The previous chapter attempted to defend the central hypothesis of this thesis regarding the relevance of Arendtian thought for IR theories. I also intended to verify that traditional formulations and practices of fixed concepts downplay the role of ordinary persons as agents in the international realm and how they are problematic in contrast with Arendtian thought. In this chapter I will continue to defend the importance of Arendtian thought in the particular field of the study of the phenomenon of violence. Such an overlook of persons as agents makes possible the emergence of particular forms of violence such as what I call the ‘management of lives.’ Conversely, I will also defend my second sub-hypothesis that current mainstream IR assumptions are insufficient to understand in depth the relation between violence and the superfluousness caused by the management of lives.

These days, our political life bears the hallmark of violence. We are used to believing that contemporary politics are naturally violent as we witness ‘preemptive’ wars, nuclear weapons development, ethnic or national conflicts, economic exclusion, discrimination against refugees and immigrants, etc. However, violence as politics is also lived under ‘pacific’ facades, as it is also about the management and procurement of happiness and abundance for what I will call ‘dehumanized’ lives, in which the most sacred value is life, but nothing else beyond mere biological preservation. From this perspective, I will show in this chapter how the experience of violence as a constitutive part of politics is typically seen as something ‘natural.’ This is so first, because human life is regarded as the highest political value from organic perspectives; and second, because the public sphere has been overrun by matters of fulfilling necessities and procuring commodious lives. Mainstream international relations scholarship is traditionally subsumed under this set of
beliefs for it sees violence as an instrument of survival and supports the classical
Clausewitzian notion that force (violence) is the instrument of politics, and war the
continuation of politics by other means.\(^1\)

In this regard, Hannah Arendt is one of the few political thinkers who does not take
violence for granted in political affairs. On the contrary, she made a great attempt to
disengage politics from war and defy the traditional belief – so pervasive in mainstream IR-
that violence is the last, effective resource for settling disputes. Her conceptualization and
critique on violence is closely related to her main concerns on acting and being political, as
violence for her is a great obstacle for the latter elements. In a general sense, Arendt’s
meditations on violence make evident reference to disastrous cases such as Nazism or
Stalinism.\(^2\) However, her reflections should not imply that violence should only be analysed
and avoided when cases of extraordinary violence arise. The violence caused by
‘fabricated’ politics and its constraints on action also deal with, and have effects on,
everyday violence due to its regard as “virtuous action in the service of generally applauded
conventional social, economic and political norms.”\(^3\) Hence, for Arendt, not only cases of
great bloodshed such as genocides are violent and alarming. The isolation caused by liberal
democracy and market-oriented capitalism is similarly so. For violence—be it ordinary or
extraordinary—precludes the possibility for the realisation of her peculiar understanding of
politics and action and, in the worst cases, deprives persons from belonging to the ‘world of
men’\(^4\) and even from having a unique identity.\(^5\)

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(Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997), 35.
3 Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Philippe Bourgois, “Introduction: Making Sense of Violence,” in *Violence in War
This chapter has three main tasks. First, I attempt to show following Arendt how our current political life renders human beings as superfluous and disposable because it regards unqualified life as its only value. Second, I expose Arendt’s insights on the phenomenon of violence as conceptually opposed to her peculiar understandings of power, politics and action. The third stage of this chapter summarizes and sketches the deep connections between the main arguments of the first two sections to provide a more detailed picture of to what extent violence is experienced under the name of politics. We will see how these emphases on superfluousness and the importance of making conceptual distinctions between crucial notions such as violence and power can make an important difference in the ways we imagine our international realm.

1. The Production of Superfluousness.

As exposed in the previous chapter, for Arendt our political life is completely a human artifice: it is not something given to us by natural means. Men do not act politically in the Arendtian sense because they are ‘programmed’ from birth not to do so. Indeed, Arendt’s work and main concepts are involved in rejecting essentialist and organic assumptions of affairs such as politics or violence. On the contrary, Arendt always considered dangerous the influence of ‘organic’ thought in political affairs. We were not born in conditions of equality, we have created such circumstances. Likewise, our political interactions are not produced by any biological predisposition, we have constructed them. As a consequence, the preservation of equality and the upholding of human dignity are not elements subject to the control of natural forces. Such tasks must be undertaken by men. What confers upon us our quality of being human is thus not our biological condition of homo sapiens, it is rather our deeds, opinions and ways to ‘be’ in the world, and our contribution of our individual

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uniqueness toward creating the bonds between us (what Arendt calls the “web of relationships”\(^7\)) that assure our humanity. “In other words, humanity, politically speaking, does not reside in the natural fact of being alive; politically, humanity depends on artificial legal and political institutions to protect it.”\(^8\) Given this, any attempt to naturalize such a “human condition” becomes indeed dangerous, since it attempts to destroy the human characteristics of our life and the very mechanisms that protect us from a state of nature. Thus, for Arendt, naturalist thought jeopardizes fundamental elements of our humanity such as our basic rights and even our most distinct human qualities like our capacity for political organization, action or plurality. With these statements in mind, the following section draws out some consequences of thinking too organically about human matters and the consequent ‘dehumanization’ of our political life.

From the analysis of the phenomena of Nazism and Stalinism, in her most famous work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt offers a profound view of how our current political structures such as state sovereignty can render persons as superfluous and disposable. As I mentioned in chapter 1, even though Arendt did not become directly involved in the analysis of international relations, she maintained a sceptical position regarding the effectiveness of international law and human rights discourses. She was concerned with the fact that such measures were unable to protect and guarantee people’s most basic rights. This critique intended to draw attention to how the modern nation-state system, by making sovereign claims over its territory and people, made it possible to render enormous segments of people as ‘superfluous’. The binding nature of international law and human rights claims is weak in facing the state’s claims on its sovereign power, which, in

\(^7\) Arendt, *Human Condition*, 182-4.

turn, is supposed to be in charge of guaranteeing protection for its *citizens*. In an international scenario in which traditional state sovereignty imposes well-delineated, fixed borders, cases of migration or displacement caused by warfare become a serious dilemma that the state traditionally disregards.

