



# THE VALUE OF VIOLENCE

BENJAMIN GINSBERG

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 **Prometheus Books**

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*As Always, For Sandy*

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# VIOLENCE OFTEN IS THE ANSWER

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My friend and sometime co-author Matthew Crenson is fond of criticizing my work for its lack of what he calls “analytic tension.” By this he means that I generally present the main argument of my book in the first paragraph or two rather than challenge the reader to unravel its mysteries as they proceed. During the course of writing two books and several papers together, we argued more about this issue than any other. In the present volume, as I am not burdened by having to accommodate Matthew Crenson, I will summarily dispel all analytic tensions and anxieties by offering this preview of the chapters and arguments to follow.

1. Violence is the driving force of politics. The importance of violence derives from the dominance it usually manifests over other forms of political action, from its destructive and political transformative power and from the capacity of violence to serve as an instrument of political mobilization. These three factors explain why Chairman Mao was correct in his assertion that political power emanated from the gun barrel.
2. In using violence, states generally have a number of advantages vis-à-vis other actors. One advantage is bureaucracy. Anyone can be violent, but serious violence generally requires the support of a bureaucratic organization to overcome the natural, human, and moral limits to violence. Bureaucracy is one of the mechanisms through which states sometimes achieve the monopoly of force to which Max Weber famously referred.
3. Most states do not rely upon naked violence as an instrument of governance but seek to refine violence and make it a more effective tool. Domestically, states employ various forms of legitimation as well as the rule of law to refine their use of violence. In the international realm, refined violence is sometimes called soft power. Legitimation, law, and soft power are not substitutes for force but instead are, in military parlance, “force multipliers” that increase the effectiveness of a given quantity of force, allowing the same result to be achieved with less effort.
4. Another instrument that reduces the state's need to rely upon overt violence is public welfare. Welfare is more a substitute for force than a force multiplier. It is the carrot rather than the stick, reward rather than punishment. The U.S., slow to build a welfare state, has chosen to rely more upon punishment than reward internally, which is why America has an enormous prison system. This internal reliance upon force has had consequences for America's external relations, as well. In fact, the weakness of its welfare state helps to explain why the U.S. is among the most overtly violent states on the face of the earth. This might be seen as the dark side of America's exceptionalism.
5. Governments, even liberal democracies, use violence against their citizens every day. But when, if ever, is it appropriate for citizens to use violence against the state?
6. Violence is terrible, but it is the great engine of political change. The next generation, perceiving itself to have been the beneficiary, is often grateful for the violent acts of the previous generation. Mechanisms designed to discourage popular violence, including political reform and peaceful modes of political participation, are generally tactics designed to delimit change.

Now that I have allayed all possible analytic tensions, I invite the reader to enjoy a calm and peaceful journey through what might otherwise be an unsettling topic.

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I should mention, for those not familiar with my work, that I am often accused of being unduly cynical. My response is simple. It is not possible to be too cynical when assessing political events. Americans, in my view, seem to be especially lacking in the requisite level of political cynicism. Many take seriously the constant admonitions by politicians and the media to involve themselves in political life, to pay attention to the issues, to vote for the best candidates, and, above all, to avoid succumbing to political apathy and cynicism. The unpleasant truth, though, is that for most individuals, most of the time, politics is a rather unrewarding enterprise. Clausewitz was, at least in this respect, correct to equate war and politics. Both are nasty, sometimes brutish activities from which ordinary participants secure few benefits. And yet, like war, politics is sometimes forced upon us and we must defend ourselves.

Self-defense requires some understanding of the realities of political struggle. To begin with, much of what we see and hear in the political world consists of lies and deceptions. The issues addressed by competing cliques of politicians are typically developed for tactical purposes and cannot be taken at face value. Politicians are generally, albeit not always, a curish lot, driven by a desire to acquire power or status or wealth, not by some commitment to the public interest. Indeed, since politicians, political parties, and other political actors habitually lie, citizens who heed the frequent injunction to abjure cynicism are likely to be duped into contributing their tax dollars and even their lives for dubious purposes, such as building democracy in Iraq. Those who actually work in the political arena—politicians, journalists, consultants, lobbyists and other political practitioners—are a notorious cynical bunch. While encouraging ordinary citizens to trust the government and the political class, members of the political class are not so foolish as to trust one another.

As I have noted elsewhere, for more than 200 years, the tale of George Washington and the cherry tree has symbolized the virtue of America's first president and, by his example, the importance of integrity as an attribute of political leadership. Unfortunately, the cherry tree story is a myth concocted in 1806 by an enterprising preacher, Mason L. Weems, who hoped to bolster the flagging sales of his rather shallow biography of Washington.<sup>1</sup>

While it may seem ironic that an anecdote designed to highlight the importance of truth telling is itself a fabrication, this irony is precisely the significance of the story. Parson Weems's fable helps to illustrate the duplicity and hypocrisy so often at the heart of the political process. Politics is a realm in which bold assertions about the importance of the truth are often lies and charges about the duplicity of others are typically hypocritical efforts to divert attention from the speaker's own misdeeds.

Take the never-ending debate between Democrats and Republicans on the question of ethics. Could anything be more obviously hypocritical and dishonest than the tiresome daily spectacle of duplicitous party functionaries accusing one another of ethics violations? In 2006, Republican lobbying and fundraising improprieties helped Democrats trounce the GOP at the polls as similar scandals had helped Republicans turn out the Democrats in 1994. Not surprisingly, once they regained power, Democrats again had trouble finding their own ethical footing. Within a week of the election and in clear violation of congressional rules, Rep. William Jefferson (D-LA) sent out a franked letter on official stationery to solicit contributions to retire his campaign debt.<sup>2</sup> Of course, by Rep. Jefferson's standards, this was a minor ethical lapse. While sending out solicitation letters at taxpayer expense, the congressman was also busy explaining to federal investigators how he came to have \$90,000 in cash hidden in a freezer in his Capitol Hill home. Rather than be known by their current donkey and



elephant symbols, the two parties should be identified as the pots and the kettles. This terminology would give voters a better understanding of the meaning of the steady barrage of partisan charges and countercharges to which they are subjected.

Perhaps political figures should be forgiven for their hypocrisy. Like other human beings, politicians are usually driven by personal desires and private ambitions. Yet, individuals in public life are compelled to provide publicly acceptable justifications for their actions. Accordingly, they explain what often is self-interested conduct in terms of high-minded goals, civic needs, and national interests. Honesty would so frequently be politically damaging that virtually all politicians and public officials become practiced liars.

