

Economies of Violence: Reflections on the *World
Development Report 2011*

**World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and
Development**

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The apparent motive, the principal motive was, of course, single. But the crime was the effect of a whole list of motives which had blown on it in a whirlwind (like the 16 winds in the list of winds when they twist together in a tornado, in a cyclonic depression) and had ended by pressing into the vortex of the crime the enfeebled “reason of the world.”

—Carlo Emilio Gadda¹

The *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development* (*WDR 2011*) arrived on my desk as the Arab Spring was in full bloom and the United States continued to struggle with the intractable politics of simultaneous troop withdrawal and insurgent escalation in Afghanistan and Iraq. As I write, London and other provincial British cities are recovering from the extraordinary explosion of street violence in July, which has triggered a debate over David Cameron’s austerity measures and the politics of “Thatcher’s children.” In Somalia, facing the worst food crisis in over half a century, the Transitional Federal Government and al-Shabaab are fighting over famine relief, while to the north ecstatic Libyan rebels pour into Green Square in Tripoli. Violence, democracy, and development seem inextricably linked, everywhere. One might conclude that, like poverty, violent conflict is and will always be with us.

WDR 2011 suggests there is more to be said.² Violence, the report says, may not just be a cause of poverty but perhaps the central cause for the “bottom billion of the population” (to invoke Paul Collier’s handy turn of phrase).³ One and a half billion people currently reside in areas affected by what *WDR 2011* calls “fragility, conflict or large-scale organized criminal violence” (1). Central to the condition of the poor is, in short, a violence trap. Peace confers conditions in which economies can grow; conversely, poverty is concentrated in states riven by civil war, ethnic conflicts, and organized crime. New forms of violence supplant conventional war. In Guatemala, more people are currently murdered—mostly via gangland violence—than during the

height of the civil war in the 1980s. Over 40,000 people have died in Mexico since 2006 in drug-related violence.⁴

WDR 2011 asks what spurs the risks of violence, why conflict prevention and recovery have proven so chimerical, and what can be done by national leaderships and international development organizations alike to restore stable development in conflict-torn and fragile states, or what the Clinton administration in the 1990s famously called “failed states.” The central message of the report is that “strengthening legitimate institutions and governance to provide citizen security, justice, and jobs is crucial to prevent cycles of violence,” a key point being that violence is recursive and high rates of recidivism plague war-torn countries (2). There is a dialectics of violence: conflict can cause poverty (death, injury, and displacement reduce life chances) as much as poverty can cause violence. If you are poor, it pays to rebel. As a result, not a single low-income conflict-affected or fragile state (the Bank’s language and categorization) has achieved a single Millennium Development Goal.⁵ Yet when security is restored, coupled with a restoration of confidence, trust, and institutional accountability, the effects can be transformative, even within a generation.

Normatively, the report’s conclusions are wide-ranging and in many respects amount to a profound critique not only of the peacekeeping and humanitarian model traditionally embraced by the international system but also, and less explicitly, of the World Bank’s own position and ideology—something to which I will return. Violence prevention, says *WDR 2011*, must be given priority. Admirably, the report draws upon experiences from places like Los Angeles and Northern Ireland as much as East Timor and South Africa. Such diverse experiences of violence reduction offer a wealth of evidence to suggest that confidence and trust in state apparatuses is crucial; that the field of violence has been refigured in such a way that the standard roles for diplomats, military, or humanitarian officials developed in and around civil war are largely redundant, which means that new configurations of civil society, state, and international organizations must be developed; and, last but not least, that there must be a recognition that such changes will take time and patience. The Bank’s so-called best performers took twenty-seven years to reduce corruption. In short, the exultant rebels who have taken over Tripoli will confront multiple and complex transitions, the cumulative effect of which will be a very long slog to peaceful and durable stable development, to conjure the language of the 1960s, with a veritable “long march through the institutions.”⁶

WDR 2011 is an important and intriguing document. It bears the marks, naturally, of complex institutional knowledge production, as must be the case in any multilateral agency, but also something a little more unusual (at least for the Bank’s development reports): a serious engagement with practitioners, theorists, and policy wonks drawn from a vast array of national, international, and civic organizations deep in the trenches of what now passes as “human security.” In a way that no other development report has attempted, *WDR 2011* launches itself, indeed has no choice but to launch itself, into the grubby universe of real-world politics. One wants to say immediately that there is a striking confluence with another big and complex set of institutions, namely, the U.S. military complex. There is a direct parallel here with the much-vaunted retooling of military functions around development and humanitarian work,

which one might term “military humanitarianism,” in which security and development—one thinks of postearthquake Haiti as a case in point—are being refigured. On the military side this has been driven by, among other things, the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (a Rumsfeldian vision of a post–Cold War military coupling of drone and other virtual technologies of war) and the challenges presented by the (re-)appearance of counterinsurgency for the American war machine.

