CHAPTER I

Thinking, Performing and Conceptualizing Violence:
Problems and Consequences

> *The problems of violence may be cardinal to a proper*
> *understanding of political life, yet the concept of violence*
> *remains elusive and often misunderstood.*[1]

Violence, it can safely be argued, is a ubiquitous phenomenon, it is present in the national and

international arenas, and it has been part of both public and private spheres. Given the broad

remit of these areas, it is unsurprising that the conceptualization of violence in the literature is

usually rather broad--sometimes to the point of inaccuracies. This problem has profound roots.

Jürgen Habermas wrote that the twentieth century featured "gas chambers, total war, state-

sponsored genocide, and extermination camps, brainwashing, state security apparatuses, and the

panoptic surveillance of entire populations."[2] Tilly charts some outcomes to those events

claiming that

> altogether about 100 million people died in the twentieth century as a direct result of action by
> organized military units backed by one government or another. A comparable number of civilians
> likely died of war-induced disease and other indirect effects.[3]

While, of course, previous centuries suffered similar misfortunes and it was not only the

twentieth century has been impregnated with violence; the twenty-first century is significant

given that it started with the horror of the events of 9/11, the war on terror, and continuous violent

attacks on democratic and non democratic countries. Witnessing these events, it may perhaps be

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[1] Vittorio Bufacchi, "Two Concepts of Violence," *Political Studies Review* 3, (2005): 199.
[2] Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 45.
[3] Charles Tilly, "Violence, Terror and Politics as Usual," (Summer 2002 [cited on June 23 2008] *Boston Review*: a
Political and Literary Forum): available at: http://www.bostonreview.net/BR27.3/tilly.html

'understandable' that we lack a deep and penetrating way to conceive the many forms of violence as much as we apparently lack the means to stop it from affecting the lives of millions of human beings every day. If images mean more than words, the events in this century and previous centuries surely did not leave us with much desire to know more about violence. Notwithstanding this, however, violence is something that we owe ourselves to understand and to define better if we ever want to limit it or control it more successfully.

In International Relations (IR) literature, violence has often been vaguely defined, taken for granted or defined in relation to other cognate concepts that have been studied in more detail, such as the concept of the state, war, conflict, and force, or concepts that give color to the kind of violence perpetrated or the state of mind of the perpetrator or onlooker, such as aggression or cruelty. The arguments in this chapter start from the premise that a main problem with studying and/or apprehending violence through these linkages is that the significance of violence itself is partially lost in doing so. The first overall task of this chapter is to show that violence has not always been conceptualized adequately or precisely because many of the definitions of violence used in some central IR texts do not permit room for what is ultimately a highly complex and difficult concept to pin down. Indeed, in demonstrating this, it is one of the central tasks of this thesis to unravel some—though certainly not all—of the complex facets of what we understand by the concept of violence. The second general task of this chapter is to tease out the undefined relation between violence and other important concepts in IR literature to provide the groundwork for an exploration of its problems and consequences later in this thesis.

Here I review some of the common IR definitions of violence to see how adequately they cover and explain the complexity of the concept. I argue that violence has indeed been understood as being among the most important phenomena in IR theories, but seldom without a direct link to its cognate concepts and points of application. In doing so, I hope this chapter can

go some way toward demonstrating the value of thinking about violence as a concept and a practice more deeply and carefully than many IR texts usually ask us to significant reference to other cognate concepts that, in the end, come to obscure rather than clarify how violence should be understood and distinguished from other connected concepts like war, peace, cruelty and aggression that are commonly relied upon. But before I can begin any of this, it is important to defend, right from the outset, one of the central methodological choices in this thesis by deflecting a potentially significant criticism that could apply to any attempt to separate out one concept from others with a view to examining its depths in detail.

1.1 Structuralism and the Conceptualization of Violence

One central criticism of any attempt to separate out one concept from others with a view to examining its depths comes from the structuralist and poststructuralist traditions (more precisely, structural linguistics). Structuralists argue very strongly that the "world does *not* consist of independently existing objects, whose concrete features can be perceived clearly and individually, and whose nature can be classified accordingly."[4] This kind of position clearly speaks against methods of study that attempt to discover the "essence" of a concept understood in isolation from its cognates. Indeed, structuralism is anti-essentialist at its core.[5] I hope to show that this thesis does not seek to find essentialist views on violence or to study that concept in any strict isolation from its cognates precisely because the structural linguistic argument seems to me to be plausible—at least in its rejection of totally isolating words and concepts whose meaning, it turns out, is clearly located in the "relations of difference" between those terms.

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[4] Terence Hawks, *Structuralism and Semiotics,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 6 [emphasis added].
[5] John Lechte, *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers: From Structuralism to Postmodernity* (London, Routledge, 1994), 35.

Structural linguistics has its origins with Saussure's thought and was later developed principally by Hjelmslev and Chomsky.[6] Language, in structural linguistics, Peters explains "in a famous Saussurean formula, is a system in which everything holds together"[7] and "everything" forms the wholeness. Saussure's students thus claimed that the study of language should "be studied, not only in terms of its individual parts, and not only diachronically, but also in terms of the relationship between those parts, and synchronically: that is, in terms of its current adequacy."[8] For Norman, the view is explained in the phrase that "the properties of the whole cannot be reduced to the sum of the properties of its parts."[9] This is because the properties of the whole are not identical, and it is its differences that define the properties.

