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The paradox of political violence

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Abstract
This article explores the paradoxical relationship between politics and violence in the concept of political violence. By examining the works of prominent theorists, such as Hannah Arendt and Frantz Fanon, the article highlights both the difficulty of separating politics and violence, and the improbability of formulating a harmonious relationship between them. Engaging with some of Michel Foucault's work on power and violence, the article begins to formulate a theoretical approach that conceptualizes political violence in its inherently paradoxical condition.

Keywords
Foucault, political violence, power

This article contends that much of the work on political violence tends to analytically separate politics and violence, and circumvent their interconnectedness. I would argue that such a separation is indeed difficult to achieve theoretically, and that scholars may be better served by directly facing the paradox of political violence, whereby the interconnectedness between violence and politics is emphasized. The paradox of political violence basically refers to the notion that violence and politics are indeed opposites: the tendency of violence is to destroy politics, and the tendency of politics is to put an end to violence. Rather than use these assertions as the basis of analytical inquiry into political violence, however, this article maintains that underlining the interconnectedness between these two assertions better serves scholarly theorizations of political violence.

To illustrate this, I first engage with two seminal texts that conceptualize violence in instrumentalist terms and neatly separate violence and politics – Hannah Arendt's (1969) *On Violence* and Frantz Fanon's ([1961] 2004) *The Wretched of the Earth*. Rather than

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present an abstract outline of the instrumentalist perspective per se, a more specific engagement with these exemplary texts is more illuminative of the argument being advanced. While I discuss some of the differences between the two texts, I argue that they share one major similarity in that they both fail, analytically speaking, to accomplish a neat separation between violence and politics.

This will then lead onto the work of Mark Duffield (2001), which constitutes a different attempt of theorizing violence. I argue that while Duffield's work is helpful in thinking beyond a neat separation between violence and politics, his work ultimately does not speak enough to the paradoxical relationship between violence and politics, as it succumbs to the temptation of subordinating violence to a greater concept that would explain it. Once the difficulty of separating violence and politics has been illuminated, I unpack Michel Foucault's (2003) schemata for the analysis of power in *Society Must Be Defended*, and outline a viewpoint that emerges out of the schemata's interconnectedness. I assert that this leads to a view of a *flux* that is inherent to political violence. This idea of a flux essentially posits that political violence can neither be restricted within clearly demarcated theoretical boundaries, nor can it be analytically hypostatized and made free of restrictions; rather, the flux points towards a constant movement between political violence's paradoxical dual-form of politics ending violence and violence destroying politics. In short, the analysis opens the door to a theorization that moves in accordance with (rather than shying away from) the paradoxical condition of political violence.

The inseparability of violence and politics in political violence

In *On Violence*, Arendt argues, 'Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy ... Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it' (Arendt, 1969: 56). That is, when power (defined as the 'human ability not just to act but to act in concert' (p. 44)) cannot (for whatever reason) prevent the appearance of violence, we can only expect the emergence of more violence and not the reinstatement of an existing power or the emergence of a new power – in short, we cannot expect the emergence of the political in violence.[1] The main reason for this is that 'violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues' (p. 51). But Arendt maintains that violence is a peculiar instrument because it usually appears with power, even though the two are opposites (p. 52). This link stems from violence's appearance as a form of action that can disrupt the movement of the status quo (p. 30). However, since violence is primarily marked by its tools (i.e., its action is marked by human weapons and not by the act of group formation), it fails to disrupt the status quo in a positive or progressive manner – it inevitably leads to more destruction (pp. 52–3). Violence, thus, is the most dangerous means because the strength it can procure at the barrel of the gun is easily mistaken for power.

For Arendt, violence can only serve short-term goals, for 'violence does not promote causes, neither history nor revolution, neither progress nor reaction; but it can serve to dramatize grievances and bring them to public attention' (Arendt, 1969: 79). If violence is allowed to stretch its use in time, then this can only lead to more violence because

violence defeats power when it induces the end of the political, i.e. the end of our very ability to usher in the progressive and the new.[2]

