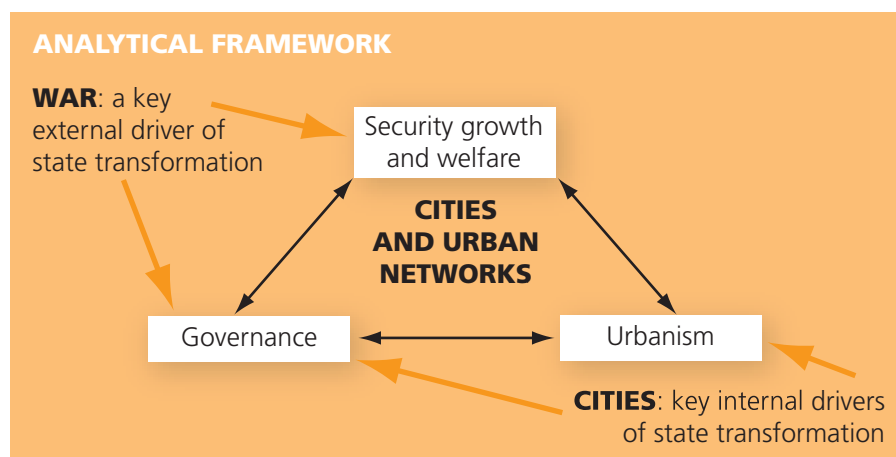


CITIES IN FRAGILE STATES

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Centre

Historically there is an acknowledged relationship between cities and state formation. This has been explored by scholars in relation to the formation of European nation-states hundreds of years ago. However we still know little about the role of cities in the transformation of states in the global South, and even less about the relationship between cities and state fragility. The Cities and Fragile States component of the Crisis States Research Centre's work focuses on the pivotal and multiple roles of cities in processes of state transformation. We explore the dynamic tension between cities and states and how cities affect the ability of states to effectively deliver their core functions of security, growth and welfare.



The urban services challenge of post-war reconstruction in Kabul



URBANISM AND URBAN GOVERNANCE

Why should we focus on cities as a unit of analysis? If economic growth and urbanisation are so closely intertwined, why not simply focus on growth? Scale matters. Cities are spatial entities that contain large concentrations of people and economic activity. They are characterised by urbanism, defined as the economic, social and political effects of density, proximity, heterogeneity and interdependence. These features give rise to agglomeration effects in urban economies, provide economies of scale in the delivery of goods, services and welfare provision, and contain the potential for all kinds of innovation due to social and economic diversity and interdependence. Urbanism can also give rise to negative externalities such as pollution but the most pertinent here being urban violence.

Understanding the relationship between cities and state transformation has never been as urgent, given the challenges of rapid urbanisation and the fact of weak governance in many parts of the world. Today more people live in urban than rural areas and the trend towards an urbanised world is set to continue. Over the next 25 years virtually all the world's population growth will be absorbed by cities in low-income countries. This will be accompanied by the continued growth of urban slums, increasing informality and deepening urban poverty.



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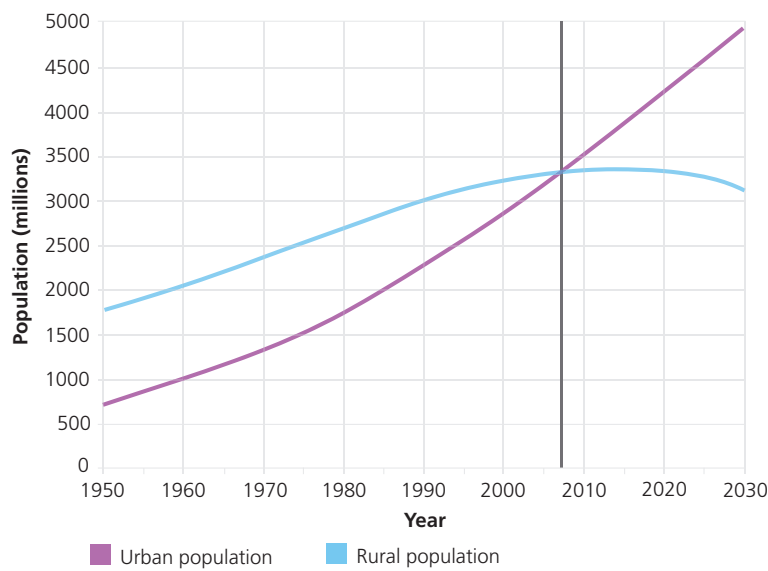
Recent studies show that by fostering economic growth, urbanisation has helped reduce absolute poverty in the aggregate across low and middle income countries but it has done little to reduce urban poverty. While the majority of the world's poor still lives in rural areas, absolute poverty is also an

urban problem, with a quarter of the world's consumption poor now living in urban areas and the proportion of the poor living in urban centres rising. This implies a need to recognise the economic contribution of cities to national growth, alongside the need to address the particular causes and characteristics of urban

poverty. Both imperatives require robust and effective governance. Yet rapid urbanisation is putting unprecedented demands on local and national states beyond their capacity to respond. This is nowhere more keenly observed than in the case of fragile states.

