Violence in International Relations

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Abstract:

One account of the state argues that economic factors were key to its emergence and dominance against institutional competitors; that account – like many – elides the avoidance of internal violence as a rationale for the state. Recent sociological and anthropological work suggests that most political activity stems ultimately from a human aversion to violent actions; violence is difficult to perform, and so humans look for other means to resolve dangerous conflict. Often, these means are found through political associations, especially the state. States themselves, however, lack the human capacities that make political association necessary – yet IR theory and foreign policy praxis are often based on an analogy of the state as an artificial person. This assumption leads to a profound misunderstanding of states and their system, and also prevents IR from meaningful interaction with other branches of political science. A correct understanding of the state – as the consequence of an aversion to violence – points to a broad research agenda on violence in international politics; this in turn connects IR to other political and social sciences, while promising a discipline more engaged with the realities of political life.

VIOLENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

> "...economic and political organizations differ in some fundamental respects. Most notably, the absence of a clear medium of exchange - that is, the absence of profit making as an evaluative mechanism of the rationale of such association – makes comparisons problematic." (Spruyt 1994a, 532)

INTRODUCTION.

The discipline of international relations has long envied economics; our most visible theories – particularly neo-realism and neo-liberalism – are deeply in debt to that discipline, and our quantitative methods are borrowed wholesale from econometrics. Thus it is no surprise Hendrik Spruyt laments the fact that political associations are not directly comparable to economic organizations – as introduction to his analysis of political associations by economic criteria. Spruyt argues that differences in economic sophistication explain the emergence of the nation-state as the dominant form of political (and economic) organization. He writes specifically against explanations of this emergence from the superior war-making abilities of states compared to other associational models, and though he makes a compelling case, Spruyt meanwhile grants to economics much that once belonged to politics. The political scientist is left to wonder whether all political phenomena are fundamentally exogenous to the discipline, and what this means for his career.

Yet latent in Spruyt's account is another explanation – a problem beyond economics – that points to a fully political explanation of the origins of states and their system. This concern is latent because Spruyt does not engage it directly, but present nonetheless because it is a fundamental purpose of political association. However, direct engagement of this problem not only strengthens the argument that Spruyt makes, but also speaks directly to those he argues against. This problem – the explanation – is violence.

Spruyt is not entirely to blame for his oversight. International relations as a discipline lacks an informed understanding of violence, its role in political life, or a vocabulary or methodology to describe it; instead, the discipline offers only a superficially compelling depiction of politics with little resonance to the lived experience thereof.

To that end, I argue that violence – more accurately, human fear of violence – is the basis of political life. Political associations are fundamentally mechanisms for the non-violent resolution of conflict. This claim is ideal, but also the best explanation for what people desire from, why they enter, and what sustains political associations. However, the benefits that accrue within political associations have an unintended external consequence: as violence *within* political associations is diminished, violence *among* associations is made easier. So the problem of international violence is at root a consequence of the problem of individual violence. That this is widely misunderstood explains both why states are very successful at war-making, and why that alone is an insufficient account of their origins.

This argument begins with – and draws heavily from – recent sociological work on violence, from which I derive an abstract concept of politics. I then revisit and reevalute Spruyt and others' accounts of the state and international system. Finally, I show how an understanding of violence should inform the study of international politics, connect that study to other sub-disciplines, and make its work relevant and useful to human society.

I. VIOLENCE AND POLITICS.

In most cases, violence enters the IR literature through a well-established theoretical lens; to call an instance of violence a "war" is to describe that event by shorthand for a complex of related ideas and theories – including, almost always, some notion of the state itself. This is, of course, a tautological

and unsatisfying way to proceed; it is instead far better to start with elemental, empirical phenomena and build from there. If war is the theory, violence is the reality.

I define violence *as injury and especially death to a human being*; this is deliberately generic and broad, to keep theory to a minimum, but also specific enough to be measurable. We generally know what a human being is and what counts as that being's death (on injury, more later); if not, we do not need a political theory to tell us. And while this may seem overly simplistic, there are yet nearly zero examples in the literature of studies that begin with violence as a pre-theoretic, empirical phenomenon. For example, Hannah Arendt in *On Violence* critiques the tendency among political scientists to conflate concepts like power, strength, force, authority, and violence (Arendt 1969, 43) – yet she also fails to offer a useful definition of violence.