Among other events of her time, the haunting spectre of Nazism in particular and totalitarian regimes in general, are at the heart of Arendt's conceptualization of violence (Birmingham, 2011: 12–14). Whether in her analysis of the Adolf Eichmann trial where the banality of evil is exposed (Arendt, [1963] 2006), or whether in her analysis of Nazi and Soviet totalitarian regimes where the delusion of their power is highlighted (Arendt, [1951] 1973), Arendt's conceptualization of violence continuously affirms the main point that violence is devoid of meaning – violence refers only to an evil that is in itself meaningless (Birmingham, 2011: 21–2). For Arendt, violence cannot itself explain the political institutions and movements of human history; violence is a mere tool that is limited and restricted to small, specific, and in the long run negligible (albeit sometimes devastating, horrific, and painful) roles (Arendt, 1969: 68–9). While Arendt's arguments regarding the Eichmann trial and the nature of totalitarian regimes are insightful, I think a more fruitful line of inquiry is found by engaging with one of the targets of her critique: Fanon. And so I turn to his work next in order to highlight what I think Arendt misses in her analysis: namely, a deeper explanation of an analytic that attempts to give at least a certain kind of violence a more prominent role in the explanation and institution of political movements and formations.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon situates the question of violence within the interplay between colonizer and colonized. The relationship between the two is born of violence and is maintained by it (Fanon, [1961] 2004: 2–3). Violence and exploitation are the key features of this colonial system, and one cannot do away with these features unless one destroys the entire system. There is no room for reform in Fanon on this question: the colonial system can only be removed by outright destruction. The violence of decolonization will: (1) destroy the colonial system and expel the colonizer as colonizer, which does not mean expelling individuals based on their race or nationality; (2) create a new social and political unity that is worthy of the precepts of freedom and liberty it evokes; and (3) restore the humanity of each colonized individual (pp. 6–10). Succinctly put, the colonized must revert to violence, not to 'bring a grievance to the public's attention' as Arendt would have it in her restricted and short-term sense, but to destroy the ruthless colonizer and revive the humanity of the colonized.

Fanon is not urging on violence unreflectively.[3] His discussion on 'spontaneous' and 'guided' violence brings out the complexities he is attempting to deal with. Fanon first speaks of the spontaneous violence of the 'rural masses [who] have never ceased to pose the problem of their liberation in terms of violence' (p. 79). These are the groups who receive the worst treatment that colonialism has to offer, and they respond with all of their strength to fight the injustices and violence wrought upon them without any plan or leadership. They act simply because that is what their condition demands of them. But on their own, such forces cannot and should not last for Fanon. They cannot last because the colonizer has recourse to many more resources and can easily outlast them (pp. 86–7). They should not last because their violence is too easily embroiled in revenge and feelings of hatred, rather than the more important and higher ideal of national liberation (p. 89). Therefore, leadership is necessary to guide the spontaneous violence of these groups (p. 86).

Fanon hopes that such leadership and guidance can contain the destructive elements of violence once the objective of national liberation is achieved. He anticipates that because the fight will demand so much of the colonized in death and brutality, it will allow them to realize the complexity of the world (pp. 92–6). To bring about this nuanced view is the task of the leadership, for if 'pure, total brutality is not immediately contained, it will, without fail, bring down the movement within a few weeks' (p. 95). As soon as Fanon raises the spectre of pure brutality, however, he avoids the question of precisely how it can be contained, and he reverts back to his belief in the righteousness and necessity of the fight (p. 96). And perhaps Fanon is correct in that the all-too-apparent destructive violence of the colonizer is so extreme that what counters it is necessarily good. Perhaps the colonized, in reaching for violence, can only grab hold of what may be called productive violence.[4]

But how are we to avoid pure brutality? How is limited brutality even capable of bringing about a realization of the 'complexity of the world'? We do not know, and Fanon provides no guarantees or an idea of how pure brutality can be dealt with or avoided. All we are left with is a distinction between pure and limited brutality presented within an either/or picture. Violence, in Fanon, is essentially an instrument for the revolutionary masses to use in order to first remove the colonial system and its violences, and then replace this system with a new decolonized and democratic political system. In Fanon, if the productive violence of decolonization loses its distinction from the destructive violence of pure brutality during the course of decolonization, then the movement of the people will basically destroy itself. This distinction, then, lies at the basis of Fanon's instrumental view of violence. Violence, in Fanon, is explained by the larger political and colonial context in which it takes place, and this is made possible because a distinction between productive and destructive violence is used as an analytical basis that delimits the concept of violence within neatly distinct categories of productive (violence which is explained by the colonial context and which explains the means of its overthrow) and destructive (violence of pure brutality which only destroys).

