Policing Insecurity

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*I*n environments of seemingly intractable conflict, how should we understand the role of state capacity building and security-sector reform in transitions to peace? Prevailing wisdom suggests that a strong state security apparatus mitigates cyclical violence and aids in transitions to predictable, rule-governed behavior. Yet growing attention to police brutality in institutionalized democracies calls this assumption into question. Drawing on a multiyear study of war making and state making in eastern DR Congo, this article interrogates logics of police capacity building, analyzing how and why reform efforts intended to bolster the state's monopoly on violence frequently fail to curb the unrest they seek to disrupt. I argue that enhancing the coercive capacity of the police can entrench a wartime political order that makes peace more elusive; when police deploy the image of the state toward destabilizing ends they reinforce the institutions of everyday war, undermining the stability a monopoly on violence is intended to build.

INTRODUCTION

*I*n environments of seemingly intractable conflict, how should we understand the role of state capacity building and security-sector reform in transitions to peace?

Prevailing wisdom on postwar recovery suggests that a strong state security service, including a well-resourced and well-trained army and police force, mitigates cyclical violence and aids in the transition to predictable, rule-governed behavior (Krasner 2004; Lake 2010). Yet growing public attention to state violence and police brutality in institutionalized democracies (González 2020; Hinton 2021; Zimring 2017) calls this assumption, long challenged in more critical circles, into question.

Drawing on a multiyear ethnographic and interview-based study of war making and state making in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), this article interrogates the logics of security sector capacity building in the context of postwar recovery, analyzing how and why reform efforts intended to establish the state's monopoly on violence through the strengthening of police and militaries frequently fail to curb the unrest they seek to disrupt (Davis 2015; Ebo 2007; Mandrup 2018; Schnabel and Born 2011).

The article advances one core argument: enhancing the coercive capacity of security agents can entrench a wartime political order that makes peace more elusive, particularly when security agents deploy capacity to engage in subjugation and violence. Patterns of violent and coercive policing are evident across political contexts and regime types (e.g., Akbar 2020; González 2020). However, amplifying the violence of states in already volatile political environments can exacerbate feelings of insecurity among civilians (Enloe 2016) and erode confidence in the state at precisely the moment that institutional trust is so important (Walter 1997). Heightened experiences of state-based insecurity can foment existing grievances, in some circumstances intensifying the prospects of future political and conflict-related unrest.

I use immersive interview-based and observational data to explore the relationship between police capacity and dynamics of violence during war-to-peace transitions. Interviewees include civilian inhabitants of conflict political orders, security architects and practitioners implicated in the design and implementation of security sector reform, and street-level officers reflecting on the meaning and work of policing.

I chose to focus on police, rather than militaries, because street-level officers comprise the most visible face of the state for many civilians. Because police officers are embedded within communities, their encounters with civilians constitute one of the key sites in which the state is "produced" through interactions between its citizens and agents (Hinton 2008; Migdal 2001; Takabvirwa 2018). This leads Mann (1984, 189) to identify the police as a key instrument of the state's infrastructural power. As such, the police play a crucial role in shaping confidence in and relationships with state institutions. Yet, despite their centrality and importance, with some notable exceptions (Blair, Karim, and Morse 2016; 2019; Karim 2020; Khalili and Schwedler 2010; Schroeder, Chappuis, and Kocak 2014), their role in war-to-peace transitions has received scant attention in political science scholarship.

Focusing predominantly on the role of policing in postwar stabilization efforts, often supported by external actors, my interviews were designed to elicit how differently situated stakeholders at various nodes of the security-peacebuilding-development nexus reflected on the security and state-building practices they were enmeshed within. The primary corpus of data for this project comprised 43 work-history interviews covering the experiences and perspectives of police officers based in the *petit nord*—the epicenter of North Kivu's recurring conflict. These interviews supplemented

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approximately 200 additional interviews and many months of embedded research associated with a number of different projects I have undertaken in North Kivu between 2012 and 2018.

My research, which was undertaken in the site of one of the most prominent peacebuilding missions in recent history[1] and where policing, counterterrorism, and other aspects of state security were heavily emphasized in the context of war-to-peace transition, revealed that the state constitutes one of the primary sources of insecurity for inhabitants of conflict political orders. Yet many of the interactions that produced the most fear and uncertainty for civilians were considered part of the regular and legitimate "work" of policing by police and civilians alike. These interactions are often reinforced institutionally and through chains of command. Because of the broader structures of violence that street-level officers find themselves enmeshed within and because of how police understand their own roles within this security environment (through entrenched logics of victimization and appropriate behavior deeply bound up in trajectories of precarity and war), capacity-building measures that fail to grapple with the broader (in)security landscape tend to facilitate the very acts that stoke unrest. Therefore, in spite of the aspirations of many police, capacities presumed to promote stability can instead entrench a political order wherein trust in the state remains low, confidence in state-based solutions are lacking, and incentives for individuals or armed actors to pursue their political and economic agendas through coercion, violence, or the threat of violence remain high. The resulting equilibrium undermines the logic of many dominant capacity-building projects (MacGinty and Firchow 2016).

This article builds on a rich body of literature on policing, political violence, and war-to-peace transitions. Part II presents a theory of wartime insecurity in cyclical low-intensity conflicts, centering inhabitants' lived experiences of war. Informed by feminist scholarship on war and peace and building on a state-in-society tradition, I posit that formal clashes between armed groups and the state are only one manifestation of conflict. Indeed, the "war" as it was experienced by my interviewees was most commonly characterized as a "war of the everyday," an experience that frequently manifests—directly or indirectly—in adversarial encounters with the state and its security architectures. These encounters can be understood as both a source and a symptom of pervasive conflict.

Without understanding how street-level officers make sense of the "work" of policing, we are ill-equipped to comprehend how security capacities are being deployed. Part III thus elucidates how the project's interpretivist approach, grounded in a feminist research praxis, offers unique insights into everyday experiences of wartime insecurity as well as street-level officers' situated understandings of their roles in broader security and state-building efforts.

Part IV presents empirical evidence in support of the article's main claims, drawing links between the lived experiences of police, their motivations, and their means. Organized in four parts, this section *(i)* sets the scene with a brief introduction to DRC's security landscape, *(ii)* provides a brief chronology of police capacity-building activities in the east, *(iii)* explores the dual logics of victimization and appropriate behavior that underpin the work of street-level officers, displacing their professed solidarity with other victims of the war, and *(iv)* shows how police capacities come to shape certain dimensions of wartime insecurity through everyday state–society encounters.

LOGICS OF STATE BUILDING IN TRANSITIONS TO PEACE

Monopolizing Violence

A large body of literature challenges the assumption that bolstering the capacity, resources, and visibility of security agents necessarily contributes to heightened security (Bayley 1994; Enloe 2000; Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019; Tickner 1992).

This observation spans a diversity of political contexts. From stop and frisk practices, asset forfeitures, administrative fees, interrogation, and physical brutality, the arbitrary *and* systematic violence of states persists under democratic, authoritarian, and weak rule-of-law regimes alike. Around the world, including in advanced industrialized democracies, predatory policing is heavily bound up with revenue generation and local economies (Akbar 2020, 114; Appleman 2016).[2] Penalties disproportionately levied on particular social groups impede access to housing, health care, and basic sustenance (Colgan 2018; González 2017). These interactions are gendered, classed, and raced, deepening experiences of poverty, social exclusion, and criminalization for those already occupying positions of marginalization. Noncompliance can be fatal. From this vantage point, relationships between policing capacity and heightened abuses of police power are unsurprising (González 2020; Pereira and Ungar 2004; Prado, Trebilcock, and Hartford 2012).