Perhaps it is diplomatic discretion, therefore, that explains why *WDR 2011* has very little to say about Afghanistan, steers studiously clear of Iraq and Pakistan, and not surprisingly provides no commentary whatsoever about current U.S. military strategy and operations in these theaters of war. Nevertheless, it would not be too much of a stretch to see *WDR 2011* as a massive critique of the colossal failures of U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Iraq—that is to say, of the appalling costs of unilaterally imposed nation building. The report briefly refers to David Kilcullen’s influential book *The Accidental Guerilla* (2009), an earlier version of which became required reading for rethinking counterinsurgency in Iraq for the U.S. military.⁷ Achieving security and development, in Kilcullen’s view, demanded “conflict ethnography . . . to borrow a literary term, there is no substitute for a ‘close reading’ of the [local] environment.”⁸ Kilcullen’s emphasis on the local context is a refrain heard throughout *WDR 2011*, as indeed are the words “confidence,” “trust,” “cultural norms,” “legitimacy,” and “credibility.” Whether they really take on conflict ethnography and close reading of history and culture is quite another matter.

Acknowledging Global Violence

Like Kilcullen, *WDR 2011* starts from the fact that violence is complex, diverse, diffuse, and lethal—but also in some respects distinctively new.⁹ From the perspective of *WDR 2011* the novelty presents a sort of paradox. The report appears at a moment when civil war deaths are declining (they peaked in the 1990s), as indeed are interstate wars; and homicide rates in most regions have also been declining.¹⁰ *WDR 2011*’s response is that these data underestimate the impact of organized violence, especially insofar as new forms of violence—militias, ethnic rebels, gang conflicts, sectarian violence, criminal insurgencies, and so on—represent a huge growth industry. The “newness” of the field of violence is matched by a particular history and geography (the violence is spatially concentrated and historically recursive). In this sense the Bank suggests that few of the countries which suffer from the new violence ever become truly “post-conflict.”

Several important points emerge from these observations. First, there is a connection between *WDR 2011* and the so-called new wars literature; Mary Kaldor’s book is an essential reference point in a highly contested field.¹¹ The boundaries in the wake of the Cold War between war and peace and between political and criminal violence have become radically blurred. The model of the Cold War insurgency seems no longer to hold: William Reno’s notion of symmetrical irregular warfare—in which rebels hold no clear ideology and are fragmented, fluid, factionalized, dispersed, defensive, and parochial—seems consistent with much of what the Bank’s report highlights.¹² Second, what one might call the “social field of violence” encompassed in this rather capacious notion of organized violence is massively heterogeneous: transna-

tional drug gangs in Guatemala with linkages to U.S. prisons, Somali pirates, organized oil theft in the Caucasus, clan and interclan (“warlord”) violence in Afghanistan, transnational Islamist groups in the Sahel, ethnic and interethnic conflict in Papua New Guinea, civil war in El Salvador, mining (and corporate) conflicts in Ecuador, secessionist movements in Somaliland, regional insurgency in Libya, and state violence in Sri Lanka. Third, the forms of violence—the social field—are teleconnected: illegal trafficking has been a source of support for Mindanao and Afghanistan, while struggles over chiefly rule of oil-bearing lands in the Niger delta are linked to groups involved in oil theft and drug running. Is there a better instance of this teleconnectivity than the labyrinthine connections between al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani tribal regions, and the fluid wider world of global geopolitics?

Much of what passes as new violence falls within the wide circumference of organized crime, by some estimations over a third of a trillion dollars, and the global shadow economy, pegged at 10 percent of global GDP (57). Terrorism, controversially defined by *WDR 2011* as force by non-state actors against civilians, becomes something of a blanket term for some but by no means all of this field: 86 percent of terrorist fatalities occur in the developing world, the report notes (55). All of this encapsulates a truly vast and differentiated set of phenomena, which immediately poses the question of whether, amid such local diversity and (to invoke Kilcullen) highly variegated local contexts, one can retain analytical integrity and coherence. And finally, the cyclical and repetitive nature of conflicts, identified by Paul Collier and his colleagues in their earlier work, produces a geographical and politico-economic condensation of violence and its destructive consequences.¹³ In other words, the territorialization, or spatialization, of organized violence falls disproportionately in some parts of the Global South, with devastating effect. For every three years that a country is affected by violence, poverty reduction lags by 2.7 percentage points. For example, until 1990 Burundi and Burkina Faso had similar growth and income levels; after the onset of the Burundi civil war in 1993, Burkina Faso became two and a half times richer. The figures are mind-numbing: with forty-two million people displaced by violence globally, Guatemala’s gang violence costs the government 7 percent of GDP annually; globally two-thirds of those who are undernourished, without potable water and without primary education reside in conflict-affected states. The indirect costs of conflict—in which children and women bear a disproportionately high burden—are mind-boggling: the indirect medical costs of violence in Brazil are forty times higher than the direct costs (65)!

