has been living in an informal settlement in Hout Bay outside Cape Town since 2003, described some of the insecurity and the suddenness of the events of May 2008:

‘Friday, I went to work. When I came back, the first thing I saw here in Wynberg was... there are a lot of foreigners who run small stands outside. They were all overturned. There was rubbish everywhere. The tents were torn... (*On my way home in the mini-bus taxi,*) traffic was so heavy, because people were moving out of Hout Bay. Traffic was terribly, terribly heavy. I got there quite late. When I got there, people were just milling around and taking their few belongings. The South Africans lined the roads and they would cheer and say “Away! Out of our place! Go, go, go, now!” The youngsters were busy looting Somali shops. That was a clear sign that everything could go wrong.’

What is clear from this account, is that the xenophobic violence is different from the other examples of violence dealt with in this book: it is not carried out by a particular organisation. In the previous chapter, the focus was on violent crime by two organised groups: the gangs in Cape Town and the FSA in Syria. In this chapter, another type of organisation, Loyalist paramilitaries, received much of the attention so far. This example of xenophobic violence is thus significant on two levels. Firstly, it illustrates how war-time conditions and the political violence that accompanied it, lay the table for ‘new’ constellations of violence to emerge after the conflict, rather than merely being continuations of ‘old’ violence. Secondly, it illustrates how violence can be spontaneous and popular and much less organised than the other examples may have suggested.

In contrast to the previous example of social violence by Loyalist paramilitaries, the links between politically motivated violence and xenophobia in South Africa are less clear.

Taken at face value, xenophobia seems to have increased dramatically after the end the low level conflict which accompanied Apartheid's last decades. In fact, as will become clear over the course of the following pages, levels of xenophobia in the black African community in South Africa were very low during the conflict. It therefore seems to be an exclusively post-conflict problem. However, the following analysis will argue that this conclusion ignores the ways in which the seeds for xenophobia were already sown during the period of political violence in South Africa. Consequently, it is not an example of social violence which is disconnected from the preceding political violent conflict.

Xenophobia refers to the irrational fear of the unknown, or specifically, the fear or hatred of foreigners of a different nationality. It relies heavily on the circulation and power of myths and stereotypes about foreigners who are typically accused of committing crimes; bringing disease (particularly HIV/Aids), 'taking' away employment from South Africans and swamping social services. Foreigners have quickly become the scapegoats for the continuing social and economic ills which many South Africans continue to face, despite more than a decade of democratic rule.

The post- Apartheid era had been witness to various incidents of violence against foreigners. As far back as 1994 (when Apartheid officially ended and non-racial elections were held), community organisations in Alexandra townships on the outskirts of Johannesburg accused migrants from Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi of causing increased crime, sexual attacks and unemployment and tried to forcefully evict them in a month long campaign called 'Operation Buyelekhaya', meaning 'go back home'. In September 1998 a mob murdered one Mozambican and two Senegalese asylum seekers who were selling sweets to passengers on the train between Pretoria and Johannesburg (Pretoria News, 1998). In 2005, Zimbabwean and Somali refugees were beaten in the Free State after a community protest against the local municipality. In 2006, mobs in the townships around

Cape Town robbed and looted the shops of Somali shopkeepers and killed 29 Somalis between July and September (Le Roux, 2006). These are only a few examples of violent xenophobia which have been reported in the media and such instances continue to the present time.

Xenophobia can take a variety of forms, ranging from using derogatory terms to using violence against foreigners (Handmaker and Parsley, 2001, p.44). More subtle forms of xenophobia are also found in the ethos and operations of powerful state institutions. In March 2000, the South African Police Service launched 'Operation Crackdown' in Johannesburg where thousands were arrested, immigrants were taken to deportation camps and loot and arms seized. Police officers reportedly stripped foreigners semi-naked on the streets to check whether their vaccination marks 'look South African' (*The Independent*, 2000).

Civil servants, and particularly the Department of Home Affairs, are often criticised for perpetuating and upholding stereotypes about African migrants and contributing to the intimidation and exploitation of asylum seekers and other migrants. Cabinet ministers and influential think tanks are on record for using derogative terms such as 'illegal aliens', 'hordes' and 'floods' when referring to foreigners and migrants and drawing explicit links between migrants and crime. (Crush et al, 2008, p. 17; Minnaar et al, 1996).