Critics, though, who insist on pointing out the regular discrepancies between politicians' claims and their true purposes are inevitably accused of fostering public cynicism. The news media, in particular, are regularly charged with promoting cynicism through their negative coverage of politicians and government officials. This charge is made so often that even many journalists have come to believe it. Nearly 40 percent of the journalists responding to a recent survey agreed that journalists were too cynical.<sup>3</sup> Some analysts assert that public doubts about the government and politicians diminish popular participation and undermine political institutions. Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye has said that cynicism about the political process tends to reduce the "quality" of American democracy. Several scholars have recently proposed that the government and private institutions should work to develop educational programs and other initiatives to promote popular political trust.<sup>5</sup> A number of states, indeed, have already launched civic education campaigns designed to combat political cynicism among young people.<sup>6</sup> And, even as they regularly present rather unflattering accounts of the governmental and political processes, members of the national news media frequently urge Americans to eschew cynicism. "Cynicism can destroy our nation as readily as enemy bombs," wrote one columnist who apparently loves hyperbole as much as he abhors cynicism.<sup>7</sup>

These condemnations of cynicism, though, seem rather misguided. Perhaps members of the national political class have reason to be concerned about cynicism. After all, cynical citizens hardly make enthusiastic subjects or reliable followers. Yet, popular cynicism is hardly an aberration or malady to be cured through the dissemination of more effective propaganda materials. Instead, cynicism should be understood as a reasonable, if mainly intuitive, popular response to the realities of politics. Millions of Americans see over and over again that politicians and government officials routinely deceive, mislead, and misinform them, offering pretexts while masking their true plans and purposes.

"I have previously stated and I repeat now that the United States plans no military intervention in Cuba," said President John F. Kennedy in 1961 as he planned military action in Cuba. "As president, it is my duty to the American people to report that renewed hostile actions against United States ships on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin have today required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action in reply," said President Lyndon Johnson in 1964 as he fabricated an incident to justify expansion of American involvement in Vietnam. "We did not, I repeat, did not trade weapons or anything else [to Iran] for hostages, nor will we," said President Ronald Reagan in November 1986, four months before admitting that U.S. arms had been traded to Iran in exchange for Americans being held hostage there. "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction," said Vice President Dick Cheney in 2002. When it turned out that the weapons did not exist, Assistant Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz explained, "For bureaucratic reasons, we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction (as justification for invading Iraq) because it was the one reason everyone could agree on."<sup>9</sup> In 2012, President Obama correctly accused his opponent Mitt Romney of suffering from "Romnesia" for seemingly forgetting which principles he had previously advocated and then abandoned for the sake of expedience. Obama himself, however,

had difficulty deciding whether it was more expedient to tell voters that the U.S. ambassador to Libya had been murdered by organized terrorists or by unorganized thugs. The story seemed to change on a daily basis.

Since politicians and public officials are hypocrites, it is quite appropriate for ordinary citizens to be cynics. Ambrose Bierce defined a cynic as a “blackguard whose faulty vision sees things as they are, not as they ought to be.”<sup>10</sup> If anything, too many Americans lack a requisite sense of cynicism. About half of those responding to University of Michigan surveys say the government *can be trusted* most of the time, and nearly two-thirds *disagree* with the proposition that public officials don't really care what people think. These recent percentages actually represent an increase in public trust after some decline between the 1960s and 1990s.<sup>11</sup> But shouldn't every American be just a bit distrustful of a class of individuals whose most prominent members, contrary to all logic and evidence, claim never to have inhaled, aver that they hardly even knew that pesky Ms. Lewinsky, or suggest they reluctantly agreed to forego the opportunity to serve in Vietnam in order to undertake the more onerous task of defending the air space over Texas? For that matter, can anyone truly believe the legions of lesser politicians who portentously declare that they are driven by an overwhelming urge to “fight” for the right of every last geezer to receive a pension check? Far from being a pathological condition, cynicism is a useful defense against such duplicity.

Yet, cynicism alone is hardly an adequate guide to the reality of politics. Political cynics often see through the lies of politicians only to fall prey to even more bizarre fantasies. Millions of Americans, for example, who don't trust the government also believe that federal officials are hiding evidence of extraterrestrial visitors at a secret base in New Mexico.<sup>12</sup> These individuals are ready to spurn official claims but, in their place, accept science fiction tales as reality. An understanding of politics requires not only a willingness to reject falsehoods but also the ability to assess objective evidence and arrive at the truth. The Chinese call this marriage of cynicism and objectivity “cynical realism,” connoting an effort to substitute a true and accurate picture of political life for the lies told by the authorities.<sup>13</sup>

Cynics are sometimes accused of being without principles. Cynical realism, however, is based upon three core principles of political analysis. The first is that politics mainly revolves around self-interest. In particular, actors generally compete in the political arena to increase their resources and stature. Individuals strive to enhance their own wealth, their own power, and their own status rather than for more altruistic or public-spirited purposes. Second, even if political actors actually have less selfish aims, they must almost always, nevertheless, work to acquire wealth, power, or status to achieve these other goals. As Machiavelli observed, prophets generally must arm themselves if they hope to succeed.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, though, the effort to maximize these interests often becomes an end in and of itself even if it was not a political actor's primary initial goal. The quest for power can be corrupting as its exercise. Third, the issues and ideas publicly espoused by political actors are more often the weapons of political struggle than its actual goals. What politicians say may be important but cannot be taken at face value.

The idea that political action is governed by selfish motives is hardly novel. Indeed, for centuries political and social theorists have conceived self-interested conduct to be a fundamental reflection of human nature. “For it may be said of men in general,” said Machiavelli, “That they are ungrateful, fickle, dissembling, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain.”<sup>15</sup> This rather bleak view of human nature has a substantial scientific basis. Evolutionary psychologists argue that power, status, and possession of material resources have been associated with reproductive success throughout the evolution of the human species. Hence, the desire to acquire these assets is a potent driving force. Psychologist Steven Pinker writes that while humans have not evolved the rigid pecking order characteristic of some animal species, in all human societies “high-ranking men are deferred to, have

a greater voice in group decisions...and always have more wives, more lovers, and more affairs with other men's wives."<sup>16</sup> Of course, individuals vary enormously in the extent to which they are driven by greed or the lust for power and status. Yet, those drawn to political life are, by virtue of self selection, more likely than others to desire the substance, trappings, and privileges of rank.<sup>17</sup>

A telling example from antiquity is that of the Athenian general Alcibiades, a man who, according to Plutarch, had an inordinate love of distinction and fame.<sup>18</sup> After losing a political struggle in Athens, Alcibiades took advantage of his family's ties to members of the Spartan elite and sought to make himself a leader in Sparta, Athens' mortal enemy. After his political foes came to power in Sparta, Alcibiades sought to make himself a leader among the Persians. And, after losing favor with the Persians, Alcibiades was able to take command of an Athenian army. In every instance, Alcibiades appealed to the patriotic sentiments of his followers, calling upon them to fight and die for their country, while he was, himself, prepared to change countries whenever it suited his interests.