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[1] The United Nations Mission in DRC (MONUSCO, formerly MONUC) is among the United Nations' largest peacekeeping missions in terms of both cost and personnel (https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/background). Partnerships with the DRC government, other international agencies, and nongovernmental organizations, combine peacekeeping with peacebuilding, stabilization, and development. UNSCR-1925 established MONUSCO's strategic priorities to include (a) improving the capacity of the government through the establishment of sustainable security forces with a view to progressively taking over MONUSCO's security role and (b) consolidating state authority throughout the territory through the deployment of Congolese civil administration, in particular the police, territorial administration, and rule-of-law institutions in areas freed from armed groups. See UNSCR-1925. Activities have disproportionately targeted the Kivus, and many are headquartered in and around the city of Goma.

[2] In Ferguson, MO, fees associated with arrest warrants and asset seizures cover a full one-fifth of the municipal budget (Soss and Weaver 2017). See also Caruso (2017); Hall et al. (2013), and Katzenstein and Waller (2015).

Rather than construing police violence as exceptional or aberrational, through its dual functions of revenue generation on one hand and social control, political subjugation, and economic oppression on the other, sociologists, historians, and criminologists have long identified coercive policing as *constitutive* of liberal social order.

Building on Tilly's seminal (1978; 1985) contributions, political scientists have also revealed how violent internal contention contributes to the "making" of modern states (Francis 2014; Gottschalk 2008; Murakawa 2014). Tracing the birth of policing to settler colonial projects like the slave patrols in Virginia (Fagan and Ash 2017; Hadden 2003; Websdale 2001) or the Irish Royal Constabulary established to suppress labor unrest in occupied Ireland (Garriott 2018; Vitale 2017), scholars have consistently centered violence in analyses of state development. By channeling resources into counterinsurgency operations (Eck 2018; Khalili 2012; Khalili and Schwedler 2010) and buttressing the state's defenses against future unrest (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014; Slater 2010), scholars have shown that periods of conflict and contention can consolidate bureaucracies, resources, and identities forged during struggle (Levitsky and Way 2012).

Given this history, and the notion that wars are least likely to recur if one side secures a decisive victory (Toft 2009; Wimmer 2012), dominant approaches to stabilization posit that augmenting the state's monopoly on violence—what Michael Mann (1984) terms the *despotic*—or militarized—power of the state—is paramount for ending cyclical conflict (Weber 1978). This perspective reifies the centrality of a robust and militarized security architecture for maintaining order and peace.

Various distinct traditions within political science share these assumptions.[3] For rationalists, a state monopoly on violence imposes costs on rebellion (Walter 1997; 1999). For institutionalists, it permits predictable, rule-governed behavior, fosters the economic conditions that disincentivize future violence, and builds confidence that contracts and commitments will be honored and evenly enforced (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; Olson 1993). For constructivists, it can enable the habituation and internalization of norms of legitimate and illegitimate violence (Risse 2011; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 2013). Practitioners and policy makers have built on these logics, emphasizing that a strong security sector, backed up by the carceral violence of the state, is paramount for displacing informal channels of dispute resolution, quelling nonstate armed actors and deterring challenges to the state's authority. Resultantly, peacebuilding missions prioritize state building through institutional and security-sector capacity building regardless of the reputations of specific government actors or their collective and individual complicity in harm (Autesserre 2012; Campbell, Chandler, and Sabaratnam 2011; Chandler 2006; Galtung 1996; Nyabola 2018).

Achieving a legitimate monopoly on violence, however, requires confidence not only in the *practice* of the state (its emergence as "the only game in town") but also in the *idea* of the state. States should have the capabilities to reliably protect citizens from external threats (Jackson and Rosberg 1982; Krasner 1999). Yet they must simultaneously generate the confidence to inspire compliance with established rules and disincentivize challenges to their authority and legitimacy (Karim 2020; Schlichte and Migdal 2005; Scott 1985). In this vein, civilians, alongside state actors, play crucial roles in sustaining political order in institutionalized democracies simply by participating in the rituals that underpin them. This includes abiding by laws, paying taxes, trusting that contracts will be honored and enforced, and refraining from material or ideational challenges to the state's hegemonic authority (Levi 1989; Migdal 1997). Willing participation in the administrative and bureaucratic practices of the state engenders a political order through which its authority is normalized and its monopoly on violence made legitimate (Bourdieu 1994; Hoffman and Verweijen 2013; Hoffman, Vlassenroot, and Marchais 2016; Mitchell 1999). In Mbembe's words, the state becomes "part of people's common sense" (Mbembe 2009, 381).

Just as the state is constituted and sustained through popular participation (i.e., paying taxes and complying with laws [Levi 1989]), so too can it be broken down. Civilians can contest the legitimacy of states rhetorically or by taking up arms against it. State agents, street-level bureaucrats, and other actors can similarly erode ideals of hegemonic legality, "undoing" the idea and practice of consolidated state authority by appropriating state symbols arbitrarily, unpredictably, or for private gain. When state authority is consistently subverted in the daily routines and discursive practices of its agents, possibilities for domination are limited. Calling the symbolic order of "stateness" into question through everyday quotidian interactions erodes the idea of state-based remedies for dispute resolution in the minds of both civilians and armed actors.[4] This can have particularly chilling repercussions against the backdrop of recurring conflict, when the need to build trust and confidence in state institutions is most pronounced.

Although conflict scholars have long sought to address the fluidities of intractable conflict (Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe 2013; Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015; Kalyvas 2005; 2010; Staniland 2012), political scientists typically treat the everyday violence experienced by civilians as analytically distinct from war violence (Olonisakin 2020). However, the architecture of protracted war can rarely be divorced from the other structures of violence that sustain it. Isolating the violence *adjacent* to war from periods of intense hostility renders political scientists' knowledge of war incomplete.

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[3] See a large body of feminist and critical scholarship for alternative perspectives (Barnett, Fang, and Zürcher 2014; Barnett and Zürcher 2009; Firchow 2018; Gordon 2014; MacGinty 2021; Mitchell 2011; Paris 2004; 2009).

[4] González (2020, 7) notes democracy is eroded when what citizens "see of the state" is a police force that neglects to protect them and is unconstrained by accountability and rule of law.

Importantly, a sharp analytical distinction between sites or periods of war and peace obscures the ways in which ordinary people, through their socialization into structures of violence, become active participants in reinforcing the political orders of which they are part (Mbembe 2009, 382). Rather than conceiving of war as a discrete period of violent struggle, scholars working within anthropological traditions instead recognize war as an organizing frame for social and political interaction, often the product of a multigenerational socializing process that is inextricable from the state and the market (Debos 2016; De Waal 2009; 2016; Lubkemann 2010; Parkinson 2013). Just as ordinary inhabitants of stable democracies "make" the state by participating in the rituals that sustain it, so too are ordinary encounters foundational in sustaining dynamics of everyday war. Without dislodging these frames of interaction, then enhancing the material, informational, and coordinating capacities of security personnel exacerbates conditions of uncertainty by reinforcing the foundations from which these experiences stem.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Understanding how conflict political orders are (re) produced over time requires careful examination of the ways in which war and the state are understood by those who participate in sustaining them. My research quickly revealed that the vast majority of wartime violence takes place not on the battlefield but adjacent to the primary axes of conflict, through opportunism, displacement, poverty, and access to water and health care (Fazal 2014; Sambanis 2004). These dynamics are particularly pronounced in non-conventional, asymmetric, or irregular conflicts, whose boundaries are more fluid, last longer on average than conventional civil wars, and result in higher civilian casualties (Balcells et al. 2014). In such contexts, a narrow focus on formal thresholds of war restricts our ability to "see" much of its violence, or the complex, interlocking, and mutually reinforcing dimensions of protracted conflict that sustain repeated insurgency.