Unsurprisingly, given South Africa's racist history, race plays a significant role in the way foreigners are viewed. Surveys by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) found that white immigrants from Europe and North America are widely viewed as the 'most desirable' (even though it was just by 22% of respondents). White illegal immigrants, for example, European tourists who overstay their entry permits, are not treated or stereotyped in the way that African migrants are (Peberdy, 2001). Handmaker and Parsley (2001) argue that the state's response to immigration is also highly racialised, where black migrants are abused and exploited in a way that white migrants are not. Insofar as violence is perpetrated, it is

largely by black South Africans against black Africans. These black African migrants are degradingly referred to as *amakwerekwere* by black South Africans.¹

Discrimination towards foreigners is also based on nationality. South Africans view migrants from Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland as more desirable than Zimbabweans and Mozambicans and much more than Africans from further afield (SAMP, 2008: 30-31). African migrants are assigned outsider status based on the languages they speak, a supposedly darker skin colour and possibly, the clothes they wear and their accents (Monare and Feris, 2001; Morris, 1998, p.1125).

This violent xenophobia in South Africa stands in contrast to the relationship between African migrants and black South Africans during Apartheid when fellow Africans were integrated into black townships, intermarriage was relatively common and they were seen as comrades in the struggle against Apartheid. During Apartheid, the white minority government actively discouraged black immigration, whilst encouraging white immigration. Hundreds of thousands of Africans from neighbouring countries (particularly Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, but also Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe) did, however, enter the country as contract workers in various industries that depended on cheap, unskilled black labour – most notably mining and farming. In the 1980s, large number of refugees from civil wars and turmoil in Mozambique and other neighbouring countries sought refuge in South Africa. Most of the pre-1990 migrants were poor, unskilled and mainly from neighbouring Southern African countries. They integrated well into the local black population, who welcomed any solidarity against the white government. Morris (1998, p.1118) argues that the local population was then less antagonistic towards migrants, due to the limited numbers of illegal immigrants (they did not see the migrant labourers as a threat to their own

¹ *Amakwerekwere* means ‘person who speaks an unintelligible language’.

employment prospects) and also because the focus was on opposing Apartheid, which was seen as the major obstacle to employment and improved living standards.

But, as Apartheid came to an end, the dynamics of African migration to South Africa changed. The size of the immigrant population from further north in Africa (particularly the DRC and Nigeria) s increased substantially, as did the number of illegal and naturalised immigrants from neighbouring states (Morris, 1998, p.1119). African migrants who come to South Africa vary from being highly skilled to being street vendors and small traders. They hail from a variety of countries, including Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa's immediate neighbours such as Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. With the largest economy in Africa, post-Apartheid South Africa is particularly attractive to migrants due to its high level of economic development and living standards and the new promise of freedom inherent to the democratic transition. Since 1990 there has been substantial increase in the number of migrants to South Africa, but the exact number remains elusive (Croucher, 1998) although it is likely to be around one million undocumented immigrants (Morris, 1998, p.1119; Crush, 1997; Adepoju, 2003, p.14).

During the following examination of the explanations for post-Apartheid xenophobic violence, an argument is put forward that its roots lie in the preceding conflict. In particular, the conditions for this type of social violence after the conflict, were created by the state weakness that characterised the conflict and peace, the role of identity politics and the civilianisation of war.

State weakness

South Africans became increasingly intolerant to outsiders in the context of unmet expectations about the socio-economic dividends of democracy. Despite democratisation and the promises of a better future, the South African 'miracle' transition has not succeeded in dramatically improving the quality of life of many South Africans living in the townships.

By 2008, the focus point of this discussion, the United Nations ranked South Africa 10th out of 126 states in terms of its income inequality (UNDP, 2007/2008). By the same year, the official murder rate was at 18,487 deaths (South African Police Service, 2008) and broader unemployment was at almost 38 per cent. The official HIV infection rate, at the time was 11 per cent of the population in 2007 and in the same year, 41 per cent of South Africans lived on less than 367 Rands (approximately £21) per month (Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, 2008).

It is therefore not surprising that a social scapegoat was found in the presence of African immigrants in the country. South Africans like to claim that migrants cause local unemployment by taking ‘their’ jobs and drive wages down by accepting low remuneration for their labour (Adepoju, 2003, p.11). There have been some suggestions that much of the so-called xenophobia which is thought to incite attacks on foreign shopkeepers, are in fact business competition and that South African shopkeepers are also regularly targeted (Charman and Piper, 2012, p. 89). It is in this context of competition over scarce resources that the dislike of foreigners – who are perceived to be more successful in securing these resources – intensifies (Everatt, 2011). Immigrants are often successful entrepreneurs, or are willing to accept employment that South Africans otherwise would not.