It is not difficult to see how Arendt’s thought is extremely relevant to this pressing problem in contemporary international relations. She remarked in 1958 that, “[t]heoretically, in the sphere of international law, it had always been true that sovereignty is nowhere more absolute than in matters of emigration naturalization and expulsion.”9 Here she means that the state can act appealing to its sovereign rights in the way it pleases over immigrants or refugees because they are automatically unprotected by virtue of not being in the state to which they belong, or even by not being members of any state at all. There is no entity that can guarantee a set of minimum human rights for them, thus they are extremely vulnerable to any kind of abuse and deprivation, and traditional IR in its disregard of persons as units of analysis has failed to notice this deficiency. From this, Arendt strongly criticised the fact that to date, the state is the entity that has the last word on who and what kinds of persons will be protected, and whose human rights will be respected or suspended.10

In the previous chapter I offered a critique to traditional approaches of state sovereignty. I demonstrated how this fictional concept is a powerful tool for setting insides and outsides and discussed how it marks a sense of belonging that presupposes a safe and uniform inside. Arendt understood very well this deficiency in the modern nation-state system and our current political structures. For her, it was crucial to recognize that it is not

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possible to continue allocating the responsibility of protecting people to the state as it can render people as superfluous and disposable at will, as in the case of stateless people.

It can therefore be particularly useful to follow Arendt in distinguishing between two different kinds of sovereignty. The first one is state sovereignty, the traditional kind of sovereignty I previously described, embodied in state’s absolute jurisdiction over its territory and people. This is clearly the predominant one that resides at the heart of contemporary international relations theory and practice and, as I mentioned in chapter one, its problems are deep and well-documented. The second kind of sovereignty for Arendt is national or people’s sovereignty. This is the one achieved by the many bound together and the right of a citizenry to self-determination.¹¹

Arendt emphasized these two forms of sovereignty to stress how state sovereignty opposes to people’s sovereignty at times, regardless of how democratic a state might be because state sovereignty is a form of politics as domination, which as we will see is related to violence. In The Origins of Totalitarianism she exposed this kind of condition by analysing the case of the hundreds of thousands of refugees and stateless people produced by the end of World War I. For her, the case of minorities, refugees and stateless people is the best example of how state sovereignty thwarts people’s sovereignty. Moreover, she called attention to how the attitude and ‘solutions’ of most Western democratic states toward this increasing problem were close to those implemented by totalitarian regimes and how these measures could become a increasing temptation. For example, she observed how governments freely used their sovereign right to denationalization for “getting rid of a great

number of its inhabitants at any opportune moment”\textsuperscript{12} which clearly embodies the kind of violence Arendt conceptualized in the sense that it both deprives men of ‘being in the world’ and of their own unique identity. Consequently, she did not see much difference between democratic states that applied measures of denationalization or nonrecognition of displaced persons and the methods applied by Nazism and Bolshevism in which undesirable people were simply sent to extermination camps. In the end, both measures are mechanisms for disposing of unwanted people.

After the end of World War I the numbers of stateless and displaced persons increased and their conditions and treatment deteriorated. For Arendt it was alarming that the deprivation of citizenship, membership to a certain state, implies a state of lack of protection in which human rights for a displaced person could not be guaranteed. Stateless persons neither enjoy protection from their government nor from international agreements, as their binding nature is weak. In the end, states decide who they want to enter their territory or who they want to expel—as the current Homeland Security policies of the United States has brought very much to the fore of our current attention. In a political system with contiguous territorial borders, displaced persons would remain as such, without the possibility of engaging in, or being in, the world, until a certain state decides to grant them recognition, or a legitimate political identity. Governments went even further after World War I by ignoring the condition of statelessness altogether—perhaps the most extreme method of negating an identity. Displaced persons were deprived of the opportunity of being eligible for repatriation or naturalization.\textsuperscript{13} Thus their condition became of not belonging anywhere at all. The right of asylum, “the only right that had ever figured as a

\textsuperscript{12} Arendt, \textit{Origins of Totalitarianism}, 279.
\textsuperscript{13} Arendt, \textit{Origins of Totalitarianism}, 279.
symbol of the Rights of Man in the sphere of international relationships, was being abolished.\textsuperscript{14} Displaced people are thus neither protected, nor subject to any law. The problem for an outlaw is not that he cannot be submitted to existent laws, but that \textit{there is no law for him}. An outlaw was completely at the mercy of the police, which itself did not worry too much about committing a few illegal acts in order to diminish the country’s burden of \textit{indésirables}… the state, insisting on its sovereign right of expulsion, was forced by the illegal nature of statelessness into admittedly illegal acts.\textsuperscript{15}

Thus, the consequences of the denial of state membership, of being an outlaw, an ‘anomaly’ makes it possible for governments to act in arbitrary ways, parallel from the law, with the risk of broadening the activities of policing. From an Arendtian perspective, they are violent forms of depriving persons of a place in this world and stripping them of any kind of protection and bonds with other people. These meditations, as we will see, are a fruitful reflection to IR theory, because an attempt to minimize violence that revolves around guaranteeing a set of minimum rights and protections to individuals is a form of protecting peoples’ identities and places in this world. These conditions will help to focus on persons rather on states as central to IR, since the failure to do so has brought severe consequences such as the growing numbers of displaced people.