The literature's indifference to violence is understandable – but not ideal – where the specific concern is violence among states. However, the argument I want to make is about violence *within* states, which depends on an argument about violence *among* people. So it is necessary to form some account of interpersonal violence; the canonical mantra of Hobbes's "war of all against all" is insufficient. Whether or not the Hobbesian analogy accurately describes states, it is still more instructive – and therefore interesting – to ask what role violence plays among human beings.

a. Micro-social foundations

Randall Collins, in his recent book *Violence*, offers an empirically-driven account of the origins and purposes of violence in human society. In a stroke against Hobbes, Collins argues that most observers miss a basic fact: humans find violence difficult *to perform*. Furthermore, this difficulty is intrinsic to what it means to be human: "... humans have evolved to have particularly high sensitivities

to the micro-interactional signals given off by other humans... [They] are hard-wired for interactional

entrainment and solidarity; and this is what makes violence difficult" (Collins 26-27). In a very

fundamental sense, humans do not want violence – neither as victim or perpetrator. In fact, argues

Collins, violence is marked by tension and fear "that comes not from concern for bodily pain; this is

something that people endure surprisingly easily" (Collins 198). Instead, the tension and fear is caused

by their own reluctance to commit violence, so that people will often refuse to act violently to avoid

violence against themselves. Collins supports his case with careful use of empirical evidence –

including an extensive collection of photographs and incident reports – and demonstrates that violence

is much rarer and more dependent on social context than is popularly believed.

Collins focuses on violence as a micro-sociological phenomenon, asking how and why

individuals engage in violent acts. Most episodes of violence are not simply for violence's sake; rather,

violence serves an instrumental purpose. According to Collins, "Violence is a set of pathways around

confrontational tension and fear" (Collins 8). Confrontational tension and fear are a fundamental

problem of human social life, a problem sometimes resolved through violence - but not always, or even

often: "The Hobbesian image of humans, judging from the most common evidence, is empirically

wrong" (Collins 11). The Hobbesian image is further refuted by anthropological evidence of human

society, of which there are demonstrable (albeit rare) examples that are effectively "warless".

Moreover, among stateless societies,

> there are relatively few cases—only about 6 percent—in which warfare is continual and peace almost
> unknown. It is only in this relatively small percentage of cases that something approximating a
> Hobbesian social condition of pervasive and unending warfare can be found. […]
>
> Hobbes thus glosses over the most prominent feature of warfare in stateless societies, namely, the fact
> that is is episodic and typically alternates with periods of peace (Kelly 124)

Not only is Hobbes wrong about humans, but also wrong about the effects of institutions on human

violence:

> If human beings have evolved on the physiological level to be full of confrontational tension when they encounter another human in an antagonistic mode, the development of violence in human history must be due to the social evolution of techniques for overcoming confrontational fear. [...]
>
> The old-fashioned usage of 'evolutionary' to mean progress does not fit well with the historical pattern of violence; if there is a historical pattern, it is that the capacity for violence has increased with the level of social organization. Violence is not primordial, and civilization does not tame it; the opposite is much nearer the truth. (Collins 28-29)

Apart from his dim view of civilization, Collins's work is otherwise micro-sociological, and therefore not concerned with the macro-social or institutional implications of violence. Yet his work suggests two relevant implications.

b. Violence and politics

First, it is clear that violence cannot be the only "set of pathways around confrontational tension and fear". The tension and fear that arises when humans come into conflict does not simply disappear when it does not result in violence. There are other ways to resolve confrontational tension and fear that do not require the injury or death of one party to the conflict, and among those mechanisms are a large number that can be described as "political" – namely, the various institutions and rules by which the members of a society reconcile their conflicts with one another. In fact, one of the primary features of political association is to provide its members with alternatives to the violence they do not want to perform. This bears slight echoes of Hobbes – that the reason people enter into commonwealth "is the foresight of their own preservation, and a more contented life thereby" (Hobbes 129) – but also again a refutation. It is not true, as Hobbes claims, that "men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company, where there is no power able to over-awe them" (100); nor is it true that "covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all" (129). Instead,

following Collins, the latent threat of violence is not necessary to prevent most people from committing

violence rather than honoring their covenants; they prefer covenants to violence in the first place.

Covenants are not primarily *a threat of* violence, but instead *an alternative to* violence. A desire to

avoid violence is all that is necessary to establish political covenants – to bring people together in

political association. So political association (or polity) can be understood as the set of rules to which a

group of people assents in order to resolve conflicts without violence. This is not to say that the

formation and maintenance of a given polity does not involve coercion – it frequently does. But

coercion is not a necessary characteristic of polities, at least in the abstract.

By this understanding, a given association is only as strong as its pathways around conflict; if

the members of a polity lapse into violence, that polity has failed. This is not to say that polities are

non-violent. Members may not act violently against one another as individuals, but they may act

against members as a polity. If the former is the goal of political association, it is an unintended

consequence thereof that the latter becomes easier the more unified the polity is. The reason violence

becomes easier for polities is the same reason violence becomes easier in non-political groups: the

"audience effects" that amplify or diminish violence. Collins explains that energized, approving crowds

help sustain combat by giving combatants the energy they need to overcome their own fear and tension

over active violence (Collins 198-207). This leads Collins to suggest for micro-social settings:

> Be aware of the influence that audiences have on whether a fight will become serious, mild, or abort. As
> an audience, we have great influence on fights that happen in our presence, at least if the numbers of
> antagonists is below about five on a side. The crowd has a big effect in providing the emotional support
> to overcome confrontational tension; if we don't provide it, fights tend to peter out. (Collins 466).