I argue, however, that even if 'productive' violence succeeds in the overthrow of the colonial regime, then such 'success' does not necessarily signal the end of the violence and cannot guarantee the avoidance of 'destructive' violence. This distinction does not explain how violence may seep into the decolonized political and social system and institutions after the overthrow of the colonial regime.[5] While Fanon is very familiar with this possibility (e.g., when he discusses the now proverbial, 'we do not want to replace the French officer with an Algerian officer'), he yet upholds and keeps intact the productive–destructive distinction of violence at the basis of his analysis. It is not enough to simply acknowledge the possibility that violence may be productive in one sense and destructive in another sense; it is imperative, rather, that scholarly analysis of violence is able to account for this possibility from the outset, as opposed to an analytic that uses a productive–destructive distinction in order to avoid this possibility. In other words, the productive–destructive distinction of violence can be easily unravelled by the possibility that so-called productive and destructive violences are not two distinct species of violence but can be, and are indeed, closely interconnected, where the terms 'productive' and 'destructive' are transferable to any given violence depending on whose perspective is involved.

Mark Duffield's work is suitable to offer an example of how a force or system that promises to extricate a new social and political order from wars and violence fails to accomplish the type of dissociation between initial violence and the democratic or liberating outcome mentioned above in Fanon. While Duffield is concerned with critiquing a liberal political ideology, which is distinct from the socialist/democratic/anti-colonial ethos espoused by Fanon, I draw on his work because he nonetheless shows how, generally speaking, the peculiarities of different contexts lead to the emergence of mutations that can never be predicted through a universal formula of propagators of colonial regimes (destructive violence) vs. the carriers of democracy and liberty (productive violence).

In his work, Duffield examines how the processes and mechanisms of 'global governance' situated in the 'North' (found in complex fields and networks of institutions that range from nation-states to NGOs) interact with their targets of intervention in the 'South' (Duffield, 2001: 12). This global governance is driven by a notion of 'liberal peace', for which the goal is to 'transform the dysfunctional and war-affected societies that it encounters on its borders into cooperative, representative and, especially, stable entities' (p. 11). Duffield situates this encounter within what he calls the 'political complexes of the new wars' (p. 16).

This latter concept basically asserts that societies being targeted by the processes of liberal governance have a will and volition of their own. Certain actors (state and non-state ones) in the targeted societies are reacting to global governance in their own unique, innovative ways to serve their own ideas of self-interest. These interests do not always coincide with the aspirations of 'liberal peace', and have the effect of producing 'illiberal regimes' (pp. 163–5, 174). Duffield's contention is that global governance is itself responsible for the emergence of such regimes. The blame can be found in numerous institutional deficiencies (pp. 263–5), but it is more importantly found in the conceptions of 'development' (time) and 'war' (violence) found in the discourse of liberal peace.

The first key element in this discourse is the 'social evolutionist' view of time, which pays little attention to the complexity of the targeted sites of intervention and imposes a teleological view of where these societies are imagined to be situated on a preconceived evolutionary ladder (pp. 161–2). The second element builds on this conception and views war and conflict as a violent levelling of the social and cultural orders of these societies, which opens up opportunities to rebuild them. The idea here is that violence can destroy the so-called decadent culture, and liberal peace can then intervene to rebuild it (pp. 123–6). What Duffield cogently points out, however, is that liberal peace is doing just the opposite. It provides a variety of actors with tools that can be used to mutate the networks of governance, thus leading to different mechanisms and systems of violence, i.e. it leads to the political complexes of the new wars. Thus, his work shows how the idea of a 'productive' violence is a shifting one at best.

Furthermore, while Duffield does not explore the possibility that violence is 'productive' and 'destructive' on different levels, I think that his work is suggestive of this idea. For instance, yes, it is true that violence is destructive in the sense that these liberal technologies of governance are only leading to new forms of violence; but that same violence can simultaneously be seen as 'productive' in the sense that these new forms of violence maintain the relations of domination between the intervening force and the one that is being intervened in. That is, the propagation of violence through the mutations that

Duffield discusses points to another angle from which one can view the 'productivity' of violence. Not as its leading to human 'development', but in its ability to establish and maintain relations of domination. The failure of 'liberal peace' to produce so-called developed liberal regimes in these regions could very well be an instance where liberal failure produces another, less visible, effect: the continued falling behind of the force that is being intervened in.

I am not alluding to a master plan developed and executed by some hidden neo/liberal entity. I am simply pointing out the way in which productive and destructive guidelines are blurred in the context of violence. What is productive for one side engaged in war is destructive for another. Even an intervening force that considers itself outside this distinction altogether (e.g., a humanitarian NGO) is nevertheless entangled in it one way or another. For instance, NGOs operating on the notion of liberal peace may view war as a leveller of the social plane, which can then be built upon (violence as destructively productive), but their efforts seem to produce the effect of more destruction, and the mutation of violence, thus maintaining a productive role for the intervening force (violence becomes productively destructive) (e.g., a humanitarian NGO needs a crisis in order to continue to exist).