Perhaps Alcibiades's modern-day equivalent is the General Motors<sup>®</sup> Company. General Motors, which recently needed a government bailout mainly to compensate for the cupidity and stupidity of its managers, is well known for ad campaigns based upon nationalistic slogans such as "Keep America Rolling" and "Our Country—Our Trucks." GM also is justifiably proud of its contribution to America's defense effort, especially in World War II when its aircraft engines powered many of the nation's bombers and fighters. GM, however, seldom mentions the fact that during that same war, the company also made a major contribution to Germany's military efforts. While GM built equipment for the U.S. army, its German subsidiary, Adam Opel, built trucks, aircraft engines, and torpedoes for the Germans.<sup>19</sup> And, indeed, as corporate officials exhorted American workers to make an all-out effort to defeat the Germans, their colleagues in Germany urged German workers to do the same to defeat the Americans. The company profited from military contracts in both countries. Indeed, in the United States the company took a huge tax deduction for allegedly abandoning its German plants—which were reclaimed after the war—and then collected reparations from the U.S. government for bombing its German plants during the war. Alcibiades would have been proud.

With a nod to the crafty Athenian—or was he a Spartan or, perhaps, a Persian?—let us turn to our discussion of the unpleasant realities of violence in political life.

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# VIOLENCE

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## THE DRIVING FORCE OF POLITICAL LIFE

Recent events such as the Boston Marathon bombing remind us that violence is brutal and terrible. Yet, while we may shrink from violence we should not shrink from attempting to analyze and understand violence. A capacity for violence has always been an important facet of human nature. Humans, and perhaps their pre-human ancestors as well, have engaged in murder and mayhem, individually and in groups, for hundreds of thousands of years.<sup>1</sup> And, at least since the advent of recorded history, violence and politics have been intimately related. States practice violence against internal and external foes. Political dissidents engage in violence against states. Competing political forces inflict violence upon one another. Writing in 1924, Winston Churchill declared—and not without reason—that “the story of the human race is war.”<sup>2</sup>

Academic discussions of the relationship between violence and politics fall into three main schools. Some authors see violence as instrumentally related to politics. Hobbes, for example, viewed violence as a rational means by which individuals sought to achieve such political goals as territory, safety, and glory.<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, Clausewitz famously referred to war as the continuation of politics by other means.<sup>4</sup> A second group of authors views violence as typically resulting from political failures and miscalculations. The title of an influential paper on the origins of the American Civil War by historian James Randall, “The Blundering Generation,” exemplifies this idea.<sup>5</sup> A third group, most recently exemplified by psychologist Steven Pinker, views violence as a form of pathological behavior that is perhaps, diminishing in frequency with the onward march of civilization.<sup>6</sup> Some proponents of this perspective have even declared that violence is essentially a public health problem.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever their differences of emphasis, each of these perspectives assigns violence a subordinate role in political life—a secondary means of achieving political goals, a result of political miscalculations, an expression of political pathology, and so forth. There is, as Hannah Arendt once noted, an alternative view that assigns violence a superordinate role in politics.<sup>8</sup> This perspective is implied by Mao Zedong's well-known aphorism that political power “grows out of the barrel of a gun.” For Mao, violence is the driving force in the political arena while more peaceful forms of political engagement serve to fill in the details or, perhaps, merely to offer post-hoc justifications for the outcomes of violent struggles. Chairman Mao essentially turns Clausewitz on his head by characterizing politics as a sequel or even epiphenomenon of violent struggles—a continuation of violence by other means. Unfortunately, Mao seemed to have an inordinate fondness for mayhem and bloodshed. He did, after all, suggest that the quality of a revolutionary should be judged by the number of people he or she had killed.<sup>9</sup> Yet, our revulsion at the Chairman's practices should not blind us to the accuracy of his observation. Violence and the threat of violence are, in fact, the most potent forces in political life.

It is, to be sure, often averred that problems can never truly be solved by the use of force. Violence, the saying goes, is not the answer. This adage certainly appeals to our moral sensibilities. But whether or not violence is the answer presumably depends upon the question being asked. For better or worse, it is violence that usually provides the most definitive answers to three of the major questions of political life—statehood, territoriality, and power. Violent struggle, in the form of war, revolution,

civil war, terrorism, and the like, more than any other immediate factor, determines what states will exist and their relative power, what territories they will occupy, and which groups will and will not exercise power within them.

In the case of statehood, there are occasional circumstances under which a state may be built by and endure mainly through peaceful means. These are, however, the rather rare exceptions. As Charles Tilly has observed, most of today's regimes are the survivors or descendants of a thousand-year-long culling process in which those states capable of creating and sustaining powerful military forces prevailed, while those that could not or would not fight were conquered or absorbed by others. Similarly, when it comes to control of territory, virtually every square inch on the planet is currently occupied by groups that forcibly dispossessed—sometimes exterminated—the land's previous claimants. Thus far, at least, the meek have not inherited very much of the earth. Indeed, the West's global dominance for most of the past millennium is as much a function of its capacity for violence as any other factor.<sup>11</sup>

In some instances, of course, those deprived of their land raise serious objections and more questions. Ongoing land disputes are particularly manifest in today's Middle East, where the Israelis are accused of pursuing an ongoing policy of stealing Arab land. Indeed, it is often asserted by Palestinians and by other Arabs and their left-liberal supporters in the West that the very existence of the State of Israel represents an illegitimate theft of Arab land. The creation of the State of Israel is seen in these quarters as a supreme tragedy or catastrophe (*al nakba* in Arabic).<sup>12</sup> Certainly, one can make this argument. Indeed, Arabs and Jews and possibly others, as well, have historic, religious, and legal land claims in the Middle East that merit attention. Yet, Jewish assertions of rightful ownership of the land of Israel do not seem any more or less lacking in legitimacy than any other contemporary territorial claims. It hardly needs to be said that the United States occupies millions of square miles of territory stolen from the Native Americans as well as land taken by force from the Mexicans whose Spanish forebears had previously stolen it from Native Americans. The ancestors of the modern-day Europeans stole their land too. But since these land thefts occurred long ago, the rightful ownership of Western European territory is only occasionally contested these days. In the case of America, the original land owners were largely exterminated by the European settlers and, so, are not in a position to press their claims with much vigor.

The main difference between the Israelis and other contemporary land owners might seem to be that Israel has only existed as a state for a few decades. Israel, moreover, unlike the United States and others, failed to launch a sustained campaign of annihilation against the previous land owners who therefore remain quite able to vocally and violently assert their irredentist claims. Should Israel, however, deserve relegation to the status of a pariah for having been insufficiently murderous? Those nations currently occupying lands whose previous inhabitants they exterminated might seem more blameworthy than those who did not pursue a genocidal program. The point here is not to absolve Israel from reproach but is, rather, to point to the many moral ambiguities surrounding questions of land ownership. The fact of the matter, however unfortunate it may seem, is that territory “belongs” to whatever group is able to seize and hold it.

In the case of power, within every state the composition of the ruling class, if not always the identity of the particular rulers, is generally shaped by the use or threat of what Walter Benjamin called law-making violence.<sup>13</sup> The availability of elections and the correlative peaceful modes of leadership selection that have become common in some parts of the world over the past two centuries does not contravene this last point. Barack Obama, America's first black president, was chosen at the polls. The possibility, however, that a black person could become a member of America's social and political elite was established through sometimes violent and often disruptive protest four decades

earlier—to say nothing of the bloody war fifteen decades earlier that freed black people from chattel slavery.

