



Breaking the state's monopoly on Violence

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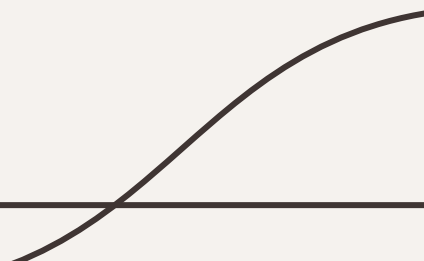


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01

Introduction

Brief introduction to the authors

Hunted: Predation & Pentecostalism in Guatemala (2019)

- Written by **Kevin O'Neill**, a professor in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto
- He is also the Director of the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies
- Part of a trilogy on the politics of Pentecostalism in Guatemala City
 - City of God (2010)
 - Secure the Soul (2015)
 - Hunted (2019)



Politics as a Vocation (1919)

- Written by **Max Weber**, a German sociologist
- Numerous contributions such as his analysis on bureaucracy and the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.
- In the 'Politics as a Vocation', Weber argued that politics is a vocation or a calling, rather than just a job or a way of gaining power.



02

Weber

State monopoly over violence



Politics as a Vocation (1919)

- State has been **successful in monopolizing the use of violence** and physical force as a means of domination
- What justifications does this domination lie on?

Types of authority used to legitimate the use of force

- Traditional
- Charismatic
- Legal

Types of authority used to legitimate the use of force: Traditional

- Power originates from **long-established traditions** and **beliefs**
- Recognizing that “it has always been this way”
- Eg. Monarchy and patriarchy



Japanese imperial family

Types of authority used to legitimate the use of force: Charismatic

- Based on **personal qualities** and **appeal** to be a leader
- Able to motivate a large following, inspiring loyalty and obedience
- Social transformation may be fueled to create new movements, ideas and institutions
- Eg. Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Adolf Hitler



Nelson Mandela

Types of authority used to legitimate the use of force: Legal

- Based on a system of **laws** and **rules**
- Their exercise of authority is deemed legitimated by those subjected to it
- Eg. Government officials elected by voters and police officers

Why can the state maintain the monopoly over violence?

- Bounded by obedience to the authority who holds the power
- Appeals to their personal interests: **Material reward** and **social honour**
- **A lot more to lose** when they go against state violence

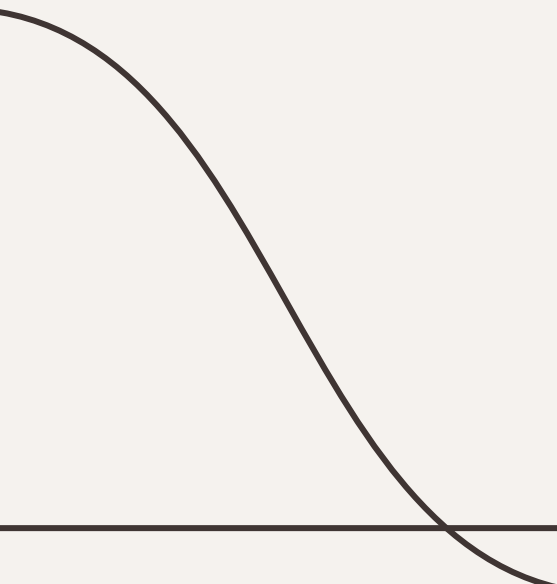
Weber's understanding of the monopoly of violence

- The state has monopoly of violence by **owning the resources** and the **means of producing violence: Military, police, firearms etc.**
 - “To maintain a dominion by force, **certain material goods are required**, just as with an economic organization”. (p. 3)
 - “In the end, **the modern state controls the total means of political organization**... No single official personally owns the money he pays out, or the buildings, stores, tools, the war machines he controls”. (p. 4)
- **Only the state is allowed to give the mandate** so that those using the resources would not have any repercussions