Though this might work for situations in which the audience and antagonists are distinct, in politics the

audience and the antagonists are often the same group of people. This enables the polity to perform –

and legitimize – violence as a polity, which few of its members would be willing to perform as

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individuals. Yet this violence is difficult nonetheless; it often requires its agents and victims to interact

face-to-face.

c. Violence and the state

The second implication of Collins's work is that the modern state represents a very high level of

development in the capacity for violence. This is entirely consonant with Weber's definition of the state

as "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force

within a given territory" (Gerth & Mills 78). Giddens, in his work on violence and the state, further

refines Weber's definition:

> The nation-state, which exists in a complex of other nation-states, is a set of institutional forms of
> governance maintaining and administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries
> (borders), its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external
> violence. (Giddens 1987, 121)

Among its refinements, Giddens's definition draws a helpful distinction between *internal* and *external*

violence. Within states, it is necessary to have associational control over the internal means of violence

in order to relieve them of the tension and fear that would otherwise be a major obstacle to

associational life. Thus monopoly over the means of violence would be necessary for the state (as for

other polities) even were there no external threat to its existence. The internal result of this monopoly –

when effective – is what Giddens calls "internal pacification", a process which "...involves several

related phenomena, all to do with the progressive diminution of violence in the internal affairs of

nation-states" (1987, 187). Internal pacification in turn "radically lessens the dependence of the state

apparatus upon the wielding of military force as the means of its rule" (Giddens 1987, 192). For

Giddens, the maturation of the state as an institutional form is marked by a decreasing resort to

violence in its internal affairs; this is not surprising if the goal of such institutions was in the first place

the avoidance of violence. If the goal is instead only the success of the claim to monopoly over the means of violence, there should be no reason for the state's decreasing use of violence internally.

The "means" of violence includes weapons, but is more importantly the capacity to mobilize individuals to commit violence. How does the state convince people to do that which they are afraid of doing? In large part, mobilization is simply the process of cultivating and sustaining a supportive audience for those who will commit violence. Whatever violence a state commits, the act itself is typically committed by a very few people; what makes it an act of the state is the legitimacy and support (even if tacit) granted by members of the polity. The exact methods by which states cultivate this support are myriad, with the specifics dependent on the polity, but some capacity for mobilization is necessary for the state to successfully maintain control over the means of violence within its territory. However, the means of violence are not often neatly divided into internal and external capacities; a monopoly on internal violence implies a capacity for external violence as well. When polities commit this violence, it is often called war.

d. Violence and war

There are, of course, several sorts of external violence that a polity might commit. Different sorts of conflicts in different contexts generate different kinds of violence, including war. Thus it is important to define war specifically, so as to distinguish it from other sorts of violence. Kelly suggests seven criteria for the definition of war:

> 1. Collective armed conflict
> 2. Collectively sanctioned by participant's community
> 3. Morally justified in participants' viewpoint
> 4. Participants esteemed by others of their collectivity
> 5. Entails organized, planned, premeditated attack(s)
> 6. Serves identifiable instrumental objectives
> 7. Social substitution governs the targeting of individuals for lethal violence

(Kelly 7)

I will revise these only slightly. In particular, items 3 and 4 are easily folded into item 2; it is difficult to

imagine a form of violence which is collectively sanctioned by a community but not morally justified

by the participants, nor are those participants held in esteem by others. It is also helpful to make

explicit the external nature of war's targets; wars can occur within states, but always between two

polities. So by my definition, war is or involves:

1. Collective armed conflict
2. Collectively sanctioned by the participant's community (or polity)
3. Organized, planned, premeditated attack(s)
4. Aimed at identifiable instrumental objectives
5. Targets of violence are outside the community (or polity)
6. Governed by social substitution in targeting of individuals for lethal violence

In either list, social substitution is "the hallmark of war" (Kelly 140); individuals of a given group are

considered equally legitimate targets for lethal violence, even if they were not a party to the original

conflict; violence against a member individual is considered violence against the group. Thus war is

"cognitively and conceptually... between groups" (Kelly 5).

Where external violence is concerned, similar dynamics pertain as do for internal violence – the

polity is both audience and antagonist – but with important differences. First, the state lacks the

inhibition against face-to-face violence that nearly all of its members possess. The very size of many

states puts their citizens so far away from the actual conflict that they have little inhibition against

advocating for violence they would not themselves be able to commit. Collins notes

> the higher degree of rhetorical ferociousness found in the rear combat areas and at home,
> compared to soldiers at the front. I would interpret this to mean the tension is inhibiting their
> conflict behavior so little, not because they are unaware of their human targets, but because they
> are not in a bodily face-to-face situation with them (Collins 77-78).