The Stakes of Explanation

How, then, does *WDR 2011* understand the dynamics of violence and why some states seem more vulnerable to its terrible and debilitating effects? By its own account the report draws upon a multidisciplinary literature on risks of civil war and on cross-country (large-*n*) data—that is to say, quantitative studies which customarily deploy multivariate methods to measure patterns of association between violence and other broadly construed socioeconomic or political variables (73). There is much to be said about this data and about the statistical analysis—what Robert Alford calls multivariate as opposed to historical or hermeneutic paradigms of inquiry—and the deep

and perhaps intractable problems associated with such partial and uneven coverage of unemployment, income inequality, homicide rates, and what the report calls “extreme criminal violence” (2; see also glossary).¹⁴ Christopher Cramer and Paul Richards put the matter directly:

All these methods have to deal with the particular salience of problematic evidence: evidence that is missing or that is distorted by interests; evidence that is coloured by the emotions driving violence, its experience and its interpretation; or evidence that is simply difficult to collect and interpret. Violent conflict is not alone in facing such problems, but may be especially prone to them. Reconstructing violent incidents or episodes and trying to understand the sequence of events, and the motives and causes that led to them, is never easy. The challenges involved ought to be taken as a warning not to get carried away by the temptations to deduce such causes and motives from abstract axioms, or to infer them from patchy and often at best second-hand evidence.¹⁵

WDR 2011 refers to these problems in its second chapter but never really grapples with them. And one alternative—to make extensive use of ethnographic and historical analyses of the sort that has been the bread and butter of agrarian studies for four decades and more—is not pursued in any serious way.¹⁶ In practice, the Bank remains deeply wedded to econometric analyses of conflict, institutional economics, and methodological individualism—that is to say, the sort of analysis laid out in the Bank’s prior work, *Breaking the Conflict Trap* (2003)—in spite of its claim to be “multidisciplinary” (73).¹⁷ One of the problems of such statistical analysis appears in regard to the important claim that violence occurs in cycles. Yet without saying so, the Bank has lowered the threshold for what counts as a cycle since its 2003 report, as Astri Suhrke and Ingrid Samset point out. The threshold for “recidivism” has now been lowered, even though the conflicts in question may involve entirely different parties and issues, take place half a century apart, and employ different sorts of measures of conflict (what the Bank calls “major” and “minor” conflicts). As a result India has purportedly experienced twenty civil wars since independence and might plausibly be seen as a fragile state. By the same token, the statistical manipulation of thresholds for recidivism with direct implications for the recursivity of violence can have the consequence of legitimating what Suhrke and Samset call a “heaving international footprint.”¹⁸ Indeed, Collier has argued for direct military intervention.¹⁹

The Bank report adopts a “stressor” model of violence: internal and external stresses like security, economics, and justice can “precipitate organized violence through a vicious cycle of vulnerability to violence” (72). Drawing upon a long shopping list of theories of conflict, including commitment problems, horizontal inequality, greed and grievance, relative deprivation, and institutional access—but, interestingly, never once mentioning the work of Hannah Arendt, Franz Fanon, or Thomas Hobbes—*WDR 2011* briefly covers everything from legacies to trauma to youth unemployment to rapid urbanization to ethnic competition to human rights abuses (75). These complex and interrelated trigger mechanisms operate in a homologous way to the World Health Organization’s health framework: vulnerability to violence is rather like the body’s immune system (86). As with fighting off disease,

fighting off violence requires a powerful immune system, or in the Bank's case, legitimate institutions. Whether this model of biophysical adaptation, which in a sense sees violence as a giant social servo-mechanism, is terribly helpful remains an open question. It bears repeating that this autoimmune model (often linked to a theory of living systems as self-organizing and autopoietic) is central to a wide range of management, organizational, and social science disciplines and, as Michael Dillon notes, is now the foundation for an entire order of modern governance which Foucault called "biopolitics."²⁰ But there is no question that the so-called resilience approach—derived from systems theory, cybernetics, and the ecological work of C. S. Holling—has become a new frame of reference not only for conflict and human security but also for the global climate change/adaptation debate, and debates within sustainable development more generally.²¹ These organic analogies have to be handled carefully, and it is not at all clear whether or how many of the examples covered in the report, drawn from Colombia, Nepal, and Afghanistan, can be easily folded into this autoimmune model.

In covering a large and complicated field, *WDR 2011* commendably reveals many of the weaknesses of the "resource curse" literature and the crude "greed or grievance" theory of Paul Collier and his World Bank colleagues in their earlier report from 2003. The current report is agnostic about how and whether unemployment causes violence but interestingly believes that inequality and criminal violence are robustly related (79). In the authors' data, rebel movements attract (overwhelmingly) the unemployed and the "idle," but "belief in a cause" and "revenge" figure dominantly in what drives people to join "ideological militant movements." The authors of *WDR 2011* have little to say about how these characteristics, "unemployment and a sense of injustice," operate in tandem (78–84): in short, the Bank does not seriously excavate the deep and knotty relations between ideology, discourse, and political economy.

The centerpiece of the vulnerability model, however, is the concepts of institutional capacity and legitimacy. Societies that rely on elite pacts, coercion, and patronage risk cyclical violence. The report's keywords are "capacity," "inclusion," and "accountability." The Bank's analysis of global data concludes that institutional capacity and accountability are negatively correlated with civil war and high homicide rates. But whereas income inequality seems central to the latter, it is horizontal inequality across ethnic and other identity groups that seems crucial here (80).