Concerning the conceptualization of violence, it is clear that the structural method would reject any attempt to define the concept 'in itself.' Structuralists would certainly claim that such a task is not realistic since an object cannot be defined outside of the wholeness, the system or independent from its structure. It is not my aim to draw essentialist definitions and conclusions concerning the concept of violence. On the contrary, I agree with some structural claims because, as the following discussion should show, there are many advantages and nuances to be gained from *comparing* it with its cognate concepts 'force,' 'aggressiveness,' 'cruelty' and its point of application, 'war,' and to some extent 'peace.' Indeed, comparing the notions in this way emphasize precisely what structural linguists argued: it is the differences between terms that are important, not the similarities. It is my claim that the concept of violence should acquire different nuances, and that it should be understood in a more sophisticated manner in a way that does not isolate it from the system. For it is precisely its, position in that linguistic system which reflects

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[6] See Norman, *El Yo Poítico,* (Mexico: Ediciones Coyoacán, 2007), 61 for a detailed account of the structuralist argument and some of its consequences.
[7] Peter Matthews, *A Short History of Structural Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6.
[8] Hawks, Structuralism and Semiotics, 8-9.
[9] Norman, *El Yo Político,* 61 [my translatation].

the complexity of the concept. The basic point to grasp from the structural approach, then, is that first, it is necessary to relate violence to its cognate concepts to understand it as part of the wholeness; and second, that it is the differences between violence and these other concepts that tell us what violence really is and help us get closer to conceptualizing it more sensitively than is usually found in the IR literature. Because IR literature usually does not focus too deeply on teasing out the *differences* between these concepts, there is a real danger that those differences can become blurred, or forgotten, or are considered irrelevant. The consequence: an elision takes place—the concepts become fused, confused, superimposed and ultimately interchangeable, hence *the distinctions between them* disappear. This is precisely what I hope to show has happened in the following review of how violence has been conceptualized in the literature.

1.2 Definitions and Classifications of Violence

In political theory and IR literature there are many different ways of conceptualizing and defining violence. While a specious level of similitude exists between them, not all are in agreement which itself begins to suggest to the careful scholar that there may be more to this concept than at first meets the eye. Robert Paul Wolff defines violence as "the illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desires of others."[10] Violence has also been defined as the "unjustified or unwarranted exercise of force, usually with the accompaniment of vehemence, outrage or fury."[11] A third definition by Daniel Ross that draws as heavily on the concept of force as these first two is "action forceful enough to produce an effect […] violence is thus something physical, something that affects things in the world."[12] Along the same lines, but relating violence to rights and physical action instead of force, violence has been defined by Smith as "immediate

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[10] Robert Paul Wolff, "On Violence," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 19 (October 2, 1969), 606.
[11] *Webster's New International Dictionary* cited in Gerald Runkle "Is violence always wrong?," *The Journal of Politics* 38, no. 2 (May, 1976): 367.
[12] Daniel Ross, *Violent Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

physical action-occupying buildings, beating opponents, burning property-which always involves a constraint on the person, and ultimately the rights of another."[13] Paul Riga defines violence as any social, economic, moral and po1itical violation of the basic human rights of the person.[14] And finally, John Keane defined violence at its basic form as "any uninvited but intentional or half intentional act of physically violating the body of a person who previously had lived 'in peace'."[15]

These definitions have in common the equation of violence to the use of force (action that *forces* someone against their will) that causes physical damage to someone and/or infringes upon their rights. They are linked to human behavior and there is more than a suggestion that many of these authors were thinking of violence in terms of *aggressiveness*. In some way, this connection would not be out of order, since both violence and aggressiveness cause damage of some kind. As a consequence the wholeness or the structure of this system would be linked by the concept (and practice) of 'harm.' However, as we will see later, although violence and aggressiveness are concepts that are rather similar, their backgrounds and outcomes are quite different. From the previous definitions Riga's is perhaps the only one that goes a step beyond, in comparison to the others because he claims that violence is *any* violation--not only physical but can be also social, economic and political—which does make his notion more complete than those mentioned earlier. In *Violence and Democracy,* Keane clearly identified the first problem in conceptualizing violence as defining it too much in association with force. He thus proposes that

> violence needs to be defined more soberly, with less normative flourish. It is better understood as the more or less intended, direct but unwanted physical interference by groups and/ or individuals with the bodies of others, who are consequently made to suffer a series of effects ranging from shock, speechlessness, mental torment, nightmares, bruises, scratches, swellings, or headaches through to broken bones, heart attacks, loss of body parts, or deaths.[16]

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[13] John E. Smith, "The Inescapable Ambiguity of Non-Violence," *Philosophy East and West* 19 (April 1969): 155.

[14] Peter J. Riga, "Violence: A Christian Perspective," *Philosophy East and West,* (April 1969): 145.

[15] John Keane, *Reflections on Violence* (London: Verso, 1996), 6.

[16] Keane, *Violence and Democracy*, 35.

Yet in avoiding a reduction of violence into force, Keane is perhaps most useful to us for illustrating a second problem that confronts any adequate conceptualization of violence: it is still too broad in scope to be really useful. Not everything that causes pain can or should be defined as a violent action, as surgeons, dentists and acupuncturists everywhere will surely avow! One could object to this position and say that, rather than being too broad, Keane's view suffers from the opposite. But even then, the conceptualization is nowhere near watertight. While the question is certainly not yet morally or legally resolved in several crucial areas of policy, many modern societies consider it proper for adults to habitually and legally take decisions about actions concerning minors, including "unwanted physical interference…with the bodies of," in this case, children. Under Keane's argument, they would be committing violent child abuse with most visits to the pediatrician, dentist or school nurse which may well cause Keane's "shock, speechlessness, mental torment, nightmares, bruises, scratches, swellings, or headaches." In this respect, one can refer to clitoridectomy and even circumcision as violent practices. However, in daily language these 'violent' practices are rarely defined as 'cruelty.' Instead, they are justified on cultural grounds.[17] Clearly, frequently causing these things to children or adults could well fall into the category of violence, but not always.