Grounded in feminist research traditions, this observation provoked an inquiry into the primary sources of threat and insecurity as they were understood by differently situated conflict inhabitants. My interviews were designed to elicit how stakeholders at various nodes of the security-peacebuilding-development nexus made sense of the drivers of "war" as they experienced it as well as the broader security landscapes they were embedded within.

I thus advance a theory of protracted conflict that foregrounds everyday encounters between civilians and the state as key sites where the experience of war is reproduced. I do not dispute that armed groups are central to the study of all civil war types. Nor do I assert that boundaries between the identities of "civilian," "state actor," and "rebel," are clear. But because routine insecurity emerged as one of the defining experiences of protracted war in my research site, and

because state actors were often implicated in these experiences, I posit that understanding these quotidian interactions are central for understanding pathways to peace.

The principal corpus of data for this article comprised approximately 200 interviews across DRC between 2008 and 2018.[5] These interviews are supplemented by informal conversations and ethnographic observations (Fujii 2015) compiled over 10 years of research in DRC's eastern provinces including 11 months in North Kivu between 2012 and 2013 during the M23 insurgency, four months in 2016, and one month in 2018, as well as many shorter visits since 2008.

The research focuses predominantly on villages and towns in a small area of North Kivu known as the *petit nord*, the epicenter of the RCD, CNDP, and M23 conflicts. The *petit nord* differs considerably from other regions in the country in that it has been the epicenter of successive conflicts but also the focus of postwar recovery efforts. MONUSCO's mission to support the Congolese government in its stabilization efforts has led to the heavy securitization of peacebuilding in the *petit nord*, with a strong emphasis on police, military, and rule of law. This results in more visible police presence than elsewhere in the country, where experiences of insecurity are less profoundly shaped by state actors. Arguments advanced in this article thus travel most readily to other targets of state-based security and stabilization efforts (Enloe 2000).

The project was deeply inductive in nature. In 2012 and 2013, I first set out to understand how the rule of law was experienced by civilians whose geographical exposure and proximity to conflict differed. Through the course of these interviews, a number of patterns emerged. Encounters between civilians and state agents, and in particular those responsible for ensuring stability and order, emerged as key sources of wartime insecurity for many of my interviewees. Situated within an interpretivist tradition, the second phase of the project sought to explore how security actors, with a particular emphasis on police officers as the most visible face of the state for many, understood the security and stabilization practices they were enmeshed within (Fujii 2010; 2018; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). After conducting six interviews with police officers, I developed an interview approach inspired by oral history techniques (Blee 1993; Jessee 2017; Shesterinina 2020). Although my interviews with police were fairly structured, focusing predominantly on the work of policing, it is not easy to disentangle work and employment histories from histories of war and of family. Interviews were therefore far-reaching in their substance and scope.

Through repeat visits to various villages in Masisi, Nyiragongo, and Rutshuru, I had developed existing relationships with police officers on detachment or at checkpoints. I worked with a longtime research partner to identify villages and towns that leveraged variation

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[5] See Appendix B for the ethical and methodological decisions encountered in design and implementation.

in conflict exposure, while relying heavily on prior acquaintances, friends, and repeat interactions to build relationships that allowed me to approach potential interviewees. My research partner and I conducted some police interviews together and some independently. We found our one-on-one interviews to be more relaxed, more intimate, and more free-flowing. In late 2017, we took the decision that my research partner, who is Congolese and fluent in multiple languages, would proceed with the remaining work-history interviews alone. Our positionality, alongside our gender and racial identities, meant that power dynamics differently shaped how our interviews unfolded. In Appendix B, I summarize how our respective positionalities shaped our conversations, and outline other ethical and methodological considerations that emerged while working together. Appendix A presents the organization of the PNC, and Appendices C and D provide summary profiles of our interviewees.

As particular themes became increasingly apparent, we began to probe more deliberately how existing capacities, as well as new forms of security-sector assistance, shaped policing practices. Observations from police stations, checkpoints, and derived from years of navigating research and travel in the Kivus afforded me insights into how police–civilian encounters typically unfolded, permitting me to triangulate information imparted directly by civilians and police officers.

My analysis took place in three steps. I did not record interviews with police, but rather I and my research partner took detailed written notes in response to each question, which I later uploaded to Dedoose. On my first reading, I developed codes corresponding to key descriptive themes, usually aligning with question topics. On my second reading, I focused on emerging patterns (for example, around logics of behavior), developing analytical codes to capture these. Finally, I wrote up work-history profiles, triangulating these data with other ethnographic, interview-based, and background source material.[6]

To cite background or informational interviews, footnotes provide the respondent's role, location, and the month and year. For the work-history interviews, I cite pseudonyms corresponding to profiles in Appendix C. I cite excerpts and quotes that were representative of material captured by a particular set of codes. Where a similar idea was expressed by multiple interviewees, footnotes citing corresponding pseudonyms refer to highlighted quotes in Appendix C. Dates and precise locations are redacted to preserve interviewee anonymity. The excerpts in Appendix C offer context for the interviews and interviewees' experiences without compromising their anonymity.

With some notable exceptions (Baaz and Olsson 2011; Callaghy 1984; Schatzberg 1991; Thill and Cimunka 2018), little has been written on the nexus between policing, peacebuilding, and state making in DRC, despite the pervasive presence of the PNC, particularly in urban areas and across the *petit nord*, as one of the most visible symbols of the state's coercive power. This omission is intriguing given a heavy focus on security and stabilization in the discourse of postwar recovery. The project was therefore informed by studies of violence that analyze combatants' own self-reflections and rationalizations for violent behaviors.[7] In the same way that scholars of armed conflict have mapped the individual motivations of combatants, group dynamics, structures, and ideologies, I set out to make sense of how ordinary inhabitants of conflict political orders contribute to processes of state making as well as to the lived experiences of everyday war. The (often contradictory) logics embedded within individuals' reflections on war and their place within it, as well as on state power and authority, shine light on the architecture and praxis of war making and state making from the bottom up (Sharma and Gupta 2006). Although civilians themselves similarly participate in making and unmaking the state (Baaz, Olsson, and Verweijen 2018, 13), in this article I focus predominantly on the institution and practice of policing, as well as police–civilian interactions, as the primary site of study.

THE FRONTLINES OF STATE BUILDING

My empirical discussion progresses as follows. Part *(i)* introduces the major contours of DRC's myriad conflicts, documenting how war is experienced by those in its midst. This section demonstrates how quotidian encounters with state security agents in general, and police in particular, often compound experiences of wartime insecurity for civilians. Part *(ii)* introduces PNC capacity-building efforts in North Kivu, distinguishing between material, informational, and coordination-based capacities. Part *(iii)* uses work-history interviews and interviews with civilians to probe the underlying logics that shape police–civilian encounters. Part *(iv)* links motives and means, documenting how police capacities are deployed and locating everyday encounters between police and civilians as primary sites of wartime insecurity.

i. Everyday War

After a ceasefire formally concluded the Second Congo War in 2003, the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD) became a political party. In the years that followed, factions periodically defected to create or join new insurgencies—most notably in the form of the Tutsi-dominated *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple* (CNDP) and later, the *Mouvement de 23 mars* (M23). During their height, both the CNDP and the M23 controlled sizeable territory in the *petit nord*, frequently clashing with the Congolese army.

