

CONCLUSION

Through out this thesis I had as main direction the study and analysis of two grand problems concerning the conceptualization of violence. It is my belief that if sufficient attention is not paid to how we define, and therefore, understand violence, severe consequences in the theories and in the practical scope take place. As a result, the first problem I was engaged with was concerned with how violence is defined in the literature. I argued that many definitions in IR theories do not distinguish between force and violence or these concepts are used arbitrarily. In this respect two problems can be identified. One is that the concept of violence is defined narrowly; just assuming that violence causes physical harm. A different view blames every possible pain to violence. However these two views do not recognize other forms of violence as such such as domestic oppression, criminal interrogations or cruelty.

The second problem I tackled concerned the legitimacy of violence. In International Relations literature, state violence is allegedly legitimate, or it can be labeled as 'coercion.' However if the legitimacy *was* acquired from the citizenry, how are we supposed to categorize morally what is to happen when the states use violence (and even annihilation) against its own citizens? Moreover, traditional state vs. state war *was* also considered a legitimate state action, however in the new forms of warfare (civil, humanitarian, total, on terror, etc.) where non combatants are targets, how legitimate is the use of violence? These two problems have serious implications not only in IR theories, but also for the way we perceive reality. What we consider to be violence, what kind of violence we accept, which kinds of violence we condemn, which violence we say to be 'just,' which violence we do not identify as such, and what actions we accept in order to live free of violence? Although they play an important role in international relations, these questions have had far less of a place in IR theories than they appear to deserve if the arguments in this thesis are correct and this, I have claimed. In addition, is at least partly because of the problems of

definitions and legitimacy that formed the central problematic of this thesis. My main hypothesis was that to grasp the contemporary significance of violence *we must give it a set of deeper nuances that not only reflect the complexities of the concept but that also help closing the ample loopholes that can permit the perpetrators of violence to find and broadcast justifications for it that are often widely accepted.* This hypothesis and its three subsequent sub hypotheses intended to provide a direction to how the problems of definition and legitimacy would be addressed.

I first suggested that, in order to give a better significance to violence as a concept, it is of primary importance to stress the limits and distinctions between violence and its ‘cognates’ because it is the differences between violence and its cognate concepts, rather than its similarities with them, that provide the most illuminating clues that clarify the meaning to this (and maybe any) concept. Second, in relation to the state’s monopoly of legitimate use of violence I suggested that in Max Weber’s definition of the state exists an incomplete conceptualization of violence, legitimacy and the state on one hand, and a serious risk of ignoring or depoliticizing so-called “nonstate” manifestations of violence on the other. Therefore it seems rather inaccurate to IR discipline and current reality. And third, concerning civil society, politics and violence, following the logic that it is the duty of the state to protect its citizens and because the legitimacy of the state is derived precisely from citizens. Concerning the practical, as opposed to theoretical, side of our experience of violence, this led me to the following conclusions. Citizens and civil societies in general have the potential to become a force in the blurred public and private realm. In this sense, through an engagement in politics, the responsibility falls to *civil society*—not only citizens of the state—can place a limit on violence.

4.1 Summary of the Chapters

In Chapter One I discussed several definitions of violence. There I argued that most are narrow since they conceive violence as an act of physical force, yet they are often not conceptualized with care even in the narrow confines of the definitions I explored. Other definitions, suggest that everything that can cause harm is violence. This would not be inaccurate if there was a convincing base to their cases for why violence should be understood this way. However, I showed that this was not the case. So I then analyzed two broad *classifications* of violence—Tilly's and Riches'—to see if the added complexity in these fared any better in the attempts to capture the subtlety, complexity and variation of forms of violence. Tilly's detailed classification of seven types of violence, I argued, is interesting and thoughtful, but misses structural and psychological violence. Riches' classification of violence does, however, provide a better scope. He suggests two important references, mental violence and cruelty that I demonstrated are central for the study of violence because they can be also associated with the violation of human dignity. Yet it must be said that these central points are often not perceived as such.