03

Social Actors

& Background context on Guatemala

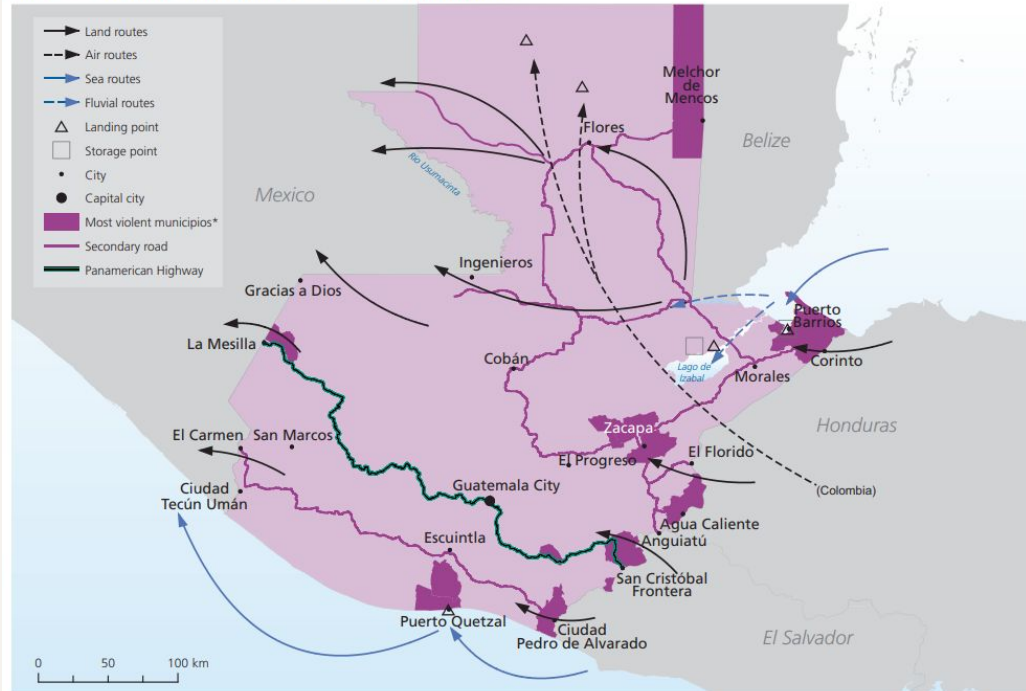


Hunted: Predation & Pentecostalism in Guatemala

- Kevin O'Neill is a cultural anthropologist focusing on the **moral dimensions** of contemporary political practice in Latin America
- *Hunted* is based on > **10 years of fieldwork** among these centers and the drug users that populate them
- His work seeks to **reframe the arc of redemption** often associated with drug rehabilitation, painting instead a **seemingly endless cycle of hunt, capture, and release**
- *Hunted* **raises questions** about **the best way of addressing social problems** in situations where **the state is weak** and **the churches/belief in religion are strong** and Pentecostalism **stands in for a criminally negligent state**

Context: Guatemala's Location

Map 8: Cocaine trafficking routes in Guatemala



Source: UNODC, elaborated from interviews in the region and national police data
*Selected among the municipalities with highest homicide rates (<100 homicides per 100,000 population)

Context: State Politics

- **Vicious cycle between corruption and drug trafficking:**

- The state is corrupt → drug lords have connections and get away with it → perpetuates the drug issue and reinforces corruption

- **Lack of effective state involvement:**

- 96% of crimes in Guatemala go unpunished
 - There are no official drug rehab centres in Guatemala
 - The state does little to regulate the conditions in the informal centres that are set up
-

Social Actors:

(1) The Drug Rehab Industry

The Hunt

- Drug addicts are **hunted off the streets** by men running these centres **upon request of the family**
 - “How do you find someone in the market? I asked. “**The family calls us**,” he said. “They let us know **where he is**, and **what he’s doing**.” (p. 9)
- The violence they enact is **approved by the family**
 - “**He needs help**... And so I want to put him inside the center for a long time... Santiago also **needs to be punished**” (p. 27)

Social Actors:

The Drug Rehab Industry

Captivity

- The men are kept in **poor conditions** and are **not treated well**
 - “We sleep on the floor like spoons” “he had to scrub the floors on his hands and knees, **naked**, “**As punishment.**” “Out of control... This is place is **out of fucking control.**” (p. 11)
 - “The center’s food was terrible. The men were **chronically underfed**” (p. 68)
- The men are **stripped off any agency over their lives**
 - “Santiago **stood naked** as he **waited for instruction**- to be told to bend over and then squat down; then, at the bottom of the squat, to pull his scrotum to one side and to cough... to enact **an intimate dominance over the captive**, to communicate to him that **he had no right to privacy**, that **his body was no longer his own.**” (p. 39)

Social Actors: The Drug Rehab Industry

- **Empowered by approval** from the family and the state, the hunters **take over the means of violence** → breaking the state's monopoly on violence?
 - “With **as much force as possible**..” (p. 32)
 - “The pastor **beats** people... with his fist and then with his bat.” (p. 17)
 - “Pedro would also **poke them in the gut, pushing** a captive onto his heels with each **prod** until his back was up against a wall.” (p. 17)
 - “The huntsmen also **play with their catch**, telling them fantastic stories that often leave these poor, vulnerable men frantic for answers.” (p. 33)

Social Actors: The Family

- The family **transfer** any of the power they have over their sons/brothers/fathers to the center → **give permission to the centre** to use any means (short of killing/seriously injuring) to **keep their sons/brothers/fathers safe**

“We **give the family peace**... they prefer to have their father or brother or son locked up here so that he doesn't get himself killed.” (p. 7)

“With a **quiet house** and Santiago **off the streets**, she had gone to bed with **a weight lifted from her shoulders**. Her son was **safe inside a center**. ... She had **never slept more soundly**. No longer in the streets or at the market and **well beyond the reach of those kinds who had once shot him**, Santiago was now **under lock and key**” (p. 41)

“Without **Maria's consent**, without **her business**, then Pedro had nothing.” (p. 43)

“The captives were also waiting for their families **to heal**.” (p. 12)

Social Actors: The State

- The state is **weak** and **does not have the resources/ability** to take control of the situation → **transfers legitimacy** and **extends their “sole ‘right’ to use violence”** (Weber, p. 1) to the centers and those in charge

“Try to get **the police** to give a shit about someone on crack... You should see the **look of relief** on their faces when they toss one of those guys into a bag” (p. 9)

“The **radical absence of the government programs** allowed the center to become a **recognizable social resource**... State institutions (courts, prisons, mental hospitals) brought men of all ages to the center- even young boys” (p. 11)

“**Offloading** became **increasingly common** as government officials found that **families often preferred** Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers to state prisons” (p. 19)

“The government **flatly refused** to provide any kind of care for drug users” (p. 21-22)

State's monopoly?

- The centers have **power over the entire operation**
 - backed by the families
 - endorsed by the state: no regulations implemented, they utilise these centres
 - The centres are **entirely privately owned and operated**, going against the definition of monopoly on violence by Weber
- The state arguably still holds power over the centers by **allowing the violence** → the centers **self-regulate** and **prevent the men from talking to the police**
 - “We **aren't doing anything illegal** here... We just don't want the guys talking to the police” (p. 37)
 - “Frener was in the center when **police raided and closed it** in 2011” (p. 41)

Social Actor: The Ethnographer?

- O'Neill plays a **passive** and **complicit** role
 - Should he have intervened to stop the multiple instances of violence he witnessed and documented?
 - Was it right for him to participate by sending these letters? (p. 65)
- His **watchful presence** added to the **humiliation and dehumanization** of these men
- What is **his role** and **who benefits**?
 - He delivers notes and through that **builds rapport** with these men → unlocks more stories/ insights and also **the perspective of the family**
 - Him delivering the notes may also serve to **antagonise the family**
- “It was in such moments of **moral adjudication** that I most felt **part of predation’s pastoralism.**” (p. 69)



04

Performance of Care

Performance of care to foster legitimacy, such that centres can continue to enact violence

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graph TD; A[Principle of Care, backed by Christian beliefs] --> B[Performances of Care to different stakeholders]; B --> C[Seen to be legitimate & can continue to function];
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Principle of Care, backed by Christian beliefs