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[6] Appendix B offers a deeper discussion of this analysis.

[7] Parallels can be drawn with work on the Congolese armed forces, for example, work by Baaz and Stern (2008), Baaz, Stearns, and Verweijen (2013), Baaz and Verweijen (2013) and Verweijen (2013; 2015). See also Manekin (2020), Shesterinina (2019), and Wood (2003).

Dozens of other armed groups and militias similarly control land, resources, and political power. Some face off against the Congolese army, and others are targets of counterinsurgency operations. Others still govern autonomously in particular communities, clash with rival groups, or dissolve and reintegrate into the police and armed forces (Baaz, Stearns, and Verweijen 2013; Stearns 2011; 2012; 2013).

Despite this maze of armed challengers, when asked to describe how the war had affected their lives, those in the *petit nord*, close to the front lines as well as further removed, talked not of armed struggle but about the daily and enduring struggles war wrought through unrelenting threats to their security and well-being. Niehuus (2014) powerfully invokes an idea expressed by many of my interviewees of a war of hunger (*vita ya njala*, or *vita ya kila siku*, "the war of everyday"). Maurice, a farmer in Rutshuru, captured this widely held sentiment:

> The reality of this war is death, poverty, disease, and famine … We became poor, without food and many died… . The war in short is instability.[8]

Bertram, a farmer from Rutshuru, defined life in war as, "a life of suffering, … of theft, and violence."[9] Roger elaborated,

> [War is] living in poverty … the presence of various negative forces that loot the property of the population, massacring people without using bullets.[10]

I asked my interviewees to describe their experiences of the war and to pinpoint the actors implicated in their anecdotes, as well as those they held most responsible for driving the war forward. Some spoke of armed groups, but when probed, many in the *petit nord* explicitly invoked state actors. Indicative of many such discussions, Henri responded,

> The police harass the population by coming to the quartier to pick up someone to show his identity card or who they can accuse of an offense… . People are traumatized, tortured, so we don't want to see uniforms anymore. When we see uniforms, all we see is prison, torture, and fines.[11]

Remy elaborated,

> Harassment by the police happens every night. They will call you over if they see you out of the house past 7pm. If you encounter them en route, they will arrest you or do everything to see what you have on you… . If you don't have anything for them to take, they will transport you to the prison and leave you there until you can pay.[12]

Situating these experiences within a long history of predatory politics, Filipe explained,

> People live in fear. Everyday, the police demand an identity card or piece of documentation. But many civilians don't have them, leave them at home, or forget to bring [it] when they go to the field. When the police demand documentation, they do so using intimidation so civilians will be afraid and give the police money.
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> [In the era of Mobutu] if you encountered military or police, you can make a show of pulling out the money so he can buy cigarettes. Today, it's the same on the road. We have a saying that if you greet [him], he will demand your identification card. You don't want to meet police on the road because they have arms, which changes the way they engage with the population. As soon as he sees a civilian, he will look for how he can procure money from him. If the civilian doesn't have money, the police will invent an infraction and demand a fine by law.[13]

The incidents recounted by my interviewees were always heavily gendered. Whereas for men, demands for documentation or money sometimes escalated to overt intimidation, violence, or arrest, for many women, conversations rapidly escalated to harassment, requests for sex, and sometimes assault. Celeste described an encounter typical of hundreds I heard from women, both in villages and towns far from any fighting and those more directly affected:

> When I was coming back to my house, I wanted to go to somewhere to look for a toilet. But when I was there, a [soldier] found me there and started to pull me to the side. I told him, 'I'm ill, I'm ill.' He said, "I don't care about your diseases… . They started raping me.[14]

My fieldwork deliberately spanned areas that experienced different dynamics of conflict and counterinsurgency. Rutshuru, and later Nyiragongo, were at the epicenter of the M23 conflict, yet the villages and towns I worked in were affected to very different degrees. Some were sites of clashes between M23 and the government or other armed groups. Others had been under M23 control. Others remained somewhat sheltered. My longest stint of fieldwork coincided with the M23 insurgency, between 2012 and 2013. Subsequent periods of research followed the 2014 peace accord and thus presented very different security landscapes. Although many armed groups were still active, areas previously occupied by M23 were controlled by the government, which sought security-sector professionalization with support from international donors. Although those who had fled fighting or lost loved ones spoke about experiences of displacement or violence at the hands of

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[8] Maurice. Civilian. Rutshuru Territory. July 2016.

[9] Bertram. Farmer. Rutshuru Territory. July 2017.

[10] Roger. Civilian. Rutshuru Territory. July 2017.

[11] Henri. Farmer. Rutshuru Territory. January 2018.

[12] Remy. Civilian. Rutshuru Territory. January 2018. See also Denis, Emmanuel, Fidel, Gasore, and others in Appendix C for a discussion of police practices of intimidation and harassment toward civilians.

[13] Filipe. Farmer. Rutshuru Territory. January 2018. Many interviewees traced legacies of state appropriation to the era of Mobutu and the infamous "Article 15." Less frequently, they traced these patterns to Belgian rule.

[14] Celeste. Civilian. Nyiragongo Territory. January 2013.

armed groups, most of my questions about war were met with markedly similar responses, in spite of this divergent exposure to the conflict. Indeed, even at the height of the insurgency, most interviewees perceived armed group clashes as one component of a far more complex fabric of insecurity, emphasizing enduring everyday precarity first and foremost. Alfred, a farmer in a former M23 stronghold, captured these continuities:

> The meaning of the war has not changed [since M23] because the effects of the war are just the cause of another war…. Whether it's war or not, people eat with difficulty…. [They say the war is over], but wars are still in progress because kidnapping, harassment, and uncertainty are the phenomena that destabilize our lives. This is why our situation has not improved since the war; we remain in poverty.[15]

ii. Police Capacity Building

In response to reports of widespread abuse, low morale, and a lack of professionalization in the Congolese security sector, the 2009 "Security Sector Accountability and Police Reform" (SSAPR), became one of DRC's largest police capacity-building and reform efforts.[16] In 2010, UNSCR-1925 emphasized consolidating state authority throughout DRC through the deployment of Congolese civil administration, in particular the police (UNSCR-1925-6-iii). These commitments were accompanied by a three-year police reform program funded by the European Commission as well as programs of assistance to build the capacity of the PNC, ensure stabilization through police reform, and improve police–community relations, through MONUSCO (supported by Japan, Canada, the Netherlands, and Sweden). The European Commission was the main funder of the *Comité de Suivi de la Reforme de la Police* (CSRP), which included support for the development of a Human Resource Management system (and continued support for a police census); support for the planning and coordination of police reform; the reorganization of budget, financial management, and infrastructure within the PNC; and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of some police training facilities. The UNDP in parallel supported the development of the *police de proximité* (community policing) program.