To attempt to pull together a vast body of work on a multiplicity of heterogeneous forms of violence in barely fifteen pages will necessarily involve a great deal of synthesis and condensation. But *WDR 2011*, dare I say it, does violence to the scholarship itself. It is not at all clear that rebels, militants, militias, vigilantes, drug gangs, and Muslim martyrs can all be lumped together in the sort of brief discussion of motives and intentions briefly surveyed by the Bank researchers. The continuum of violence and the heterogeneity of conflicts demand a much more sophisticated sense of causality and mechanism than is on offer in the Bank's analysis. Even if the Bank's simplified model of cyclical violence—elite pacts, weak institutions, and stressors—holds some analytical merit, its preference for multivariate analysis and statistics (of sometimes very dubious quality) over ethnographic, interpretive, and historical analysis (of the sort seen in the work of Jeffery Paige, Paul Richards, and Jeremy Weinstein) offers

only a clunky model of dynamics (89).²² Furthermore, holding the analysis together is what Cramer calls a liberal theory of democracy, with certain assumptions about rational action (*homo economicus* goes to war) in which violence is perverse, abnormal, and aberrant. (Cramer offers a more plausible “double helix” account of conflict, a political economy of violent capitalism that approximates what I have elsewhere called “violent economies.”)²³

The Niger Delta

My own work on the Niger delta—an oil region in which there is an insurgency and endemic conflict, and which makes several appearances in *WDR 2011*—reveals what needs, in my view, to be made clearer in the Bank’s account. First, the social field of violence is complex, multilayered, and teleconnected. There are ethnic militias and guerilla insurgents. There are widely heterogeneous conflicts between communities and ethnic groups over oil-bearing property and land or territorial rights. Violent oil thieves and their gangs fight over so-called oil-bunkering territories. Security forces and oil-producing communities, and youths and chiefs fight over access to oil rents. And not least within the oil cities of the region, there are struggles over the delimitations of electoral wards and local government boundaries as a way of gaining access to the oil revenue process. Actors move between and among these conflicts, which are nevertheless all situated in some way in relation to oil, but the political idiom across these conflicts varies in important ways. One expression is that the insurgency—militants attacking the state and oil companies in the name of resource control—has quite different dynamics in the eastern and western delta, varying to the extent to which militants have or have not been co-opted by powerful political figures.

The Niger delta example also shows clearly how the tight definition of conventional analytical categories proves to be a hindrance—or does not correspond to what we see in the ugly world of insurgency and rebellion. The boundaries between rebels and the state is porous; local oil thieves work with politicians and the military; criminality and politics often blur, as does the line between various types of identity (ethnicity, clan, citizen). Militant groups typically have a distinctive social composition in which the rural and urban uneducated poor meet up with a class of unemployed graduates whose prospects in the local labor market are close to zero. And finally, while the Bank is right to talk about stakeholders—to use its anodyne language—the Nigerian case shows how important multinational corporations, private security forces, forms of customary or local rule (chiefdoms in the Nigerian case), and transnational diasporic networks are—yet none of these pivotal actors receives any attention whatsoever in the report.

What is most perplexing about the report’s analysis of violence is the absence of any suggestion that anything might be learned from the large and sophisticated literature on agrarian political economy.²⁴ At the heart of this work is the centrality of agrarian dynamics to many forms of contemporary conflict and political development. Since the Vietnam War there has been an explosion of work on peasant rebellions and revolutions, peasant resistance and political mobilization, and the relations between agrarian transformation and political violence (whether of Mafia-like organizations or guerilla insurgencies). Cramer and Richards suggest that

studying the agrarian dimensions of violent conflicts involves seeing how access to and control of land and labour, as well as financial capital, is shaped by social structures and relations, including class, gender and age. Moreover, such studies point to changes in these structures and relations, which in turn pose threats to established and institutionalized patterns of access and control. These changes may be driven by demographic pressures and increasing land scarcity, sometimes artificially accelerated by new forms of foreign investment . . . or by immigration and shifts in labour markets, or greater integration into global markets. Central to most of these changes, and the tensions they may generate, are policies: policies regulating property rights, investment in rural infrastructure, establishing sectoral change in productive activities and so on.²⁵

In this light, it is mildly astonishing that Paige's path-breaking work on agrarian violence is nowhere to be seen in the report.²⁶ On the basis of a rigorous statistical analysis of the livelihood of social movements engaging in armed violence in seventy agrarian commodity-exporting countries over the period 1945–68, Paige concluded that conflict was likely where cash crops were produced either by decentralized sharecropping or long-distance labor migration. In both instances, a noncultivating upper class lacked resources or support to assert control over an increasingly well-organized agrarian workforce, while the land-owning class lacked significant links with industrial or finance capital. These classes, with no prospects of diversifying or redistributing, fought to retain land, but with different political (and conflict) outcomes. In one case (sharecropping), the social structure split along class lines, leading to revolutionary war. In the other (the migratory labor estate system), plantation workers returned to their rural homelands and were mobilized as support for the political ambitions of a nationalist elite of chiefs, merchants, and low-level state functionaries. Here violence is directed against planters, but it reflects communal rather than class-based ties, and a nationalist rather than a socialist regime emerges.

In a subsequent analysis of three Central American coffee economies, Paige shows how the differing relations between agriculture and elite pacts—that is to say, alliances and political contracts between ruling groups—produced three very different outcomes: social revolution in Nicaragua, a fascist revolution from above in El Salvador, and democracy in Costa Rica. Paige combines ethnography, surveys, and historical political economy to show something about the relations between coffee elites, violence, and political trajectory.²⁷ In their comparison of violence in Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, Chaveau and Richards, through a careful historical and social structural analysis, are able to show how an agrarian-based lineage order, thrown into crisis by the marginalization of youth groups from local institutions, produces quite different conflict dynamics.²⁸ These models of historical and cultural complexity are mixed with statistical analysis and ethnography, to which the Bank says it aspires but never achieves. In this sense, perhaps, *WDR 2011* should have taken a page from the Kilcullen playbook.