Performances of Care to different stakeholders

Seen to be legitimate & can continue to function

Principle of care

- Emplacement of drug abusers in these facilities is also an **act of care and love**.
 - “The important point,” he insisted, “is that this is **about love** rather than hate; this is about **rehabilitation** rather than retaliation. We want users to live rather than die. This is about forgiveness and not retribution.” (p. 21)

Principle of care

Concern for **safety** of **individuals**

- “If you’re in the streets,” Alejandro said, “you’ll end up dead.” [p 5]
- The principle argument for holding these men captive was to keep them alive. [p 45]

Concern about **reformation** of **individuals**

- Pedro approached me again. “They’re waiting for a better perspective on life,” he added. “They’re waiting for a chance to make a good decision. [p 45]

Awareness of **families’ concern of individual’s safety**

- “what about the rights of the mother who right now is calm and relaxed because she knows that her son is in good hands?” [p 8]

Concern about **family’s well-being**

- “The families need a break... they come here with their son or brother or husband, and they are tired. They’ve had their money stolen. Their sleep stolen. Their pride broken. [p 46]



The **ends** of safety, well-being of drug
abusers and families, all in the name of
care, justifies the violent **means** to capture
them and hold them captive

Reasons for policing

Centres

- Profits
 - so while the average Guatemalan earns around \$2,750 USD a year, Pedro cleared about \$5,000 USD per month after expenses (p. 26)
 - Pedro's catch and release program proved to be lucrative. (p. 62)

Families

- Care
 - But in the center," Maria insisted, "Santiago is safe. No one can shoot him there." (p. 16)
 - With.. Santiago off the streets, she had gone to bed with a weight lifted from her shoulders (p. 41)

**Link to Week 5 -> Intimate Policing
within the families, but for different
reasons from the state**

Performance of care (directed at families)

Name Cards

- Name cards demonstrated **care and concern** for drug abusers and family members
 - It read: “Drugs in your family? **There’s a solution**. Call anytime. Open 24 hours a day.” (p. 13)
 - “Do not give up!” other cards encouraged. “**We are here to help!**” (p. 14)
- **Emphasis on the positive environment** they provided that will drug abusers
 - Many of them went even further, insisting that they provide “a **friendly, agreeable environment**” for drug rehabilitation (p. 14)

Performance of care (directed at families)

Tour of facilities

- Peek into programmes demonstrate that they are in **safe hands**, as there are programmes that reform individuals
 - “I don’t let people inside, but you can take a look.” It was midmorning and the men had gathered inside the main room to listen to a **sermon** from a visiting pastor. (p. 30)
- What is concealed is intentional, **to hide the fact that, these programmes are not as effective** as purported
 - What Maria could not see was Tomás **watching over the captives**,
 - There were often **fistfights** between captives... how **hungry** these men got... also not see the stretches of **inactivity** that these men endured. (p. 30)

Performance of care (directed at charitable organizations)

- To continue receiving provisions, the centre must **maintain appearance of a religious/charitable organization**
 - Local churches often lightened those numbers with **donations of bread and vegetables**, Pedro routinely received hundreds of pounds of **charitable provisions** from the United States Agency for International Development. Boxes of **vitamin-fortified lentils** sat on the roof, brought there by subcontractors who saw Pedro's center as a charitable organization. (p. 26)

Performance of care (directed at state institutions)

- Some centres have successfully **gained state recognition** as a state resource, through performances
 - the center to become a **recognizable social resource**, with transfer sheets lining its archives. State institutions (courts, prisons, mental hospitals) brought men of all ages to the center (p. 11)
- **Concealment of coercion from the police** to keep up with appearance of care, so that centres can continue to run
 - Even one mention of coercion from a captive could hypothetically initiate a investigation, ... the scene would have undoubtedly cut Pedro's population in half (p. 36)

Seeing through the centre's performance

- Some are **suspicious** of the intentions and effectiveness of these centres
 - Most cynical of citizens understood Pedro's mission as **nothing more than a business**
 - Government officials called pastors such as Pedro "**vultures**".
 - Public health workers shrugged them off as **parasitic** while human rights lawyers saw them as nothing more than **agents of greed**.
 - Even pastors of established churches ... often wondering whether any of these centers **did more good than harm** (p. 22)