The nation-state, incapable of providing a law for those who had lost the protection of a national government, transferred the whole matter to the police. This was the first time the police in Western Europe had received authority to act on its own, to rule directly over people; in one sphere of public life it was no longer an instrument to carry out and enforce the law, but had become a ruling authority independent of government and industries… The greater the ratio of stateless and potentially stateless to the population at large… the greater the danger of a gradual transformation into a police state.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} Arendt, \textit{Origins of Totalitarianism}, 280.
\textsuperscript{15} Arendt, \textit{Origins of Totalitarianism}, 283-284.
As a consequence, the inability of states to treat stateless people according to their supposed ‘inalienable’ rights can dangerously lead to the totalitarian temptation of excessive policing and arbitrary rule. For example, as a result of the current “war” on terrorism, the United States’ mechanisms to procure security to its territory have included measures of excessive policing and arbitrary rule such as its current border control practices and the passing of the Patriot Act.

Arendt exposed the special case of stateless persons, as they are “the most symptomatic group in contemporary politics.”\textsuperscript{17} Stateless persons are indeed extremely vulnerable, but the main aspect that should be taken into account is that our current political structures are susceptible to developing totalitarian characteristics, no matter how democratic a government is. IR by relying in outdated concepts of the nation-state and sovereignty, and by ignoring the extreme state of vulnerability produced by the denial of membership to a certain state, has somehow contributed to take for granted the violence imposed to those who have no place in this world. The mechanisms of totalitarianism produce violence, because, as in the case of stateless people, they exclude them from a specific political realm and throw them into an extreme condition of vulnerability as they cannot appeal to any mechanism of protection. Our political structures such as the assertion of state sovereignty are connected to totalitarianism because they render people superfluous and disposable; they make possible the use of arbitrariness when it cannot control its people. “Totalitarian solutions may well survive the fall of totalitarian regimes in the form of strong temptations which will come up whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social, or economic misery in a manner worthy of man.”\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} Arendt, \textit{Origins of Totalitarianism}, 277.
\textsuperscript{18} Arendt, \textit{Origins of Totalitarianism}, 459.
When ‘emergencies’ occur, the temptation of imposing omnipotent rule becomes greater, and power as domination becomes more evident than ever. The possibilities of such measures might even extend to citizens who apparently are protected by their government’s laws.19 These acts of omnipotent rule are manifestations of violence for Arendt, because they put obstacles for ‘real’ power (collective action) and make more likely the use of force when things get out of control. I hope now to explain with more detail why this is violence and why we need to make a distinction between false power as domination and authentic power as collective, spontaneous action in further stages of this work.

The question of state sovereignty entails the problem of ‘naturalization’ mentioned at the beginning of this section. Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben observed that state sovereignty protected unqualified lives, whose bond to the world of men and unique individual identity is deemed unimportant. Mainstream IR in considering violence in terms of a ‘natural’ manifestation that should be studied from structural, state-centric perspectives also ignores the inherent violence in the link between state sovereignty and such unqualified lives. Thus, individuals are regarded as simple homo sapiens who happened to be born within a specific territorial jurisdiction of a certain sovereign state.

It is not possible to understand the ‘national’ and biopolitical development and vocation of the modern state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries if one forgets that what lies at its basis is not man as free and conscious political subject but, above all, man’s bare life, the simple birth that as such is, in the passage from subject to citizen, invested in the principle of sovereignty.20

Agamben’s point enhances and complements Arendt’s claims because the lack of protection Arendt criticises lies at the basis of the principle of state sovereignty which imposes its rule over paradoxically ‘dehumanized’ and superfluous citizens. This is

19 Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 290.
probably one reason why Arendt distinguished between two kinds of sovereignty, where the authentic one for her is the one that emanates from the power of plural action: people acting together in concert.

What can be gathered from all of this is that the current understanding of state sovereignty in traditional IR theory and practice is a typical case of what Arendt would call ‘fabricated’, poietic politics. Fabricated politics (which should not be confused with the human artifice of real politics), as I mentioned in the previous chapter, are defined by not emanating from real action (praxis). In other words, they concentrate on reification: ‘fabricating’ or ‘making’ things (f. Latin: res) such as institutions, laws, and policies, rather than placing attention on the actions of persons—actions that define who we are (our unique identity) and how we are with others (our ‘human’ relationships). Therefore, ‘politics’ becomes a matter of mastering the perfect arrangement of human conditions that permit a specific ‘ideal life’ according to a specific governmental criterion. Politics are still marked by the totalitarian attempt of moulding a particular social order to design a perfect society, -or in Zygmunt Bauman’s words, ‘garden’ of politics. To serve these purposes, state sovereignty is not intended to provide protection, it intends to manage lives and bodies through policies such as public health, drug prohibition or immigration. According to Arendt modernity brought the bodily needs of life and material concerns (which only concerned to the private sphere and were even hidden) to the public arena. “It is all the more symptomatic of the nature of these phenomena that the few remnants of strict privacy relate to ‘necessities” in the original sense of being necessitated by having a body.”

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23 Arendt, Human Condition, 72-3.
this reason, *poietic* ‘political’ structures make it possible at a certain point to regard individuals only as ‘bare lives’, because the only concern is to preserve the bodily functions and biological survival of the population.

The superfluousness our current political structures impose on persons is indeed a veiled, but highly dangerous, form of violence according to Arendt that permits us to make use of arbitrary power whenever it seems justifiable. Because if politics is a matter of managing lives who only need to survive, then the government can set up specific conditions and criteria for survival. As a consequence, a state can impose or fabricate a set of requirements for falsely ‘being in the world’ (we should remember that such condition is about engaging a plurality of individual uniqueness in spontaneous action). But in the same sense that it fabricates and manages such conditions, it can take them away from persons. In other words, it can deprive them from a place in the world, among men and a unique identity. Therefore, the state acts as a sort of craftsman which under sovereign claims can mould and ‘create’ its citizens but also destroy them at will, provided that their basic human rights -their last resource to which they can call for protection- can be jeopardized by the state.