The most frequent and visible markers of these programs along the Goma–Nyiragongo–Rutshuru axis have been donor investments in vehicles and transportation, trainings, radio communications equipment, and station support. In the city of Goma, a number of buildings have been refurbished and vehicles donated. Outside of Goma, fewer traces are seen of building maintenance, IT support, or larger vehicles, although some postings received motorbikes, furniture, and radio equipment.

I loosely categorize the capacity-building activities I encountered through fieldwork in the *petit nord* as *material*, *informational*, and *coordination-based. Material* capacity encompassed efforts to improve resources and equipment such as furniture, new uniforms, transportation, and armory. *Informational* resources included training and sensitization, particularly in laws and procedures, designed to impart knowledge. My interviewees attended trainings in intervening in public affairs, overseeing public demonstrations, maintaining public order, the *Code Militaire*, and the penal code.

Coordination-based capacity predominantly refers to the formalization of communication, oversight, command structures, and internal procedures. In addition to resources, equipment, and training (Davis 2016; Nlandu 2012; 2013), capacity building has included efforts to centralize command structures; formalize employment, pay, and promotion; and matriculate all serving officers (Nlandu 2012).

iii. Participants in Violence: Dual Logics of Appropriate Behavior and Victimization

Whereas many civilians, state agents, and proponents of capacity building retain an image of stabilization through state security, this image quickly breaks down in recollections imparted by interviewees. It is similarly disrupted in police's own testimonies and in their motivations for joining the PNC. Indeed, hundreds of conversations in the field revealed stories of harassment on the road or at market, and many sexual assaults followed similar patterns. These encounters consistently undermine the image of the state as provider of protection and security.[17]

Reflections from police reveal two main logics underpinning these interactions, which I term appropriate behavior and victimization.[18] First, my interviewees considered much of their behavior to be a licit component of the "work" and remuneration of policing and a motivation to join the PNC in the first instance. This perception is underpinned by a system of formal and informal rules, reinforced institutionally and throughout chains of command (March and Olsen 1998).

Importantly, fining civilians for various transgressions was often characterized *as* the administration of justice and inseparable from the work of "maintaining social order." For many rural police officers, the broader legal system did not feature heavily (if at all) in their understandings of law enforcement. On the

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[15] Alfred. Civilian. Rutshuru Territory. January 2018.

[16] See Hendrickson et al. (2010, 17), UK Stabilization Unit (2016), and the SSAPR for further discussion of this program and other security sector reform efforts. Appendix A provides a more comprehensive overview of different reform programs.

[17] Similar interactions are eloquently described by Louisa Lombard (2016) in her discussion of checkpoints and taxation in the Central African Republic.

[18] This recalls Taylor's (2011, 16) distinction between the "routine" and the "exceptional," although the "routine" is not grounded in law, as in Taylor's discussion, but is instead socialized as appropriate and legitimate. In her work on police motivations to commit torture in India, Wahl (2017) similarly found justifications grounded in perceptions of appropriateness, deriving from perceived shortcomings in formal justice.

contrary, justice was met either through on the spot fines or formalities in the office. These interactions were also widely understood by street-level officers as the primary—and legitimate—means through which police were remunerated for their work.

This understanding of policing was reinforced through chains of command (Baaz and Olsson 2011; Sanchez de la Sierra et al. 2019). Systems of *rapportage* ensure formal and informal payments solicited from civilians are passed up through internal hierarchies and incentivized by superior officers.[19] Lower ranking officers in particular drew an important distinction between fines (*amendes transactionelles*) mandated by law and *motivation, tracasserie, migulu ya polisi,* or *sehemu ya polisi*: terms for the smaller contributions that allowed both parties to avoid formalities, permitting street-level agents to bypass superiors in order to feed their families.

These systems of ad hoc remuneration support the subsistence of police outside of major cities and often the financing of entire police units. In such contexts, *amendes* can be a unit's only means of revenue. Alexis described,

> *Normally, fines should enter the public treasury. Only in Congo, they are shared at the level of the station. The commanding officer therefore simply distributes the money among his companions according to his discretion.*[20]

Emmanuel elaborated,

> *Fines are different from [migulu ya polisi], according to the constitution. Fines must have a receipt, while what is requested for "motivation" does not. [Amendes] are eaten by the superiors, and there is also the money that we send to the company and the district, so some of these fines end up in the public treasury.*

Laurent recounted,

> *The amende is not ours but it is for our commanders. We only eat with prison money. When you have taken someone, they give you either 5000cf or 3000cf and that's what you eat; so that's your part.*[21]

Across ranks, security agents exhibited uneven knowledge of the formal rules, codes, and procedures governing their interactions with civilians. When pressed on specific laws and policies, police typically discussed ad hoc payments as legitimate remuneration. The result is that infractions and fines are often levied arbitrarily and by discretion.[22]

It was fairly uncommon among the officers I interviewed to receive any form of consistent monthly wage, even in spite of systems introduced to formalize pay at the national level. Levying fines was, therefore, understood as central to the "work" of policing, constitutive of maintaining public order, and motivated by insecurity. Alexis's situation was common:

> *I do not even receive the wages I am owed by the state. After eight years of service, my superior still tells me that my serial number came out empty. They tell me to wait until the department that handles the payroll attaches my number to a pay slip. Only then will I start receiving a salary.* [Interviewer: How long has this been going on?] *It is seven years. Many others are in the same situation.* [Interviewer: So, where does the money you receive come from?] *I am sometimes paid directly by my superior, with fines he imposes on those who commit offenses. That is how we get paid.*[23]

Where behavior diverged from what was considered appropriate, officers turned to their own positions of precarity and marginalization. Perceiving themselves as victims of the war first and foremost, officers recognized little tension in using the coercive power of their roles to offset material hardships, representing practices of extortion and violence as justified, given their circumstances. They discussed these practices in a frank, open manner.

The logic of appropriate behavior thus exists alongside a well-rehearsed logic of victimization. While many of the interactions civilians described fell within the scope of what police (and often civilians) believed police were supposed to be doing, others—such as engaging in what was perceived as excessive intimidation, harassment, or violence—were *justified* by their vulnerability. Police frequently shared evocative narratives that positioned themselves as primary victims of the country's conflict.

Mirroring my conversations with civilians, I asked each of the officers to describe the war and to reflect on the most pressing security concerns they faced. Like their civilian counterparts, the vast majority spoke first of their own precarity, describing lives of deprivation and poverty. Marcelín explained,

> *Living away from my family makes me afraid. If someone is sick there is no one to take care of them. Even if the information reaches me on time, I do not have the means to help. I live alone in suffering, and my family remains alone in suffering.*[24]

Like many others, Reginald used the frustration and fear he felt in his role to excuse behavior he understood

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[19] Others have written extensively about systems of rapportage wherein police officers return money collected on the streets to their supervisors and institutional hierarchies encourage rather than undermine predatory behaviors (Baaz and Olsson 2011; Sanchez de la Sierra et al. 2019; and Thill, Njangala, and Musamba 2018).

[20] Alexis. See also Anthony, Emmanuelle, Felixe, Fidel, Gasore, Josephat, Laurent, Lionel.

[21] See also Charles, Denis, Evariste, Jacques, Manase, and Yves.

[22] See Fidel, Gasore, Josephat, Laurent, and Manase for discussions of fine amounts. The law fixes *amendes transactionelles* for various infractions, but these are variable and set high. In practice, they are subject to extensive negotiation.

[23] Alexis. See also Aloys, Bahati, Baraka, Josephat, Nepo, and Paulin.