What might one say about the Bank's analysis, then? First, as Stathis Kalyvas suggests, viewed from the micro-level the delta insurgency resembles, like many conflicts, a “welter of complex struggles” in which the notion that the rebels are

criminals who operate against law-abiding states fails to capture the dynamics at work. Group interests are often “localistic and region-specific,” yet their specificity emerges from the structured totality of historically and geographically situated political economy.²⁹ Second, a geographical, that is to say, spatial, analysis suggests a more complex picture of conflict dynamics and renders an analysis more attentive to questions of scale. And third, one must explore the relations between forms of capitalism (whether seen as emerging markets or structurally adjusted economies) and a wider economy of violence. Much of the violence on offer assumes the form of social and class struggle—some criminalized, some not—within a historically and politically specific form of what the geographer David Harvey calls “accumulation by dispossession.”³⁰ My starting point is a historical sense of class and sociopolitical exclusion, corporate and other capital flows, and military neoliberalism.³¹ This actually returns the analysis to the home turf of the Bank, namely, economics and capitalism—curiously missing from *WDR 2011*—albeit in a rather different register from the neoliberal or neoclassical prescriptions and analyses we typically associate with the multilateral development agencies.

A Bundle of Contradictions

The most compelling part of *WDR 2011* examines, in a quartet of pivotal chapters, how to think about three critical challenges, in order both to prevent further violence and address existing conflicts (postconflict resolution): how to restore confidence in the state; how to transform institutions to deliver citizen security, justice, and jobs; and how international support can assist in the attainment of these twin goals. It is impossible to summarize the wealth of insight here. What is striking is that in practical terms, the Bank endorses, unlike its one-size-fits-all approach in promoting market efficiency, a “best-fit” approach that takes history and geography very seriously.

The authors of *WDR 2011* devise a fourfold matrix for particular types and forms of science, which includes (1) transition opportunity, (2) essential stakeholders, (3) major stresses, and (4) institutional challenges, all of which are locally defined and shaped by the political space into which interventions are made. By definition, this approach encourages what one might call local knowledge and local context, a multidisciplinary disposition, and a sensitivity to political opportunities and spaces as they emerge from concrete (national or subnational) spaces. This alone is worth a round of applause. As the report puts it:

A core message is that the particular manifestation of violence at any one time is less important than the underlying institutional deficits that permit repeated cycles of violence—and that successful approaches to address political, communal, and criminal violence have much in common. But the mix of different types of violence does affect strategy. Inequality among ethnic, religious, or geographical groups is important as a risk for civil conflict—employment programs and services would thus target equity and bridging opportunities among these groups. But for organized criminal violence, inequality between rich and poor matters more (irrespective of ethnic or religious identities). Violence with strong international links—organized crime, international recruitment into ideological movements—requires greater international cooperation. (22)

Central to this strategy is the construction of “sufficiently inclusive” political coalitions capable of including social groups, instilling security and confidence (which means tackling head-on the radical reform of the security and military apparatuses), and focusing on job creation, which needs to be sequenced and paced over time. At its core this is a program—a context-specific national program with external support (on which more momentarily)—that reconfigures state-society relations. It is quite striking to read that the World Bank believes this must be achieved through “bottom-up support,” job creation through public works, and a feminization of security, justice, and economic empowerment (chapter 5).

Perhaps most startling are the new demands such a project implies for international organizations “unable to keep pace with the emerging analysis of conflict” (181). Again, there is much to be said here, but the emphasis on external pressures (commodity shocks, trafficking, cross-border insecurity, global climate change, illicit transactions) and the inadequacy of existing patterns of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance (stop-go aid, competition between NGOs, lack of accountability to national actors) points to the need for a radical overhaul. The report identifies four tracks, each of which could be seen as a direct challenge to existing orthodox mentalities: the provision of more integrated specialized assistance for citizen security, justice, and jobs; reform of internal agency systems to restore confidence; regional and global cooperation to attend to external stresses; and cross-regional (south-south and north-south) support to reflect the “new landscape of policy and assistance.” At its core, says the report, is a principle of “shared global risk” (290). Admirable sentiments, but this principle of sharing, if one examines the decade since 9/11, must ring a little hollow for residents of Kabul, Basra, Kinshasa, or Mogadishu.

A reading of *WDR 2011* necessarily raises questions of epistemology and knowledge production. The World Bank, after all, self-consciously positions itself as a “knowledge bank” and the annual report as a state-of-the-art compendium of ideas and policy. The hegemony of the Bank in regard to development theory and practice is widely recognized at the same time that the multilateral development agencies (the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Finance Corporation, and the International Monetary Fund) are widely seen as centers of what has been called the “neoliberal thought collective” and the so-called Washington Consensus.³²

Where, then, does *WDR 2011* stand in relation to the complex lineages of neoliberalism and to the often contested history of previous Bank reports? (The 2000 development report on poverty, for example, proved internally very fractious, resulting in the resignation of one of its key authors, and it is widely understood that the departures of the Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz and the economist William Easterly followed from internal dissension over the role and character of structural adjustment reforms and some of the core tenets of neoliberalism.) International financial institutions like the Bank are by their very nature complex and contradictory: after all, the infamous former head of the IMF, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, was, and as far as I know remains, a “socialist.” While economists and engineers dominate the research division, social scientists of many stripes populate its assorted divisions. Particularly under the strain of growing political and popular pressures on its projects since the

1980s, the Bank has been compelled to diversify, to incorporate (some would say co-opt) civic organizations and NGOs, and in the name of public oversight to engage with a raft of new and different actors and agents.