From these perspectives, the ‘bare’ condition of human lives throws people to an increased state of vulnerability, which makes it easy to inflict violence on them. An important kind of violence Arendt emphasized is the loss of a person’s identity and place in this world. For Arendt, the management of life is violent as it precludes the free formation of identities and ways to be in the world, but it also is violent because, as we will see, the superfluous status such managerial tasks impose on human life permits the justification of the use of violence. For example, the denial of rights is a form of exclusion, a deprivation of a place in this world, of, as Arendt would put it, true ‘*being* in the world: to live among
men.’ When this happens, a person is left with nothing but his “abstract nakedness of being human.” He has no civic bonds and is left to an almost savage state.

The human being who has lost his place in a community, his political status in the struggle of his time, and the legal personality which makes his actions and part of his destiny a consistent whole, is left with those qualities which usually can become articulate only in the sphere of private life and must remain unqualified, mere existence in all matters of public concern.

Sadly, the latter appears to be one of the hallmarks of our ordinary political experiences. To date, the politicization of the natural is characterised by dehumanization in the paradoxical “elevation of life to the status of supreme good combined with the multiplication of instances in which life is degraded to the utmost.” In this sense, life is seen as the supreme good, however the kind of life that is defended refers to nothing else but mere biological survival.

What was left was a “natural force,” the force of the life process itself, to which all men and all human activities were equally submitted… and whose only aim, if it had an aim at all, was survival of the animal species man… to labor, to assure the continuity of one’s own life and the life of his family, was all that was needed. What was not needed, not necessitated by life’s metabolism with nature, was either superfluous or could be justified only in terms of a peculiarity of human as distinguished from other animal life.

As this excerpt claims, anything beyond biological existence, such as civic bonds with other people, a sense of belonging to a certain place or group, our humanity, is not very important; “life instead of the world becomes the highest good of man.” Such ‘animalisation’ of human life explained in naturalist terms thus becomes a meaningless, dehumanized experience of unqualified life. Action—having a place in this world and interacting with others—loses significance. Action is substituted by labour and fabrication as survival becomes the only priority for human beings. The kind of ‘human life’ that is

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24 Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 299.
25 Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 301.
26 Duarte, Biopolitics and the Dissemination of Violence.
27 Arendt, Human Condition, 321.
28 Arendt, Human Condition, 318 [my emphasis].
defended is reduced to nothing but processes of production and consumption. As a consequence, ‘politics’ is seen as a matter of preserving bodies through specific disciplinary mechanisms (health policies for example). Moreover, ‘politics’ is a question of managing ‘bare’ human beings and the furtherance of physical “labour” (to ensure survival) and happiness (through “work” to ensure commodious living) as their main activities. Both these activities can never be truly free for, on the Arendtian account, both stem from a kind of slavery to physical necessity. The public sphere, which is supposed to be the space of freedom from necessity, is overrun by the concerns of the private sphere – which fail to distinguish human existence from the life of any other animal. As a consequence, we lose the space for distinctly human politics, unpredictable action and the freedom to act in concert.

The problem of animalised lives was studied and taken further by Agamben as he observed that such treatment of human life make possible the simultaneous possibility of protecting life and authorizing its holocaust.29 He also asserts that biological existence as a value has also become a matter of protecting the ‘health’ of the nation through the production of docile bodies.30 The state thus protects several lives at any cost but at the same time is capable of destroying several others. Human life is sacred (as we find in current arguments surrounding the abortion debate, or euthanasia, for example), but at the same time humans can be put to death by anyone.31 And so we find that the loss of certain

30 This claim is deeply inspired by Foucauldian considerations on the phenomenon of “biopolitics.” Agamben, *Homo sacer: El poder soberano*, 12.
31 This is what Agamben calls the ‘bare life’ of the *homo sacer*, a juridical figure of Roman law, which belonged to it only by virtue of its total exclusion from it. Agamben, *Homo sacer: el poder soberano*, 18. Contemporary *homo sacers* are “living dead” people whose bodies and lives could be taken by the state at will or at whim, neither for (religious) sacrifice nor for crimes committed (capital punishment), but only because of their ‘availability’ for execution”; persons whose murder would not be a crime. Schepers-Hughes, Bourgois,
lives might become the cause for launching wars or political platforms, but some others are ‘unlivable’ and ‘ungrievable.’

Certain examples that Agamben might have mentioned include the following: we never hear the names or see the faces of the thousands of Afghans, Iraqis or Palestinians who have died because of the current wars and conflicts. That is why serious feminicides, such as the ones happening in Cd. Juarez, or constant violence toward street children and barrio people are generally ignored. Those persons are anonymous, they do not have a story, or even an identity recognised by the state, and sometimes they do not have a place in this world at all.

In sum, our current experiences of politics, the ways in which state sovereignty and modern models of the nation-state take for granted and defend unqualified life as the most important political value has carried severe consequences. To date, important segments of humanity are deemed superfluous to the paradoxical extent of producing Agambian homo sacers in practice. Classic examples of apparently ‘sacred’ lives that can be put to death by anyone are the victims of the corpse factories installed by Nazism or Bolshevism. But these days also are the cases of the extra-legal detentions produced by the ‘war on terrorism’, as the entire debate on Guantánamo has revealed, or the numerous anonymous deaths of persons who had the bad luck of being born in ‘irrelevant’ geographies marked by bloodshed, but that are not enough ‘relevant’ to ‘high politics.’ As long as contemporary politics keeps recognizing no other value than life, totalitarianism –the clearest example of

animalised lives as the supreme political criterion—will remain with us as a latent temptation.34

Dehumanization, treating human lives as irrelevant or superfluous makes easier to deprive persons of their identity and a place in the world, among men. Moreover, it makes more likely the infliction of violence and use of arbitrariness. As a consequence, it is extremely vital to regard the denial of being-in-the-world and a unique identity as forms of violence that should be taken into account by IR theory in order to prevent such totalitarian temptations as much as possible. For this purpose, it is important to pay attention to Arendt’s insights on violence. Her considerations on the subject can indeed provide a fruitful contribution toward sketching a deeper connection between violence and bare lives and rejecting both elements as self-evident assumptions in the international scenario.