The previous discussion plainly leads to the conclusion that conceptualizing any adequate notion of violence faces at least two main problems; it can either be poorly or unsubtly defined as just some act of physical damage, or it can be very broadly defined as a violation of any or all possible kinds. The problem with this last is, of course, that then potentially everything

[17] For more on this see "UN agencies unite against female genital mutilation," *Nation's Health* 38, no. 3 (April 2008): 10 and, "No prosecution made under female genital mutilation law," *Nursing Standard* 22, no.41 (June 16th 2008): 11. Diane F. Merrit, "Genital Trauma Children and Adolescents," *Clinical Obstetrics &Gynecology* 51, no.2 (June 2008):237-248. See also, Patricia Wheeler, "Eliminating FGM: The role of the law," *The International Journal of Children's Right* 11, no.3 (July 2003): 257-271 and Efua Dorkenoo, "Combating Female Genital Mutilation: An Agenda for Next Decade," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 27, no.1/2 (Spring/Summer 1999): 87-100.

(or at least too many things) can be considered violence. The general point here is reflected in Joseph Betz' observation on the ubiquitousness of violence: "if violence is violating a person or a person's rights, then every social wrong is a violent one, every crime against another a violent crime, every sin against one's neighbour an act of violence."[18] Thus it seems that the concept of violence has often been "over exploded" in the sense of being used in a pejorative term for every possible wrong, *without further explanation*. In other words, and referring to structural views, the concept of violence is often conceived as 'a wholeness' where the significant differences between violence and its family concepts are not emphasized. Sometimes they are not even mentioned. One result of conceptualizing violence with such excessive scope is that the complexities and subtleties of the notion, and of how various complex and subtle forms of violence can be performed or could be limited in practice, tend to be overlooked or obscured.

George Sorel recognized the complexity of violence and the implications it has in practice when he claimed that "the problems of violence remain most obscure."[19] If by 'obscure' Sorel meant that we still have not managed to understand and define violence adequately, because our definitions are always surpassed by, or are not sensitive to, reality, then he was right, and the problems of violence remain obscure. Yet there have been some attempts in political science and International Relations that seek to make the problems of violence less obscure, and more understandable.[20] Vittorio Bufacchi tries hard to do just this, delimiting the concept by identifying

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[18] Joseph Betz, "Violence: Garver's Definition and a Deweyan Correction," *Ethics* 87, no.4 (1977): 341.

[19] George Sorel, *Reflections of Violence*, trans. T.E Hulme and J. Roth. Mineola (NY: Dover Publication, 2004). However Sorel's original quote dates from 1907.

[20] For the length of this thesis it is not possible to cover them all but for a feminist approach on the delimitation of actors and perpetrator of violence see: Laura J. Shepherd, "Victims, Perpetrators and Actors' Revisited: Exploring the Potential for a Feminist Reconceptualisation of (International) Security and (Gender) Violence," *Political Studies Association* 9, (2007): *239–256*. For interpersonal violence see Elizabeth A. Stanko, *The Meanings of Violence* (London: Routledge, 2003). For a distinction between violence and terrorism see: Augustus R. Norton, "Drawing the line between opprobrious violence," *Ethics and International Affairs* 4, (1990): 123-133. Against the pejorative meaning of violence see: Bernard Crick, "Justification of Violence," *The Political Quarterly* 77, no.4 (October-

two perspectives in defining violence: one sees violence as force; the second understands violence as violation. Bufacchi rejects the conceptualization of violence as a synonym of force, arguing that that connection endorses a narrow conception of violence.[21] Hannah Arendt, to whom we return in some detail in chapter two, was also careful to make a clear distinction between force and violence where she attempted to define very carefully *both* concepts (a task not often achieved in most contemporary IR texts I have read) as related but nevertheless different. Arendt claimed that 'force' should be limited to the forces of nature,' the 'force of circumstances,' which is not necessarily a violent action but "energy released."[22] In Bufacchi's conceptual discussion of violence, it is the deeper distinction between the two concepts that Arendt draws attention to that leads to his conclusions.

> First, force is a dispositional concept, that is to say it refers to an ability or potentiality. Violence on the other hand refers to the action itself. Second, violence is an evaluative concept, perhaps even a normative concept, while force is not. It is perhaps the moral neutrality of the concept of force that led Hannah Arendt to dismiss it as a useful path into the meaning of violence, suggesting instead that we focus on the relationship between violence and power.[23]

Bufacchi's attempt to distinguish between force and violence is quite successful and suggests that defining violence merely as physical force is just too narrow and exclusive to be useful. Clearly, both concepts are different, though it is similarly clear that one *might* also involve the other. Bufacchi's attention to Arendt's distinction between violence and power is similarly important in understanding violence and will be treated at length in Chapter 2.

Concerning violence as a violation, Bufacchi defines violence as to "infringe, or transgress, or to exceed some limit or norm."[24] It will be recognized immediately that this approach leads to similar problems of excessive scope as that of Keane discussed earlier.

December 2006): 433-438 and Gerald Runkle, "Is Violence always wrong?," *The Journal of Politics* 38, no. 2 (May, 1976): 367-389.
[21] Bufacchi, "Two Concepts of Violence," 193.
[22] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (San Diego: Harcourt and Brace&Company, 1970), 44-45.
[23] Bufacchi, "Two Concepts of Violence," 195.
[24] Bufacchi, "Two Concepts of Violence," 196.

Bufacchi recognized this problem and points out that violence as violation can be perpetrated against the body (which Keane also states) or human dignity (which Keane does not).[25]

The human dignity characteristic is relevant for the study of violence since it involves the recognition and rejection of different forms of violence that can affect not only the body but the condition or ability in which individuals live. Because "all human beings have real dignity simply because they are persons—entities with natural capacities for thought and free choice […] all human beings are persons."[26] In this respect Robert Nozick pointed out that "individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them without violating their rights."[27] Therefore, following Bufacchi and Nozick, psychological violence obstructs human dignity and hence it is relevant to consider it in IR literature, though to date few scholars do even after 9/11.