I also contended the importance of making a distinction between violence, aggression and war in this chapter. Although the three concepts are intrinsically interrelated (since the three cause some kind of harm) there are differences that should be emphasized because that is what distinguishes each concept. It was not an easy task, especially since IR literature makes this omission fairly habitually. Nevertheless, I hope I showed that while aggression is more concerned and conceived as an individual conduct that can or cannot flow into violence, violence distinguishes itself from always releasing harm. The problem with the distinction between war and violence is more complex. The concept of war originally conceived as interstate violence has evolved. Today IR theories encounter a definitional problem when seeking to conceptualise humanitarian war, civil war; total war, war on terror, etc. Therefore I suggested that a rigorous

classification of violence should be considered because if we classify ‘all’ state violence as ‘war’ then states will always find their way to justify violence and find acceptance among many.

Chapter one concluded that in IR (and in Social Sciences in general) a great part of the definitions of violence do not reflect the complexity of the concept, and indeed make the problems more obscure. This not only makes the academic task of conceptualizing violence in a way that is adequate to, and sensitive to, 21st century conditions. It also makes identifying the divergent forms of violence that occur in the contemporary world more tricky, and, most importantly, I showed that it sets the base for part of this thesis’ main hypothesis: *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.

Chapter Two was specifically concerned with state violence and alternative conceptions of violence. I tried to show that Hannah Arendt’s treatise *On Violence* captures the complexity of the subject, and by making a distinction between power and violence she automatically sets the ground to claim that violence cannot be legitimate. I also claimed that the state has used its “monopoly of legitimate violence” to harm its own citizenry without acceptable justifications. From that circumstance I analyzed the foundation of the monopoly of violence (in Hobbes’ context) and the arguments Weber provided to assume that state violence can be legitimated. I concluded that both Hobbes and Weber views do not longer correspond to our current political and social reality. Following this claim, I linked the concept of violence and the state with legitimacy. I concluded that today in the Western world ‘legitimation of domination’ with violence is no longer accepted, legitimacy ought to be derived by popular consent. However, to recognize these implications, it is first important to give better nuances to understand the

complexity of the concept of violence, in order to recognize violence in all its forms; even when it is disguised as cruelty, morality, ‘freedom’ and especially ‘security.’

Chapter Three begins with that background and provides practical examples for the main hypothesis. I argued that because we often accept the ambiguities of the concept of violence, i.e. we take it for granted; we allow the perpetrators to move freely in the domain of violence. Here again I suggest that the state is the most dangerous perpetrator of violence. The examples I analyzed were all linked to the ‘War on Terror.’ I argued that the Bush administration perpetrated behavioural, psychological and structural violence against their ‘enemies’ and against their ‘friends’ (and civil society). What is most alarming is that most of this violence is usually not questioned, and is even accepted! The presidential rhetoric was particularly relevant to this acceptance, as Maggio claimed “many scholars have suggested that strategic rhetoric can help the president get his agenda passed.”¹ Yet it is also my belief that additionally the misconception of violence (and taking it for granted) cut room for civil debates. In other words, if state violence is usually conceived as ‘legitimate’, and that it has the last word in matters of security -in addition to a scenario of fear and anger- what was left to argue?

In this respect I claimed that through a commitment to politics (which, following Arendt, I understand in a highly participative sense that includes debate) civil society can provide an alternative to these scenarios of violence. This is especially relevant if we remember that today civil society is living a special momentum. In the western world, civil society is flourishing like it had not for some time and democracies seem to promote its development.

Consequently in the second part of this chapter I considered that an organized civil society can become a counterpart to violence in the ‘thicker’ more nuanced way I have attempted to

¹ James Maggio, “The Presidential Rhetoric of Terror: The (Re)Creation of Reality after 9/11,” *Politics and Policy* 35, no.4 (2007):810.

depict it. This is especially so when talking of state violence since civil society is the source of state's legitimacy. I recognized that not all civil society is particularly *civil*. However, there is an important sector or society that favors non violence. This point I considered important to be linked with Arendt and Torres Guillen. Torres Guillen claims that when civil society resorts to violence, it takes the risk of 'becoming' guerrilla, terrorists, etc.² Arendt would conceive this 'shift' as the loss of power by the means of violence. Therefore because from violence, power can hardly emanate the *non violent* civil society is the only one that can possibly provide a different scenario than sheer violence.

The conclusion for this chapter was that it is only through the political way that violence can be limited, and politics is the best resource civil societies have. Moreover, I claimed violence will always mean harm in some way no matter if it is private or public. Therefore, there are no sufficient reasons and grounds to legitimize the use of violence, on the contrary there are plenty of facts that show us that violence, not matter who performs it, cannot be legitimate.