Not only do polities not share the human aversion to violence: that aversion in humans has become a

liability for the state. Collins discusses at length SLA Marshall's study of soldiers in combat – and similar research – which showed the great difficulty front-line troops had in committing violence effectively in the Second World War: despite massive popular support for the war, infantrymen still had difficulty shooting their rifles, even more so shooting to kill. This was, from the state's point of view, problematic; Marshall's study convinced the U.S. Army to change its training to encourage more firing, and subsequently firing rates increased significantly (Collins 51). Indeed, much of the violence in the last century can be attributed to the success of states' efforts to increase the distance – physical or emotional – between soldiers and their targets. Collins points out that

> operators of bombers, long-distance ballistic missiles, and artillery achieve the highest rates of fire, and have the highest willingness to kill the enemy; for them, the target is most depersonalized, even though they may well have an explicit cognition of the human casualties they are causing (Collins 77).

These technologies in effect make it easier to commit violence by avoiding the confrontational tension of face-to-face encounters. As Rapaport puts it: "the dehumanization of war in the sense of making emotions associated with war irrelevant remains the principal result of sophisticated technology. It is no longer necessary to hate anyone in order to kill everyone" (428).

The second difference is that polities – and states specifically – have a greater potential for violent conflict than an unaffiliated group of individuals might. When persons join together in political association, any conflict one of them has outwith that polity has the potential to escalate into a conflict for the entire polity; the institutions that bind people together in non-violent polity also connect them to conflict outside the polity that they might otherwise ignore. In anthropologic language, "vengeance requirements ensure that one death leads to another and organizational features engender the alliance of clusters of local communities that both externalize armed conflict and augment the scale of units involved" (Kelly 146). However, the organizational features of such polities offer little means to resolve external conflicts – in fact, the polity is likely to make it worse. When a polity does become

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activated in conflict, "audience effects" – as discussed above – make it relatively easy for the polity to

amplify that conflict into violence. This is obviously closely related to the previous two facets; the

"rhetorical ferociousness" Collins notes is also evidence of amplification.

The point of political association is to reduce the need for violence internal to the polity; the

consequence is that external violence becomes easier for the polity. Where the state is concerned,

violence is so much easier that it becomes second nature. Tilly surveys the result:

> This massive domestic pacification does not mean, however, that violence has disappeared from Western countries. The same countries that so effectively brought down frequencies of homicide, assault, and violent struggles for local political power also built the world's greatest and most destructive military forces. (Tilly 2003, 61)

The fact that states make war – or even that states find war easy – is not evidence that they are made for

war; if violence has come to be second nature for the states, it has not yet overwhelmed their first

nature.

II. THE NATURE OF THE STATE

Contra Spruyt, a proper understanding of violence and the polity provides the "evaluative

mechanism of the rationale" of political association. In general, polities develop in response to conflict

in society; this response can be evaluated in terms of its success at providing alternatives to violence.

When extant polities are no longer adequate to the conflict within, they adapt – or fail. In specific

instances, the particulars of societal conflict inform the organization of the polity, which can then be

evaluated in terms of that conflict and resulting violence.

a. Rise of the State

In the late medieval period, a number of simultaneous and intersected changes began to

challenge and undermine the feudal polity. Economic transformation, as Spruyt argues, was among

these changes; "The result of this economic dynamism was that a social group, the town dwellers, came into existence with new sources of revenue and power which did not fit into the old feudal order" (Spruyt 1994b 62). But economic changes were not the only source of conflict; there were also religious, technological, and intellectual changes that accompanied and affected the economic dynamism of the era. Specifically, the invention of the printing press, the Reformation, and new innovations in military technology also shaped the process that lead to the emergence and consolidation of the sovereign state in Europe.

For its effect on other aspects of European societies, the invention of the printing press was among the most crucial events in the late medieval period. The feudal order was based in part on the church's monopoly on knowledge and learning. Kings and princes depended on literate clerics for record-keeping and communication; government and the Church thus maintained an intimate relationship. The printing press not only minimized rulers' need for clerics in court, but also diminished their control over information. Writes Eisenstein, "when functions" – meaning the production of books – "were transferred from churchmen to lay commoners, the balance between the three estates was changed in a way that undermined traditional hierarchies" (406). This shifting balance helped lead to the Reformation, but not only that: "Scattered attacks on one authority by those who favored another provided ammunition for a wholesale assault on all received opinion" (Eisenstein 125). The result was conflict – often violent – driven in part by the Protestant challenge, but fueled by a broad crisis of authority and legitimacy. Nowhere is the crisis more visible than in the series of peasant revolts that arose towards the end of the 1450-1650 period; these revolts were widespread, and mostly irrespective of irrespective of religious faction (Schulze 1984). In fact, "The universality of revolution in the seventeenth century suggests that the European monarchies, which had been strong enough to absorb

so many strains in the previous century, had by now developed serious structural weaknesses: weaknesses which the renewal of general war did not cause, but merely exposed and accentuated" (Trevor-Roper 50). Meanwhile, changes in military technology "helped to tip the balance of power within each European state away from the nobility and in favor of the crown" (Rice 10). All this pointed to massive, systemic reorganization of European polities.

