What Constitutes the State's Culture of Political Violence?

JOANNA RAK[*]

Designing Peace: Cyprus and Institutional Innovations in Divided Societies

By Neophytos Loizides
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015, 264 pages, $75.00, ISBN 9780812247756.

Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations

Edited By Cristian Cantir *and* Juliet Kaarbo
New York and London: Routledge, 2016, 228 pages, $28.90, ISBN: 9781138653818.

Time, Temporality and Violence in International Relations: (De)fatalizing the Present, Forging Radical Alternatives

Edited By Anna M. Agathangelou *and* Kyle D. Killian
New York and London: Routledge, 2016, 342 pages, $160.00, ISBN: 9780415712712.

A culture of political violence is the configuration of factors which exist lastingly in a political subject's milieu, and determine if and to what extent the use of violence is acceptable to and allowable by this subject. This theoretical category is highly applicable to explain why some states, political groups, social movements, and individuals use political violence eagerly while others are reluctant to do so. Its model may consist of various analytical levels determined according to the type of its subject. This review article introduces and critically discusses recent contributions to studies on states' cultures of political violence. Their authors agree with the assumption that a culture of political violence cannot be directly measured; they have diverse analytical proposals for what variables should be taken into consideration when a model is constructed. *Designing Peace: Cyprus and Institutional Innovations in Divided Societies* by Neophytos Loizides concentrates on the analytical levels of domestic politics and international relations by showing the relationships between

* Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland

institutional innovations and designing peace processes. Although the same levels are covered by *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations* edited by Cristian Cantir and Juliet Kaarbo, they are elaborated in the latter from the perspective of different factors. The contributors scrutinize national role conflict in advanced democracies, thus shedding light on role contestation among political elites and between elites and the general public. In turn, *Time, Temporality and Violence in International Relations: (De)fatalizing the Present, Forging Radical Alternatives*, edited by Anna M. Agathangelou and Kyle D. Killian, offers important insights into political violence at the individual, social, and international relations level. Its authors delve analytically into the experiences and structures of political violence in relation to time, oppression, neo-colonization, slavery, war, poverty, and exploitation. These books differ considerably in terms of their methodological, theoretical, and empirical approaches towards individuals, society, domestic politics, and international relations as the analytical levels of the state's culture of political violence. This article summarizes them, and then provides an analysis and critical evaluation of their approaches by assessing their contributions to existing studies on the culture of political violence.

N. Loizides addresses the following research questions: Why do some societies choose federal or consociational institutions to accommodate ethnic or religious variety while oth-ers avoid doing so? How do postconflict societies combine such arrangements with reconciliation and other institutional mechanisms to support victim groups? What conclusions may be drawn from case studies (pp. 1-2) by examining the Cypriot case and comparing it with examples from Bosnia, South Africa, and Northern Ireland? *Designing Peace* deals with the failure to enter into a federal agreement in Cyprus in spite of considerable endeavors to that end since 1974. As Loizides shows, in contrast to other divided societies that transcended their stalemates, Cyprus has been divided for decades, even though the two communities have tentatively accepted the general conditions of reunification since the High-Level Agreements of 1977 and 1979. The federal vision has been shared but it has not been fulfilled. Moreover, the vision has been helping scale back the negative public sentiment toward the state history following the 1974 *de facto* partition of the island. The mediation attempts of the United Nations have so far failed to reunify Cyprus, despite the gradual rapprochement of Turkish and Greek Cypriots (p. 190). According to the study, an array of factors contributes vitally to a culture of political violence and leads the state and its citizens and denizens to the use of violence. On the analytical level of the state as the subject of international relations, practices of international conflicts resolution have to be considered. In turn, on the next analytical level, the organizational level of the state, factors include: the usage of physical violence by the state securi-

ty apparatus; the control of the state security apparatus by the judiciary, and the perpetration of extrajudicial actions; devolved use of violence; criminal justice system efficiency; the extent of performance of the state control tasks; the extent of impunity for past unlawful acts of physical violence; and public glorification of physical violence.

Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations' territorial research field embraces different states than those considered in *Designing Peace*. The authors carry out empirical research on Great Britain, France, Australia, Japan, Belgium, Turkey, the U.S., Libya, and Scotland to establish how to capture verbally what constitutes the state's culture of political violence. The major argument of the contributors is that a better conceptualization of the domestic political process in which national roles may be contested is crucial to tackling questions formulated by foreign policy analysis and international relations scholars. Roles are defined as social positions and socially recognized categories of actors that are constructed by ego and alter expectations regarding the purpose of an actor in an organized group. The expectations are about proper behavior in a social position, which come both from actors inside the state (ego expectations or national role conceptions) and from actors without (known as alters) (p. 17). The volume offers case studies which trace the occurrence of role contestation within domestic institutions or between elites and the public, follow its path

through the domestic political process, and assess the results. In contrast to Loizides, the authors focus on the type and the maturity of the political system when they evaluate the organizational level of the state as the determinant of a culture of political violence. Also unlike Leoizides, they draw attention to the analytical level of society and consider the extent of the intensity of social revitalization thought to be another determinant of the state's culture of political violence. There, revitalization consists in the approval by citizens and denizens to construct a more satisfying state.