Furthermore, the recognition of human dignity not only implies the recognition of psychological violence in IR literature, but also the re-interpretation of violence in the private and public realm which I will soon explain. In my opinion, these views reflect better the different forms of violence because it permits into the lexicon of violence many things that cannot be captured by relating the concept merely to the use of physical force. For it has perhaps never been clearer that, in an age where terrorism affects more individuals and groups than ever before, the *threat* of physical force can be just as effective as actual physical force. Likewise, in an age where equality of rights and freedom are the catchphrase of many Western powers, psychological violence toward women, children, homosexuals, ethnic or religious minorities and so on is obviously practiced and often denounced. It is patent, therefore, for any concept of violence to make room for its psychological as well as physical forms if it is to be adequate as a concept and

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[25] Bufacchi, "Two Concepts of Violence," 196.

[26] Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, "The Nature and Basis of Human Dignity*," Ratio Juris* 21, no. 2 (June 2008): 175.

[27] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, the State and Utopia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), ix.

sensitive enough to relate to contemporary practices and circumstances. Unfortunately, along with Bufacchi's "Two Concepts of Violence," the definitions of violence quoted earlier show us the often vague and sometimes careless nature of how violence is used in IR theory.

Another area in which these conceptions of violence score less than well concerns the traditional distinctions of the private and public realm which can potentially imply violence. Traditionally, "actions falling on the public side of the line implicate the constitution and those on the private side do not."[28] In other words, the distinction between the two realms represents the limit to the direct application of, and intervention of, the law. This division has, of course, direct and much-discussed implications for gender matters. As Higgins puts it, "historically, the line between the home as private and the rest of civil and political society as public was defined by social norms as well as law, and that line was clearly gendered."[29] That law found its limit in the private realm allowed oppression, exploitation, subordination, in other words, different forms of domestic violence within this realm in a way where the law is less likely to intervene. Likewise, Landes argued "the problem of sexual subordination came to be linked closely to the division of public and private life. Breaking the silences of personal life, feminists sought the grounds for a more egalitarian private and public sphere. This last point bears repeating."[30]

For reasons of brevity I cannot here go into depth in the debate of feminist views on the public and private realm. However, the feminist concern is relevant because within the private realm not only physical but psychological violence is perpetrated against women, men, infants, workers, etc. Traditional IR conceptualizations of violence have been reluctant to take this important problem into account (because it is concerned more with internal politics) although it

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[28] Tracy E. Higgins, "Reviving the Public/Private Distinction in Feminist Theorizing," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 75, (2000): 848.
[29] Higgins, "Reviving the Public/Private Distinction in Feminist Theorizing," 849.
[30] Joan B. Landes, "Introduction," in *Feminism, the Public and the Private,* ed. Joan B. Landes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.

has repercussions in the classifications of violence. Therefore the feminist concern should be paid more attention, not only by jurists, but by all involved in politics.[31] As Landes argues, as the slogan, "The Personal Is Political attests, a feminist movement moves in two directions, placing the gendered organization of both public and private space at centre stage."[32] Violence makes no distinction between the public and the private, only law usually does.

Another important problem springs from this situation that concerns the ambiguity in the classification of violence. Although there are not many detailed classifications of violence, a couple of interesting approaches have emerged from the disciplines of the behavioural sciences and psychology that could be adapted to become at least partially informative in questions relevant to IR. A rather complete attempt to clarify and classify violence was exemplified by Charles Tilly's seven types of violence, compared by coordination among violent actors and salience of short- run damage. The seven categories are:

> individual aggression (single-perpetrator rapes, assaults, etc), brawls (street fights, small-scale battles at sporting events, etc), opportunism (looting, gang rape, piracy, etc), scattered attacks (sabotage, assault of governmental agents, arson, etc.), broken negotiations (demonstrations, governmental repression, and military coups), coordinated destruction (terrorism, genocide and politicide) and violent rituals (lynching, public executions, gang rivalries, etc).[33]

Tilly's classification of violence covers a good range of different violent actions and is clearly one of the most reflective accounts available. Yet it is still problematic in that he misses psychological or mental violence. Although psychological violence has often been marginalized in International Relations theories,[34] it is important, if not necessary, to consider it in varieties of

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[31] For more on the feminist approach on the private and public realm see e.g., Anita L. Allen and Erin Mack, "How Privacy Got its Gender," *Northern Illinois Law Review* 10, (1991). Raia Prokhovnik, "Public and Private Citizenship: From Gender Invisibility to Feminist Inclusiveness," *Feminist Review* 60, no.1 (September 1998). Gillian Bendelow, Mick Carpenter, Caroline Vautier, Simon Williams eds., *Gender, Health, and Healing: The Public / Private Divide* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[32] Landes, "Introduction," in *Feminism, the Public and the Private,* 1.
[33] Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 14-15.
[34] Psychological violence has often in the past been connected only with the private realm which has to do traditionally more with internal politics than IR. IR theories were traditionally state-focused.

violence to achieve a better conceptualization in the significance of violence—at least if the discipline is to remain unscathed by its feminist critics. Moreover psychological violence cannot only be connected to the private realm and the feminist claims to overthrow violence and oppression there. It now makes sense to talk about psychological violence happening in the public realm: for example in the 'privatisation' of violence. By 'privatisation' of violence I mean two types: first terrorism, and second state violence. Both types can be connected with oppression, fear, violent interrogations, limitation in civil liberties, etc.[35] These varieties of violence are happening between the private and the public where IR has its main interest. Public actors (the state) are perpetrating violence in the private realm, and private actors (i.e. terrorists) are committing violence within the public realm. It would therefore be rather old-fashioned and anachronistic to argue that psychological violence is only present in the private realm today. In sum, psychological violence should have its place in the conceptualization of violence and in IR theories because in this century, where the privatisation of violence is perhaps the biggest threat to humanity, we cannot pretend it only concerns internal politics. It most certainly concerns international relations.