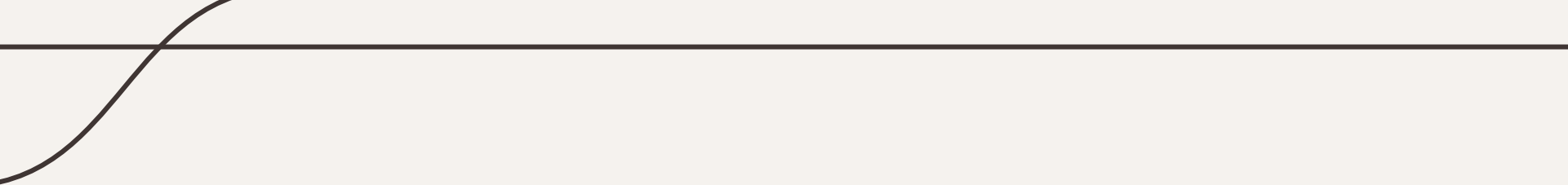
While some actors were suspicious of these performances, the fact that these could still remain means that performances, for a large part, has worked in convincing most stakeholders of the centre's legitimacy



05

Punishment

Of drug users within the rehab
centres



**'Punishment, if I may so put it,
should strike the soul rather than
the body.'**

**– Foucault
“Docile Bodies”**



Punishment: Reforming the soul, not the body

Pedro

- “I bring sinners here to wait for God.” “I bring them here to wait for a miracle.” He hunted sinners so that the Lord could heal them. “All I can do,” he said, “is **pull them from the streets just long enough for God to save them.**” (p. 63)

Pastor

- “The Lord is preparing his children. He is preparing their souls. He will give them liberty by freeing these sinners from their chains. The Lord is going to raise each of these sinners up. He is going to make each of them taller, spiritually speaking, and allow them to return to their families.” What is your responsibility? I asked the pastor. He paused. “My role is to **tell them that they must change.**” (p. 54)

Punishment: Reforming the soul, not the body

Pedro

- Locked up the drug users – place them in a space where they can be kept alive for God to reform them

Pastor

- Extol drug users to change



**Target of reformation: Soul of the drug
users, not their bodies**

**Intended outcome of stay at rehab centres:
Reform them – never use drugs again**



Reforming the soul: Creation of dedicated space

- Rehab centre – drug users forced to “submit myself (themselves) to treatment for alcohol detoxification and/or drug rehabilitation, located at the **address stated clearly at the top of this form.**” (p. 43)



- **Foucault – “art of distribution”**
 - “Discipline sometimes requires enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony.” (p. 141)

Reforming the soul: Organisation of activity

- Drug users “commit myself (themselves) to strict observation and follow the given rules for the reestablishment of my (their) health.” (p. 43)
- Following a **timetable** that **dictates** appropriate activities for them to do
- Timetable usually includes the following: Hygiene and house cleaning, meals, worship services, visits and prayers.
- **Ensure the quality of time** that drug users spend at the rehab centre – activities will help the drug users **reform and quit drugs permanently**

Reforming the soul: Organisation of activity

- **Foucault – “control of activity”**

- “Three great methods - establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, regulate the cycles of repetition” (p. 149)
- “But an attempt is also made to assure the quality of the time used: constant supervision, the pressure of supervisors, the elimination of anything that might disturb or distract; it is a question of constituting a totally useful time” (p. 150)
- “Time measured and paid must also be a time without impurities or defects; a time of good quality, throughout which the body is constantly applied to its exercise. Precision and application are, with regularity, the fundamental virtues of disciplinary time.” (p. 151)

Reforming the soul: Economy of suspended rights

- By **suspending the rights of the drug user – to be a social person and citizen** – during their time at the rehab centre
 - “I (drug user) give formal consent to my total, complete, and voluntary submission for the restoration of my complete person during what will be my internment.” (p. 43)
- Drug user caught in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions – can be **manipulated according to strict rules** to achieve 'higher' aim of stopping them from using drugs in future

The slide features a light gray background with two horizontal dark gray lines, one near the top and one near the bottom. A dark gray curve starts on the left edge, between the two lines, and curves downwards and to the right, ending near the bottom line.

