ASSIGNMENT 1, FALL 2015

DEFINING URBAN CONFLICT

In a highly urbanized world like the one we live in, cities become the strategic place of violent conflict. Economic, religious, gender and ethnic differences are negotiated every day in the urban arena when tensions become conflict and conflict escalate into violence; the urban space becomes the battlespace. The process of city building with all its conflicts and tensions then is a tool for both violence and reconciliation. In short, the tools of urbanization are the tools of war in an urbanized conflict.

In this assignment, the goal is that you get accounted with a particular place of conflict, understand the unique conditions of the manifestations of conflict on the urban scale. Become familiar with the history of violence that permits to understand patterns of conflict and how government organizations, citizen, international actors, and perverse actors play a role in the reproduction of violence.

DIRECTIONS

1. Choose a city in the world that present a high level of urban conflict. The city of your choosing should exhibit higher levels of conflict when compared to other cities in its region. We define the conflict in this context not only as the tension between divergent groups but as physical manifestations of the conflict thru the use of violence.

2. Document the process of conflict in that city. For this exercise, it Is important here to see how conflict has evolved over time not only the current manifestations but understand what has been the key temporal inflexion points in which conflict has escalated into violence. Here you are looking for significant historical events that permit to explain the present condition such as riots, beginning or end of civil or international wars, hunger, political and/or religious transitions. Include as much data as it could be possible in the form of maps, charts, illustration, photos or other media.

3. Measure the manifestations of conflict of the city. There are many ways to define and measure conflict here you are asked to look at the conflict historically and measure its changes. Describe the conditions of conflict and the type of actors that perpetuate violence or are affected by it. You are required to find data for the following measuring variables, but you can, also, develop your measuring tools that fit the type of conflict that you are researching. The required variables are Homicide rate, population, urban area size, zones of conflict (neighborhoods, districts, city wide, and nation), governmental structure and GDP.

4. What has been done to prevent the conflict? Briefly describe the policies that have been implemented so to avoid further conflict. Develop your criteria to test how effective those policies or projects had been as tools to prevent conflict. Try to explain the motivation behind these policies and the effects in your chosen city.

When thinking about your cities conflict use the following factors that are part of the context in which conflict happen. You do not need to use all of them in your paper, however, they serve as exploratory questions that you can use to better define the type and context of conflict that you are analyzing.

Spatiality: Understanding the interconnections between different city locales enables the analysis of movements of violence across space and time. Here look at how physical mobility and geographic isolation/connectivity both inhibits and promotes insecurity.

Nature of Violence: define what tipe of violence occurs in the selected city (i.e. individual vs. communal, economic vs. political).

The context of Violence: A city's current violence is never independent of historical and geopolitical contexts. Understanding the 'big picture' also enables investigators to discern the reasons why a city's scale of violence.

Civil Society: As civil society has long been championed in political science literature as a necessary precursor to a robust democracy, prod the possibility of civil society's ability to enable resilience. What are the social organizations (and synergies between them) which exist within each locale and do these groups promote violence and/or resilience?

State: Law enforcement and the judicial system are considered two critical arms of the state that help ensure security. Analysis of these two factors within a city may assist in determining why a city has devolved into chronic violence and/or how a city (or communities) can overcome such violence.

Governance: Sovereignty and legitimacy of the state over a given territory are key elements of security, explore levels and possible parallel sovereignties of informal governance structures that either contribute to or deter chronic violence. Both the local and national state contexts are considered.

Economy: The formal, informal, and illegal economies, as well as rates and sources of employment, are regarded as potential drivers of violence and/or resilience. A city's degree of economic connectivity to regional, national, and international markets is also considered as a possible driver.

Service Provision: Control and provision of six key urban goods (security, education, transport, housing, energy, and water) are considered determinants of legitimacy of formal and informal governance structures. The scarcity of such goods is also regarded as a potential driver of violence and/or resilience.

Environment: The possible connection between environmental vulnerability and urban insecurity, both in terms of fueling chronic violence as well as laying the foundation for resilient communities. Constant vs. episodic environmental challenges also has the possibility of determining levels of resilience. Climate change is identified as a potential destabilizing force which challenges regular control and provision of certain urban goods.

Examples of Resilience: Women, youth, religious organizations, labor organizations, business communities, local and international NGOs, as well as the state are considered possible agents of resilience. Pay particular attention to the partnerships between such groups. Also look at the role of space in which enable such adaptations (i.e. public parks, plazas, pedestrian-trafficked streets).

PRODUCT

Document your findings in a brief paper, no more than 10-15 pages in length, including any data and illustrations you may wish to include. Be sure to include a one page summary of your conclusions up front.   The assignment should be done individually.

DEADLINES

Identify confl t city by the week of **Session 3.**

The assignment is **due** in class on **Session 10.**

11.488 Urban Development in Conflict Cities: Planning Challenges and Policy Innovations
Fall 2015