That said, there *is* a center of intellectual gravity within the Bank, and this is indisputably its important legitimizing function for neoliberal thought and practice. Robert Wade's work on what he calls "paradigm maintenance," Alice Amsden's analyses of the self-justifying Bank policies crafted by an incestuous groupuscule of Bank insiders and consultants, and Robin Broad's picture of how hiring and promotion practices, selective enforcement of rules, manipulation of data, and the squelching of dissonant ideas all serve to reproduce a particular ideology, make this production of hegemonic ideas crystal-clear.³³ Michael Goldman's exemplary account of how environmentalism (driven by popular criticism of many Bank projects) was constructed in the Bank's image, in what he calls a self-reinforcing congruence with values of finance capital, is an exemplary case in point.³⁴

So how does *WDR 2011* stack up? The short answer is that it is an intriguing bundle of contradictions. On the one hand (and despite the report's claim to incorporate ideas from across the social sciences), the approach to conflict and violence remains driven by economists and (a subset of) political scientists. In conceptual terms, *WDR 2011* claims to represent an integration of the ideas of Paul Collier (a former Bank researcher) and the Bank's *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, released in 2003 with political theorists who study institutions in terms of commitment problems, legitimacy, trust, and credibility. On the other, it is striking how absent are market thinking and neoliberal ideas, indeed the entire economic growth agenda; job creation turns out to be crucial, but ironically a strong argument is made for state-funded employment strategies. What is on offer is a ringing endorsement of creative and forceful public action, a bold endorsement of security, justice, and citizenship rights, and the need to draw upon a raft of civil society practices and organizations to build durable development. Indeed, this report seems to contradict some of the ideas contained in its 2003 counterpart, and while it claims to integrate Collier's "conflict trap" notions, it in fact ends up rejecting them (117).³⁵

At the very least one might say that focusing on conflict and violence has compelled the report to run headlong into the nitty-gritty of real world politics, the indispensable role of the state and civil society, and the need to embrace experiences (Los Angeles gangs, the therapeutic and healing practices of truth commissions) and disciplines (social psychology, anthropology, sociology) in a novel way. It is striking that many within the humanitarian and development activist community who would not ordinarily be cheerleaders for the Bank have been guardedly optimistic about the tenor and the ideas contained within *WDR 2011*.³⁶ The tendency to "render technical," which has been a hallmark of Bank analysis, rather than render political or social, has—at least for this report—been thoroughly muzzled.³⁷ The cynic (realist?) might say that what seems like another step toward the post-Washington Consensus and the call for radical change—something also present in last year's report—is a shift from one form of neoliberalism to another, in which the Bank now has to come to terms with addressing the consequences and contradictions of the radical imposition of its

earlier free-market philosophy.³⁸ Either way, there is not a great deal here for Friedrich Hayek or Michael Oakeshott.

If this report in no simple sense reflects a neoliberal agenda, it nevertheless reveals something more ominous and sinister about the Bank itself: namely, its extraordinary consistency in writing out of the story its own practices and culpability. Put differently, the report comes close to seeing conflict as the counterpoint to development (which it is in the business of promoting, of course). But any account of modern capitalism and the rise of the modern nation-state—Charles Tilly on war and state building, Michael Mann on the dark side of democracy, Karl Marx on primitive accumulation, Vadim Volkov on violent entrepreneurs—would recognize that violence has been the regular midwife of social and political change, that reform can be the forcing house of the most extraordinary violence. It is not that violence is development in reverse. Economies of violence have their own coherence and logic, working together, as Volkov shows, in the emerging markets of Russia, which were characterized by the management and capitalization of organized violence—violence-managing agencies constituted in part by disenfranchised sports clubs and discharged soldiers—under conditions of weak state capitalism and reformist market adjustment.³⁹

In this way, much of what passes as World Bank structural adjustment was in fact co-constitutive of what one might also call “violent economies.”⁴⁰ Global military neoliberalism and the forcible imposition of adjustment created a set of conditions in many parts of the world which produced Harvey’s accumulation by dispossession.⁴¹ As Karl Polanyi noted long ago, market reforms and commodification, when conducted on a global scale (and now enforced by imperial powers and heavy-handed multilateral agencies), are generative of violence—granting, of course, as the Bank properly points out, that all these countermovements are inflected by local conditions and circumstances: Ivory Coast is different from Egypt.⁴² In the same way that the Bank writes itself out of the conflict story, it also cannot state the obvious: U.S. Cold War imperialism and post-Cold War globally imposed neoliberalism have created the conditions for all manner of reactive (and often reactionary) violent politics in the developing world. Here the closest the Bank can come is its proper invocation of “external stresses,” by which it mostly means price shocks and financial turbulence. A similar silencing (or perhaps occlusion) is seen in the decision of *WDR 2011* to begin its start of violence in the postindependence period. The effect is to truncate analysis in a way that (1) privileges violence as a postcolonial phenomenon (rather than coming to terms with the ugly record of colonial violence) and (2) ignores for analytical purposes how a deep historical sensibility might shape the understanding of the Bank’s four-fold matrix of vulnerability to violence.