Generally speaking, electoral politics is an arena in which success requires substantial economic, institutional, educational, and organizational resources. Consequently, elections in the Western world are usually fought among competing factions of the bourgeoisie—a social stratum whose power was established in a series of violent struggles that began in Europe in the seventeenth century.<sup>14</sup> Electoral outcomes reflect more than they affect this stratum's power in Western society. Some awareness of the limits of electoral politics seems to underlie the economic protests that developed throughout Western Europe and the United States in 2011. One young Spanish protestor quoted in the American media said, “Our parents are grateful because they're voting. We're the first generation to say that voting is worthless.”<sup>15</sup> We shall return to elections in [chapter 6](#).

In the United States over the past two centuries those elected to high political office have mainly been individuals drawn from the middle and upper classes.<sup>16</sup> For new groups, social and economic mobility have generally preceded electoral success. And, if by some chance, significant discrepancies do emerge between electoral results and the actual distribution of power in society, the verdict of the polls is likely to be challenged, often by forcible means. In the United States, for example, such a situation manifested itself in the South during the late 1860s and early 1870s when black electoral success was negated by white-organized paramilitary forces.<sup>17</sup>

Once the basic questions of statehood, territoriality, and power are answered, subsidiary matters might be addressed without a resort to force. But whether some form of peaceful political discourse is likely to emerge in the aftermath of a violent struggle depends in no small measure upon the decisiveness of the struggle's outcome. Decisiveness refers to the relationships among the winners and losers that emerge in the wake of a violent political conflict. An outcome is most decisive when a more or less unitary actor, such as an organized political party, nation-state, revolutionary army, or similar entity—say, the Bolsheviks or Chinese Communist Party—achieves a complete and clear-cut victory over its foes. Decisiveness is reduced when the nominal losers retain the ability to renew hostilities at some future date, or when victory is shared by a loosely knit alliance or coalition whose members' relationships to one another have as yet to be determined.

Generally speaking, more decisive outcomes bring a more certain end to violence but often also lead to the construction of hegemonic national or international regimes. Lack of decisiveness, on the other hand, may leave the road open to continuing or recurrent violence but can also pave the way for the emergence of polyarchical politics and a more liberal national or international order. If the losing parties to a violent conflict are not decisively defeated they may seek to avenge their defeat months, years, or even decades later. Those who are not able to defeat their foes decisively must be prepared to develop programs and policies designed to win the support of their defeated but still dangerous enemies if they wish to avert further hostilities. Thus, in 1066 the Normans defeated the Saxons but were not able to completely destroy the latter's military capabilities. Accordingly, Norman rulers were compelled to incorporate elements of the Saxon nobility into the ruling class and military, and to promote intermarriage and assimilation. Unable to defeat their adversaries more decisively, the Normans found it necessary to rule them more graciously. In a similar vein, though the Bulgarian Empire was conquered by the Byzantines in 1018, the Bulgarian nobility retained significant military strength. Accordingly, Byzantine emperor Basil II allowed Bulgarian nobles to retain their local powers and incorporated them into the Byzantine aristocracy. This policy was successful in preventing revolts, and its reversal after Basil's death sparked a series of rebellions by the selfsame noble families and the eventual overthrow of Byzantine rule.<sup>18</sup>

Decisiveness is also lessened when success in a violent struggle is achieved by a coalition

loosely affiliated set of forces rather than a single entity. Victory won by a coalition may be decisive vis-à-vis the losers but is often followed by disputes among the winners that can produce a renewed threat of violence. The coalition that won a decisive victory over Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in the Second World War, for example, soon split into hostile camps that faced one another in a protracted and occasionally violent “Cold War.” If they wish to avoid internecine disputes, winning coalitions must usually construct institutions and develop rules for peaceful conflict resolution. If the winning coalition involves nations, these arrangements may take the form of complex treaties, agreements or super-national organizations like the League of Nations or the United Nations. If the successful coalition consists of groups or entities within a nation, the erstwhile coalition partners may endeavor to develop a constitutional power-sharing arrangement. In the aftermath of the American Revolutionary War, for example, members of the victorious coalition of thirteen states agreed to the Articles of Confederation and, later, the Constitution to provide for the discussion of common issues and the peaceful resolution of problems.

Neither the League of Nations nor the United Nations, nor for that matter the Articles of Confederation and Constitution proved fully effective in preventing the emergence of conflicts among their various members and signatories. There can be little doubt that a decisive resolution of violent national or international conflict offers a surer path to peace than an indecisive conclusion. However, while a decisive end to violent struggle is more certain to yield peace, an indecisive conclusion opens the way for politics. Though it may sometimes recede into the background, the use or threat of violence never truly disappears from governance and politics. Every government routinely employs coercion against those who challenge its power, and most will respond quite forcefully to internal as well as external threats to their autonomy or territorial integrity.

Since many political issues have at least potential implications for the balance of political power within or between states, the threat of violence can lie just beneath the surface of even the most peaceful political discussion. In 2010, for example, the prosaic issue of health care reform seemed, albeit rather obliquely, to raise questions about the relative influence of competing social forces in the U.S. This soon brought intimations if not actual threats of violence by and against foes of the Obama administration's plans as well as ruminations by some politicians about the legalities of state secession from the Union.<sup>19</sup> Should a mundane discussion come to have more direct implications for a nation's territorial integrity or the distribution of power in society, the latent possibility of violence can quickly become manifest. Thomas Jefferson was shocked in 1820 when what had appeared to be a routine debate over the admission of new states suddenly threatened to bring about the violent dissolution of the Union when the issue was seen to have major implications for the balance of power between Northern and Southern elites. It was a “fire bell in the night,” Jefferson famously declared. Four decades later, when the fire bell rang again, the national government expended 600,000 lives to crush the South's effort to secede.

The political importance of violence derives mainly from four factors. First is the dominance, usually manifested by violence over other forms of political action. Second is the agenda-setting power of violence. Third is the destructive and politically transformative power of violence. Fourth is the capacity of violence to serve as a catalyst for political mobilization. Taken together, these attributes of violent political action explain why the gun barrel is, indeed, such an important source of political power.

## **DOMINANCE**

As to the first of these factors, dominance, political forces willing and able to employ violence

achieve their goals will generally best their less bellicose adversaries, overturning the results of elections, negating the actions of parliamentary bodies, riding roughshod over peaceful expressions of political opinion, and so forth. Indeed, the mere threat of violence is often enough to instill fear in and compel acquiescence on the part of those unwilling or unable to forcefully defend themselves. Violent groups can usually be defeated only by adversaries able to block their use of mayhem or to employ superior force against them. Those who cannot or will not make use of violence seldom achieve their goals over the opposition of those who are not similarly constrained. As Machiavelli observed, things have seldom turned out well for unarmed prophets.<sup>20</sup>

In recent decades, for example, armed insurgents have employed violence or the threat of violence to overthrow a number of established regimes. The African continent alone has experienced some eighty-five successful military coups during the past sixty years. Once in power, such groups can usually only be overthrown by subsequent armed coups or insurrections. They tend not to be very responsive to opinion polls, voting, or other polite forms of political expression. Occasionally, perhaps, a regime steeped in violence can be successfully confronted via peaceful means, but these are exceptional cases. East Germany collapsed in the face of peaceful protests in 1989 when its Soviet sponsor, having decided to rid itself of its satellite empire, would not allow the German Democratic Republic's feared security services to be mobilized. Or, to cite another example, Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet actually stepped down after losing a plebiscite in 1988, some fifteen years after he had seized power in a bloody military coup. Yet, even Pinochet's departure from office came on the heels of an assassination attempt and five years of increasingly violent demonstrations that undermined the Chilean economy and convinced many military officers that it was time to return power to a civilian government.