A second classification of violence is explained by David Riches who distinguishes between five types of violence: First, 'mental violence,' or "the inflicting upon another of a deleterious psychological impact… corresponds with a distinctive situational experience, on the part of the perpetrator or, for that matter, the recipient, this is hard to determine."[36] Second, 'symbolic violence' "includes the 'threats of violence,' and economic obligations and other social constraints designated under this term."[37] Third, 'structural/ institutional violence' where

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[35] I explain this in more depth in chapter 3.
[36] David Riches, "Aggression, War, Violence: Space/Time and Paradigm," *Man New Series* 26, no. 2 (June, 1991): 293.
[37] Riches, "Aggression, War, Violence," 293.

"violence is inherent in social structures, especially ones with marked hierarchy."[38] Fourth, 'ritual violence' which involves actions that are not entirely considered violent but 'harmful,' these actions can be considered 'beneficial', for example circumcision or fun as in sports.[39] And fifth, "Violence where the victim is not fully human: violence towards very young infant [babies], foetuses, animals and inanimate objects": "the perpetrator's perception is that the victim is never in a position to object […] the perpetrator's sense that the harm being done is illegitimate is colored accordingly: such harm might be better signaled by the term cruelty."[40] Bullfighting is an example of this type of violence.

Riches' classification of violence is similar to Tilly's in that both are focused in behavior. However, Riches goes one step beyond Tilly and covers psychological violence. An important point in Riches' classification is the blurred line he identifies between cruelty and violence. It is interesting to note that 'cruelty' is referred to when there is harm to 'not fully human victims' who cannot denounce violence. Concerning human beings, "violence destroys subjects' bodily motion. It silences them as well.[41] In Chapter Two I discuss more the relation between silence and violence. However, it is important to note the psychology involved in the rationalization (and, as it were, linguisticization) of violence. Indeed, it is precisely this nonphysical element of how we understand and deal with violence, which figures in political and international discourses of different kinds attempting to justify, for example, psychological violence as methods of torture in Guantanamo Bay that is quite obviously relevant to many branches of IR. As Parry argues "the

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[38] Riches, "Aggression, War, Violence," 293.
[39] Riches, "Aggression, War, Violence," 294.
[40] Riches, "Aggression, War, Violence," 294-295.
[41] Keane, *Violence and Democracy,* 37.

policeman's stick, the soldier's gun and the tools of the interrogator leave visible or internal marks on people's bodies and psyches."[42] Furthermore, he continues

> [i]nterrogation of a criminal is rarely gentle even if it appears calm and orderly. On the surface at least it is about extracting information, which requires control or, even dominance. An interrogator is often—perhaps must be—willing to use the suspect, to approach him as a vessel to be emptied rather than a as a person possessed with dignity and rights and entitled to equal concern and respect.[43]

Thus Riches classification, together with Parry's exemplifications of state psychological violence, contributes importantly to clarify loopholes in events important to, but only superficially explained in, IR theories.

A final 'classification' of violence, significant to IR studies, in relation to current threads of violence against humanity is Keane's 'triangle of violence.' One side of the triangle is "apocalyptic terrorism," the second is "*un* civil wars" and the third side is instability caused by "nuclear stipped states."[44] More than a classification of violence, Keane's triangle of violence shows us that in spite of all hopes, violence enacted by different types of actors is here to stay; and that these three forms of violence are the ones we should be most concerned with because of the levels of destruction they can reach.

The point to be gleaned from all of this is that different classifications of violence exist in the literature that are useful to International Relations. But these are generally organized depending on the key perspectives of the discipline they focus on or stem from. In IR, the main focus of the study of violence in recent times has most often been launched from the perspective of security issues, terrorism, and war and, therefore—as with all approaches—contains the biases inherent to those perspectives when it comes to designating the important issues, views and

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[42] John T. Parry, "Pain, Interrogation and the Body," in *Evil, Law and the State: Perspectives on State Power and Violence,* ed. John Parry (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 2.
[43] Parry, "Pain, Interrogation and the Body,"6.
[44] Keane, *Violence and Democracy,* 20-29.

conceptualizations from the superfluous ones. The coming chapters will focus on finding different nuances to the concept of violence. For now it is useful to take a closer look at the perspectives from which violence has been studied in International Relations theories to identify what gaps those nuances need to fill.

1.3 Aggression and War: Undefined Relations to Violence

In International Relations which is, according to Shepherd, a discipline that "takes seriously issues of war and peace, there has been a lack of attention paid to theorizing security in relation to violence."[45] Yet, to respond to this important point from Shepherd, if more attention *is* paid to security in relation to violence, it is quite crucial to understand the differences as well as the similarities between these concepts, for it is what *differentiates* it from other concepts associated with the phenomenon of violence that can bring us to a deeper understanding of the concept. While security is not the only concept to which violence is usually linked, it is the latest central concern in the vast majority of the literature. Before security became a/the principal topic in IR literature, violence had been linked chiefly to 'aggression' from a behavioural point of view as well as to peace and, most commonly, to war.

Riches claims that the correlation between the concepts violence, aggression and war is that the three "have to do with harm-giving between human beings."[46] Pursuing Riches' point a little further, it seems plausible to agree that violence, war, and aggression have the same departing point: harm. If this is correct, the next questions become, what distinguishes them from each other if their basis is the same? And, if violence and aggression have been used as synonyms,

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[45] Laura P. Shepherd, "Victims, Perpetrators and Actors' Revisited: Exploring the Potential for a Feminist Reconceptualisation of (International) Security and (Gender) Violence," *Political Studies Association* 9, (2007): 239.
[46] Riches, "Aggression, War, Violence," 282.

is there any real value in retaining the two different terms/concepts? These questions need answers.