4.2 General Conclusions and Benefits to IR theories

At the beginning of this work I quoted different scholars who argued why there were difficulties in the conceptualization of violence and why there had been not many discussions on the latter. Keane, for example, argued it was because the subject of violence was not a pretty one and because violence tends to shock our senses.³ In a similar line of argument Parry argues that because the violent foundations of civility are too terrible to affirm we tend to avoid the subject. In a different line of argument Wolff suggested that the subject of violence has been much

² Jaime Torres Guillen, "La desobediencia civil como praxis en las sociedades democráticas: Una perspectiva Latinoamericana," *Espiral estudios sobre Estado y Sociedad* XIV no. 42 (Mayo-Agosto de 2008).

³ 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), 1.

discussed and that it was an ancient subject.⁴ Moreover as we have seen throughout this work, the concept of violence has been addressed by many scholars in a limiting manner. On this respect Desjarlais and Kleinman argued that “most important is to be honest about how little we know and how limiting are the most traditional approaches to the subject.”⁵ Similarly, I argued that the difficulty that most studies on violence tend to face is not so much that the subject is ancient, unpleasant, and terrible to affirm or that it has been much discussed, but that those discussions often seem unable or unwilling to provide a view or conceptualization of violence that is sufficiently deep or lacking in vagueness. I clearly could not possibly cover all components or facets of the concept of violence; however after this work we hopefully moved some small, though significant steps towards a more adequate understanding of the concept of violence.

The scope of this thesis was particularly concerned with this respect and also with showing the implications that can spring if we do not give better nuances to the concept of violence. This dissertation thus hopefully reflects how much room there is for future studies and discussions of violence.

When this work began I found rather surprising that for a phenomenon that has always existed and that is becoming more dangerous as we improve technology and the implements of violence, we do not move away from definitions that conceive violence as the use of force against someone or something and that violence is understood as vehicle of power. As well important that little improvement has been achieved concerning the condemnation and punishment of state violence. These ways of understanding violence, we have observed, lack important elements,

⁴ Robert Paul Wolff, "On Violence," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 19 (October 2, 1969): 601.

⁵ Robert Desjarlais, Arthur Kleinman, "Violence and Demoralization in the New World Disorder," *Anthropology Today* 10, no. 5 (October 1994): 11.

which in my belief *provide ample loopholes that can permit the perpetrators of violence to find and broadcast justifications for it that are often widely accepted.*

Therefore, from this dissertation I hope to have shown that the definition of violence goes beyond an act of physical force; and that the fact that violence is ubiquitous is precisely because violence can also be present in a psychological and structural manner; in the private and the public realms. However to recognize the ubiquity of violence does not mean we cannot place limits to violence or that further discussion is of no worth. Therefore the questions and problems I addressed through the thesis have consequences not only for IR theories but on how we reflect on everyday state violence and ‘sheer’ violence.

This thesis thus moves forward from classic definitions of violence precisely with the recognition of different or inconspicuous forms of private and public violence. The ways in which this thesis has helped us move forward in the understanding and conceptualization of violence are several and are best explained in relation to IR theories.

One of my aims in this thesis was to provide a theoretical ground for further discussion in IR theories concerning the concept and practice of violence, and hopefully I demonstrated why violence remains an important phenomenon to International Relations theories. IR was traditionally conceived as a discipline that studied the relations between the states. With that ground the study of war between states was a main concern. However, two events changed completely this perception, the end of the Cold War and 9/11. These two events promoted an extension of IR study areas. With a new focus on individuals and societies, *human dignity* acquired significant relevance. From this point the study of violence acquired additional importance in the discipline and in the mind of the public. Different forms of violence that were previously not recognized as such or studied in depth in IR theories were being questioned in

particular state violence, structural and psychological violence. And consequently a reinterpretation of the public and private realm is being conceived.

This reinterpretation of the public and the private realms is also due to the increasing importance of 'security' and 'terrorism' both concepts intrinsically linked to violence. Although this thesis was not overly concerned with terrorism *per se*, the conceptualization of terrorism shows us how the ample loopholes in the concept of violence are obstacle to define contingent concepts. More in concrete why it is that IR theorists are having many difficulties in the conceptualization of terrorism if it is also violence? It is my belief that it has to do perhaps with the linkage of concept of violence and the state.