As the past century's history of coups, insurrections, civil wars, and invasions suggest, East Germany and Chile are unusual cases. Generally speaking, force can only be defeated by force. When peaceful dissidents confront tanks the result is more likely to resemble the Tiananmen Square bloodletting than the fall of the Berlin Wall. This lesson was learned repeatedly throughout the Middle East in 2011. Peaceful protestors in Libya and Syria quickly found that they were no match for the tanks and machine guns their rulers were only too happy to deploy against them. Only when Libya's insurgents resorted to force backed by NATO air strikes were they able to defeat the Gaddafi regime. Only through force could Syrian protestors confront the Assad government. And, in Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak was ousted more or less peacefully only because the army calculated that it could most easily retain control of the nation by acceding to demands for a new president.

Much attention, of course, is given to the putative effectiveness of nonviolence as a political method. Nonviolent tactics are often said, for example, to have been instrumental in ending segregation in the U.S., Communist rule in Eastern Europe and British rule in India, and, certainly, political leaders espousing a philosophy of nonviolence—Martin Luther King, Vaclav Havel, Mahatma Gandhi—played important roles in these cases. Indeed, as an interesting study by Eric Chenoweth and Maria Stephan has shown, various forms of nominally nonviolent civil resistance can be quite effective.<sup>21</sup> A troublesome and disruptive group can wrest concessions from a government without having to resort to mayhem and bloodshed. In some instances, a regime may see the costs of such concessions as less than the costs and risks of a harsh response. This calculus was the basis of Saul Alinsky's well-known “rules for radicals.”<sup>22</sup> I shall return to this topic in [chapter 5](#).

However, far from being nonviolent, the protest tactics—strikes, boycotts, demonstrations, and the like—employed by such leaders as King and Gandhi were designed to produce economic and social disruption and, in some instances, to provoke violent responses from their opponents. Violent attacks on apparently peaceful protestors would, it was hoped, elicit sympathy for the innocent victims



bloodshed and perhaps encourage powerful external forces to intervene on their behalf. Their success was predicated upon the availability of allies who could be drawn into the fray in support of the victims of violence.

Take, for example, one of the tactics employed by Dr. Martin Luther King in his effort to undermine the Southern *apartheid* system and secure civil rights for African Americans. On a number of occasions, Dr. King led groups of peaceful protestors into hostile Southern communities where he could be confident that the local authorities could be provoked into employing violence against his followers. This, in turn, would help to build support for his cause and demands for the federal government's intervention on its behalf by convincing Northern audiences that the Southern Jim Crow system was brutal, evil, and fundamentally un-American.<sup>23</sup> In his efforts, Dr. King counted upon the support of an alliance of Northern white liberals, segments of the business community, and important elements of the national news media. The media not only saw a powerful story, but also saw an opportunity to castigate the conservative coalition of Southern Democrats and right-wing Republicans that had tormented journalists and broadcasters over their alleged Communist ties during the 1940s and 1950s. This alliance gave Dr. King extraordinarily good access to the nation's television screen which helped him to sway public opinion in favor of his cause and to secure the intervention of federal authorities who then forcibly suppressed Southern white resistance to the enfranchisement of blacks.

One of the most famous protests organized by Dr. King, the April 1965 march at Selma, Alabama, is instructive in this regard. King targeted Selma for a concerted campaign of protest activity partly because racial discrimination in Selma and surrounding Dallas County was so starkly obvious. For example, because of systematic black disfranchisement, only 2 percent of the county's registered voters were black, even though blacks comprised 58 percent of the county's residents.<sup>24</sup> Selma had been chosen, however, not only because of its record of discrimination but also because Dr. King was confident that state and county political leaders were fools. He expected them to respond to peaceful protests with violence and, in the process, imprint themselves upon the collective consciousness of a national television audience as the brutal oppressors of heroic and defenseless crusaders seeking freedom and democracy.<sup>25</sup> Alabama and Dallas County authorities played their assigned roles convincingly. With network cameras watching, Alabama state troopers launched a vicious attack against protestors on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, leaving forty demonstrators seriously injured in what the media dubbed "Bloody Sunday."<sup>26</sup>

From the perspective of protest leaders and the national media, Dallas County sheriff Jim Clark might have been sent by central casting to play his part in the drama. Clark displayed a violent temper on camera, wore a "Never" button in his lapel, and armed his deputies with electric cattle prods. Clark unwittingly contributed so much to Dr. King's efforts that the protestors made him an honorary member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) as well as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).<sup>27</sup> Clark certainly deserved his awards. Nationally televised images of the violence unleashed upon peaceful protestors generated enormous sympathy for the civil rights cause and helped create the setting for the enactment of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which sent an army of federal law enforcement officials into the South with the power to suppress white resistance to the registration of black voters. In essence, nominally nonviolent protest succeeded because the protestors' allies had an even greater capacity for violence than their foes. Where, as in the case of Tiananmen Square, powerful allies are not available to deploy or at least threaten the use of force, nonviolent protest is almost always doomed to failure.

## **VIOLENCE DRIVES THE POLITICAL AGENDA**

Violence or, in some cases, even the threat of violence tends to drive other issues and considerations from the political agenda. Whatever the underlying causes of a political dispute, once violence erupts it generally takes center stage with other issues and considerations forced to the margins. The course of the dispute is driven and its outcome heavily influenced if not always fully determined by the violence to which it gave rise. In essence, once ignited, violence takes on a life of its own and becomes, to use a phrase coined by President George W. Bush, the decider.

Take the events leading up to the American Civil War. The war had many contributing causes—sectional economic rivalries, the tariff, slavery, and so forth. Yet, none of these, whether singly or in combination, need have produced a military confrontation. In some measure, the proximate cause of the war was violence itself.

The first state to secede from the Union was, of course, South Carolina. During the constitutional crises of the 1830s and early 1850s, the propertied interests that dominated South Carolina politics had urged caution and moderation in the South's response to Northern criticism and to efforts to limit the expansion of slavery. By the late 1850s, though, the views of South Carolina's planters shifted dramatically. The new Republican Party, a political entity that made opposition to slavery a major plank in its political platform, won the 1858 national congressional elections. In 1859, news of John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, threw the entire South into an uproar. And, in early 1860, the Republicans nominated as their presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln, an individual seen throughout the South, albeit incorrectly, as a mortal foe of slavery. These developments led even the most moderate among South Carolina's planters to believe that secession from the Union might become necessary. In 1859, planters supported the gubernatorial candidacy of F. W. Pickens, an individual who had been a "Nullie," or outspoken advocate of the idea that states could nullify federal laws within their own borders, in 1852 and had previously been dismissed as a hothead by men of property and substance. Before the war, South Carolina's governors were chosen by the state legislature. The legislature chose Pickens, and a general agreement emerged among the planters that if Lincoln was elected, the state would secede and would defend itself if attacked.