These changes lead directly to the Thirty Years' War. Granted that feudal political institutions in Europe were already sufficient to keep most people from committing violence; what changed in the late medieval period was that many people discovered they needed protection from violence. The state-as-protector bears resemblance to Tilly's description of states as "quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy" (1985, 169), but with the key difference that the potential for conflict in these societies was not a consequence of the state's own activities. Tilly has parts of the story entirely backwards: in his "idealized sequence, a great lord made war so effectively as to become dominant in a substantial territory, but that war making led to increased extraction of the means of war" (1985, 183) - but this assumes an extant polity available to engage in war; that is, the "great lord" must have had some means of mobilizing otherwise unwilling people to engage in violence. In this case, the distinction between internal and external is too fragile – but only because Tilly's account conflates the two (1985, 185).

External conflict is indeed a threat "created" by the state, but the sources of *internal* conflict and violence antedated the state. Tilly notes that "Early in the state-making process, many parties shared the right to use violence" (1985, 173 – he makes the point twice verbatim in the same paragraph). What destabilized this situation was not the diffuse right to commit violence, which had already existed for centuries. Instead, explosive growth in the potential for conflict meant that many parties not only had

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the right, but also *the motive* to use violence. New religious beliefs required new institutions to stem

sectarian conflict; new armaments required new ways of protecting a populace. Printers sought

guarantee that their presses would not be destroyed by clerical censors, and merchants sought guarantee

of continued trade. The feudal order was insufficient to mitigate these conflicts; the transformation

came not from princes, but from polities themselves. That is to say, ordinary people often desired the

institutions that Tilly argues were forced upon them, even if they were not able to shape those

institutions directly.

    None of this is incompatible with Spruyt's account; the present goal is not to provide an

exclusive account of change in Europe, but to provide a *political* account of change in Europe.

Economic factors certainly influenced this change – new trading patterns required some guarantee that

merchants would not be robbed, cheated, or taxed into penury – but were not the sole motive force. In

fact, Spruyt drops tantalizing hints that the late medieval era saw problems more dire than coinage:

traders "prefer institutions that protect them physically" (1994a, 531), feudalism entailed "private

possession of the means of violence" (536), and business could be a "sometimes dangerous affair"

(538). Indeed, even a strictly economic account of this era has to acknowledge the high transaction

costs of "outright predation by robbers and local lords" (535).

    Where external violence is concerned, Spruyt criticizes accounts centered on "the growth and

extractive capacities of government" (550); he grants "there is little doubt that protracted conflict"

shaped the emergence of states, but asks "why did this particular form of state prevail?" (551) This is

an apt criticism and Spruyt is correct to look inwards of the state for his answer. He argues that "the

ability to wage war cannot explain why so many small territorial states survived", and that a better

account – his account – of the success of the state emphasizes "the effectiveness and efficiency of

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particular institutional arrangements in mobilizing and rationalizing their domestic economies" (552).

However, this is more broadly true: the success of the state can also be explained by mobilization and

rationalization of domestic ideologies, identities, technologies – as well as economies. What is common

to all these explanations is the potential for conflict and the threat of violence.

Spruyt concludes his account in general terms: "in the long run, sovereign authority proved to

be better at combating the fragmentation of feudal authority" (554), and that the "particular makeup of

the unit, specifically the sovereign territorial state, had external consequences" (556). He is correct in

his conclusions, but to arrive at these conclusions he has chosen a set of criteria that makes it difficult

to assess the "external consequences" of the sovereign state – consequences somewhat more

substantive than the disparate coinage. The present account fully affirms Spruyt's conclusions,

meanwhile offering useful insight into the nature and extent of the external consequences of

sovereignty. It is to those consequences that I now turn.

b. Sovereignty and violence

With the rise of Protestantism, the Roman church could no longer serve as the ultimate authority

for many of the people of Europe. Such people needed a new institutional framework under which to

resolve their conflicts. As feudalism gave way to the state, "the duty of personal loyalty of vassal to

lord" was easily transmuted into duty of allegiance of subject to "*territorial* monarchy", a "legacy of

ideas which emphasized the absolute character of government" (Brierly 4). Among these ideas was the

personification of the state; Bodin argued that what made a polity a state was "the unity of its

government" in a single authority – a person called "sovereign" (Brierly 8, 12). Early states were in

fact largely indistinguishable from their human rulers. Consider the extent to which the actual text of

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the Peace of Westphalia is concerned with persons mentioned by name*; the overwhelming sense of the document is that these were negotiations among specific individuals, not polities or states. As sovereigns, the parties at Westphalia were lords of larger territories, and recognized by their peers as the governments of those territories.