'Aggression' has been more frequently defined from a biological standpoint, and before 1939, "most psychologists considered aggression to be instinctual in nature and inherent in human beings as well in other animal species."[47] Later on, that belief shifted to a more behavioural stance, and has been often associated with human frustration.[48] Aggression is still considered part of human behavior, but not the essence of humans and animal species, as Riches argues:

> 'aggression'; connotes antagonistic behavior which, even when consciously performed, is non-volitional (and probably irrational), the immediate impulse for which lies in uncontrollable forces within the human body that are barely at all subjects to reason or sense. As people enunciate it, 'aggression' is believed to be something that can 'take over; - triggering off social behavior in a manner that is comparable with the impact from a material force.[49]

Consequently, there are perhaps a few important reasons to use aggression and violence often to describe similar or the same events. Violence can certainly spring when there is aggression. One could identify an aggressive action as a violent action. But the concepts themselves are *not* equivalent. Aggression may be part of the human behavior, but violence is not a property, not a condition, but a phenomenon usually linked to domination or resistance. As Riches pointed out, "violence significantly contrasts with both 'aggression' and 'war' the term has never given its name to disciplines of study (as has 'war') or theoretical paradigms (as has 'aggression)."[50] Moreover, aggression may be often linked to genetic or biological justifications. Carey claims "infrahuman literature clearly indicates that genetics cannot be discounted as an important source

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[47] Leonard D. Eron, "Theories of Aggression from Drives to Cognition," in *Aggressive Behavior: Current Perspectives*, ed. L. Rowell Huesmann (New York: Plenum Publishing Corporation, 1994), 3.
[48] Leonard D. Eron, "Theories of Aggression from Drives to Cognition," 3.
[49] Riches, "Aggression, War, Violence," 285.
[50] Riches, "Aggression, War, Violence," 285-286.

of individual variation in human aggression."[51] Violence does not have a genetic influence. In a different way, violence is more characterized by what Audi referred to as something that "is always *done*, and it is always done *to* something, typically a person, animal or piece of property."[52] In this sense, aggression may or may not have a subsequent action, whereas physical or psychological violence always does. Furthermore, there are views, such as those of Hobbes, Machiavelli and Weber "which accept violence as a necessary aspects of politics."[53] Although I am not sympathetic with this view, it represents how violence, contrary to aggression, is not a claimable 'inherent' part of the body. Thus violence and aggression may often appear together, but their significance is different. As such, the study of violence should consider carefully these limits and the differences between these two concepts.

Just as with aggression, the correlation between 'war' and 'violence' is logical and thus separating the two concepts is not always easy—but again, that does not mean that it cannot or should not be attempted. The study of (human) aggression belongs mainly to the domain of psychology, but the study of war is an important focus of IR theories, therefore I will spend more time on the latter in this analysis.

Although it may look like we all know what war means, it can be conceptualized differently. Francis Beer wrote that war "is the presence of direct international violence […] war is defined to include only violence between the states. Violence within the states, between individuals is excluded."[54] So war, for Beer, only included physical violent confrontation between

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[51] Gregory Carey, "Family and Genetic Epidemiology of Aggressive and Antisocial Behavior," in *Aggression and Violence: Genetic, Neurobiological, and Biosocial Perspective,* eds. David M. Stoff and Robert B. Cairns (Mahwah NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 4.

[52] Robert Audi, "On the Meaning and Justification of Violence," in *Violence* Jerome Schaffer ed. (New York: MacKay, 1971), 50.

[53] Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings, "On Politics and Violence: Arendt Contra Fanon," *Contemporary Political Theory* 7, no.1 (February 2008):93.

[54] Francis A. Beer, *Peace against War, the Ecology of International Violence* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1981), 6.

the armies of states. For Waltz, "war occurs among states."[55] The delimitation of the concept is quite accurate since, from this perspective, Waltz does not make the mistake of defining all violent confrontations as war. Furthermore, in interstate war, violence is allegedly legitimate; hence it would be distinct from large scale violence between individuals and the state, usually conceptualized as civil war.

Contrary to Beer, Petras recognized four types of war: imperialist wars, separatists ethnic conflict, colonial territorial wars and regional wars.[56] The main problem in Petras' classifications of war is that a conflict does not necessarily mean war and a conflict is not necessarily violent: that is, democracies in fact promote conflict,[57] but that does not mean *violent* struggle. Therefore a separatist ethnic conflict can indeed occur without violence, but then it is not war. Clausewitz's *On War*, still compelling in IR theories, claimed that "war is an act of force to compel our adversary to do our will."[58] Yet this definition encounters two problems. First, we have seen that force and violence have a different meaning. Second, under this definition, all violent conflicts could be labeled as war, which is what often occurs.

A growing type of 'war' is civil war Sambanis tells us there is a growing literature[59] on this which leads to two conclusions. From one side it means that the study of civil war is increasing in importance, but the less positive outcome is that this

> increases the risk of making inferences from unstable empirical results. Without ad hoc rules to code its start and end and differentiate it from other violence, it is difficult, if not impossible, to define and measure civil war.[60]

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[55] Kenneth Waltz, *Man the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 81.
[56] James Petras, "The Meaning of War," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 35, no. 4 (2005): 423.
[57] Giovanni Sartori, *¿Qué es la democracia?* (Mexico: Taurus, 2003), 90 [my translation].
[58] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* trans. O. J. Matthijs Jolles (Washington DC.: Infantry Journal Press, 1950), 3.
[59] Nicholas Sambanis "What Is Civil War?: Conceptual and empirical complexities of an operational definition," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (December 2004): 814.
[60] Sambanis "What Is Civil War?," 814.

The problem of the conceptualization and classifications of violence consequently surfaces again. In spite of this "problem," it is important to define civil war. Civil war is thus distinguished from state vs. state war. Civil war is, according to Small and Singer, "any armed conflict that involves military action internal to the metropole, the active participation of the national government, and effective resistance by both sides."[61] It can be defined as war because it is an armed conflict in which the state is involved. However, how legitimate would the use of violence be if civilians are present and are targets? Like terrorism, it could consequently be argued that a civil war that targeted civilians would not be a common war. Unfortunately, the literature has not often made this distinction.