[24] Marcelín. See also: Bahati, Celestin, Hakizimana, Jacques, and Jean-Bosco.

as wrong, drawing a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate theft:

> I do not like to take the property of the population illegally, that is, to plunder … [But sometimes,] harassment is forced. We take involuntarily due to need.[25]

A running theme was that low salaries and conditions of personal hardship prevented officers from doing their job "well." Their hunger and discomfort caused them to behave in ways they were not proud of. Many situated themselves as somehow worse off than others in society, using their vulnerability to explain turning to the population for comfort (rape and sexual harassment) and sustenance (food and money). Emmanuel commented,

> I will do my job because in our service, obedience and respect take precedence. But we are not going to behave as one who is motivated [paid]. While I am worrying about my family who spend each night [hungry], how I am I able to defend the population? That [changes] me. If, sometimes, we behave as we shouldn't in the community, [it is because] we are hungry and unmotivated.[26]

All 43 police confirmed that they turned to the population to supplement their material needs. Paulin clarified,

> Yes, we use the population to solicit livelihoods. We receive money only at the end of the month and only after everyone [above us] has been paid already. After that, they call me to give the little that remains. So how am I going to say that I do not use the population? I am on good terms with the community because they are the ones that allow me to survive. They give me food and money but also fields to cultivate my seeds.[27]

Yet "maintaining good relations" with civilians often bled into overt intimidation. Roland was frank on this theme:

> We find ourselves intimidating and torturing people in the community, especially in the village, so that we can make money there. This is because no one takes care of our needs or understands our complaints.

When pressed on harassment and pillage, many security agents spoke openly about the ways in which they used their positions of power to meet their needs.

> [Interviewer: Did you ever resort to the population to ask for [money, food, or drink]?] Certainly yes. If I arrest someone and a member of his family comes to intervene, I will release my belt [to see if he can give me something]. If he is not at grave fault, I will release [his arrested] brother.[28]

Anthony adds,

> The more civilians delay paying, the more they will be tortured in order to force them to release [money] as quickly as possible.

Evariste remarked:

> When we are sent on a mission to arrest someone, if he gives us a little money and we find it acceptable, we call him back another day. Or we give him time to settle his file amicably … if we find he can offer us money to eat, instead of keeping him in prison, we can fine him and if he pays, he can go home.[29]

How these situated vulnerabilities sit alongside the officers' positions of relative power is informed by an inquiry into agents' own motivations for joining the PNC. Every officer I spoke with invoked conditions of extreme deprivation to justify recruitment and subsequent intimidation. The lowest ranking among them were often the most eloquent in centering their relative victimization to excuse their (ab)use of power (Utas 2005).[30] When asked why they joined the police, many referenced a desire for privileges others cannot access:

> I was told that [police] have no limits at the national level. We can go anywhere without anyone asking for our identity card or whatever.[31]

The anxieties they faced as civilians necessitated self-protection. Alphonse replied,

> It was to protect myself against certain realities in the community such as paying taxes, forced labor, and being neglected.[32]

When asked how they felt about their roles, many recalled advantages alongside its hardships:

> I have a position of authority and honor in the community … and when I go to some office or bureau to ask for a service, I get it quickly. [Interviewer: Like what?] I have a brother who has a motorcycle in Goma. When there is a road block, he might be disturbed because he doesn't have documents … but if I intervene, he can ride his bike unconditionally.[33]

Jacques added,

> I am proud that I can defend myself in case of danger like war. I defend my family. Because I am a policeman, no one can touch us. My status leaves people obeying me.[34]

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[25] Reginald. See also Gasore, Josephat, Lionel, Paulin. This is somewhat reminiscent of Baaz and Stern's (2008) distinction between lust rape and evil rape, and Baaz, Olsson, and Verweijen's (2018) discussion of formal and informal fines.
[26] See also Aloys, Amani, Simon, and Sylveste.
[27] See also Alexis.

[28] Fidel. See also Aloys Simon, and Jacques. Parenthetical sentence paraphrased from a longer excerpt.
[29] Evariste. See also: Bartholémie, Celestin, Gerard, Jacques, and Jon.
[30] See Appendix B for a more detailed discussion of victim narratives, particularly with respect to analysis and interpretation.
[31] Bahati. See also Baraka, Bartholémie, Celestin, Faustin, and Gerard.
[32] Alphonse, Anthony, and Sylveste.
[33] Amani. See also Faustin and Manase.
[34] Jacques. See also: David, Gerard, Luc, Paulin, and Prince.

In this sense, street-level officers present a janus-faced self-image: on one hand, power-invested agents of the Congolese state bringing security, protection, and order to their families and communities through their legitimate policing work, on the other, disempowered and neglected victims of the country's devastating wars.[35] These two narratives sit prominently but uncomfortably alongside one another, each shaping repertoires of everyday violence.

Because police officers' personal sense of wartime victimization took precedence over their public-facing roles, because their conceptualization of "maintaining order" comprised in part of soliciting fines they understood as legitimate to compensate their hardship and labor, and because these logics are reproduced through fragmented security hierarchies and up chains of command in practices of *rapportage*, then bolstering capacity without attending to the broader social and material landscapes of violence that underpin state–society interactions too frequently results in its deployment toward further destabilization.

iv. Material, Informational, and Coordination-Based Capacity: State–Society Interactions as Sites of Violence

Through an understanding of how police interpret and understand their work, we can better understand how capacities are deployed. I show that enhanced capacities both shore up existing practices and create opportunities for innovation. *Material* resources can permit wider coverage (usually through more efficient forms of transport) and greater coercive power (through uniforms and other accoutrements displaying the symbolic authority of the state). *Informational* resources can bolster the discursive authority of agents, invoking legal formalities can create opportunities for intimidation, and new knowledge of legal frameworks offers fresh terrain for interacting with civilians. *Coordination-based* capacity, on the other hand, permits efficiency within institutional hierarchies, which can mitigate *tracasserie* but compound *rapportage*, carrying higher penalties for civilians.

After asking officers to describe in detail how they understood the work that they do, I explored how they engaged in this work. Responses shed light on how motivations (logics of victimization and appropriate behavior) and means (material, informational, and coordination-based capacities) intersect to produce the insecurities described by civilians. Table 1 summarizes how capacities facilitate the work of policing as understood by officers.

It is notable that few police officers, particularly in rural areas, have resources at their disposal, lacking office buildings, means of transport, computers, pens, paper, documentation, or regular salaries. Because officers saw many of their everyday practices *either* as appropriate functions of police work *or* as avenues to meet pressing needs, when asked about capacity building many continued to invoke the practices civilians described as destabilizing. Lionel noted,

> When someone brings us information, for example, about people who are suspect, [motos] allow us to go after them.[36]

Aloys commented,

> If I find civilians afraid of me, I approach and ask them questions about their identity. But if they see me and flee, [with a motorbike] I can better go after him.

And Baraka added,

> When I wear police uniform, it gives me power because this uniform can be recognized by the whole nation.