2. Hannah Arendt on Violence

The dehumanization caused by the management of lives, in its attempt to fabricate specific kinds of persons and regarding them as superfluous is a form of violence from an Arendtian perspective, but probably not for mainstream IR. Arendt’s conceptualisation and critique of violence is a pertinent attempt to defy the widely accepted view that politics are inherently violent, as it is normally held that “violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power.”35 The general thrust of this last understanding of power will not be foreign to anyone studying international relations. While Arendt did recognize that in practice, governments combine the exercise of power and violence,36 her preoccupation was that the conceptual differences between both practices are usually overlooked. In fact,

for Arendt power and violence oppose each other. Basically, power is the ability to act in concert, it is never the property of an individual and its existence depends on a group keeping together. Moreover, for Arendt, power is not equivalent to strength. In relation to government, “[a]ll political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them.” The living person or human—in the Arendtian sense—is where power is located, not in the things, res, institutions we fabricate.

By contrast, violence is essentially instrumental, thus it requires implements. The latter are designed for multiplying natural ‘strength’ (the individual property inherent in an object or person whose character proves itself in relation to other things or persons) until it can be substituted for violence. Conceptualised this way, violence can destroy power by isolating people and depriving them of acting together and destroying their bonds. Yet, at the same time, violence is incapable of providing a substitute for it. Therefore, while power is the essence of all government, violence is not because, by virtue of being instrumental, it only serves as a means for reaching a specific end.

Arendt’s general attempt is to reach a conceptual clarification of power and violence in a way that, in practice, the latter can be avoided as much as possible. The goal of this would be to promote a more ‘political’ (in the sense of praxis) life and allow the creation of spaces that permit such a human condition. In this sense, it is very important to understand the implications of her views on power, which bear a strong connection with her notions of politics, action and plurality.

37 Arendt, On Violence, 44.
38 Arendt, On Violence, 41.
39 Arendt, On Violence, 44, 46.
40 Arendt, Human Condition, 202.
41 Arendt, On Violence, 51.
For Arendt, current discourses on power are quite problematic since they carry the burden of progress, Judeo-Christian tenets and even biologism. One of the most salient problems with power is its traditional formulation as *domination*, that is, the ability to get others to do our will. Power is usually regarded as an instrument of ‘rule.’ If this relies on “the effectiveness of command, then there is no greater power than that which grows out of the barrel of a gun.” Therefore, “it would be difficult to say in ‘which way the order given by a policeman is different from that given by a gunman.’”\(^{42}\) Yet obedience is not always guaranteed by violence since authority (“unquestioned recognition by those who are asked to obey”) is conditioned by the respect for the person or office; thus contempt or laughter are capable of annihilating authority\(^ {43}\) (as every would-be teacher knows). Hence, the ‘rule’ imposed by a single entity is the opposite of the ‘real’ power which emanates from plurality. Recalling Montesquieu, Arendt contends that tyranny is “the most violent and least powerful of forms of government... power always stands in need of numbers, whereas violence up to a point can manage without them because it relies on implements.”\(^ {44}\)

In short, power in its usual formulation consists in command and obedience, which are instruments of rule. However, this conceptualisation is problematic because, as I mentioned in chapter one, rulership entails a dimension of ‘fabricated,’ *poietic* politics,’ in which a preconceived plan is put to work in order to achieve a utopian goal. Power-as-rulership therefore makes possible the exertion of control and domination since they are regarded as the means for attaining a certain ideal; they are justified because it is believed they are necessary for following the path of *progress*. For Arendt, such time-honoured

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\(^{43}\) Arendt, *On Violence*, 45.

\(^{44}\) Arendt, *On Violence*, 41-42.
dogma is extremely dangerous since its means-ends logic constrains the space for political action, and ‘authentic’ empowerment. She contends that progress explains the past without breaking up the time continuum but it can serve as a guide for acting into the future... gives an answer to the troublesome question, And what we do now? The answer, on the lowest level, says: Let us develop what we have into something better, greater, et cetera. (The, at first glance, irrational faith of liberals in growth, so characteristic of all our present political and economic theories, depends on this notion.)

So, the enlightened conception of progress promised certainty on future events as if we knew our fate in advance. Arendt opposes progress, as such, because it undermines the essentially unpredictable character of political action, which is certainly not “a preordained plot with a happy ending” as, for example, Marxists believe.

Progress as a means-end question that leaves little or no space for spontaneous action is extremely important because it precludes the capacity of acting in concert (real power, potential praxis politics) and instead ‘instrumentalizes’ politics. For Arendt, the substitution of acting with making is inherently violent. Political action needs to be disentangled “from ‘labour’ with its connotations of necessity” and “from ‘work’ with its connotations of violent ‘making.’” Margaret Canovan illustrates this by stressing the Western, Marxist and revolutionary belief that “[o]ne cannot make a table without killing a tree, and as soon as the model of fabrication is applied to politics it sanctions violence.”

The substitution of action with fabrication entails the perversion of the spatial dimension originally destined for political action, that is, the public sphere. When the public realm is invaded with concerns that belong to the private sphere (survival and necessity,) it raises as a ‘social’ sphere involved in working and labouring. The social sphere –as a reproduction

of the private in the public—becomes violent. “[F]orce and violence are justified in [the private] sphere because they are the only means to master necessity... and to become free... violence is the pre-political act of liberating oneself from the necessity of life for the freedom of world.”\textsuperscript{48}

Arendt derived this argument from the Ancient Greek division between the \textit{polis} and private household where the functioning of the private sphere depended on the master’s ruling over his slaves for the fulfilment of necessities. Therefore, if politics is understood in terms of making things, and if the political realm is only seen as a matter of preserving ‘empty’ lives that can do nothing more than consume and labour, then violence against man-made things is justified and inevitable,\textsuperscript{49} one reason why Arendt was very vocal against Locke’s insertion of property as fundamental to political theory. At least Greek citizens were able to take a break from household affairs and be free by entering the public realm of community and equality. By contrast, the advent of the Protestant Work Ethic and, following Locke and the American Constitution, the new function of government as the protector of ‘life, liberty and property’ were underpinned by a very different notion of freedom. Indeed, they were based on a very different notion of what human ‘life’ really is.