In November 1860, of course, Lincoln won the presidency. The next month, South Carolinians held a state-wide convention that voted to secede from the Union. South Carolina now considered itself an independent nation and prepared to go to war if this should become necessary to maintain its independence. Six other states, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, and Georgia followed South Carolina out of the Union and banded together as the Confederate States of America. This new Confederacy chose Mississippi senator Jefferson Davis as its president. Despite the developments, many politicians in both the North and South continued to hope that some compromise might be reached and the crisis defused. Several of the Southern states, including Virginia, the South's most important state, had not seceded, and their unionist politicians continued, in the spring of 1861, to search for some formula to avert the breakup of the United States. Perhaps such a formula might have been found, but violent events in Charleston's harbor soon made compromise impossible.

At the mouth of Charleston's harbor sits a tiny artificial island, Fort Sumter, constructed after the War of 1812 as part of America's system of coastal defenses. Sumter's artillery, along with guns positioned at Fort Moultrie, a point of land on Sullivan's Island across the harbor from Fort Sumter, guarded the approaches to Charleston. The Charleston forts and one Florida fort were the only federal installations in the seceded states that had not been quickly abandoned by federal authorities. On December 26, 1860, the federal commander in Charleston, Major Robert Anderson, evacuated his troops from the indefensible Fort Moultrie to the more secure Fort Sumter and waited for orders from Washington. An attempt by the U.S. Navy to resupply Fort Sumter in January failed when South Carolina artillery, in response to an order issued by Governor Pickens opened fire on the supply ship *Star of the West* and drove it away.

The standoff at Fort Sumter continued through Lincoln's inauguration in March 1861. At this point Confederate commissioners traveled to Washington to demand the surrender of the fort. They were officially rebuffed but received tacit assurances from Secretary of State Seward that the government would not attempt to reinforce the fort while discussions and deliberations continued. Both in Washington and the temporary Confederate capital, Montgomery, Alabama, many influential politicians argued for a cautious approach. A number of Confederate officials thought secession could be accomplished without war. A number of federal officials hoped a peaceful resolution to the Sumter question would help persuade Virginia to remain in the Union. By April, though, Sumter's supplies were running out and President Lincoln ordered a relief expedition to leave for Charleston. Confederate President Davis, in turn, ordered Southern artillery to open fire on the fort. Sumter's garrison replied, and for two days the citizens of Charleston cheered the artillery barrages from the waterfront.<sup>28</sup> Finally, Major Anderson indicated that he was ready to surrender, and a triumphant flotilla of soldiers and civilians headed for the little island.

News of the fighting at Fort Sumter spread quickly via telegraph. President Lincoln asked the loyal states for 75,000 troops to suppress the rebellion. With Lincoln's call for troops, voices of moderation in Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee were drowned out, and these states seceded and joined the Confederacy. Thus, while secession and war had not been planned or even desired by most major policy makers, once sparked, violence drove the political agenda, relegating the other issues and causes of the war to a subordinate status. Students of history will note that a similar story could be told about the outbreak of World War I.

## **DESTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION**

Third, violence is a major instrument—perhaps the major instrument—of social and political transformation both in the international system and within given states. Violence is usually necessary to bring about the destruction of existing institutions and social forces and, thus, to pave the way for new developments. As the always prescient Chairman Mao put it, without violence “it is impossible to accomplish any leap in social development.”<sup>29</sup>

The likely impact of violence upon “social development” is related to its level of intensity. At a low level of intensity, violence is generally associated with maintenance of the political status quo. States and individual bureaucracies within states usually construct police and security forces and more or less continually employ a low level of violence to intimidate or subdue their opponents and to prevent disruptive or even modestly violent activities on the part of disaffected groups—protests, demonstrations, and the like—from having much effect upon their behavior. Even contemporary American students of public management are taught to be prepared to deal with “public outcries, insults and demonstrations,” without allowing these to divert them from their “program goals.”<sup>30</sup> At the same time, a low level of violence on the part of disaffected groups can actually help to maintain political order by allowing governments an opportunity to demonstrate their power, to impress all around them with their forbearance in the face of provocation and, as sociologist Kai T. Erikson once observed, to strengthen communal solidarity by clearly demarcating the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable political activity.<sup>31</sup>

Violence at a high level of intensity, on the other hand, is often associated with political and social change. First, practiced by states against one another intense violence can transform, indeed, is usually a necessary condition for transformation of the world order. The current international system dominated by the United States is, like its predecessors, in large part a product of wars and other episodes of violence that created some states, eliminated others, and determined the balance of power.

among the survivors. Today, forces intent on changing the shape of that order are working assiduously to develop military capabilities that will allow them to challenge the United States or whatever regional powers stand in the way of their ambitions. Thus, Iran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons that might give it a dominant role in the Middle East; China is building naval, air, and ground forces that could make the PRC the dominant power in Asia, while a variety of less-well-endowed states and even non-state entities are counting upon terrorism and other forms of asymmetric warfare to advance their interests. For their part, the U.S. and other established powers constantly endeavor to strengthen their own military forces and frequently wage war to thwart these adversaries.

Intense violence practiced by states against one another not only shapes the international system but also influences the internal politics and institutional development of the states within that system. Acts of violence that are of short duration can often become at least a temporary source of social cohesion as members of a community bond together in shock and indignation. The 9-11 terror attack, for example, initially produced a sense of national solidarity or “rally-round-the-flag effect” in the United States that seemed to transcend the nation's usual social and political divisions.

If, on the other hand, violence persists for a longer period of time, its human and pecuniary costs can lead to stresses that expose and exacerbate whatever divisions may already exist in a particular society. Thus, for example, most Americans initially supported each of the major military conflicts in which the nation has engaged over the past two centuries, but as these struggles wore on, they aggravated the nation's underlying social, economic, racial, and regional divisions and produced major anti-war movements. During the War of 1812, for example, New England, whose commercial interests were adversely affected by the national government's war policies, nearly seceded from the Union. During the Civil War, the Democratic Party called for a negotiated settlement with the South and nearly ousted President Abraham Lincoln in the 1864 elections. World War I led to political divisions and resistance to conscription. Similarly, America's wars in Korea, Indochina, and the Middle East sparked political opposition and the eventual defeat of the politicians and parties associated with leading the nation into war. Only World War II failed to generate significant domestic conflict. Though many Americans had voiced isolationist sentiment and had been opposed to the nation's involvement in the war, once America was attacked, few could see any alternative but to fight until Japan and Germany had been defeated.

