

# The Politics of Protection: Crime and Policing Outside of the State in South Africa

By Nick Smith

# The Problem

- Since the return of the police to the townships following apartheid and despite massive police reform, policing by groups outside of the state is widely practiced
- Similar forms of extra-state policing are widely practiced in other transitional democracies in Latin America, the former Soviet Union, and throughout Africa

# The Questions

- Why has extra-state policing been so prevalent in South Africa's townships since the end of apartheid?
- Why is it prevalent in so many transitional democracies?
- What does the prevalence of extra-state policing suggest about the difficulties of democratic state building?

# An Understudied Problem?

- Extra-state policing is absent from the literature on democratic transition
- A curious neglect given that crime and policing are at the core of many of our theories of political obligation (e.g. Hobbes, Locke) and of the state (e.g. Weber and Tilly)

# A Definition

- Extra-State Policing: A set of practices in which citizens seek to impose order, often though not always violently, on a locality without recourse to state institutions.
- Extra-state policing organizations may include, among other groups, lynch mobs, vigilante organizations, political parties, civic associations, and gangs.

# Existing Explanations

- Crime
- Poor Policing/Rule of Law
  - Bratton and Van de Walle, Diamond, O'Donnell
- Community Breakdown
  - Godoy Snodgrass

# An Alternate Hypothesis

- A Story of Conjuncture
  - A Shift in the Meaning of Violence
  - The Organization of Violence
  - Rising Inequality and Unmet Expectations

# The Meaning of Violence

- From Political Violence to Criminal Violence
- A Excess of Crime and the Appearance of an Ineffective State
- An Ambivalent Citizenry



# The Organization of Violence

- The Extension of Policing Power and the Privatization of Protection
- Negotiating Policing
- An Ambivalent State

# Rising Inequality

- The Expectations of Democracy
- Expectations Unmet
- The Criminalization of Youth
- Reasserting Generational Control

# A Tale of Two Townships

- KwaMashu and Evaton (?)
  - Higher Crime vs. Lower Crime
    - 116/100,000 vs. 24/100,000 murder rate
  - Poorly Policed vs. Well Policed
    - Increasing Crime vs. Consistently Decreasing Crime
  - Ethnic Homogeneity vs. Heterogeneity
    - Primarily isiZulu-speaking vs. Ethnically Plural
  - ANC/IFP Split vs. ANC Stronghold

# Remaining Problems

- Second field site?
  - (Evaton, Orlando, Naledi, Diepkloof, Elsewhere?)
- Other alternate hypotheses?
- How exportable is this theory?

# Why South Africa?

- A “Miraculous” Democratic Transition
- Relatively Strong State Institutions
- Structural Similarities to Authoritarianism Elsewhere

# Research Methods

- Participant Observation and Interviews
  - Area residents, those engaged in extra-state policing, police officials, those who have been targeted by policing groups
- Discourse Analysis
  - How is crime talked about in everyday conversation?  
How are crime and policing represented in local media?
- Archival Work
  - To track the continuities and differences in policing within and outside of the state from apartheid to the present