Worth emphasizing is that all of the contributors use different methodological assumptions to examine the relations between the components of the state's culture of political violence and the use of violence. The authors of *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations* employ two methodological approaches to contribute to the conceptual framework of role theory. Here, the term 'theory' does not denote a unified theory but rather a set of concepts that have descriptive, organizational, and explanatory value (p. 21). It is not clear why the editors decided to use this umbrella term instead of the term of a nomological network. The first approach aims at identifying and defining roles. It consists in the application of content analysis to explore secondary literature, primary data collected by Nicole Koenig and Özgür Özdamar via interviews and secondary sources. The last-mentioned are cabinet notebooks, legislative debates, policy documents, pub-

lic statements, and surveys of public opinion (p. 19). The second approach aims to connect the roles with foreign policy behavior. The statistical and content analyses of the secondary literature are utilized to investigate what aspects of role contestation can contribute to the development of the role theory framework. Process tracing is useful to determine the casual mechanisms through which role contestation influences a state's foreign policy decision-making process or behavior (p. 20).

In *Designing Peace,* N. Loizides supports his arguments by presenting the Cypriot experience and comparing it to other divided societies. The author maintains that he uses three research methods: the crucial-case method, comparative historical analysis, and interpretative work. Nevertheless, the handbooks of social science methodology do not classify these as research methods but as ways of data devising. In fact the interpretation of data is a research duty, not a method. N. Loizides contrasts the island's power-sharing mediations to the cases he considers the most similar and the most different, while establishing variations within Cyprus at the level of communities, institutions, and political parties. Most or least likely cases to fulfill a theoretical prediction are defined as crucial. They are acknowledged as appropriate in analyzing institutional innovations in conflict-ridden societies because, in the author's view, they enable researchers to control for alternative explanations and reveal the mechanisms through which in-

stitutions interact with the most prohibitive conditions for peace (p. 14). As Loizides underlines, he conducts the historical analysis by drawing on archival material, parliamentary records, newspaper reports, surveys, interviews with political figures and opinion-makers, policy memos, feedback accumulated over years in debates over alternative institutional arrangements, and three authorial databases (p. 14). Nevertheless, firstly, the methods of data collection in these databases are not presented. Secondly, the criteria of the source selection are not introduced. Thirdly, the argumentation is mainly based on unmentioned secondary literature. Thus, the argumentation drawn on the material is unverifiable and therefore may not be considered a contribution to systematic research.

A. M. Agathangelou and K. D. Killian's volume differs from the others already discussed in its lack of methodological premises. The contributors discuss secondary literature and some examples but they avoid doing so systematically in the line of any methodological framework. In addition, unlike the other two works, *Time, Temporality and Violence in International Relations* brings together not only critical theorists but also artists and poets to deal with the temporal structure of the relationships between politics and violence, with a focus on the tensions between slavery, colonization, settler colonialism, and the postcolonial event. The territorial research field is constituted, as in C. Cantir, J. Kaarbo's and N. Leoizides's contributions, of the U.S., Africa, and

Japan and, unlike the other volumes, Palestine, and the European Union. Even though one may consider artists' and poets' voices to be inspiring, the authors go beyond the scope of scientific discussion of cultures of political violence on the grounds of their works' figurative nature.

Worth discussing, however, are the theorists' analyses. According to them, a disruption of dominant theorizations and their generated contingent influence begins by recognizing slavery, anticoloniality, settler colonialism, and postcoloniality as phenomena that linger as a series of events in time. Their articles challenge the idea of the West and the Global North as primary temporal analytical sites and their citizens and denizens as the agents of politics against which everybody else is to be temporally sequenced (p. 15). The contributors' goal is to uncover what it means to de-fatalize the present, to cease pretending to know the end both in terms of eradicating colonialism and liberating those who are subject to it. They thoroughly analyze how people take part in and disrupt such violent strategies and methods of expediency as the laws, constitutions, and democracies that abstract their common struggles, betraying them, and their lives. As they argue, by beginning with an examination of these shattering experiences of betrayal and avowed promises, one may identify how imaginations become captive and how the everyday politics of expediency re-animates dead paradigms, transforming the reified substrate logics that turn sites into catastrophe spheres marked

with death (p. 15). Importantly, when a culture of political violence is concerned, the articles collected in A. M. Agathangelou and K. D. Killian's book discuss the category on the level of society by distinguishing the extent of quality of life; revenge cult; the extent of marginalization of youth; social rewarding of the use of violence; limited social sanctioning of the unlawful use of physical violence; social construction of the enemy; social glorification of the use of violence; the breakdown of social capital; the sacralization of the use of violence by its religious justification; and on the individual level by pointing out the exposure to violence and the extent of trauma support. Noteworthy is that, in contrast to N. Loizides's, C. Cantir and J. Kaarbo's volumes, *Time, Temporality and Violence in International Relations* covers the individual level of factors which determine the state's culture of political violence.