In short, the productive–destructive distinction cannot hold as a firm analytical basis for the study of violence. Rather, this distinction seems to act as a vehicle built for politics to escape its difficult relationship with violence by analytically subordinating violence to politics, i.e. by viewing violence as 'instrumental in nature', to return to Arendt's quote. Seen in this light, despite Arendt's efforts to distance herself from the likes of Fanon, her own attempt to limit violence is fraught with similar difficulties.[6] When she divides violence into that which can be used for short-term goals and that which can only destroy, Arendt is essentially using a productive–destructive distinction for the purpose of analytically limiting violence. But if the productive–destructive distinction is a mere matter of perspective and cannot act as a genuine analytical framework, then the attempt to limit violence in Arendt can easily be upset by considering, for instance, the effects of these so-called short-term goals on gendered subjects in the mutations of violence and politics. Similarly, my point about Fanon is not that he was right or wrong to argue that violence is necessary for the overthrow of colonialism; the point, rather, is that he should not have turned the productive–destructive distinction into the very basis of his analysis. It may well be the case (or it may not be the case, for that matter) that new/revolutionary transformations in the case of Algeria can only be brought into being through violence; but again, that is precisely what is to be analyzed and not what is to guide the analysis – an analytic of violence must therefore find a way to account for this distinction in the analysis itself and not seek to formulate the analytic on one of the perspectives, which is part of what is being analyzed.

The underlying problem with these instrumentalist approaches is that they essentially concern the analytical subordination of violence, which in the case of the works cited above, is undertaken in relation to certain conceptions of politics or the political. But even in the work of Duffield, which does much to break the rigid boundaries often drawn around conventional understandings of violence, the concept of violence is still subordinated to a concept of 'global governance', and as such, his work fails to speak to the paradoxical relationship between politics and violence; or to speak to the paradox as a paradox, as opposed to circumventing it.

Taken together, these texts seem to suggest that violence and politics are indeed opposites, and thus form a paradoxical relation: the aim/tendency of violence is to destroy politics, and the aim/tendency of politics is to put an end to violence. But since these texts also seem to suggest that political violence, in one way or another, tends to lie at the foundation of political formations and social relations, it becomes difficult for scholarly work to simply separate these two opposites simply because they are 'opposite'. This is a paradoxical relationship that can neither be ignored via a separation of politics and violence, nor made harmonious by scholarly intervention. It seems as though scholars may be better served by approaching this relationship in its paradoxical condition. Ultimately, this difficulty concerns our mode of understanding the continuous opposition between politics and violence. In search of a different ground for theorizing political violence, I next examine Foucault's schemata for the analysis of power: 'contract-oppression' and 'war-repression'.

Foucault and the paradox of political violence

Before examining Foucault's schemata, it is important to note that when Foucault discusses the discourses that fall within either of the two schemata, he is doing so to outline their genealogy in relation to one another, and the transformations that each set of discourses has undertaken throughout the past few centuries. Thus, the war-repression schema can be discerned, for example, from the discourse of 'political historicism' that was marginalized by the dominant philosophico-juridical discourse of Thomas Hobbes (Foucault, 2003: 87–111). Foucault puts back into play that which is marginalized in dominant discourse for the sake of disrupting our understanding of the contract-oppression schema, which for him has shaped much of the modern understandings of power.[7] Thus, when Foucault praises and advances the role of the marginalized discourse of war-repression, he is not necessarily endorsing or advancing every aspect of it, but rather using this discourse as a way of reaching a new or different understanding of power, which may or may not eventually do away with the concept or the word 'repression' (Foucault, 2003: 40).

The following analysis is not concerned with the question of genealogy, or with the specific discourses that are analyzed in Foucault. It is not even my intention to discuss Foucault's conception of power, although some discussion of it will be necessary shortly. My goal, rather, is to present a general outline of the two schemata and the form of their interconnectedness in order to think a different way of understanding the paradoxical relationship between violence and politics. The best way to accomplish this is to primarily focus the discussion on two or three lectures, in which the example of Hobbes and the discourse of 'political historicism' take centre-stage.

I begin with the war-repression schema. Foucault defines repression as 'the effect and the continuation of a relationship of domination ... the implementation, within a pseudopeace that is being undermined by a continuous war, of a perpetual relationship of force' (Foucault, 2003: 17). In this schema, war acts as a 'principle of intelligibility' rather than a 'disruptive principle' in our understanding of power, law, history and the state (Foucault, 2003: 163). The most important feature of this schema is that it focuses on the opposition between 'struggle and submission', whereby relations of domination

are fought over in the battlefields of history and continue to be fought over in the ensuing political/civil/juridical/racial orders.