Terrorism is, of course, another form of violence. Then why is it not referred to only as slaughter? Possibly because the state is also a practitioner of violence and slaughter. Thus terrorism commonly refers to violence perpetrated against non combatants and the state, and that has the potential to change political structures. Nevertheless, terrorism is also violence. Here it is then possible to ask ourselves, are we so used to violence that we need a different term that shocks our senses? And does not state violence make us mumble anymore? This question can be related to two factors. First the conception of 'legitimate' state violence and second the under covered violence in the mask of security and freedom. Who can question these two ideals? I would say all that know the implications, significance and forms of violence. Democracies should not forget "violence is the greatest enemy of democracy."⁶ And that particularly in these regimes private and public violence is illegitimate.

A second consequence of an inadequate or incomplete definition of violence in IR theories is present in the Human Security debates (not fully conceived yet as a theory). The Human Security debates face two main problems. It seeks to provide human being with 'freedom

⁶ John Keane, *Violence and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.

of want' and 'freedom of fear.' In other words from behavioural and structural violence, however how would it be possible to limit violence if violence is not adequately understood? It is true, that most of us would want to get rid of violence, but it is important to first understand the different forms of violence and the difference between cognate concepts.

Therefore I believe that this dissertation can benefit IR theories and their employment of the concept of violence in several significant ways. First, because by giving a different set of nuances to what we conceive as violence we will be able to recognize different forms of violence present in the public and the private realm for example psychological and structural violence. This understanding helps better explain contingent concepts such as war and terrorism, and sets a better ground for potential theories such as Human Security and Peace theories.

Second, perhaps the most ambitious part of this dissertation was the way its arguments led to a critique of Max Weber's widely-accepted conception of the state and legitimate domination. I argued that his famous 'monopoly of legitimate use of violence' clause is no longer adequate to how we conceive politics and the state today. Today we no longer conceive politics and the state as instruments of oppression whose essence is violence and struggle. Furthermore Weber's definition of the state is currently inaccurate since he conceived three methods of legitimate domination for the monopoly of violence; however none of them rests on popular consent, which is today the most accepted and democratic form of legitimation. The Weberian methods of legitimate domination also encounter problems in the distinction between domination, obedience and power. In this respect it seemed that Weber was equating these three concepts; however as Arendt explained us, obedience and power are not the same.⁷ And finally Weber encountered a

⁷ Arendt, *On Violence*, 48.

predicament in the ethics of violence in the hands of human associations. Perhaps Weber himself was slightly aware that distinguishing between ‘violence’ and ‘coercion’ is rather absurd.

Therefore from these points, early explained in depth, this thesis provides room to the recognition and creation of new theories of the state that do not legitimate the use of violence, because today that can be considered anti-democratic. Moreover the current inadequacy in Weber’s conception of the state and legitimation of domination asks for new discussions on the legitimation of the state. And last and most important for this thesis, IR theories should move aside from Weber’s and Hobbes conception of the state which legitimize the use of violence. Instead IR theorists should focus in the reinvention of theories of violence and theories of the state separately. Although both concepts are extremely linked, they are not contingent or part of the same structure. And we should not forget that because of Weber’s clause, by a large extent, of the state’s monopoly of legitimate use of violence, state violence is widely accepted, and ‘monopolists’ of violence move freely and ‘legitimately’ in the domain of violence.

Third, because in modern democracies’ legitimacy is derived from popular consent it is relevant to incorporate traditional philosophical theories (i.e., Locke’s) and contemporary and influential theories (i.e., Arendt’s) to IR political scope. IR theories can benefit from the philosophical depth these theories possess. In this sense not only the theoretical side of International Relations would be enriched, but would provide different and profound explanations to the *praxis* in IR.

Finally, I believe my main contribution to IR theories was beginning to clarify some of the existing loopholes in studies of violence which can potentially help setting justification and acceptance of violence. Moreover by trying to unfold the relation of violence and war and violence and aggression I possibly inspired a future evaluation of the definitions of the concept of war and conceiving a clearer line for the blurred distinction between violence and aggression.

To close I want to add that no matter who perpetrates violence, for what reasons, under which justifications and grounds violence is always attempt against human dignity and plurality. Therefore no glorification of violence and no monopoly of violence should be accepted, if we ever want to limit violence and protect freedom and plurality.