But perhaps the silences and occlusions within the operations of the World Bank are not the place to end. *WDR 2011* calls for a “fundamental rethink,” and this challenge is as central to the Bank’s mission as it is to any other development organization—and one should take this seriously whether or not one thinks the Bank is likely to undertake it. By focusing on the dynamics and burdens of human conflict it has chosen to shine a light on institutions and necessarily on politics. *WDR 2011* might, of course, have spent much time reviving hoary old Malthusian ideas about

the relations between overpopulation and scarcity, or Hobbesian notions of the coming apocalypse. It does not run away from the fact that the state must be an object of analysis and scrutiny; that resilient and effective states, if they are to be built on the rubble of civil war or internecine strife, will require robust citizenship rights, inclusive political coalitions, transparent and accountable security apparatuses, economic and social security, responsive political organizations; that a set of international agencies, if they are to play a supportive role, must be radically rethought. To place the ugly face of violence in the harsh light of day is no mean achievement.

WDR 2011 seems to call for a paradigm change in an institution characterized, to invoke Robert Wade again, by paradigm maintenance. At the very least that is a worthwhile sentiment. If anybody is to now invoke nation building or fragile states, *WDR 2011* shows that one cannot run away from the need for an in-depth understanding of local politics and the need to engage with the long, arduous, and time-consuming process of forming broad-based coalitions capable of restoring confidence and credibility in something—the state—that has for far too long been seen as either subsidiary to the market or as a repository of corruption and bad governance. The state is back on the agenda, but the state cannot restore what it has lost under its own power. In my view, states must be rebuilt with, and on, the rubble of neoliberalism. In a world reeling from financial collapse, and in which the U.S. government looks ever more like a fragile (failed?) state, the road will be long and hard.

NOTES

1. Carlo Emilio Gadda, *That Awful Mess on the Via Merulana*, trans. William Weaver (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2007), 5–6.

2. *WDR 2011* can be productively read in relation to the *Human Security Report 2009–2010* published by the Human Security Report Project (HSRP), an independent research center affiliated with Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Vancouver, Canada. There are important differences in the interpretation of what are admittedly often patchy and poor data on war, conflict, and violence. Their core findings are:

- Four of the world's five deadliest conflicts—in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Somalia—involve Islamist insurgents.
- Over a quarter of the conflicts that started between 2004 and 2008 have been associated with Islamist political violence.
- In the post–Cold War period a greater percentage of the world's countries have been involved in wars than at any time since the end of World War II.
- Armed conflict numbers increased by 25 percent from 2003 to 2008, after declining for more than ten years.
- Intercommunal and other conflicts that do not involve a government increased by more than 100 percent from 2007 to 2008.
- The impact of the global economic crisis on developing countries risks generating political instability and increasing the risk of war.
- Wars have become “intractable”—i.e., more difficult to bring to an end.

3. Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

4. "Q&A: Mexico's drug-related violence," BBC News, August 26, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-10681249> (accessed September 19, 2011).
5. On average a country that experienced major violence over the period 1981–2005 has a poverty rate 21 percentage points higher than a country that experiences no violence (61).
6. The remark is usually attributed to 1960s German activist Rudi Dutschke, but he in turn drew upon Antonio Gramsci's language to describe the process by which a counterhegemony could be created from below. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).
7. See David Kilcullen, "Ethics, Politics and Non-State Warfare: A Response to González," *Anthropology Today* 23, no. 3 (2007): 20. Invading Iraq, Kilcullen famously said in a 2009 interview with the *Washington Independent*, was "fucking stupid." See <http://washingtonindependent.com/403/sources-holler-back-kilcullen-edition> (accessed September 19, 2011).
8. David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
9. Kilcullen is referring largely to what he calls the global Islamic insurgency. See his "Accidental Guerilla: Read before Burning," *Small Wars Journal*, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/accidental-guerrilla-read-before-burning> (accessed September 19, 2011).
10. According to the *Human Security Report 2009–2010 (HSR)*, from 1992 until 2003, the number of *state-based armed conflicts*—those involving a government as one of the warring parties—dropped by some 40 percent. Since 2003, however, the global incidence of armed conflicts has increased by 25 percent. Meanwhile, *non-state conflicts*—violent confrontations between communal groups, rebels, or warlords that do not involve a state as a warring party—increased by a startling 119 percent from 2007 to 2008. The increase in 2008 was largely associated with fighting in just two countries: Kenya and Pakistan. In the view of the *HSR*, non-state conflicts tend to be short-lived and pose no direct threat to the security of governments; few last more than a year, and their battle death tolls are very small. A quarter of the conflicts that started or reignited between 2003 and 2008 were associated with Islamist political violence and the so-called War on Terror. The evidence suggests that the incidence of one-sided violence is declining. In fact, in 2008 the one-sided-violence death toll was the lowest since 1989—the first year for which there are data.
11. Shannon D. Beebe and Mary Kaldor, *The Ultimate Weapon Is No Weapon: Human Security and the New Rules of War and Peace* (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2010).
12. William Reno, *Wars in Independent Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
13. Paul Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2003).
14. Robert R. Alford, *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
15. Christopher Cramer and Paul Richards, "Violence and War in Agrarian Perspective," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 11, no. 3 (2011): 292–93.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Interestingly, in a major internal assessment of Bank research undertaken in 2006, the review of the conflict work by an economist noted that much of the analysis of Collier and his colleagues—which had successfully branded the notion that greed causes civil wars—was in fact rated as poor econometrics by the economist reviewers. See Daron Acemoglu, "Evaluation of World Bank Research," <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/84797-1109362238001/726454-1164121166494/3182920-1164133928090/Daron-Acemoglu.pdf> (accessed September 19, 2011).