The interplay of forces during battle arises out of already existing relations of domination, and is meant to either re-affirm, invert, or to establish new relations (p. 160). This schema objects to the theory of sovereignty, and argues that 'Law is not pacification, for beneath the law, war continues to rage in all the mechanisms of power ... War is the motor behind institutions and order' (p. 50). Through its focus on 'the contingency and injustice of battles', this schema aims to highlight the contingent element of power (p. 72). For example, it brings forth the idea that the legitimacy of the rulers is born of their unjust victory on the battlefield. Simply put, war, and not some notion of 'natural law', is seen in this schema as the basis upon which the very definition of the 'principles of public right' comes to rest (p. 124).

The second, dominant schema for the analysis of power is contract-oppression. This schema primarily rests on the theory of sovereignty. Its main concern is to analyze the abuses of power – the institutions and mechanisms whereby the state oversteps its limits, abuses its power, and uses it as an oppressive tool against its subjects (p. 17). Rather than 'struggle-submission', the opposition here is between 'the legitimate and illegitimate' apparatuses, forms, and mechanisms of governance. In this case, oppression refers to the 'transgression of the limit' by the sovereign, whereas contract is the 'matrix of political power' whereby the sovereign gains its legitimacy through the willful surrender of power by the individual (p. 17).

As a result of its focus on the contract, this schema forms a fundamentally different view of war than the previous one. This is best seen in Foucault's discussion of Hobbes. In Hobbes, war is part of a larger and continuous 'state of war', and it is this state of war that ought to be our main concern, not the real battles of history. This state of war is characterized by an 'unending diplomacy between rivals who are naturally equal' (Foucault, 2003: 92) during peace time as well as war, the result of which is an unending state of war where life is always threatened by death. The contract, or more precisely in Hobbes, the State acts as a shield against this permanent state of war, and this is accomplished through forms of sovereignty whose underlying mechanism is always characterized by the series of 'will, fear, and sovereignty'[8] (Foucault, 2003: 96).

The creation of the State in Hobbes, therefore, is always legitimate since it is the opposite of war (whether real or not), or it is that which ends war (Foucault, 2003: 95). The programmatic is to then move forward, away from the sites of real battles, and realize the State's 'just' form. In short, this schema is concerned with the capacities and potentialities of the State (Foucault, 2003: 110–11, 222). It is concerned, not with revolution and/or the re-constitution of the state, but rather with the ability of individuals to constitute a State (pp. 223–4). War is no more than the battles that had finally led us to the universal and just totality of the State – and this State explains history, not war (pp. 233–6).

What Hobbes was ultimately trying to eliminate from his discourse is thus, for Foucault, the 'Conquest of England, that painful historical category, that difficult juridical category' (Foucault, 2003: 110). Specifically, Hobbes attempted to marginalize and eliminate the discourse of political historicism, which refused the language of sovereignty, emphasized that certain forms of sovereignty were based on relationships of

domination born of real battles and wars, and called for a sort of eternal resistance that never stops challenging the outcome of such battles.

Beatrice Hanssen's (2000) *Critique of Violence* maintains that *Society Must Be Defended* highlights Foucault's attempt to challenge the boundaries that the contract-oppression schema erects between violence and power. She also argues that Foucault's 'The Subject and Power' aims to address the dangers of completely blurring such boundaries, and works to reconstitute distinct boundaries between power and violence but in a direction that would challenge the contract-oppression schema (Hanssen, 2000: 38–40, 148–57). While my analysis shares many points of intersection with Hanssen's, I argue that the most important point that Foucault's text makes visible is that while each schema aims to dissociate itself from the other strategically, they are connected in the sense that they are both concerned with the relations of domination and relations of power operating within political violence. What is crucial, then, is the idea that the relations of domination established through war do not simply terminate when the political project is initiated and underway (although that is precisely what the contract-oppression schema attempts to accomplish and what the war-repression schema aims to reawaken). Rather, these relations of domination will continue to shape and influence the political project – the forms it takes, its tensions, and the struggle over its future directions. Things would be relatively simple if this was the end of Foucault's argument, but the difference between power relations and relations of domination in Foucault complicates matters further. This difference is perhaps most clearly developed in 'The Subject and Power' (Foucault, 1983). As opposed to Hanssen's emphasis on Foucault's reconstitution of boundaries and differentiation between violence and power, I argue that Foucault's work in this text indeed both differentiates and illuminates the connections between relations of power and relations of domination.