Civil war is not the only concept which challenges the conceptualization of war and violence. There is a third, and less common, variety of war: 'humanitarian' war, "a war initiated and justified on humanitarian grounds [...] and even [on the] necessity of using military force to protect civilians within sovereign states."[62] Here it is important to ask ourselves if war can ever be humanitarian or, in other words, can violence be used to protect humans beyond national territory? The human dignity factor, of course, is present but then would it still be war or is it international security? Both concepts change radically the connotations of the action of intervening in sovereign states. And if we consider the view that "the true solution to the problems of securing peace and protecting human rights can only be achieved by peaceful means, based on international law."[63] Resorting to war would not be entirely a legitimate action.

A fourth type of war which is less known is Kaldor's 'New War.' For Kaldor a New War "is an extreme manifestation of the erosion of the autonomy of the nation-state under the impact

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[61] Melvin Small, David Singer, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil War, 1816-1980* (Beverly Hills: SAGE 1982), 210.
[62] Susan. L. Woodward, "Humanitarian War: a new Consensus?," *Disasters* 25, no.4 (2001): 331.
[63] Edward Demenchonok, "From a State of War to Perpetual Peace," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 66, no. 1 (January, 2007): 25.

of globalization, these wars could be described as implosions of the state."[64] The circumstances that give rise to these 'New Wars'

> is the lack of authority of the state, the weakness of representation, the loss of confidence that the state is able or willing to respond to public concerns, the inability and/or unwillingness to regulate the privatisation and informalisation of violence that gives rise to violent conflicts.[65]

Shaw also recognized a new type war, conceptualized as total war where "war is normally waged on the enemy society as well as the enemy state."[66] Here again non combatants are involved, thus if war was said to be 'legitimate' where rests the justification? As I explain in Chapter 3, moral rhetoric does not provide an enough basis.

In contrast with Kaldor's, Shaw's, Sambanis' and Woodward's views, Beer's and Waltz's definitions of war can be considered accurate in the context they wrote. Yet with the end of the Cold War and the duration of 'stable politics,' the perspectives from which war was defined changed. In Holsti's words, "war today is not the same phenomenon it was in the eighteen century, or even in the 1930's. It has different sources and essential characteristics."[67] It seems prudent to agree with him in the sense that the *motivations* of war might have changed. Nevertheless, the essential characteristic continues to be violence. It has different targets, and may be executed with improved technology, but the presence of violence has not changed at all from old or new wars. The problem, however, with equating most confrontations with 'war' is that it is unclear if the concept that would be better to use instead should be violence. If so, it might be better to reserve the concept of 'war' to a state's allegedly legitimate violence. It is certainly true that in war, violence is ubiquitous. But not all violence is war. War has, of course evolved, from only meaning "organized and politically directed violence between the armed

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[64] Mary Kaldor ,"Cosmopolitanism and Organised Violence," paper prepared for Conference on 'Conceiving Cosmopolitanism', Warwick, 27-29 April 2000.
[65] Kaldor "Cosmopolitanism and Organised Violence, April 2000
[66] Martin Shaw, *War and Genocide* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 27.
[67] Kalevi J. Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), xi.

forces of two or more states."[68] Today the motivations are different, "war as an instrument of state policy is a relatively new form of organized violence."[69] And "wars today are less a problem of the relations between the states than problems within the states."[70]

So while war has been traditionally conceived as violence between states, in current times this situation has changed. Other violent conflicts that do not necessarily include direct confrontation between states have emerged. Yet little attention has been paid to the conceptualization to the shifts in patters of violence, the actors, and the targets, most are still regarded as 'war.' It is in this sense that the obvious relation between war and violence has become quite problematic. The difficulty again has the same root: the generally vague way that 'violence' has been habitually conceptualized and the implications of this. Thus there are two complementary options to these problems: a reinvention of the concept of war that fits the twenty-first century is needed; and/or we should develop better nuances in the concept of violence that helps us explain the changing nature of war.

Another implication of conceptualizing violence so vaguely that its close connection with war makes it almost reducible to war is its close linkage with 'peace.' Peace is commonly defined as "the absence of war."[71] It is ironic that human beings are so desperate to pursue peace but the element of violence is always present. Thus it may look as if peace would lose its reason for being if there was no war.

Thus concerning war, peace and violence, it seems that the relation between these concepts is almost unbreakable. In IR one cannot refer to one concept without making connections to the others. In this sense Saussure's structural linguistics give room to ambiguities

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[68] Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War,* 6.
[69] Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War,* 2.
[70] Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War,* xi.
[71] Beer, *Peace Against War, the Ecology of International Violence,* 7.

between the concepts. It even sounds plausible to claim with Hassner that "the formula for the post-Cold-War world may, instead of 'neither war nor peace', rather be 'both war and peace'."[72] Was not peace the absence of war? Here we may ask Hassner what kind of war? However the absence of 'war' may not only bring peace, it has brought terrorism, or in Enzensberger's account

> the diffusion of violence may be the best price we pay for the decline of interstate war; conflicts may no loner be ideological, but nationalism and ethnicity, racism, and fanaticism are only very thin rationalizations for a raw hatred and violence which is directed against oneself as much as against foreigner or 'the other' as such. Its ultimate source may have to be sought in the nature of modern society or in that humankind itself.[73]

Enzensberger was right and there is a diffusion of violence. But blaming the nature of modern society or humankind is not the solution to stop this diffusion. It is true that for some time, IR theories were concerned with the study of human nature; that was especially true for the Realist School.[74] However, today is not the case. Besides, violence existed prior to modern societies, and prior to modern states, thus that there is a diffusion of violence is better explained by other social and political phenomenon such as globalization, blurred borders, an unprotected monopoly of violence, poverty, natural catastrophe, religious differences, etc, but not human nature.