18. Astri Suhrke and Ingrid Samset, "Cycles of violence? Three issues and a question," CMI, <http://www.cmi.no/news/?818=cycles-of-violence-three-issues-and-a-question011> (accessed September 19, 2011).
19. Collier, *Bottom Billion*.
20. Michael Dillon, "Underwriting Security," *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 2/3 (2008): 309–32; Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
21. See Michael Watts, "Ecologies of Rule: African Environments and the Climate of Neoliberalism," in *The Deepening Crisis: Governance Challenges after Neoliberalism*, ed. Craig Calhoun and Georgi Derlugian (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 67–92; World Resources Institute, *Roots of Resilience: Growing the Wealth of the Poor* (Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 2008); W. Neil Adger, "Vulnerability," *Global Environmental Change* 16, no. 3 (2006): 268–81; Carl Folke et al., "Adaptive Governance of Socio-Ecological Systems," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 30 (2005): 441–73.
22. For problems with the data, see Christopher Cramer and Jonathan Goodhand, "Hard Science or Waffly Crap: Evidence-Based Policy versus Policy-Based Evidence in the Field of Violent Conflict," in *The Political Economy of Development: The World Bank, Neoliberalism, and Development Research*, ed. Kate Bayliss, Ben Fine, and Elisa Van Waeyenberge (London: Pluto, 2011), 215–38. Also Christopher Cramer, Laura Hammond, and Johan Pottier, *Researching Violence in Africa: Ethical and Methodological Challenges* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). For the ethnographic supplement, see Jeffery M. Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: International African Institute, 1996); RETORT, *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (London: Verso, 2005); and Jeremy W. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
23. Christopher Cramer, *Civil War Is Not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries* (London: Hurst, 2006), 199–240. See also Michael Watts, "Economies of Violence," in *Contested Grounds: Essays on Nature, Culture and Power*, ed. Amita Baviska (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1061–1136.
24. See Cramer and Richards, "Violence and War in Agrarian Perspective."
25. *Ibid.*, 280.
26. Jeffery M. Paige, *Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World* (New York: Free Press, 1975).
27. See Paige, *Coffee and Power*.
28. Jean-Pierre Chauveau and Paul Richards, "West African Insurgencies in Agrarian Perspective: Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone Compared," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8, no. 4 (2008): 515–53.
29. Stathis N. Kalyvas, "'New' and 'Old' Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" *World Politics* 54, no. 1 (2001): 112–13.
30. David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
31. Jenny Pearce, "Policy Failure and Petroleum Predation: The Economics of Civil War Debate Viewed 'From the War-Zone,'" *Government and Opposition* 40, no. 2 (2005): 152–80.
32. See Robin Broad, "Research, Knowledge and the Art of 'Paradigm Maintenance': The

World Bank's Development Economics Vice-Presidency (DEC)," *Review of International Political Economy* 13, no. 3 (2006): 387–419.

33. Robert H. Wade, "Making the World Development Report 2000: Attacking Poverty," *World Development* 29, no. 8 (2001): 1435–41; Wade, "U.S. Hegemony and the World Bank: The Fight over People and Ideas," *Review of International Political Economy* 9, no. 2 (2002): 201–29; Alice H. Amsden, "Why Isn't the Whole World Experimenting with the East Asian Model to Develop? Review of the East Asian Miracle," *World Development* 22, no. 2 (1994): 627–33. See also Broad, "'Paradigm Maintenance.'"

34. Michael Goldman, *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Justice in the Age of Globalization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 148.

35. Collier, the report says, focuses on low incomes (where income is a proxy for uneducated young men turning to violent resource predations as an income-enhancing strategy), whereas they focus on "institutional deficits."

36. The Asia Foundation refers to the Bank's new "development realism," while International Alert calls it a "game changer." See <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2011/04/27/development-realism-why-the-world-bank%E2%80%99s-world-development-report-should-lead-to-changes-in-aid-to-fragile-states> and <http://www.international-alert.org/news/2011-world-development-report-potential-game-changer> (accessed September 19, 2011).

37. See Tania Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

38. For an excellent discussion, see Elias Van Waeyenberger, Ben Fine, and Kate Bayliss, "The World Bank, Neo-Liberalism and Development Research," in Van Waeyenberger, Fine, and Bayliss, eds., *Political Economy of Development*, 3–25.

39. Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

40. See Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006); and Achille Mbembe, "At the Edge of the World," *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (2001): 259–84.

41. RETORT, *Afflicted Powers*; Harvey, *New Imperialism*.

42. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Rinehart, 1944).