To understand power relations, Foucault revives suppressed struggles in order to study the techniques and technologies of modern political rationalities (Foucault, 1983: 210–12), and he asks: by what means is power exercised? (p. 217). This question leads Foucault to the insight that modern forms of power are not exercised in the sense of forcing individuals to act and behave in specific ways; rather, power acts upon actions (p. 220). Contemporary struggles in Foucault are not seen as forming against 'domination (ethnic, social, and religious)' or 'exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce' (although neither of which have disappeared), but primarily as struggles against 'subjection', which 'ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way' (Foucault, 1983: 212).

So the exercise of power in Foucault is not to be conflated with the use of violence or with the 'obtaining of consent' (neither of which the exercise of power can do without); rather, the exercise of power 'is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions' (Foucault, 1983: 220). Such a characterization of power leads Foucault to argue that the form or structure of power relations is that of government – acting upon actions must take place within the context of freedom, or subjection can work only on free subjects who may choose freely within a limited field of application (p. 221). These limits, even though not overtly violent in the spectacle of public torture and execution, for instance, are often hidden modern forms of violence that can indeed produce unprecedented scales of violence (Oksala, 2010: 37–9).

Thus, we have in Foucault an interplay between power and a freedom which refuses to submit to it. Absent this interplay, we would be faced with a Master–Slave relationship, which is not a relationship of power in Foucault, but rather 'a physical relationship of constraint' (Foucault, 1983: 221).[9] Power and freedom are entangled to such an extent in the contemporary world that they form an 'agonism': a permanent state of provocation between two forces that cannot engage in direct confrontation because such a confrontation would destroy or paralyze the two (p. 222). This state of agonism between power and freedom is at the basis of power relations, and indeed modern social existence (p. 224). Based on this understanding, we can analyze power relations in terms of the various strategies through which they operate.

Although Foucault distinguishes between three senses of 'strategy' (pp. 224–5), he also maintains that these three senses can 'come together in situations of confrontation – war or games – where the objective is to act upon an adversary in such a manner as to render the struggle impossible for him' (p. 225). These are situations of confrontation that aim to establish a solidified order by obtaining victory of one adversary over another. In these situations, relations of power are interlocked with relations of strategy, where the latter are implemented and advanced so as to gain the form and status of the former (relations of strategy becoming relations of power), and where the former, if it continues its line of development, can be turned into a winning strategy if and when it is faced with an adversary. Even if not interlocked, the constant interplay between the two relations can give rise to different sets of interpretations: 'from inside the history of struggle or from the standpoint of the power relationships' (p. 226). In other words, these interpretations can either overthrow relationships of power or they can aim to solidify them (this is not dissimilar to the strategic utilities that Foucault outlines for war-repression and contract-oppression respectively).

Additionally, Foucault argues that when relations of strategy and power are interlocked, we cannot be talking about power relations since these must have an agonism between power and freedom that does not yield a victory for one or the other. Or, if power defeats all struggles against its forms and institutions – if the possibility of insubordination is eliminated, then we are faced with relations of domination, not relations of power (Foucault, 1983: 226). In short, when relations of power are apart from (yet connected to) relations of strategy, we have a set of complex systems of institutions, norms, mechanisms and technologies of rule that operate on the agonism between power and freedom. When relations of power and strategy are interlocked, we have relations of domination wherein power has utterly defeated freedom and exhausted its possibilities – even if at least, and relatively speaking, momentarily.

I do not follow a reading of Foucault that emphasizes the claim that the modern world is marked by either relations of domination or relations of power (Sovereign rule or Biopolitics), or a reading that explores sovereign violence and biopolitical violence as two distinct species of violence that sometimes dangerously coincide (*à la* Oksala, 2010: 41–3); instead, I highlight Foucault's line of thinking that focuses on the manner of the interconnection (not combination or merger) between the two sets of relations (even as they remain distinct in some important ways), which can be better seen when we go back to the schemata for the analysis of power.