Over very long periods of time violence between states is associated with the construction and consolidation of state power. Historical sociologist Charles Tilly described the state as the functional equivalent of a protection racket, offering its citizens security in exchange for their taxes, service, and obedience—whether they want protection or not.<sup>32</sup> Citizens are more likely to want protection when they face real threats, hence long periods of international or internecine violence provide rulers with excellent opportunities to expand their power. Over time, moreover, protracted violence operates in a quasi-Darwinian manner to promote the emergence of powerful states. During the course of centuries of conflict, particularly in Europe, the states that survived did so because they were able not only to construct powerful military forces, but also the bureaucracies, tax collection agencies, and administrative procedures needed to extract resources from the citizenry, ensure popular obedience, bolster economic strength, and so forth. Over time, as Tilly put it, “war made states.”<sup>33</sup>

Like conflict between states, violence within states can bring about major social and institutional transformations. Practiced by dissident groups against regimes or by regimes against their domestic foes, violence can sweep away established institutions and social forces and help to empower new ones. Violent transformations are particularly important in two realms. First, violence is far more likely than peaceful change to bring new groups and forces to power. Second, violence is one of the few instruments that can uproot established political institutions and bureaucratic agencies.

As to the first of these realms, violence is the most important vehicle through which the power

established social forces can be suppressed. Thus, for example, the terror campaigns launched by Stalin during the 1920s and 1930s were aimed at weakening or eradicating social forces such as the intelligentsia, the upper peasantry or “Kulaks” and, later, the Jews regarded as potential sources of opposition to the regime. Through violence, the Soviet regime worked to fundamentally change the structure of the society it inherited and purge it of groups that might be disloyal or stand in the way of the regime's objectives. The result was the consolidation of Soviet power albeit at the cost of widespread suffering.<sup>34</sup>

By the same token, violence can serve as an important vehicle for groups from society's lower rungs seeking to ascend the ladder of political power. In a series of studies completed during the late 1960s, political scientist Harold Lasswell and his associates examined the revolutionary elites—Soviet, Nazi, Italian Fascist, and Chinese Communist—who changed the face of the world during the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup> Each of these political forces used violence to seize power and to stamp out opposition. The Nazis, to be sure, also had some success at the polls, but their electoral tactics included violence and intimidation directed against voters and opposition candidates.<sup>36</sup>

Most of the founders and early leaders of all four revolutionary movements, including the Nationalist Party, were intellectual ideologues with middle- or upper-middle-class social origins and, in many cases, a good deal of formal education. These were the individuals with the backgrounds and training necessary to organize political movements and to articulate political ideologies. More important, though, all four movements allowed members of previously subordinate social groups to make their way to the pinnacles of national power. The chief Nazi administrators, for example, were generally recruited from the lower strata of German society. Italian Fascism brought to the fore individuals from the lower middle classes. In Russia and China the revolutionary seizure of power by Communist movements ultimately allowed individuals from the lower classes, including the peasantry, to achieve high positions. In general, leaving aside the intellectuals who founded the four movements, power in the regimes that resulted from the success of these movements was inversely related to success and position in the preexisting society.<sup>37</sup> In all four cases, violent political action served as a vehicle for social revolution through which subordinate groups were able to displace established elites and seize power.

Just as it can sweep away established elites, violence can also uproot and destroy established governmental and political institutions that might otherwise be impervious to change. Bureaucratic institutions, as Max Weber noted, are extremely difficult to alter or abolish once they are firmly established.<sup>38</sup> Generally speaking, bureaucracies are created to give more or less permanent effect to some set of programs and policies so that they continue on after their initial sponsors pass from the scene. Accordingly, those who create bureaucracies generally surround these institutions with rules and procedures designed to safeguard their autonomy and to prevent potentially hostile forces from gaining control of them and subverting their purposes. Hence, even in a democratic context, bureaucracies are staffed primarily through an appointment process that they, themselves, control. They develop their own administrative procedures and promulgate their own rules for the implementation of programs and policies within their bureaucratic domains. In the U.S., these ideas have been enshrined by the courts under the rubric of “deference” to agency decisions.<sup>39</sup>

Once they are established, bureaucratic agencies generally endeavor to protect their institutional and procedural autonomy by sinking taproots into the political economy. They work to build lasting ties of mutual interest to social constituencies, interest groups, and politicians who will, in turn, defend them from criticism.<sup>40</sup> In the United States, relationships between bureaucracies, clientele groups, and politicians are sometimes known as “iron triangles” because of their political power and ability to ward off political adversaries. For example, during the 1980 presidential campaign, Ronald

Reagan promised to abolish the Department of Education as part of his effort to get the government "off the backs" of the American people. After his election, Reagan even appointed a Secretary of Education who was publicly committed to eliminating the agency. Nevertheless, the Department was able to rally the support of its allies in Congress as well as the teachers unions, government contractors, and other clientele groups that benefited from its programs. Reagan's efforts were quickly deflected.

Over the years, bureaucratic agencies will sometimes depart from their original missions and evolve new goals and procedures designed to advance both the internal and external goals of the leadership cadres. That is, agency executives will seek to identify a mission that justifies the agency's budgetary claims and power vis-à-vis other institutions, strengthens clientele support, and reinforces the established structure of power within the agency by affirming the importance of the particular leadership group that claims to be uniquely qualified to carry out the agency's core mission.

In time, this mission and associated practices can become so deeply ingrained in the minds of agency executives and staffers that adherence to it becomes a matter of habit and reflex. Students of bureaucracy refer to this set of established patterns of practices and beliefs about the organization's role and purpose as the agency's institutional "culture."<sup>41</sup> Political scientist James Q. Wilson observed that "every organization has a culture...a persistent, patterned way of thinking about the central tasks of and human relationships within an organization. Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual...it is passed from one generation to the next. It changes slowly, if at all."<sup>42</sup>

As in the case of efforts to abolish bureaucratic entities, agencies will strenuously resist attempts to redefine their missions, since agency leaders are likely to view these efforts as endangering their own power and position and will mobilize their supporters and clients to drive off such threats. As a result, many agencies seem to cling tenaciously to missions and procedures whose purposes seem no longer to have much validity. It may be recalled that efforts by the battleship admirals who controlled the U.S. Navy to resist the introduction of aircraft carriers were ended only when the Japanese sank several of the enormously expensive but militarily irrelevant leviathans.

Perhaps one of the lessons of the Pearl Harbor attack is that violence is sometimes the most effective way to compel established bureaucracies to alter their behavior. Bureaucracies are almost always protected by rules and procedures designed to prevent external interference in their affairs. Violence, however, is outside the rules and practices that safeguard bureaucratic autonomy. Mechanisms of leadership selection, procedural rules, bureaucratic culture, and the like become irrelevant when an institution is confronted by violent threats to its facilities and personnel.