Arendt thus makes a point against the belief that human life depends on command and obedience, because “if it were true that nothing is sweeter than to give commands and to rule others, the master would have never left his household.”\textsuperscript{50} Concerning the problem of the ‘rise of the social,’ when the pre-political violence of the private slips into the public realm, it may carry severe consequences as it permits the development of sophisticated means of destruction that might be used against great numbers of ‘superfluous’ persons.

\textsuperscript{48} Arendt, \textit{Human Condition}, 31.
\textsuperscript{49} Canovan, \textit{Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation}, 129.
\textsuperscript{50} Arendt, \textit{On Violence}, 40.
The modern state, gathering into its hands a monopoly of coercion, had pacified its own domains to an unprecedented extent, but had at the same time developed the means of violence to levels of destructiveness they would never have reached if they had remained in the possession of heads of households.\textsuperscript{51} Canovan’s claims can be linked to the advent of the nuclear era and increasing technical development in the production of means of destruction. Arendt observed that we have “reached the point where no political goal could conceivably correspond to their destructive potential or justify their actual use in armed conflict.”\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, understanding the differences between power and violence, ruling and acting in concert is important for IR theory as it could make a significant difference toward leaving aside instrumental and mechanical assumptions that justify the use of violence.

Violence and power possess another significant difference. Whereas power is \textit{legitimate} because it is inherent to political communities, violence can only be \textit{justified} due to its instrumental nature. Power is legitimate as it is a prerequisite for the existence of political communities and an end in itself. If action does not emanate from people acting in concert, then totalitarian or tyrannical forms of government come to the fore.

Arendt puts great emphasis on the importance of acting in concert, for she specifically claims “[p]ower springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action then may follow.”\textsuperscript{53} On the contrary, violence can only be justified and never legitimate because it is a means for reaching an end: “[w]hat needs justification by something else cannot be the essence of anything.”\textsuperscript{54} In addition, by being the opposite of power, violence cannot be used to restore or create power. In Arendt’s words, “[v]iolence can always destroy power;

\textsuperscript{52} Arendt, \textit{On Violence}, 3.
\textsuperscript{53} Arendt, \textit{On Violence}, 52.
\textsuperscript{54} Arendt, \textit{On Violence}, 51.
out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, resulting in the most instant and perfect obedience. What never can be grown of it is power.” Arendt’s point is a strong one. When power is weak, the temptation to use violence is strong. However, when violence flows in its teleological nature, it leads toward total destruction of power. Therefore, “[w]here violence is no longer backed and restrained by power, the well-known reversal in reckoning with means and ends take place… with the consequence that the end will be the destruction of all power.”

Mainstream IR theories have typically supported an instrumental view of violence. They have traditionally acted according to the Clausewitzian notion that force (violence) is the instrument of politics, and war the continuation of politics by other means. Although this is one of the first elements Arendt argued against in On Violence, she did not become explicitly involved in the analysis of how violence is regarded within the IR tradition. Some Arendtian scholars explain this by claiming that her political thought complemented classical realism in some aspects. It should by now be clear that much evidence exists in Arendt’s work, and in sensitive readings of it, that this is not the full story. The previous chapter did expose briefly that Arendt saw the international realm from an eminently realist perspective in that she regarded violence as “the ultima ratio in relationships between nations and the most disgraceful of domestic actions.” Yet, while classical realist Raymond Aron was her friend and she defended a peculiar, deep view of Machiavellian thought, her meditations are at odds with many core realist assumptions that pervaded in her

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55 Arendt, On Violence, 53.
56 Arendt, On Violence, 54.
times. For example, Morgenthau and Kennan were also strongly sceptic of issues such as international law and human rights. However, they did not criticise them for the same reasons Arendt did. On the contrary, they defended state-centric positions in favour of traditional state sovereignty and even neglected the refugee problem.59

Another crucial argument against mainstream IR is found in Arendt’s opposition to politics as ruling and domination. As Morgenthau declared, “every man is the object of political domination… and at the same time aspires toward exercising political domination over others… Political domination, then, appears as a product of nature itself.”60 Morgenthau thus sees power essentially as a form of exerting domination, which for him justifies and legitimizes the use of violence although it is not very desirable and should be considered as a last resort. The strength of these kinds of ideas has permeated IR thought to a great extent; they are taken as self-evident assumptions in mainstream IR circles causing a severe impact on our current forms of conceptualising the relation between force and politics. We have consequently reached a point in which “there is no longer any clear distinction or fixed hierarchy as between force that is essentially politicized and politics that is essentially conflictual.”61

With these theoretical views of the international scenario in mind, it is not difficult to observe why much of our contemporary experiences of ‘politics’ are lived in the form of violence. Modernity made us believe that society is essentially ‘pacific.’ The classical Weberian conception that states possess the monopoly over the means of legitimate