In each set of relations, the schema of war-repression strives to reawaken the battle, i.e. reawaken the agonism in relations of domination; or, reawaken our understanding of our restrictive freedom in relationships of power; the schema of contract-oppression aims to solidify the victory, i.e. solidify the antagonistic system of physical constraint and prevent the agonism from re-emerging; or, solidify the field of restriction on freedom so as to ensure the victory of certain configurations of power relationships. Put differently, we are left with four arrows operating within a complex field of interaction that is marked by a dual-form: one form perpetuates itself by punishing (or threatening to punish) those who transgress the established relationships of power within a political and social formation (formation legitimizes force); the flipside keeps in view the violent founding moment of a political and social formation, whereby 'legitimacy' was up for grabs, making it possible to challenge the legitimacy of the established formations because they were never absolute (formation legitimized on force). This makes it possible to think of the interconnection of politics and violence in their paradoxical relationship. A given formation can establish itself as legitimate through violence (politics ending violence), but on that account, opens up the possibility of its own violent annihilation since its violence serves as a reminder of its founding violence (violence ending politics). This is the crux of the paradoxical relationship between politics and violence. In its dual-form, 'political violence' maintains in our view the continued presence of the possibility of creating and maintaining relations of power *and* domination while simultaneously illustrating that these relations are not ever-lasting or absolute because their guardian – political violence – sits on a gateway that both protects these relations and can also lead to their executioner.

The four arrows that Foucault provides us with above operate in a field of interaction which can point them in many different directions at once. This, I argue, is where the idea of a *flux* that is inherent to political violence is found, which can be illuminated by briefly examining a similar idea that is found in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987). Deleuze and Guattari posit that a 'war machine' is an exterior force that overthrows, displaces, and mutates the ordered arrangements of things found in the State (1987: 417). Despite the State's efforts to conquer this dangerous exteriority (simply because the war machine opposes the stable identity and boundaries fundamental to the State form), the war machine (contra Hobbes) will always manage to attack and counter-attack the State through scattering and metamorphosis (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 356–60). In short, the war machine cannot be reined in by a State apparatus (a greater force that delimits) because it is built to break any attempt at its subordination by subordinating itself before its mortal enemy reaches it. But this self-subordination produces only an illusion of victory for the conqueror: it is indeed a defence mechanism whereby the war machine scatters itself everywhere, and then awaits its moment to rise again in metamorphosis.

Critically, for the purposes of this article, this suggests that the concept of political violence seems to resist all attempts at delimitation. Every locus into which social and political theorists centralize and restrict violence seems to disappear into a host of directions the moment it is approached. Violence cannot be captured within conceptual frameworks such as Arendt's and Fanon's, wherein violence must only play a specific role within a rigidly bordered theoretical region. Deleuze and Guattari's work suggests that

violence is always moving; itself developing into nothing, while simultaneously playing a role in the production and development of systems of rule, social institutions, cultural practices, etc. Having said that, there is a danger in following Deleuze and Guattari's model in that their extreme de-subjectification of violence makes it appear as if it is an omnipresent force that creates everything around us, while maintaining a certain kind of independent existence that is beyond us. In other words, there is a danger here of hypostatizing violence as a foundational and radically independent concept within the analytic, where violence can metamorphose into anything because it is nowhere. While the notions of scattering and metamorphosis that occur in and/or constitute a state of flux offer fruitful lines of inquiry, I do not believe that the limitless expansion of the concept of violence within the analytic serves well our understanding of violence. In a sense, while I think Hanssen moves too far in emphasizing Foucault's reconstitution of boundaries, I think Deleuze and Guattari move too far in dissolving all boundaries.

Thus the notion of the flux that I am working with is posited in-between these two poles, and suggests that any instance of political violence – whatever that may be or however it may be defined (which will largely depend on which of the previously mentioned arrows the political violence is being seen from or advanced) – indeed, any appearance of political violence in discourse as such, opens up a sort of vortex of all of the arrows and a multiplication between them that varies in degree, ferocity, and force in each singular case.

This vortex or flux further illuminates the underlying reason why it is virtually impossible to neatly separate violence and politics in the seminal texts I began this article with. For instance, Arendt attempts to posit violence through an arrow that deprives violence of the ability to institute the political, yet she does this for the sake of a peculiar Arendtian agonism that, briefly, seeks to revive the human ability to constitute something new for the cause of human freedom. Her argument, however, cannot be thus neatly separated as at least two arrows criss-cross in this instance: when she downplays the role of violence, she solidifies the field of restriction on freedom by naturalizing certain political and social formations that were born of war (e.g., 'American democracy'); and she simultaneously reawakens the agonism in relations of domination. The interaction between at least these two arrows can produce, for example, the wide range of reactions with/against Arendt, with some calling her conservative and some radical, and both being somewhat correct in their claims. This is what occurs from a flux that makes up the paradoxical condition of political violence, and it constitutes the basic reason why it may be best for scholarly analysis to pursue the study of political violence in accordance with the flux, as opposed to an attempt to theoretically circumvent it.