Others similarly linked the logics discussed in previous sections with the means at their disposal, explaining how their uniforms, transportation, and other material and symbolic artifacts of the state afforded them protection and power, which in turn facilitated intimidation and survival.[37]

Informational resources served similar functions. In an interview in 2013, Delphin explained that when he arrived at the local police station to report that his sister had been raped, the officers on duty asked him for money to open the case—a fairly standard practice. Once the accused was detained, the police solicited additional fees from both parties. If Delphin agreed to pay more, the case could continue. If the accused could

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TABLE 1.	Police Capacities		
	Material capacity	Informational capacity	Coordination-based capacity
Capacities	Uniforms, badges, transport, stationary, equipment.	Training, expertise, knowledge, sensitization.	Communication infrastructure, matriculation, formalization of command structures.
Deployment	Shoring up symbolic power; facilitating predation over wider areas	Bolstering confidence and facilitating coercive intimidation	Facilitating rapportage, typically at higher costs to civilians, bolstering infrastructure for state repression

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[35] See Baaz and Stern (2008) for a discussion of similar dynamics within the armed forces.

[36] Lionel. Also Amani, Gerard, and Jacques, Simon.
[37] See Bartholémie, Faustin, Gerard, Jon, Paulin, Roland, Sylvain, and Yves.

match or augment this fee, he would be released.[38] This negotiation was typical. Officers' abilities to augment the fees they collected from reported cases increased the more intimate their knowledge of the law; like uniforms, the language of the law affords officers authority and coercive power. Its complexity and antiquity can disarm civilians, who often have little knowledge of the law themselves, rendering them powerless to evade formalities and threats. Denis elaborated,

> If we know the law well, he has to figure out how to avoid the case [with money or gifts] so that he doesn't get arrested and brought to jail.

In observations at police stations and in communities, I frequently observed the alienation and anxiety experienced by those accused of infractions as police invoked legal codes and articles. In addition to profiting from accusations by civilians, legal knowledge allows police to weaponize targeted accusations. As Gerard explained, "We can accuse [someone] of a rape case and arrest the perpetrator, then he must pay a fine."

Throughout my research, I learned how training in new laws empowered police officers in their roles. In 2013, I observed a number of ad hoc trainings that sought to build police knowledge and capacity surrounding the 2006 Sexual Violence Law and the 2009 Child Protection Law. Interviewees informed me that the primary problem, as they saw it, with trainings, was that once police learned that certain acts were criminalized, it became profitable to work in these areas.[39] Equipped with knowledge of legislation, police can more effectively make accusations, threaten legal action, and demand payoff. Training in the 2006 Sexual Violence Law is a notorious example. Better knowledge of statutory rape laws can be leveraged to threaten criminal charges or intimidate the families of teens engaging in underage sexual relations, often unaware they have committed an offense. Training in the 2009 Child Protection Law similarly created a new legal environment in which police who received training in the law themselves became involved in the market for sex work. In more than one site, I learned of police recruiting young girls to solicit sex following training in the law. Those recruited would report clients' details to officers who used their newfound legal knowledge to detain them. Rather than pursuing formal charges, officers would often demand payment for release.[40] From the perspectives of the police I interviewed, these interventions were framed as combatting crime. If the

suspect could pay, he had made amends; prison—or a larger fine—was a looming threat if he could not. Trainings imparting legal expertise thus amplified coercive authority, creating opportunities for profit.

Because the practice of distributing fines up chains of command was highly institutionalized, improvements in communication and coordination, such as matriculating officers and distributing cell phone credit, facilitated these practices. Whereas none that I interviewed was involved in protest policing, more efficient communication and oversight within the PNC can also contribute to the state's capacity for repression.[41]

Most officers to whom I spoke had no professional communication technology at all. Sanchez de la Sierra et al. (2019) document how a quota system among traffic police in Kinshasa determined how much revenue in kind was diverted up the chain of command by street-level officers. In my research sites, practices of rapportage were rarely this formal. Rather than fulfilling daily quotas, street-level officers exercised discretion in who they directed to their supervisors. Because distances between officers on detachment and their supervisors were far, connected by poor roads, communication between them was inhibited. In Kinshasa and Goma, street-level officers might report back to their superior at the end of a shift. In more rural locations, officers can go for months without upward communication. The more contact officers had with their superiors, the less they took home to their families. Because police perceived the fines they levied to be the primary way they—and their superiors—were paid for policing work, passing revenues up chains of command increased the need to turn to the population for sustenance (Sanchez de la Sierra et al. 2019). Alexis described a typical predicament:

> If, for example, your census token is missing, I would force you to give me $10 USD so that you are released. I am not allowed to do this, and that's why we call it tracasserie. Ordinarily, I should take you to the office and issue the paperwork, so that the fine can be paid to my supervisor.

Aloys noted it was always preferable to finish the negotiation without formalities:

> If I bring him to the office, only the commanders will eat, without remembering who brought the case. This is why we work on the ground to finish the file.[42]

Yves added,

> When we talk about improving our work, we must start with the superiors, because when we bring a detainee, [he] offers payment and superiors pocket that money. They forget about us. They look out for their own interests and leave us to starve.

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[38] Delphin. Civilian. Goma. January 2013. Fieldnotes. Goma. January 11, 2013. See also Alexis.

[39] Fieldnotes. Goma, May 2, 2013; Goma, August 12, 2014. See also Baaz, Olsson, and Verweijen (2018) and Douma and Hilhorst (2012) on how civilians have sometimes colluded with officers to entrap alleged perpetrators.

[40] Fieldnotes. Goma, August 2014; Bukavu, October 2016; Mbuji Mbayi, November 2016. When I asked police officers about the child protection law, officers often responded: "of course. I know it well. I use this law regularly (*je l'exploite regulairement*)." Fieldnotes. Goma, November 2016.

[41] See https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/04/dr-congo-police-fire-beat-protesters; and https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR6283952018ENGLISH.pdf.

[42] See also Alexis, Amani, and Josephat.

Increased monitoring and communication within institutional hierarchies can ensure more cases are brought into the office due to greater oversight within chains of command (Revkin 2021). However, fines levied formally tend to be higher than those negotiated on the street and are not often shared with those who brought the case. Unless the incentive structures of superiors are also transformed, such initiatives do little to curb predatory practices overall and can impose higher costs on civilians.

The systems of *matriculation* and *bancarisation*—formally registering police officers and providing them with bank accounts to be paid directly have also notoriously failed to significantly change behavior. Indeed, studies elsewhere confirm that a living wage is a necessary but insufficient condition for behavioral change (Gans-Morse et al. 2018). Although direct payment can reduce material need, rural officers often need to expend high costs to reach a bank to withdraw their salaries. Although this system limits the extent to which senior officers can withhold pay, it can exacerbate patronage demands, sometimes leaving street-level officers worse off. Jacques, whose salary was digitized, explained,

> At the end of each month when the money is available in the account, our chief informs us to go and get it. Sometimes they go with us to withdraw their sum. Even when we withdraw the money [directly], when we return he calls us and says "you got the money today. You have to buy us drinks."

Moreover, in order to receive a transfer or promotion, or avoid recrimination, interviewees confirmed the need to share their salaries with their supervisors: Denis told us, "for [a transfer to a better posting] to be possible … I have to give my salary to my major, because he is the one with the competence to transfer me elsewhere. He has to eat my salary because no one is going to ask him how he decided to transfer his agents."[43]

In demonstrating the connections between *motivations* (logics of victimization and appropriate behavior) and *means* (material, informational, and coordination-based capacities), testimonies from street-level police officers indicate that policing capacity enables the very practices civilians describe as destabilizing. Without first addressing the underlying logics motivating police behavior, new capacities are unlikely to significantly improve security landscapes.

CYCLES OF VIOLENCE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Coercive policing is by no means unique to DRC. Scholars around the world identify relationships between police capacity, brutality, and violence (Akbar 2020, 134; González 2020; Stoughton 2014). I contend that shoring up the coercive capacities of states

can exacerbate situated *in*securities. In environments already vulnerable to conflict, this has grave implications for peace.