The post-Apartheid state is unable to provide the political goods of economic development and social welfare and this result in competition and conflict with potential competitors. State weakness thus provides an explanation for these high levels of xenophobia: the high crime rate (which foreigners are associated with), the continuing inability of the state to provide economic improvement and development and poor service delivery create a context of competition over scarce resources.

The civilianisation of war

As discussed before, war now encompasses greater involvement from civilians and relies more heavily on forms of community organisation. This was also the case in South Africa, where the mass violent protests against Apartheid were concentrated on the streets of the black townships on the outskirts of the white cities. The United Democratic Front – an umbrella organisation of many civil society organisations, such as labour unions and student organisations – was at the vanguard of these protests and clashes with the security forces in the 1980s. This high level of civilian involvement in the conflict is connected in two ways to post-Apartheid violent xenophobia: in the methods of violence which are used and in the organisations and structures which are involved in the violence. Firstly, some of the methods which characterised the conflict are being resurrected in post-Apartheid South Africa, including during some xenophobic attacks. In particular, the method of necklacing (where a rubber car tyre is filled with petrol, placed around the neck of the victim and set alight to burn the person to death) was in use in South African townships during the 1980s.

Minnaar (2001, pp. 48-9) provides a description of the practice of necklacing and its association with traditional African cultural beliefs about the destruction of the ancestral spirit through burning⁸. Necklacing was first used as a method in South Africa in 1985 in townships in the Eastern Cape province as a way of eliminating political rivals and quickly spread to other townships and between 1985 and 1990 an estimated 350-400 people were killed in this way (Minnaar, 2001, p. 48). The late 1980s was a period of intensified popular protests against the regime. It was in this political context that the necklace method gained popularity as a way of punishing suspected government collaborators. Minnaar says that a change in the use of necklacing is evident from the 1990s when it was still used for political purposes in the violent rivalry between the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party, but it became increasingly used in killing suspected criminals. As Apartheid came to a close and levels of political violence declined, necklacing emerged as a tool in

other types of violence too. It was not only a tool in political violence any more, but increasingly was used in social violence such as vigilantism, and later, xenophobic attacks. Indeed, one of the iconic enduring images of the May 2008 riots was of the necklacing of a Mozambican migrant.

Clearly, necklacing was devised during the height of civilian involvement in political violence, with political purposes in mind in that it was, after all, initially intended as a deterrent for regime collaboration. Yet, as the conflict ended, the method itself survived into the post-war period. This carry-over of a particular violent practice between the war and into the peace, is also found in other contexts. For example, the method of lynching in Guatemala which has become pervasive in post-war vigilantism, has its roots in the civil war when it was used by both the state and insurgents to exert punishment (García and Christina, 2004).

Secondly, some of the structures which were instrumental to community organisation during the struggle against Apartheid have survived the conflict and re-emerged to influence other instances of violence. In this way, street committees were suspected of involvement in the May 2008 riots in Cape Town. Street committees are structures of grassroots level representation which were brought into existence during Apartheid to solve disputes on a local level. These committees serve several streets and are directly elected. They were tasked to settle disputes and organise daily life in the townships (Burman and Schärf, 1990,p.706). They were initially co-operating with government-established Community Councils, but as popular rejection of co-operation with the regime grew in the 1980s, many street communities actively severed that association. After Apartheid, these committees were retained as local-level bodies of governance, but were more formally integrated into the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO). One respondent in Cape Town, a Zimbabwean immigrant, detailed suspicious meetings by the street committees the day before the violence started in Cape Town, which he believed were attempts to ‘strategise’ in

preparation for attacks which followed the next day (Interview with Zimbabwean immigrant, 3 June 2011). Distrust in the intentions of the street committees in xenophobic attacks have been voiced by other sources too (SAPA, 2008). Manson and Misago (2009, p.27) found evidence that local authorities, particularly street committees, were aware of the planned attacks in May 2008, but did nothing to prevent it. Whilst the street committees may not be the overt instigators of this violence, there is compelling evidence that they allow it to happen, and possibly even, unofficially, sanction it.

The central role of civilians in the conflict during Apartheid, made it possible for methods of violence and the community organisations from the war to survive into the peace. These structures and methods can still play a role in post-war violence.

Identity politics

At the heart of Apartheid, was the deliberate fragmentation of South African society into racial and ethnic enclaves. Sharp (2008) disagrees with the notion that the violence of May 2008 was necessarily targeted at foreigners per se, but rather at ‘outsiders’ from that particular community, even from elsewhere in the country – as exemplified by the fact that some of the victims were in fact South Africans. Indeed, it has been shown that one third of those killed in May 2008 were indeed South Africans, but were outsiders in the sense of belonging from another ethnic group, and being internal migrants (Everatt, 2011, p.8).

