



Causes and cures VI: The political science and economics of violence[☆]



Bandy X. Lee

Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 30 January 2016
 Received in revised form 30 April 2016
 Accepted 3 May 2016
 Available online 4 May 2016

Keywords:

Violence studies
 Interpersonal violence
 Collective violence
 Political science
 Economics

ABSTRACT

The past two years have been a landmark moment for violence prevention, with the publication of *The Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014*; a historic resolution on violence by the 67th World Health Assembly; and the release of multiple documents on violence by international and United Nations entities, with a corresponding building of momentum in scholarship. Most notably, in September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, addressing the need for violence prevention at an unprecedented scale. In this context, more than ever, violence studies have become a field of its own right. Still, a systematic approach of the topic has been lacking, and no textbook yet synthesizes the knowledge of multiple disciplines toward a cogent understanding. This article is the sixth of a series of fifteen articles that will cover, as an example, an outline of the Global Health Studies course entitled, “Violence: Causes and Cures,” reviewing the major bio-psycho-social and structural–environmental perspectives on violence. Political and economic forces have become potent contributors to human behavior and societal organization, such that we cannot leave them out in any analysis of violence. While a major contribution of political science has been to bring together scholars of different fields, economics has endeavored to bring about a coherent theory for the link between income measures and conflict or behavioral violence. These fields thus provide useful insight into the causes and consequences of violence as well as, in many cases, their solutions.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

Article	103
1. Introduction	104
2. Evolution of the two disciplines	104
3. Political science theories	105
4. Economic perspectives	106
5. Conclusion	107
Acknowledgments	107
References	107

Article

We are living through a landmark moment for violence prevention. The past two years, especially, have seen an outpouring of documents reflecting a growing focus on the problem of violence and multilateral collaborations to solve it. In December 2014, for example, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the United Nations Development Program (WHO, UNODC & UNDP, 2014) joined forces to launch the *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014*, detailing the efforts of 133 countries to address

interpersonal violence. It is the first major report on violence since the *World Report on Violence and Health* (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002), an influential document that consolidated all the existing science on violence for the first time. In the same year, the 67th World Health Assembly (WHA, 2014) adopted a historic resolution addressing violence, bringing particularly to focus women, children, and other vulnerable members of the populations subject to systematic structural and institutional violence. Furthermore, *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data* (UNODC, 2014), *Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence against Children* (United Nations Childrens Fund [UNICEF], 2014a), *Ending Violence against Children: Six Strategies for Action* (UNICEF, 2014b), *Preventing Suicide: A Global Imperative* (WHO, 2014), and *Preventing Youth Violence: Taking Action*

[☆] [N.B.: This is a continuation of “The Causes and Cures of Violence” series.]
 E-mail address: bandy.lee@yale.edu.

and *Generating Evidence* (WHO, 2015), all appeared within a two-year time span, highlighting some of the major forms of violence. Most notably, on September 25, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations [UN], 2015), addressing the need for violence prevention at an unprecedented scale and recognizing the interdependence between sustained peace and sustainable development. In this context, more than ever, violence studies need to become a field of its own right, with university-level instruction capable of addressing the complexities and commonalities of the different forms of violence that have not unified due to existing disciplinary barriers. Meanwhile, ongoing worldwide events make all the more urgent the need for a cogent understanding of this all-important, life-or-death topic.

Over several issues, *Aggression and Violent Behavior* has graciously offered to publish a lecture series that has been implemented through the Global Health Studies Program at Yale College in a course entitled, “Violence: Causes and Cures.” While it does not purport to be the definitive sequence for reviewing all the major bio-psycho-social and structural–environmental perspectives on violence, it proposes a systematic approach. This article consists of the sixth of this fifteen article series, which carries the following order:

1. Introduction: Toward a New Definition
2. The Biology of Violence
3. The Psychology of Violence
4. The Symbolism of Violence
5. The Sociology and Anthropology of Violence
6. The Political Science and Economics of Violence (in this issue)
7. Structural Violence (in this issue)
8. Environmental Violence
9. Consequences of Violence
10. Criminal Justice Approaches
11. International Law Approaches
12. Public Health Approaches
13. Global Medicine Approaches
14. Nonviolence Approaches
15. Synthesis and Integration

1. Introduction

Peace is not an absence of war, it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice.