This article has argued that many ongoing security threats plaguing inhabitants of cyclical, "low-intensity" armed conflicts do not derive from the battlefield but from everyday precarities. In the *petit nord*, these insecurities are exacerbated by quotidian encounters with state security agents. Everyday insecurity, which both undergirds and intersects with more formal manifestations of violence, is reproduced through routine practices of state building. In a context where civilians often turn to armed groups, as well as to the professions of military and policing, for self-protection, incentives to direct new capacities toward private gain prevail. These patterns erode trust in institutions and intensify the vulnerabilities that lead people to armed groups in the first place. Through state–society interactions, myriad ordinary inhabitants of conflict political orders become participants in making and unmaking the state's coercive power, entrenching an equilibrium that armed groups, elites, and the peace accords they broker have little power to disrupt.

From an analytical perspective, ignoring the complex tapestry of experiences that make up landscapes of conflict-related (in)security for inhabitants of wartime political orders risks isolating outbreaks of intense fighting from the broader sociopolitical dynamics that spawned them. This creates blind spots that impede political scientists' knowledge of war. From a policy perspective, a heavy emphasis on capacity building that fails to take seriously the structural vulnerabilities faced by civilians and police, as well as deeply embedded logics of appropriate behavior and the incentive structures that support them, fractures both the image and practice of the state, thereby undermining the stability a monopoly on violence is intended to build (Weber 1965).

It is plausible that alternative models of capacity building offer greater stabilizing potential. I briefly outline three alternatives that might engender different results.

First, recognizing that technical or organizational reforms are unlikely to affect meaningful change without accompanying normative shifts in police officers' relationships to the work of policing, one potential alternative to the approaches discussed here is a model of police capacity building that seeks to comprehensively *resocialize* police officers through dialogue, intensive training, and fostering community-centered accountability (Arias and Ungar 2009).

Karim (2020) explores the idea of "relational" state building, grounded in the idea that public perceptions of the police—and in turn, police perceptions of civilians—can be transformed by encouraging all actors to see themselves as bound up in a collective fate. Because adversarial relationships are already deeply embedded, iterated, and supported in dialogue, explicitly encouraging police and civilians to recognize and invest in a shared future, seeking slow and deliberate resocialization, promises a deeper equilibrium shift. Grounded in these logics, an ambitious reform model was trialed in DRC through a community policing pilot termed *police*

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[43] See also Aloys, Sylvain, Thierry, and Yves.

de proximité (PdP), rolled out in Bas Congo, Western Kasai, and South Kivu. PdP brought police and civilians together to collectively reimagine a community-centered security, situating police officers as equal members of their communities and partners in the pursuit of societal well-being. Over the short-term, this model shifted dynamics considerably in pilot communities, circumventing predatory behaviors by transforming police attitudes toward their work (Thill and Cimanuka 2018).

Nevertheless, this approach to resocialization is incredibly time, cost, and labor intensive, proving notoriously challenging to implement or scale. Moreover, models of community-centered policing rarely disrupt the violent logics that are embedded not only in individuals or units but also in the institution of policing itself. In DRC's three pilot locations, officers' individual normative commitments and personal investments in reform quickly dissipated against the backdrop of the political and institutional environments they returned to (SSAPR 2016; Thill and Cimanuka 2019). Many interviewees commented that a lack of integrity at the top of the hierarchy and no broader shift in the institutional environments officers are socialized into impedes any individual or unit-level resocialization efforts.[44] Indeed, tighter chains of command and increased monitoring and oversight are unlikely to engender enduring reform while commanders are also socialized into violent and extractive security systems (Alexandre 2018; De Sousa, Belo, and Koenig 2011; Manekin 2020).

In the United States and Latin America, critics of community policing have similarly observed that such models can be easily coopted, incorporating civilians into the surveillance architecture of the state. Such efforts disproportionately disadvantage those already inhabiting positions of social and political marginalization, leading abolitionist organizer Mariame Kaba to assert, "the police cannot be reformed" (Kaba 2020).

Departing from resocialization and community-facing accountability mechanisms, a second potential policy alternative foregrounds the material drivers of predation. The overriding rationale for the abuse of power as articulated by my interviewees derives from officers' own situated poverty. By this logic, a lack of pay and an inability to meet basic material needs drives police to predation and violence. The work of policing offers the means to feed their families, whereas perceptions of intense societal victimization serve as legitimating logics for abusive behavior. Resultantly, many scholars suggest that better material conditions—inspiring the formalization of police payment—can disrupt these patterns.

Insights from elsewhere suggest we should be cautious of any analysis that paints salary as a silver bullet. It is clear that violent and predatory behaviors overshadow policing in a diversity of political contexts. In the United States and across much of Europe, police are well paid and well resourced, and yet they consistently wield the coercive authority of their uniforms to engage in intimidation. While revising pay structures and redressing problems of police poverty is clearly of paramount moral importance and would certainly ameliorate some of the grave material hardships and ensuing incentives to turn to the population for sustenance, there is little evidence to suggest that salary increases alone will erode institutionalized violence (Gans-Morse et al. 2018). In the Congolese case, supervising officers, who are often materially far better off than their low-grade colleagues, generate revenue from civilians at similar, if not higher, rates (Baaz and Olson 2011). Furthermore, as *amendes transactionelles* are such an integral part of how police officers conceptualize the work of policing, reforming pay without undoing underlying logics of appropriate behavior as well as top-down incentive structures modeled by superior officers alongside other contextual drivers of violence is unlikely to engender systematic behavioral change.

A third policy pathway thus involves reimagining the centrality of policing in transitions to peace. Critical, feminist, and abolitionist scholars have long argued that strengthening security capacities historically serves to protect those who already exercise power, failing to attend to the situated *in*securities of ordinary people at society's margins (Bryden and Olonisakin 2010; Olonisakin 2020; Olonisakin, Hendricks, and Okech 2015; Tickner 1992). This article demonstrates that most self-described threats to peace derive from a lack of access to sustenance, basic welfare, and personal safety (Firchow 2018). As scholarship from the United States so convincingly demonstrates, everyday security need not be the purview of police. The fact that most officers report joining the PNC as a means of survival, noting that they would otherwise have joined armed groups to protect themselves, speaks powerfully of the need for forms of social care beyond militarized policing. A robust health, welfare, and public service infrastructure can stave off the vulnerabilities that create the initial conditions for grievance and need for self-protection. A public sector that fosters communities of care by prioritizing mechanisms to respond to the expressed needs of communities can build trust in institutions over time. And a system of democratic politics that is genuinely accountable to and embedded in communities can mitigate social unrest. Mitigating insecurity by directing the growth of the state in publicly accountable and prosocial directions rather than shoring up forms of coercive capacity can foster a more inclusive security for all citizens and promise greater stabilizing potential over the long term.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit http://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421001441.

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[44] One interviewee noted that the community policing model was not well adapted to the realities of DRC; as long as the hierarchy remained corrupted, even the most far-reaching socialization was fruitless against the incentives creates by senior officers (Interview. Goma, DR Congo, January 6, 2018).

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

The author declares the human subjects research in this article was reviewed and approved by the University of Washington and Arizona State University. Certificate numbers are provided in Appendix B. The author affirms that this article adheres to the APSA's Principles and Guidance on Human Subject Research.

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