As other, less personal forms of governance emerged, they nonetheless retained this personified characteristic – called "sovereignty". As a consequence, the international system was premised upon and continues to maintain the assumption that states are a sort of artificial person. In *Leviathan*– published some three years after Westphalia – Hobbes wrote that the state was an "artificial man; though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which *sovereignty* is an artificial soul, giving life and motion to the whole body" [*sic*] (19). A hundred years later, Vattel describes the state as "a moral person", arguing that as such it was bound by the same natural laws that bind mankind in universal society:

> Since the object of the natural society established between all mankind is ― that they should lend each other mutual assistance, in order to attain perfection themselves, and to render their condition as perfect as possible, ― and since nations, considered as so many free persons living together in a state of nature, are bound to cultivate human society with each other, ― the object of the great society established by nature between all nations is also the interchange of mutual assistance for their own improvement, and that of their condition. (Vattel ss 12)

This continued even as constitutional governments emerged, with the "people as a whole" becoming sovereign in the writing of Locke and Rosseau (Brierly 14), so that even vast groups of people were personified as unitary entities.

Appealing as the metaphor of state as person may have been in the early modern era, it no longer bears any weight: the modern state is not person-like in any meaningful moral, physical, or functional way. Where once states were in effect real people – kings, princes, 'Lord Charles Lewis and

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*   e.g. Article XXIII, in full: "Reciprocally the Lord Charles Lewis and his Brothers shall render Obedience, and be faithful to his Imperial Majesty, like the other Electors and Princes of the Empire; and shall renounce their Pretensions to the Upper Palatinate, as well for themselves as their Heirs, whilst any Male, and lawful Heir of the Branch of William shall continue alive." (Avalon 2009)

his Brothers', et cetera – they are no longer so; with the emergence of modern capitalism and economic

participation came mass politics (Giddens 1987, 67) and the consequent diminishment of whatever

personal qualities the state may have had. (Granted, a few states are still ruled by very specific real

persons). The personification of the state is not, as Carr claims, "an indispensable tool devised by the

human mind for dealing with the structure of a developed society"(Carr 148-149), but a thin analogy

that obscures by assumption what should be determined by examination: namely, the form and function

of the state as a political association, and its efficacy as an instrument of developed society in

protection and defense of natural persons.

Yet sovereignty – the personification of the state – is the "constitutive rule of the system"

(Spruyt 1994a, 557). This, writes Brierly,

> has been a disaster for international law. By teaching that the 'natural' state of nations is
> independence which does not admit the existence of a social bond between them [it is]
> impossible to explain to explain or justify their subjection to law; yet their independence is no
> more 'natural' than their interdependence. (Brierly 40)

More generally, this has been a disaster for international relations. The state lacks the internal check on

violence innate to nearly every real person, and is more likely to amplify conflict into violence; the

kinds of "pacts and covenants" which might suffice to bind humans together peaceably cannot suffice

to regulate the external behavior of states. Moreover, mass politics and the unitary nature of the state

have led quite naturally to a broadening in the scope of social substitution in lethal violence. Where

violence might have been limited to the armies of the warring parties, antagonists came to view the

entire state – soldiers, rulers, and citizens – as legitimate targets. Rapaport attributes this to the wake of

the French Revolution, calling it "patriotism" and democratization (426); these are words generally

associated with more beneficial aspects of the state, but in this case the essential logic informs the

rationale that makes the use of atomic weapons on civilian populations a possibility in modern warfare.

That the option has only been exercised twice might reflect diminished support for state violence in the developed world, but in no way changes the fundamental problem: a polity of states predicated on the sovereignty of its members is likely to fail – in significant, sometimes spectacular fits of violence.

III. VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Against Spruyt's lament, I have argued that violence – or the avoidance thereof – is a fundamental rationale for political association, and thus violence is an appropriate way to explain and evaluate those associations. This has obvious implications for the study of international relations, but it is also has implications for political science more broadly. Finally, it has implications for the normative intent of political science and its relationship to the practice of politics.

a. Violence and International Relations

As is true for Spruyt specifically, the problem of violence is consequential for IR more generally where the discipline borrows from economics. These borrowings come through two ports-of-entry; first, in the classical liberal theory that economic interdependence diminishes the likelihood of war; second, in the structural realist portrait of states as rational, unitary actors. In the first case, the problem is that economic exchange is just one of the many interactions which might lead to conflict; such exchanges may make war less acceptable, but they are no substitute for deliberate, institutional pathways around violence. In the second case, the structural portrait requires willed ignorance both of the interests of the people within the state, and the failure of the Hobbesian analogy of states as persons.

But if violence undermines some central tenets of IR theory, it also offers a broad and deep research agenda that not only reorients the major theoretical perspectives, but demands they

communicate directly. The principal advantage of an appropriate understanding of violence is that violence, at its most basic, is simple to measure: one only has to count the bodies, which at least a half dozen institutes and organizations are dedicated to doing already. That this concrete definition of violence is exogenously given puts the subject beyond the intra-theoretical debates that sometimes fragment and paralyze the field. However, the secondary advantage of a focus on violence is that it also defines a neutral space in which disparate theories can debate and argue – specifically over the question, what *else* counts as violence? Although death is inarguably violence, this is the only fixed boundary on a considerable range of events that might be considered "violent"; the definition of the second boundary is a theoretical question. Strict empiricists might argue that only death counts as violence, but critical theorists might argue that all sorts of emotional and psychic harms count as violence, too. Yet some definition of what counts as violence ought to be part of the ontological foundation of any theory of international politics, thereby providing a means to evaluate theories as well as polities.