[Baruch Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (Spinoza, 1670)]

Political and economic forces have become potent contributors to societal organization and human behavior, such that we cannot leave them out in any analysis of violence. Political science and economics have thus made useful contributions to elucidating the relationship between these human structures and the phenomenon of violence. Political science as a field deals with systems of government and the analysis of political activity and political behavior. The study of violence in political science has undergone a boom in the past couple decades, catapulting from being a peripheral topic to one of its central concerns. Most notably, political science has been innovative in adopting a multi-disciplinary perspective, bringing together public health, economics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and history, to name just a few. It has, in a sense, done in practice what public health has attempted to accomplish in theory. As we have noted regarding the *bio-psycho-social–environmental* nature of violence (Lee, 2015), it is a very prudent method to adopt. Economics is a social science that describes the factors that determine the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. By focusing on how economies work and how economic agents behave and interact within them, the field of economics has made its analysis of the factors that contribute to human violence. As political forces are sometimes seen as the determinant for the distribution of power and resources, and economics now deals with the main

source of contemporary power, the theories about violence in these two fields have increasingly overlapped.

Political science has been adaptable in the face of the changing forms of human violence. Within the field, international relations were the first subfield to address the issue of violence systematically, and it has dealt largely with a particular form of organized violence: interstate war. However, as recent decades have seen a decrease in the incidence and casualties relating to classic forms of interstate violence, as well as in organized civil war violence, it has been shifting its focus (Urdal, 2006). At the same time as this decline, the threat of violence, its use for political ends, and its often unpredictable forms and consequences—such as those of terrorism—have become perhaps more pervasive throughout the world. Amid this landscape, political science has increasingly incorporated the broader literature on crime, gangs, riots, rebellion, revolutions, state repression, and genocide. It has thus been among the foremost to recognize that violence is by nature a multi-faceted, complex phenomenon that is impossible to understand only while combining the knowledge of multiple fields. As a result, political science has been instrumental in bringing together scholars of international security, area studies, comparative politics, development, ethnography, international law, and military studies. The field of economics has been making similar progress, but possibly in the opposite direction. Accumulating empirical data show an increasing link between income or growth measures and conflict or behavioral violence, for example, and the field has tried to advance theories along the lines of behavioral economics to provide explanations. While the simplicity of this method may at times seem to undermine the complex nature of violence, it also serves to highlight important systemic contributors of violence. In other words, human violence is not something that “just happens” and requires explanation, but economic problems and crises can become grounds for social disorder: a dwindling economy can give rise to violence, while violence can cause a complicating decline in peoples economic lives. Economic principles can thus be a useful elaboration on how human-created systems can influence violent behavior.

2. Evolution of the two disciplines

Although codified in the nineteenth century when all the social sciences were establishing themselves, the study of political science has ancient roots that trace back to the works of Chanakya, Plato, and Aristotle, from nearly 2500 years ago. Its origins lie in diverse fields such as political philosophy, moral philosophy, political theology, history, and political economy, among others that have concerned themselves with the characteristic determinants of an ideal state. The founder of modern political science is Italian diplomat Niccolò Machiavelli (1532). American political science broke from traditional fields of history and economics in the early twentieth century when there was a desire to advance a scientific study of politics (Gunnell, 2006). However, because political science essentially studies human behavior in the context of political situations, environments are often difficult to control, not to mention duplicate, which makes it an observational, not an experimental, science (Lowell, 1910). Political scientists have traditionally observed political elites and institutions, as well as individual and group behavior, to identify patterns, to draw generalizations, and to build theories of politics. The field further developed and formed a language after World War I (Blatt, 2009). Political science is more complex than the study of political history because it studies political activity, political behavior, and often the distribution of power and resources (Stoner, 2008). Meanwhile, since the 1950s and the 1960s, a behavioral revolution emphasizing the systematic and scientific study of political behavior, instead of institutions or legal texts (Converse, 1970; Dahl, 1961), led to the development of experimental political science (Druckman, Green, Kuklinski, et al., 2011). The late 1960s and the 1970s heavily applied deductive, game theory models that borrowed from economics to provide an analytic basis for studying political institutions and political

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/94451>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/94451>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)