South Africa’s history of international isolation can also be seen to facilitate anti-African xenophobia. By the late 1970s and 1980s, the international community had intensified its cultural and business boycotts against the Apartheid regime, leading to relatively limited contact with foreign cultures and influences. It is argued that South Africans still see themselves as apart from the rest of Africa, as exceptional and therefore struggle to identify with other Africans (Williams, 2008; Handmaker and Parsley, 2000; Morris, 1998:1125; Neocosmos, 2008). There is a tendency to view difference as “ominous

rather than as an opportunity” (Bauman, in Morris, 1998:1126). Here, a broader interpretation of ‘identity politics’ which is closer to a conservative nationalism applies and contributes to an exclusive notion of citizenship and belonging (Crush, 2001; Peberdy, 2001). This, undoubtedly, underpins xenophobic attitudes.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed the relationship between social and political violence. It examined two examples of social violence: the loyalist paramilitaries’ use of vigilantism in Northern Ireland and violent xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa.

In Northern Ireland, the analysis illustrated how state weakness during the war provided paramilitaries with opportunities to supplement their use of political violence with social policing. This bestowed on them an element of legitimacy and support for their vigilantism in the context of growing disillusionment with the British state. The post-conflict police reform was controversial to protestants and contributed to the distance between loyalist communities and the state. Loyalist paramilitaries were thus able to continue their vigilantism, in the context of these persisting weaknesses of the state. The civilianisation of war and the identity politics which characterised Northern Ireland during the war and after further solidified the relationship between these violent organisations and their communities. They share a history and a common enemy. Loyalist paramilitaries were seen as the protectors of the community during the war with the IRA and this bestowed a considerable degree of legitimacy on their use of violence, including social violence. The political economy of war where armed groups cultivate organised crime abilities to fund their political violence, further explains their continued use of vigilantism after the conflict. Vigilantism can be viewed as an effort to stifle competition (by punishing competing criminal networks) and keeping the police at bay so that their criminal enterprises can continue undisturbed.

In South Africa, violent xenophobia is certainly a post-war phenomenon⁹. The analysis illustrated how this post-war violence is still linked to conditions created by the prior experience of political violence and low intensity conflict. Xenophobic violence takes place in a context of a state which is unable to provide satisfying levels of local economic development and crime control. This, coupled with a history of conflict and isolationism which was caused by a restrictive, exclusive sense of belonging to the nation and the transcendence of tools and structures of political violence into the peace, explains the links between political and social violence.

These past two chapters have illustrated how the interconnectedness of different types of violence with political violence occurs against a backdrop of civil war. These conditions can outlive the conflict and can provide an explanation for high levels of violence in post-war societies.

Up to this point, the emphasis was on the aims of violence. The focus of this book now turns towards the cultural framework within which violence occurs: a culture of violence.

¹ Shirlow and McGovern (1997) provide a good account of the complexity of Northern Irish Protestant identity.

² A detailed history of Loyalist paramilitarism is provided by Burce, 1992 and 1994; Nelson, 1984; Cusack and McDonald, 1997; Garland, 2001 and Rowan, 2004).

³ It should be noted that these statistics do not distinguish between 'civil' and 'political' crimes (see the discussion on the next page).

⁴ The term 'ordinary decent crime' is popularly used in Northern Ireland to refer to crimes which have not been committed by paramilitaries.

⁵ Loyalist distrust into the PSNI is the result of a complex mix of factors. One such factor relates to the restrictions placed on protestant recruitment into the new police force in order to make it more representative of the broader society. This would have contributed to a sense of political loss amongst the protestant community and could have affected the legitimacy of a police force which did not reflect their communities.

⁶ The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey results are available on their website, www.ark.ac.uk/nilt

⁷ It should be noted that some respondents disagreed with the claims about a high level of organisation and structure to Loyalist paramilitary vigilantism.

⁸ This added another dimension to the punishment: necklacing does not only kill the body, it kills the spirit too and the victim's family would consequently be unable to call on the ancestral spirit for guidance (Minnaar, 2001: p. 48).

⁹ If such acts of xenophobic violence occurred during the conflict, they would probably have been obscured by the context of the broader political armed conflict. Such attacks would have been indistinguishable from other instances of political violence. Clearly, the removal of the context of political conflict has brought xenophobic violence into the open. With these complexities in mind, this study treats it as a post-war conflict.