Violence not only offers a unifying vocabulary for disparate view of IR; it suggests concrete problems and questions for the discipline to solve. One of the problems of current efforts to measuring state violence is that they count only those killed in war. This is – as I have argued – a post-theoretic distinction couched in a latent theory of international politics, which ignores potential connections among the various possible kinds of violence states may perpetrate. For example, if extra-state violence is a manifestation of the audience effect created within states, then it is likely that other forms of violence within the state also demonstrate that dynamic. Since audience effects vary – whether towards encouraging or discouraging violence – it seems likely that not all states will display the same attitudes towards violence. However, it is even more likely that a given polity will hold similar attitudes

towards state-sanctioned violence internally and externally; internal violence should correlate strongly with external violence. Where war is the principal manifestation of extra-polity violence, capital punishment is the principal manifestation of internal state-sanctioned violence; by Kelly's criteria, only the social substitutability of targets distinguishes war from capital punishment (Kelly 7). Meanwhile, Giddens argues that one striking aspect of the maturation of the state is "the disappearance of violent forms of punishment associated with the legal system" (Giddens 1987, 187), especially capital punishment. If that process affects any of the criteria common to both war and capital punishment, then it should lead to a demonstrable change in both forms of violence. A full test of this hypothesis is beyond the scope of this paper, but a sketch is entirely feasible.

Dozens of states have abolished capital punishment for all crimes, especially in the last few decades. The combination of data on abolitionist states (ie. non-death-penalty-using states, per Amnesty 2008) and interstate violence (Correlates 2008) serves as a rudimentary test of the hypothesis that audience effects extend across states' domestic and foreign activities. A few states – mostly in Latin America – abolished capital punishment for all crimes prior to World War II, but after 1945 more states joined them: by 1970, there were at least 15 abolitionist states; by 1980, at least 22; by 1990, at least 35; and by 2001 some 77 states had abolished capital punishment for all or ordinary crimes. In terms of observations by state and year between 1945 and 2001, some 5039 state-years were for states with capital punishment and some 1253 state-years were abolitionist. (The latter does not include the 29 states that were considered de facto abolitionist by 2001.) Table 1 shows the incidence of war and use of force (COW "hostlevel" codes 4 and 5, respectively) in militarized interstate disputes between 1945 and 2001. Preliminary analysis shows this results to be significant and robust to various definitions of abolitionist and violence.

TABLE 1. ABOLITIONIST AND DEATH PENALTY STATES' WAR AND USE OF FORCE, 1945-2001

	State-Years	War-Years	Proportion(War)	Force-Years	Proportion(Force)
Abolitionist	1253	26	.021	223	.180
Death Penalty	5039	257	.051	1738	.344
Abol. % of total	19.9%	9.2%	--	11.4%	--

Table 1 shows that abolitionist states are responsible for a smaller share of violence in the international system than states with capital punishment. The data also show that since 1945 no two abolitionist states have fought a war against one another. Moreover, of the 11 wars fought by abolitionist states, three were Israel fighting against its neighbors; Israel still retains the death penalty for extraordinary crimes. At least two other observations were states that joined wars as allies of the United States; it is not clear from the data whether any war was initiated by an abolitionist state.

Again, this is only a sketch – but it suggests quite strongly that there is an important ideational component among the correlates of war. A more ambitious study might attempt to include measures of incarceration rates or structural violence in such a comparison, to determine whether these phenomena are indeed related to interstate violence. Other potential research might examine whether wars between non-state polities – including polities within states – are less violent than wars between states, as this study implies they should be.

Even if war is endemic to the international system, there should be at least echoes of political pathways in the peaceful interactions of states; if war is the "malfunctioning of a system", then "how are these parts supposed to interact 'normally'?" (Rapaport 539). This is a question for which IR still has no answer, yet relations between political associations have always possessed some means of peacemaking as a hedge against annihilation: "a capacity to maintain or reestablish peaceful relations is critical to group survival because armed conflict would otherwise be additive and irreversible" (Kelly

146). Discerning and describing that capacity should be an explicit goal of IR, as it is implicitly for other sub-disciplines of political science.

b. International Relations and Political Science

In his book, "The Nation-State and Violence", the second volume in a planned trilogy, Anthony Giddens asks: "What would the 'good society' look like in respect to control of means of violence?" (Giddens 1987, 326)* . Giddens asks what should be a central question for international relations, but also political science more broadly; in this respect, an appreciation of violence can serve as a unifying agenda within the now-dispersed sub-disciplines of political science. But while international violence will long be important to the discipline, its true focus is – and should be – politics. One of the shortcomings of the IR as currently construed is that it lacks a definition of politics that might connect it to other sub-disciplines. This is partly due to the fact that violence has an immediacy for IR that it does not for the study of American politics, or political theory; thus political science has a number of definitions for its domain, some are which are incoherent, many of which are incompatible – and few of which identify a rationale for political association, much less violence.