Take, for example, the relationship between African Americans and America's police forces, school systems, social service agencies, and other urban service bureaucracies. Prior to the 1960s, these institutions generally viewed blacks as problems rather than clients. Many big-city police forces, in particular, routinely subjected blacks to harassment and were far more likely to employ brutality against blacks than against the whites with whom they came into contact. Police officials justified what they viewed as aggressive policing by averring that extraordinary force was needed to maintain order in the black community.<sup>43</sup> This notion that blacks were generally a troublesome or criminal element also rendered police officials insensitive to the demeaning treatment, insults, and indignities that black citizens frequently suffered in encounters with patrol officers. Even well-educated, middle-class blacks often found themselves subjected to racial epithets and other insulting language and were far more likely than whites to be questioned, searched, or detained by the police. At the same time, police services in black communities were generally far worse than in white areas, with the police responding slowly to calls and ignoring a range of illegal activities such as drug abuse and prostitution that they would not have tolerated in white areas.<sup>44</sup> All of these practices, according to criminologists,

Robert Fogelson, were attributable to the ideology and experience of the police and were a routine element of their bureaucratic culture.<sup>45</sup>

Efforts by African Americans to persuade police agencies to alter their practices had generally been unsuccessful. In New Orleans, for example, after 1945 more than thirty organizations were established by African American leaders to protest police misconduct in the black community. Groups such as the Police Brutality Committee and the Committee for Accountable Police met with politicians and police officials and held numerous protest meetings all to no avail.<sup>46</sup> In New Orleans, as in other cities, police administrators declared that black criticisms were merely efforts to undermine the effectiveness of law enforcement.<sup>47</sup>

Urban police departments were compelled to modify their conduct in the black community by a outbreak of intense rioting and violence—much of it directed at the police—during the 1960s. Major riots took place in New York (1964), Philadelphia (1964), Rochester (1964), Jersey City (1964), Atlanta (1966), Chicago (1966), Detroit (1967), Tampa (1967), and Washington, DC (1968), while lesser disturbances occurred in a host of other cities. Virtually all these riots were sparked by confrontations between African Americans and the police. In New York an off-duty police officer killed a black teenager, in Atlanta a patrolman wounded a black auto theft suspect, in Detroit the police raided an after-hours black tavern, and so forth.<sup>48</sup> In most cases, too, rioters directed the bulk of their anger and fury at the local police, who suffered numerous injuries, as well as some fatalities at the hands of rioters. National guard troops, mobilized to restore order, were generally treated courteously in the black community.<sup>49</sup>

In the wake of the riots, investigations by a number of official bodies such as the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, and the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, came to the obvious conclusion that police practices had been a major precipitant of urban violence and recommended a number of reforms that were gradually imposed upon police bureaucracies by local and federal officials determined to prevent a renewal of the violence that had already cost billions of dollars in property damage. These reforms included the appointment of larger numbers of black police officers and their assignment to patrol black neighborhoods, the promotion of black officers to command positions, including the highest ranks of urban departments, the introduction of a variety of police–community relations programs, and the promulgation of rules and regulations designed to compel officers to behave courteously toward black citizens.<sup>50</sup> Two years of violence had forced urban police departments to at least begin a series of reforms they had previously rejected.

Of course, bureaucracies can be sufficiently resilient to withstand even the most violent attacks. In 1966, Mao Zedong unleashed the first of a decade-long series of blows against the Chinese state apparatus that came to be called Mao's "Cultural Revolution." Fearing that foes, whether real or imagined, within the state and party bureaucracies might unite against him, Mao mobilized hundreds of thousands of students calling themselves "Red Guards" to struggle against those deemed enemies of the Revolution. Most of these putative enemies were state functionaries and party cadres from the lowest to the very highest levels of power, including such luminaries as Marshal Lin Biao, Liu Shaoqi, and Deng Xiaoping. Tens of thousands of officials were exiled to the countryside and forced to engage in hard labor; many thousands of others were murdered, beaten, imprisoned, tortured, humiliated, and driven to suicide.<sup>51</sup> After Mao's death in 1976, however, his closest associates were arrested, and many of the high-ranking party cadres and state functionaries purged during the Cultural Revolution were returned to positions of power. These included Deng Xiaoping, who became China's de facto leader. Even a number of the ministries that had been abolished by Mao and the Red Guards were reopened. Ten years of violent attacks, orchestrated by the

nation's paramount leader, had shaken but not uprooted the bureaucracy.

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## MOBILIZATION

Finally, violence can serve as a powerful catalyst for political mobilization, bringing new and previously marginal groups into the political arena. Some groups may be drawn into the political arena in an effort to bring an end to violence. In the United States, for example, opponents of the Mexican War, the Civil War, World War I, the Vietnam War, and other conflicts were able to organize rallies, demonstrations, resistance to conscription, and widespread electoral opposition to the government's war policies. Opposition to America's war in Vietnam played an important role in bringing young people into the political arena, first as demonstrators and then as voters when the Democratic Party sought to take advantage of this politically mobilized youth by pressing for the enactment of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, lowering the voting age to eighteen.

At the same time, those who actually fight and sacrifice expect to derive some benefit for themselves and, perhaps, for their ethnic, regional, or confessional compatriots. Such benefits often include a larger role in public life. Thus, in both America and Europe periods of warfare and violence were often associated with suffrage expansion as soldiers demanded voting rights in exchange for their martial efforts, and governments saw political participation as an instrument for inspiring citizens to fight for their country. A nineteenth-century Swedish slogan that captured this notion was "One man, one vote, one gun." In recent years, of course, this slogan has been abbreviated and its original meaning forgotten. World War I, in particular, was associated with a great wave of suffrage expansion in Europe and North America as governments sought to mobilize support for the war effort.<sup>52</sup> In Canada, for example, under the Wartimes Election Act, women with relatives serving in the armed services were given the right to vote for the duration of the war. The government apparently believed that a woman with a vote would have reason to urge her husband, son, or brother to make whatever sacrifice was needed for victory.<sup>53</sup>

Still a third way in which violence can contribute to political mobilization is through its emotive power. For some individuals—perhaps particularly young men from social strata in which what Pinker calls a culture of combative masculinity has taken root—the opportunity to engage in violence exerts a powerful attraction.<sup>54</sup> National military services play on this desire with their recruiting slogans such as "We're looking for a few good men," with its assurance of adventure and promise of a chance to demonstrate one's masculinity by becoming a fierce warrior.

In the political realm, violent movements have sometimes found that it is their very propensity for violence that is attractive to some potential adherents. Take, for example, the appeal of the Nazi movement to some German workers as Hitler bid for power during the 1930s. In contrast to German workers' established Social Democratic leaders, the Nazis did not speak of complex, long-term solutions to the problems faced by the working class. Instead, the Nazis engaged in direct and violent action against immediate and visible targets. To a far greater extent than even other parties of the radical right, the Nazis exulted in acts of violence—in beatings, riots, desecrations, pogroms, and murders. As historian Peter Pulzer has observed, the ferocity of the Nazi's tactics had an enormous allure for desperate and angry workers.<sup>55</sup>

In a similar vein, contemporary terrorist groups often vie with one another for prestige and adherents by planning and executing more spectacular and destructive acts than those committed by their ideological or factional rivals. As political scientist Martha Crenshaw points out, within the Palestinian resistance movement, competing factions have often planned ever more violent attacks against Israeli civilians not so much to intimidate the Israeli government as to enhance their own



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