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61 Hassner, Violence and Peace, 37. Hassner’s use of the term force is in Arendtian terms a combination of violence, increased and multiplied with the help of strength. Arendt, On Violence, 44-46, 53.
violence\textsuperscript{62} presupposes the ‘pacification’ of society and sometimes tends to imply that society is pacific by nature. However, this understanding of violence and peace is misleading as contemporary forms of violence in industrialized societies of the north consist rather in discipline and surveillance of the minds and moral characters of the citizens.\textsuperscript{63} Thus, society is not inherently pacific, it is only sensitive toward using and witnessing certain physical manifestations of violence. As Anton Blok argues, people

\begin{quote}
are inclined to consider its unauthorized forms in particular as anomalous, irrational, senseless and disruptive – as the reverse of social order, as the antithesis of ‘civilization’, as something that has to be brought under control… The pacification of society and its acceptance as ‘natural’ lie at the basis of both scholarly and popular accounts of violence: if focused on the actual use of violence at all, the emphasis falls on the instrumental, most obvious aspects of violence. The cultural dimensions of violence –its idiom, discourse and meaning – receive less attention.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

Blok claims that violence –when not exerted or approved by the state- has been traditionally regarded as ‘uncivilized,’ irrational and ‘senseless’. That is why the social sciences have traditionally placed more attention on ‘social order’ rather than on violence, because the state’s monopolization of the means of violence has rather lurked ‘behind the scenes’.\textsuperscript{65}

Blok’s arguments complement Arendt’s reflections. Although violence is inherently instrumental, it is important to stress that it cannot be simply reduced to self-evident means to reach an end. Both the conception of violence owned by the state and ‘senseless’ violence obscure the fact that “more is at stake than an instrumental move towards a specific goal. If there are any goals involved, they can only be reached in a special, prescribed, expressive, indeed ritualized way.”\textsuperscript{66} Thus, for example, the state police may not hesitate in resorting to arbitrariness and physical violence against immigrants from the third world, but will refrain

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Scheper-Hughes} Scherper-Hughes, “Bodies, Death and Silence,” 178.
\bibitem{Blok2} Blok, “The Enigma of Senseless Violence,” n.1, 34.
\bibitem{Blok3} Blok, “The Enigma of Senseless Violence,” 25 [emphasis in the original].
\end{thebibliography}
from exerting it against its most representative national citizens. This indeed relates to the issues discussed in section 1, because the lack of protection of some segments of people makes more likely the infliction and justification of the use of violence upon them. In addition, such an extreme degree of superfluousness is reached because the state promotes it by imposing which kinds of ways of being-in-the-world are relevant for its preservation and which others are not. Classic IR theory, in its emphasis only on particular forms of violence such as war and in its traditional disregard of ordinary people, has overlooked these kinds of problems, which from an Arendtian perspective seem to be clear and grave.

3. The Violence of Superfluousness

Arendt’s emphasis on making conceptual distinctions between power and violence or acting and ruling has showed us how some of the less contested IR theoretical assumptions are problematic and puts obstacles for setting and reformulating pertinent debates on issues such as violence. So far, we also have seen how Arendt’s insights on the question of the production of superfluous lives and their management are a highly problematic element that should also be considered a form of violence to the eyes of IR theory. Without a doubt, the main obstacle for IR theory to detect and address such problems has been its one-sided focus on structures, rational actors and states.

A step toward including more than a couple of modes of violence in IR’s discourse and to contribute toward the inclusion of ordinary people into its domain of analysis resides in the study of the deep connection between the production of superfluousness and violence according to Arendt. In the first section I exposed how our contemporary political life makes possible the production of animalised lives and superfluous persons as unqualified life is our only political value. In the second section I exposed how important it is to stop taking violence for granted in political affairs and the relevance of thinking about power as
conceptually opposite to violence as the former permits the creation of spaces for action and politics. With such arguments in mind, I will now analyse in depth and draw out more consequences of the interrelation between animalised lives and violence. This exercise will contribute to the main task in this thesis of emphasizing the relevance of Arendtian thought in IR theory, as it will attempt to draw the extents of dehumanization to which the intersection between violence and superfluousness can take us.

In the first section I exposed that some actions derived from the state’s sovereign claims and its use of arbitrary rule upon some people were a form of violence according to Arendt because they might deprive persons from their identities and places in this world. For Arendt, there is an inherent violence in these conditions because they cause a state of isolation.

Isolation is that impasse into which men are driven when the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed… Fabrication (poiesis...), as distinguished from action (praxis) on one hand and sheer labor on the other, is always performed in a certain isolation from common concerns… when the most elementary form of human creativity, which is the capacity to add something of one’s own to the common world, isolation becomes altogether unbearable. This can happen in a world whose chief values are dictated by labor, that is where all human activities have been transformed into laboring.67

As Arendt claims, labouring and working are activities that belong to the private sphere and that can be performed in isolation. Politics and the public sphere, however, cannot exist in isolation as plurality is a constitutive element of politics and the public. Only when human beings encounter each other is it possible for them to act in political association, to create power by acting in concert. In the previous section I mentioned that for Arendt the substitution of acting with making is inherently violent because mastering necessity implies the use of force and violence. Hence, when the private invades the public there is no need of

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plurality and action. ‘Politics’ can be fabricated by a single entity, a bureaucracy that can manage and discipline the survival of unqualified lives.

When human life is regarded only from a perspective of fulfilling necessities, an individual entity can easily impose itself over men as they are considered human beings whose bare lives rely on promoting their happiness through labour, work and consumption. A scenario in which individual rule is imposed by virtue of the invasion of social concerns where there is no space for action, plurality and politics; in which utilitarian means-ends logics reign, prepares the terrain for the easy emergence of violence. If politics is a question of administering bare lives, the means-ends logic that rules government’s actions make it possible to justify increasingly violent, authoritarian acts. A consequence of the introduction of organic thought in ‘politics’ is precisely that the absence of thinking and acting politically leads toward the glorification of violence, to take for granted that such as in nature, the violent struggle for survival is a natural characteristic of political life. Such logics make it possible for governments to “permit themselves to impose physical and structural violence against individuals and regimes that supposedly interfere with the security and growth of their national ‘life process.’”