Indeed, few of the extant definitions of politics require any sense of violence. For example: Weber, more concerned than most with violence, defines politics as "any of kind of independent leadership in action" (Gerth & Mills 77);   Morgenthau writes that "all politics is a struggle for power" (29). More recently, Tilly has described politics as those activities in which "relations of participants to governments are always at stake" (Tilly 2003, 26). Arendt begins with the suggestion that "Politics deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men", but then argues , "the meaning of politics

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*Although he promised to answer the question in a third volume, Giddens never wrote it – "just went on to other things" (Giddens 2008). Political scientists ought to be grateful for his oversight; it might be embarrassing were a sociologist to answer a question of such importance to our field.

is freedom" (2005, 108). These are all helpful, but insufficient. To define politics in terms of power, leaders, governments, or freedom is to define a process by its product – much akin to the problem of defining states by their wars. The problem is that this definition cannot detect failures of the process: if there is no product, the definition says there was no process. Politics might create power, but might limit power; politics might beget leadership and government, but might lead to fragmentation. Politics might lead to freedom, but also might lead to slavery.

But if politics are more broadly "the pacts and covenants" that people join as a means to mitigate conflict – and especially to avoid violence – then here is a definition that both reflects what people want from political association and allows them to fail in their efforts to build those associations. Arendt comes close in writing, "the task, the end purpose of politics, is to safeguard life in the broadest sense" (Arendt 2005, 115). Mouffe comes closer, defining politics as "the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality [*sic*] provided by the political" (9). However, my is that conflict is a consequential, rather than "constitutive", dimension of human society – and thus rejects the notion that politics can be understood primarily in terms of a friend/enemy distinction. Politics might create enemies, but might not.

This definition – politics as the institutions people create and sustain to mitigate conflict - not only helps reorient the study of international politics, but also helps identify what is useful and transferrable from other sub-disciplines. To the extent sub-state politics offer pathways around violence apart from the state, studies of these politics – necessarily outwith IR – could be useful in understanding international politics. To the extent that pathways around violence require something like a state, the various ways in which states are organized should be useful in understanding the future and

potential for international organization. If nothing else, it should now be clear that war is *not* the

extension of politics by other means (cf. Mearsheimer 375), but the failure of politics among states.

c. International Relations and humans

My claim that an understanding of violence should be the basis of IR deliberately implies that a

better understanding of alternatives to violence should be an aim of the discipline. This is a normative

claim; it is not, however, the sort of "personal value judgment" that Weber warns against (146). If

violence is the failure (or absence) of politics, there is no reason to grant the former privilege over the

latter. Instead, the promotion of that which is beneficial over that which is detrimental to human life

serves to connect political science to other sciences concerned with human beings - including medicine,

psychology, sociology, and (yes) economics.

For many IR scholars, the assumption of the state as a person above persons has come to imply

that the state's use of violence is beyond judgment. Their desire to maintain objectivity is

understandable, but often too far gone in pursuit of an erroneous ideal of science. It is not the case that

reserving judgment as to the legitimacy of claimants in a conflict requires withholding judgment as to

the means used to conduct that conflict. The former is the objectivity necessary to a science of

international relations; the latter is an artifice of neutrality. "Objectivity is by no means identical with

moral neutrality" (Rapaport xvii) – nor are they corequisites. In contrast, epidemiologists and other

medical scientists have no difficulty remaining objective in their work, while judging disease to be a

problem in need of solution; in fact, such scientists typically believe their work useful only insofar as it

benefits humankind, and that it would be unethical to behave otherwise. Even economists possess a

latent normative benchmark, described by Coase as "total social product" (192), by which to judge

economic institutions by their benefit to human society. Yet scholars of International Relations

commonly assume that their focus on the system of states exempts them from any duty to the welfare of the human beings who sustain those states. The result is that International Relations is the only science (that I am aware of) in which the death of thousands of humans is not problematic.

Thus IR has lost sight of the "popular demand" (Carr 2) by which it came into being; if anyone looks to political science to produce an 'evaluative mechanism' of the rationale of the state, they are so far disappointed. The sorts of questions that gave rise to the discipline – why so much war? what can we do about it? - are commonly dismissed as not objective enough for science. Yet in privileging the state over its constituents, IR has abrogated its responsibility to provide objective evaluation of states and their system; the discipline has in many respects become a defense and refuge for the state, and its servant. A more useful discipline could address both the reasons why states fail to protect their constituents from violence and the improvement of their ability to do so. This would be an appropriate response to "popular demand", entirely in accord with norms of scientific objectivity elsewhere. Real persons generally wish to avoid violence, even if they do not have any institutions which are entirely successful in that respect; this is (or should be) a fundamental fact of International Relations.

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