For cities to play an effective role in state transformation and reconstruction they have to be governed properly. This requires effective and resilient city-level local government alongside appropriate national level urban and spatial policies. It means going beyond the uncritical promotion of decentralisation, thinking about intra-governmental coordination and identifying the appropriate level of government for addressing particular issues. Whether intrinsically good or bad more generally, our research suggests that decentralisation policies can be damaging in fragile states. In countries experiencing ethnic or regional conflicts they can be used to favour or buy off particular districts. Moreover, decentralisation policies are not always designed with the city scale in mind. We have identified the metropolitan tier of governance as important, especially in fragile states, where it has greater capacity and regenerative power than smaller district municipalities and because it impacts not only on urban centres but city regions or urban hinterlands. Political engagement at the metropolitan scale is better able to hold national and sub-national bodies to account

Urban and rural population trends



VIOLENT URBAN CONFLICT AND STATE FRAGILITY

One of our core themes is intra-urban conflict and how this relates to crises of the state at different levels. Demographic analyses suggest that persistent unemployment, combined with rapid urban growth and a demographic youth bulge, is a recipe for persistent fragility. At the same time, poor welfare, measured in terms of high infant mortality rates, is a good predictor of political violence. Many perpetrators of urban violence, such as youth gangs and popular militias, might be politically and economically disruptive but they make varying contributions to asset accumulation and social protection in impoverished communities, often areas where the state has abdicated responsibility. As such they are part of the social fabric and therefore difficult to challenge and change. The Crisis States Research Centre is undertaking research on urban violence in a number of cities including Ahmedabad, Managua, Karachi, Bogotá, Cali and Medellín.



A young man with a sign against arms during a peace demonstration in Medellín, Colombia

Citizens waiting to pay their utility bills at the municipal buildings in Herat, Afghanistan



DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN THE WAKE OF CONFLICT IN NORTHERN UGANDA

Throughout most of the 21-year civil war in northern Uganda, Gulu town has been a relative oasis of calm and security in the midst of the violence and upheaval that wracked the rest of Acholiland. Although it has been a reception centre for internally displaced people since 1996, holding over 130,000 people in a space meant for under 40,000, those living there mostly saw it as a temporary time of trial. They intended to move back to the villages and homesteads they had left behind, once the war ended. However, this has not been the case and today Gulu has overtaken Jinja as Uganda's second city. Evidence from Afghanistan also confirms that urbanisation and conflict are closely correlated.

While Gulu has remained relatively stable over the last decade, our research suggests that urban population pressure could

become a destabilising influence in the region. For the first time in ten years, the end of displacement is a genuine possibility in northern Uganda thanks to the on-going peace talks in Juba between the LRA and the Ugandan government. While this is cause for optimism, the peace could be accompanied by a significant number of currently displaced people from the camps, unable or unwilling to return to their pre-displacement homes in the villages. In this situation, Gulu town could become a haven for large numbers of the dispossessed, excluded, and victimised and as such a catalyst of peace and stability. Alternatively it could be a site of further violence and instability in the post-war period, depending on how well the situation is managed in the context of this demographic change.



PANOS PICTURES: SVEN TORFINN

Children waking up at sunrise in Noah's Ark, one of the shelters for so-called night commuters in Gulu Town. Due to the fears of being abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), many children leave their villages each night for the relative safety of the town.

when compared to smaller municipalities, helped by the greater proximity of large city actors to a wide range of supra-local power brokers.

SECURITY, GROWTH AND WELFARE IN CITIES

We are interested in how cities contribute to security, growth and welfare at national level and how they deliver these core state functions in urban centres, where security, growth and welfare have particular characteristics and dynamics.

Security: Contemporary cities are increasingly vulnerable to the impact of sovereign and civil wars and are also sites of urban-based civic conflict. Cities can become theatres of regional and international conflicts and are impacted upon by people displaced by civil war. They are regularly characterised by segregation and fear born of violent crime and destructive conflict. In fragile cities, urban security often takes the form of non-state policing, such as 'armed response' gated communities, the use of private security firms, vigilantism and paramilitaries. This signals disillusionment and an opting out of public goods, which in turn undermines the authority and reach of the state. Even when state security is provided, it is not always effective and rarely operates on behalf of the most disadvantaged, with the urban poor frequently fearing rather than turning to the police.