In simple terms, “[t]he sicker the patient is supposed to be, the more likely that the surgeon will have the last word.”

Another severe consequence of an animalised life is that its place in the world loses significance; persons are stripped of their humanity when they cannot add some of their uniqueness and disclosure themselves in a space of plurality.

Isolated man who lost his place in the political realm of action is deserted by the world of things as well, if he is no longer recognized as *homo faber* but treated as an *animal laborans* whose necessary ‘metabolism with nature’ is of concern to no one. Isolation then becomes loneliness… Totalitarian government… could not exist without

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68 Duarte, *Biopolitics and the Dissemination of Violence*.
destroying the public realm of life, that is, without destroying, by isolating men, their political capacities. But totalitarian domination... destroys private life as well. It bases itself on loneliness... Loneliness the common ground for terror, the essence of totalitarian government, and for ideology or logicality, the preparation of its executioners and victims, is closely connected with uprootedness and superfluousness... To be uprooted means to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others; to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all.70

A person who is deprived from her rights, an outlaw who is even denied from being part of any community, not only loses her human rights. She also becomes an unqualified human being whose citizenship, profession, opinions, deeds and capacity of acting are taken away from her and consequently lose significance. If action and speech are crucial elements of an authentic human life, the one lived among men, then such degradation implies that they are deprived from a place in this world and taken to an animal status. “The calamity of the rightless is not that they are deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion... but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever.”71 The rightless thus reaches a state of suspension between being dead or alive, she might attempt to take part in human life but such spectral state “leaves a mark that is no mark”, life is absent but so is loss.72

As the general argument I have presented in this chapter has often suggested, the superfluousness caused by the loss of a place in this world can be translated to a state of loss of identity. If an individual is denied from its capacity of living among men then she loses her possibilities of intersubjective interaction, she finds herself in a state where she can neither rearticulate, nor reaffirm who she is as the other is absent. For this reason Arendt claims that loneliness is the common ground for terror,73 as the deprivation of identity is without a doubt a sort of unbearable violence and because tyranny and totalitarian

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70 Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 475.
71 Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 295 [my emphasis].
72 Butler, Precarious Life, 36.
73 Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, 475.
domination do not find any confrontation when they are only by themselves. Loneliness is
terror because it means that an individual is completely deprived of its human condition,
because she is thrown by force into a bestialised state that she could never achieve by
herself. In this sense, the managerial tasks of the state play a powerful role in throwing
persons to such a state of loneliness because they can impose ways of being in the world
upon their population. But they can also take such ways of being in the world away from
them. People who were sent to extermination camps under Nazism and Stalinism are typical
examples of persons thrown to a state of loneliness, *homo sacers* whose murder did not
imply a crime for the authorities. However, as totalitarian temptations still remain with us
and violence is still a self-evident assumption in our discourses, we should be attentive to
possible forms that permit the imposition of loneliness. For great numbers of outlaws and
unprotected persons still pervade and they are still subject to the managerial procedures and
abuses produced by the state and its sovereign claims.

**Conclusions**

From what has been exposed in this chapter, it is not difficult to imagine that our current
political life is deeply marked by violence and the permanent risk of falling again into
totalitarian conditions. What is more alarming, our mass and market-oriented democracies
still contain at their core the very elements that facilitate totalitarianism, that is, life as
biological preservation as their only political value. This characteristic permeates our
quotidian lives in such a way that is almost invisible to ourselves. We are made to believe
that we inhabit authentic free societies, but we are rather subsumed in a political realm in
which “everything is possible but we can do nothing.”\(^{74}\) Our political participation is
basically reduced to the solitary experience of voting, and the rest is left in the hands of

\(^{74}\) Duarte, *Biopolitics and the Dissemination of Violence.*
bureaucratic rule. It is almost impossible not to agree with Duarte in that, “[t]he citizen consumes in the democratic-supermarket: choose from a strictly limited variety of political brands, with no option to question the political options on offer.” Therefore, when politics is understood as a matter of administering unqualified lives in utilitarian terms, then the space for politics, unconditioned action and freedom, is lost; human beings then are not able to create new, alternative political options.

Given this situation, IR sphere in its excessive reliance on state sovereignty and classical images of a state-centred international realm in which power as domination is a ‘natural’ characteristic, is unable to detect and understand the phenomenon of violence and superfluousness. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, Arendt’s emphasis on making conceptual distinctions between apparently self-evident notions such as power and violence have been able to provide a deeper look at problems such as arbitrariness toward the most vulnerable people. These kinds of exercises reveal mainstream IR theory’s most common vices such as the conceptual overlooking of some crucial notions as well as how some time-honoured dogmas about our international realm are anachronisms that stubbornly remain with us. Arendt’s pertinent view on violence and superfluousness contributes toward removing these obstacles and summing up the current efforts of IR’s ‘marginal’ approaches which intend to raise the profile of ordinary individuals as agents or subjects in the international realm.

Arendt’s views on violence and superfluousness have shown us why ‘fabricated’ politics, the attempt to create and embellish a ‘garden of politics’ through means-ends logics, are deeply connected. The utilitarian logics of our current political structures permit exclusion and marginalization to occur in the form of poverty, chronic hunger, geopolitical

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75 Duarte, *Biopolitics and the Dissemination of Violence.*
displacement, etc. Exploring the connections between violence, terror and the importance of an identity which assure us a place in the world of men will contribute toward countering utilitarian models of fabricated politics, and make the emergence of violence less likely through political interaction.

As I said before, like it or not, we are still not free from totalitarian temptations. Our current ‘political’ reality -such as the menace of terrorism- suggests that we are in dire need of deep understanding of the way in which we are living politics and violence in order to avoid the increase of numbers of superfluous people and *homo sacers*. If we continue to think in terms of systems and structures, severe manifestations of violence and dehumanization will continue to occur.