Violence would thus be transiting between aggression, war and peace. Aggression, often mistaken with violence can lead often to violent or non violent conflict. Violence is the essence of war, peace is the absence of violence thus violence can destroy peace and can bring war, especially if we consider that "peace is of a fragile quality."[75] But while the previous discussion has clearly implied that these concepts are related, maybe even necessarily related, it has also

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[72] Pierre Hassner, *Violence and Peace: From the Atomic Bomb to Ethic Cleansing* (Hungary: Central European University Press, 1997), 14.

[73] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Aussuchten auf den Burgerkrieg* (Frankfurt, Surkamp, 1993) referenced in Hassner *Violence and Peace: from the Atomic Bomb to Ethic Cleansing*, 15-16.

[74] See i.e., Hans Morgenthau *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York Knopf, 1978), Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation* (Westminster: John Know Press, 1996), and neo realist Kenneth Waltz, *Man the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press,1959).

[75] Roger Mac Ginty, Orla T. Muldoon, Neil Ferguson, "No War, No Peace: Northern Ireland after the Agreement," *Political Psychology* 28, no. 1 (2007): 2.

shown that they are not equivalent. The problem seems to be that the distinctions between them are not very sharply defined which can be confusing, as we have seen. Therefore, for a better understanding of these three concepts and their changing reality, it is important to give better nuances to the concept of violence, not just take it for granted as a physical violation. With this not only we understand better the complexity of violence, but as a consequence its structure is better defined.

1.4 Conclusion

The problems of violence, as Sorel argued, indeed remain most obscure. This not only makes the academic task of conceptualizing violence in a way that is adequate to, and sensitive to, twenty-first century conditions. It also makes identifying the divergent forms of violence that occur in the contemporary world more tricky, and, most importantly, it provides ample loopholes that can permit the perpetrators of violence to find and broadcast justifications for it that are often widely accepted. All these consequences conspire to obstruct the crucial tasks of thinking up in theory more effective ways of limiting violence today in its different forms, and—of course— putting those theories into practice. This thesis can only hope to provide the very beginnings of the academic task of conceptualizing violence in a way that is more adequate than is usually found in the literature used by IR theorists and practitioners today. But it is my view that, if the task as a whole is to be successful, this project must start from a foundation that is as solid as possible. I hope to show throughout the rest of this thesis that such a solid ground is found when one recognizes the importance of first, taking how we understand important concepts seriously and second, in doing so, making clear and careful distinctions between concepts that are related— maybe even necessarily related—but are not to be fused or confused. Consequently, there may in fact be a way that we can add positive content to our understanding of a concept like violence,

provided that we take seriously and carefully both its differences with other concepts and the often blurred line between it and other concepts. Moreover, while it may seem excessively academic to those eager to get on with the practical process of limiting violence, thinking deeply about what violence is and is not, can actually be seen as a step that is unavoidable if we wish that practical process to be as successful as possible.

To succeed in this task, it is therefore crucial to reflect on the complexity of the concept. It is still very common to see the equation 'violence=force'—and physical force at that. This is not to say that the connection between these concepts is illegitimate or mistaken. But this close relation between the two concepts is problematic precisely because, as we have seen, it often results in fusing (or confusing) both concepts together. This would not be problematic if both concepts did mean the same thing. However, the general problems of any kind of theoretical reductionism[76] apply here. If we limit violence to force, then we run the risk of omitting many 'actions' that can be referred to as violence. Indeed, some of the literature has obviously grasped this, for classifications of violence would be unnecessary if all violence were reduced to the mere infliction of physical injury. It is because of the assumption that violence is only the use of physical force that war and peace are commonly linked to violence without hesitation or, it seems, sufficient reflection. This is a departing point for existing loopholes in theories that relate violence, war and peace, i.e. the study of 'Human Security.'[77]

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[76] For the generally authoritative work on the problems of reductionism see Alan Ryan's famous *The Philosophy of the Social Science* chapter 8 "Wholes, Parts, Purposes and Functions," (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1970), 172-198.

[77] For detailed explanations and recent debates on Human Security see:
Mary Kaldor, *Human Security* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007). Pauline Ewan, "Deepening the Human Security Debate," *Politics* 27, no.3 (2007): 182–189. Nana Poku, Anthony McGrew, *Globalization, Development and Human Security* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2007). Roland Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air," *International Security* 26, no.2 (2001).Joseph J. St. Marie, Shahdad Naghshpour, Samuel S. Stanton, "The colonial origins of Human Security: Economic, Geographic and Institutional Determinants," *Politics and Policy* 36, no.1 (February 2008): 80-106. Gary King, Christopher J. L. Murray, "Rethinking Human Security," *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 4 (Winter, 2001-

In the debates on 'Human Security' in particular violence is just mentioned as something that human beings should be free of. More specifically in the 2005 Human Security Report, "human security is defined in terms of the protection of individuals and communities from the effects of organized violence."[78] 'Organized violence' may be a safe term to encompass all possible varieties of violence, but it should not be forgotten that the outcome of violence can depend upon the salience and coordination between the actors.[79] My point here is that violence is such a complex concept that states cannot guarantee full protection of individuals from the effects of violence, especially since violence can also emanate from individuals. Thus the intentions of the Human Security proposals are justified (and noble); however, violence is not just something that can disappear if the states or International Organizations decide to achieve freedom of want and freedom from fear. In this same sense, if we do not develop better nuances or new theories of violence, other concepts that are part of the same system such as war, peace, and security will probably fail to achieve their goal. Human Security is just one example.

In the next chapter I analyze Hannah Arendt's treatise *On Violence* since it captures the very complexity of the concept of violence that I have argued is lacking in most IR accounts, alongside emphasizing the important differences between violence and some of its cognates while recognizing that they are nevertheless related.

2002): 585-610. Edward Newman, "Human Security and Constructivism," *International Studies Perspectives* no.2 (2001): 239-251.

[78] A. Mack and Z. Nielson, *Human Security Report 2005: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[79] Tilly, *the Politics of Collective Violence*, 15.