PRAVEEN PRIYADARSHI

Slum settlements in Ahmedabad

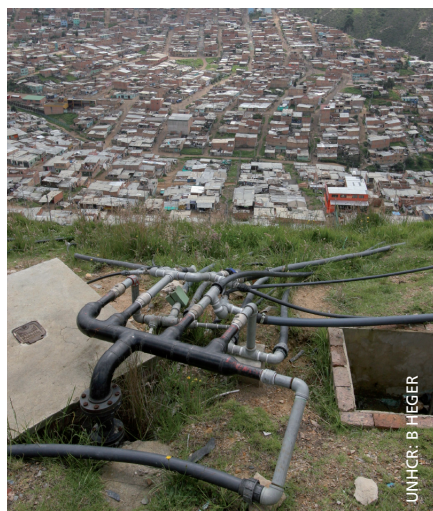
Growth: Cities are engines of economic growth either directly as sites of production or indirectly as financial and trading hubs. Agglomeration gives rise to productivity and diversity to innovation. However, this is not usually the case for cities in fragile states, which rarely benefit from local economic development, are constrained by poor infrastructure and services and lack skilled labour. They are rarely connected into the global economy on terms of their own choosing and fragile cities suffer from

'Our research suggests that decentralisation policies can be damaging in fragile states'

rates of population growth beyond their capacity to generate jobs and livelihoods. Urban unemployment is central to the breakdown of security in cities, while urban informality and the proliferation of slums appears to exert a negative influence on economic performance.



In Los Altos de la Florida, Colombia, tubes running from a big tank at the top of the hill bring water to hundreds of homes for a few hours each day



Welfare: Although cities offer economies of scale in the delivery of urban infrastructure, welfare, amenities and services, this is not always forthcoming. Indeed very few Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) focus on urban poverty at all. This is worrying given that several studies have identified the deterioration of welfare (measured by changes in infant mortality rates) to be the strongest single predictor of future political instability. The

situation is exacerbated by the fact that many aspects of urban welfare (land, housing and services) have capital asset values that are out of reach for the most disadvantaged.

CITIES AND STATE RESILIENCE

What happens in cities has an impact on city-state relations and development outcomes. Our initial findings suggest a correlation (not causality) between cities and state fragility or resilience in three critical ways:

1 State fragility seems to be more likely in countries with a primate city, that is, an urban centre unrivalled in terms of population size (at least twice as populous as the next largest city) as well as financial and political dominance. Our research has demonstrated this with respect to Kabul in Afghanistan. Interestingly Africa has many primate cities: our cases include Kampala, Kigali, Kinshasa and Maputo.

2 State fragility seems less likely when cities are integrated within a national urban network or system. The more integrated cities are into national economic, social and political processes, the better able they are to contribute effectively to the delivery of security, growth and welfare. Significantly, there are fewer primate cities and

more integrated urban systems in middle-income countries such as the BICS (Brazil, India, China and South Africa). Here our relevant case studies are Pakistan and Colombia, where we are studying a number of urban centres.

3 Even in resilient states cities can fail. These are cities where security, growth and welfare are not provided for all or most urban residents either by local government or as a result of inclusive coalitions involving both elites and popular groupings. Nor are they leveraged from other sources, notably central government. An example of a fragile or failing city might be Cali in Colombia, which unlike Bogotá and Medellín has not been able deliver security by way of reducing urban violence through public policy.

RECONSTRUCTION, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE-BUILDING

Cities are important sites for reconstruction, development and peace-building. There are four important reasons for this. First, in the wake of civil war there is a tendency for people to move to urban centres in search of safety and livelihood opportunities, although links to rural areas are often maintained through kinship and other ties. Second, there are economies of scale to be had in relation to reconstruction and development interventions, which through social networks can have an impact beyond the urban fringe, for example through mutual reciprocity and remittances. Third, investment in urban infrastructure and services can have both a welfare impact and serve to help kick start asset accumulation in moribund economies. Fourth, evidence is emerging from our research that urban elite coalitions are finding ways through public policy to successfully address urban violence. What we need to explore further is under what circumstances this is really effective rather than violence simply being displaced, for example to the urban periphery or the rural hinterland.

HYBRID ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS DIFFUSE CONFLICT IN DURBAN

Some see chieftaincy as characterised by customary forms of accountability, while others view it as anti-democratic and, most significantly, oppressive of women. Research undertaken in Phase One showed that recognition of institutional multiplicity helped the city of Durban overcome the legacy of a violent political transition in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Here conflict between predominantly urban supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) and the regionally strong Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) favoured by traditional leaders (the *amakhosi* and *izinduna*), reached the proportions of a civil war. It left 20,000 dead and a million people displaced. By involving the *amakhosi* and incorporating customary consultation practices in metropolitan governance, eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality facilitated a hybrid system of accountability that eschewed rigid blueprints for democracy in order to cater to local preferences and foster the peace.

eThekweni Metro threw down the gauntlet to the *amakhosi*, encouraging them to earn the right to represent their people by accommodating themselves to democratic processes. Traditional leaders cannot comprise more than 20 per cent of representatives on the metropolitan council, do not have voting rights, and do not deal with the budget. Nevertheless, they have their own budget and are paid participants in local governance, alongside elected councilors. As a result they have cooperated more willingly in development activities in the peri-urban areas of the city. The incorporation of potentially competing power structures into eThekweni's metropolitan governance framework has averted tensions that could have threatened local security. This approach has also contributed to national stability by defusing a regional flashpoint. Moreover, city government has had the strength (not necessarily possible at the district level in rural areas) to contain the *amakhosi* and their ambitions within the parameters of South Africa's liberal democratic constitution. In so doing it has demonstrated that democratic transition is a process and not something to be achieved at the stroke of a legislative pen.



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