The volumes employ analytical tools to examine the state's culture of political violence. *Designing Peace* structures and adopts a theoretical framework to account for why conflict-ridden societies opt for peace settlements for their states and avoid using political violence. It consists of five factors: the state of ethnic relationships, including how communities might have damaged these relations; crucial changes in the local socio-economic environment; hostile neighbors; support from friendly outside political subjects; and the society's responses to its ethnopolitical make-up and specific pitfalls (p. 12). These criteria are highly useful

to evaluate the attitudes toward practices of international conflict resolution. N. Loizides maintains that this framework involves existing scholarly debates in the field and is very relevant to intractable conflicts in which decisions on peace, power-sharing, and state failure are closely connected (p. 53). Nonetheless, his study omits the most important and classic works on this issue, such as Daniel Bar-Tal's articles on intractable conflicts, and does not take the dominant political thought and political regime contexts into consideration. Therefore, N. Loizides's assertions should not be taken for granted because, as the other books demonstrate, contexts are significant factors within which to evaluate the states' culture of political violence. They are identifiable on various levels. Firstly, the type of political regime matters when the state is assessed on its organizational level. The volume edited by C. Cantir and J. Kaarbo shows that advanced democracies, defined as states with institutional democracy and a high level of economic development and prosperity, differ from fragile democracies in terms of their willingness to use violence to achieve political goals. They prove that not only does the type of political regime matter when the state's culture of political violence is assessed, but also that the maturity level of the democracy should be investigated.

In turn, in *Time, Temporality and Violence in International Relations*, Andrew R. Hom and Brent J. Steele plausibly introduce how to examine cultural attitudes with a theoretical framework of the revitalization of political thought. They detail distinctive features of Self and Other discourses identifiable on the basis of the positive and negative valuating of own and foreign cultures (pp. 191–192). In the same book, Pinar Bilgin assumes that the tradition in Western social thought of treating one's contemporaries as belonging to the past, has created a double discourse comprising treatment of one's own past as producing a failure and relegating one's contemporaries to that past reality. The ways in which such a double discourse is mobilized in securing and insecuring people are the main concern of her contribution. She proposes the concept of temporalizing security to explore those dynamics unleashed by the temporalization of difference and the spatializing of time, whereby the insecurities of some people in some other places in the world are depicted as a passing phase, and violent practices toward them are warranted as the only available remedy (p. 221). Ultimately, the authors convincingly argue that the type of political thought may be evaluated according to the set of subject and temporal dimensions, and the type constitutes the important indicator of the state's culture of political violence.

As recent studies on the culture of political violence have revealed, although it is a useful explanatory category, it cannot be directly measured. Nevertheless, it may be elaborated according to the directions presented in the books under review. The variables introduced by the authors on the an-

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE STATE'S CULTURE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE?

alytical levels of international relations, domestic politics, society, and the individual make a welcome addition to the literature about the sources of political violence. They allow us to reach conclusions about cultures of political violence, characterize a latent variable (a culture of political violence), and form its model. The works under scrutiny suggest that one should include in such a model on the level of the state as the subject of international relations: practices of international conflicts resolution and responsivity to international organized crime perpetrated on state territory; on the organizational level of the state: the usage of physical violence by the state security apparatus, the control of the state security apparatus by the judiciary – extrajudicial actions, the devolved use of violence, criminal justice system efficiency, the extent of performance of state control tasks, the extent of impunity for past unlawful acts of physical violence, public glorification of physical violence, the type of political system; on the level of society: the extent of the intensity of social revitalization thought, the extent of quality of life, revenge cult, the extent of margin-

alization of youth, social rewarding of the use of violence, limited social sanctioning of the unlawful use of physical violence, the social construction of the enemy, the social glorification of the use of violence, the breakdown of social capital, the sacralization of the use of violence by its religious justification; and on the individual level: the exposure to violence and the extent of trauma support.

Summing up, the books present insightful discussions on the sources of political violence. Their authors comprehensively discuss the most significant factors on the level of the individual, society, domestic politics, and international relations, which may contribute to the construction of a model of a culture of political violence. Arguably, the works are highly recommendable to all those interested in formulating and applying the model of the state's culture of political violence as an explanatory framework for empirical research. They demonstrate an inspiring research field for scholars who intend to explain why some political subjects use violence while others avoid doing so. ■

2017 Spring **237**