Week 1: Security blurs

Security blurs: Similarities with the state

- Rehab centres following some state logics
 - **Rhetoric of pastoral care** to justify enacting violence on drug users
 - Following the state formula on the purpose of punishment – **reform the soul, not inflict pain on the body**

Security blurs: Differences from the state

- However, rehab centres still different from legitimate state actors such as the police – great efforts to stay out of police limelight
- **Pedro**
 - Keep up appearances to avoid police scrutiny – does not allow drug users to interact with the police – fear they will expose physical abuse that happens in rehab centres – could land rehab centres in legal trouble
- **Complex relationship with the state**
 - Care work of reformation largely done by the rehab centres
 - Official state actors such as the police – identify and send drug users to these rehab centres, and collect bodies of the drug users

Security Blurs: Power sharing with state

- Act of securing the city against drugs shared amongst the police and rehab centres
- **Power sharing a highly negotiated performance**
 - Rehab centres can only **perform within acceptable boundaries** that are dictated by the state.
 - Cannot appear to overtly engage in illegal activities such as physically abusing drug users (Jorge's center was raided by the police for harbouring members of organised crime)

Must perform an act of care rather than punishment

Complicating breaking the state monopoly of violence

Weber

- As Weber mentioned, state must own the means of producing that violence
- However, rehabilitation centres are privately-owned
- Hunters operate under the jurisdiction of Pedro, not the state

State monopoly of violence has been broken

Foucault

- Rehab centres follow state logics when punishing drug users
- Reforming the soul rather than punishing the flesh

Centre's violence largely conforms to state logics



Has the state monopoly of violence really
been broken?

Or are different social actors simply
reproducing state violence by following
state logics of punishing people?





Duterte's War-on-Drugs

Context for Duterte's WOD

- Cornerstone campaign of Duterte's presidency to purge Philippines of illegal drugs (Conde, 2019)
- Human Rights Watch: More than 12,000 Filipinos killed under this campaign, mostly the urban poor (Conde, 2019)
- Victims —suspected users and pushers — do not enjoy due legal process before being killed in a brutal manner (Nachtwey, n.d.)
- **Perpetrators: vigilantes, hired guns and cops** (Nachtwey, n.d.)



Analysing Duterte's WOD

Weber

- For state to wield monopoly on violence – state must own means of producing that violence
- Duterte's WOD – extrajudicial killings sanctioned by the state was the norm (state does not own means and resources of producing this physical violence)
 - Does the state still hold monopoly over violence, even if they no longer own the means of producing that physical violence?

Analysing Duterte's WOD

O'Neill

Similarities

- Pastoral care used to justify violence faced by drug users
 - Duterte: **“Your concern is human rights, mine is human lives”** (A Thousand Cuts, 2021)
 - O'Neill: Drug users isolated to protect others from them – family is main beneficiary; drug user can no longer steal or hurt their family

Differences

- Rehab centres focus on reforming the soul VS Duterte focuses on inflicting bodily pain; to kill the drug user rather than reform them

Conclusion

- For Weber, state monopoly of violence is owning the means of producing that violence
- O' Neill complicates understandings of state monopoly of violence
 - In this case, the state monopoly of violence has been broken, as these centres who own the means of producing violence can enact violence on drug abusers
 - But they conform to state logics of reforming rather than inflicting pain
 - Performances enable them to gain legitimacy to break state monopoly of violence

Discussion Questions



Discussion Questions

- 1) According to Weber, states have a monopoly on the means to enact violence. In Duterte's WOD, the state no longer has the monopoly on violence based on Weber's definition, yet it is still state-sanctioned violence. Would you still consider this breaking the state violence? What does breaking of state violence mean - is it the intent, or is it owning the means of violence?
- 2) What are the conditions of breaking the monopoly of violence? What are other examples that show a breaking of the monopoly of violence?
- 3) How do state actors and non-state actors differ in their mechanisms/ intentions of producing violence?
- 4) When is policing care, and when is policing violent?
- 5) Can policing be non-violent? – thinking of more humane and gentle ways to police others

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