Conclusion

If the relation between politics and violence is essentially paradoxical, then this does not mean that the two cannot and do not meet and conjoin. Indeed, non-violence or a violence that can be controlled is not easily imagined or practised – violence plays an important part in human society. Even if we are against violence, perhaps *because* we are against violence, this part must be understood. To understand it, we should not ask if politics is the continuation of violence by other means (*à la* war-repression) or if violence is

the continuation of politics by other means (*à la* contract-oppression). I think that this question misguides our efforts since violence and politics are not two separate entities; rather, they form a continuum in which relations of domination and power are established, but also continuously resisted, modified, inverted, and negotiated. A debate centred on causality and precedence will inevitably subordinate politics to violence or violence to politics. I argue that scholars should theorize and analyze violence and politics in a manner whereby they enjoy a continuous opposition, which brings attention to the ways in which relations of domination and power interact within a constant state of flux. Perhaps if we focus on these relations, we can then discuss the peculiarities of a violence–politics relationship within the specificities of its context, and without having to subordinate one to the other.

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Notes

1. In Arendt, 'neither violence nor power is a natural phenomenon, that is, a manifestation of the life process; they belong to the political realm of human affairs whose essentially human quality is guaranteed by man's faculty of action, the ability to begin something new' (Arendt, 1969: 82). But having said that, 'Power is indeed of the essence of all government, but violence is not' (Arendt, 1969: 51). This is why Arendt finds it crucial to say that power and violence are opposites and not simply different.
2. For a comprehensive overview of Arendt's qualifications on her instrumental view of violence, see Finlay (2009: 29–30). Despite these qualifications, and despite the fact that Arendt is certainly not an instrumentalist thinker per se, her (re)conceptualization of violence, at least after the 1940s (see Birmingham, 2011: 12), remains instrumental.
3. Fanon is well aware of the difficulties and dangers that the use of violence produces. In his last three chapters, he confronts the reader with all of the difficulties faced by the colonized in their fight for freedom. These difficulties range from ones posed by the petty bourgeoisie of the colonized, to ones posed by the colonizer's immaculate success in a divide-and-rule strategy, to the difficulties posed by overcoming the psychological effects of violence and war.
4. As is the case with Arendt, Fanon's conceptualization of violence rests on some of his earlier works regarding the devastating effects of violence (Fanon, [1952] 1967). Whereas Arendt was occupied with such devastation within the heart of Europe, Fanon was more concerned with it in Europe's conceptions of, and actions towards its colonized 'Other.' While Fanon's sophisticated

argument on the Master–Slave dialectic deserves closer analysis that can be allowed in this article (e.g., see Tamdgidi, 2007, for fruitful roads of inquiry that illuminate and draw on Fanon's multi-dimensional and complex view of human liberation), I maintain that it does not adequately address the question of exactly how the violence of decolonization can be contained and its destructiveness avoided.

5. I would not pose Fanon's existential view of violence as opposed to, or even as different from, the instrumental view of violence (e.g., see Kaempf, 2009). Kaempf rightly points out the importance of the existential dimension in Fanon, but I maintain that Fanon posits this as an existential role for violence that serves the purpose of catharsis or purification, and this would take place in Fanon within a productive–destructive distinction of violence.
6. Christopher Finlay (2009) makes a similar point, although his article focuses more so on the manner in which Arendt's thought is closer to Sorel's thought on violence, power, and politics than she would have us believe in *On Violence*.
7. This is a central idea in many of Foucault's writings, and it is perhaps best illuminated in *Discipline and Punish*. For an analysis and an overview of Foucault's understanding of violence throughout his most famous works, see Hanssen (2000: 97–157) and Frazer and Hutchings (2011: 6–9).
8. Peg Birmingham (2011) contends with Foucault's reading and shows that Hobbes paid as much attention to 'glory' as he did to 'fear', where the relation between fear and glory constituted the sovereign in Hobbes (Birmingham, 2011: 4–12). While Birmingham is correct in challenging Foucault on this point especially as it relates to the question of why human beings pursue power and sacrifice through political violence (fear, glory, or both?), my interest (and I would argue Foucault's primary interest) lies in Foucault's preoccupation with the how question (i.e., how is power exercised?) (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011: 5–6), since I am concerned with how relations of power and relations of domination interconnect in Foucault.
9. This does not mean that a Slave can never be in a relationship of power with her/his Master. Hanssen points out that the English translation misses Foucault's point that when the Slave is in chains and no possibility of escape exists, then we are talking about a physical relationship of constraint; but when the possibility of a potential escape exists, then we are talking about a relationship of power (Hanssen, 2000: 154). Despite the nuance of Foucault's argument here, I believe that Fanon's understanding of the Master–Slave dialectic alluded to above is more insightful than Foucault's. I cannot delve into this debate here.

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