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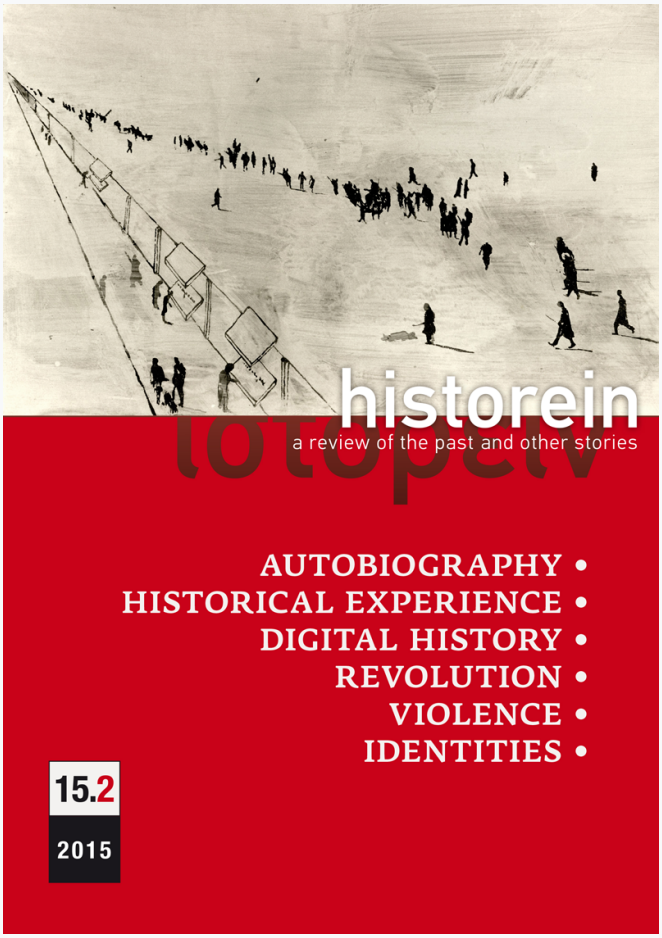

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Revolutions and regimes of violence

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Revolution creates an "historical void that separates one regime from another, and where established institutions give way to the idea that human action can impose itself on history".[1] What François Furet meant by this was that revolutions create an empty space between regimes. What I want to do in this article is to fill that void in regards to regimes of violence. To start with an obvious point: revolutions are violent. But, historiographically, the study of violence has been parsed out into different components studied by various branches of the discipline. For example, war and the violence attendant to it have been the purview of military historians. Interpersonal violence has largely fallen to social historians, whereas the criminalisation or the legal discourse over what constitutes unlawful violence has been dominated by legal scholars. My contention is that the study of violence must be studied more holistically in what I wish to call "regimes of violence". Every society, I would submit, manifests a specific regime at any given historical moment, and that regimes change over time. The concern of this paper is the relationship between regimes of violence and revolution, and how regimes change in the aftermath of rebellion.

Much of the literature on revolutions focuses on the ideas that motivated people to rise up in rebellion against their government. And this is totally appropriate. After all, there have to be ideas that challenge the status quo and that give people a vision of a future different from the reality they are currently living through. A good deal of attention has been paid as well to the intellectuals who disseminated those revolutionary ideas to the masses.[2] But ideas are not enough. Insurrections, whether they end successfully in a revolution or fail and become labelled as civil

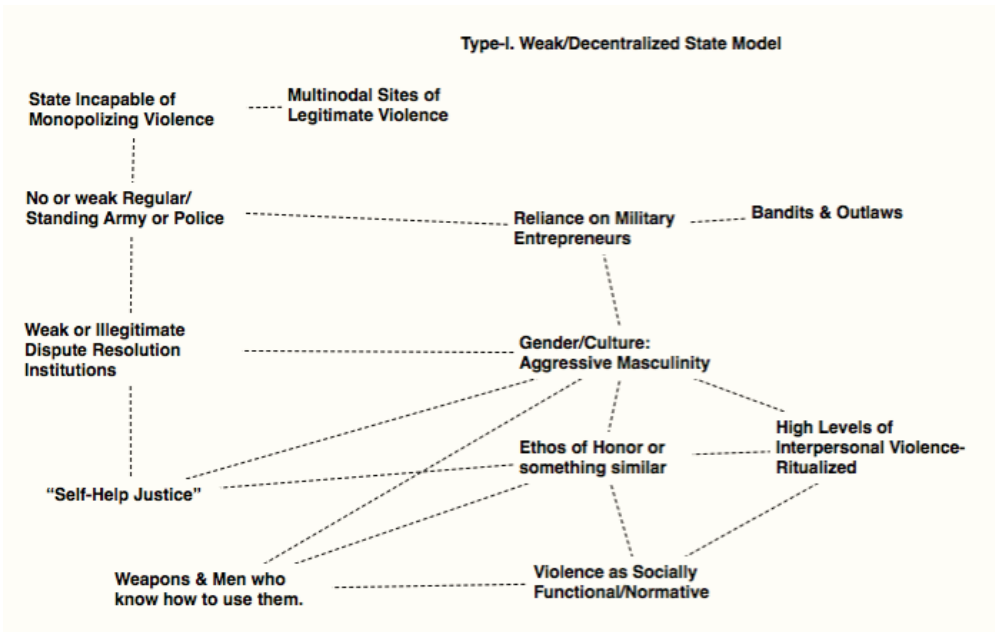
wars, require fighters. Certainly scholars have studied collective violence, endeavouring to explain how and why regular people join an insurrection, but a critically important group has been left out of most of those studies.[3] While the image of the peasant putting down his plough and picking up a gun to join a rebellion is as compelling as it is romantic, it masks a simple truth: most of the time peasants do not make good fighters. The willingness to deploy lethal violence against another human being requires cultural desensitisation to a fundamental ethical tenet. But in every society there emerges men for whom this is not so. Historically, at the heart of every insurrection there was a core of men for whom a propensity to violence was a way of life. I refer to these men as "military entrepreneurs".[4] These were men who were well-versed in the martial arts, who possessed arms and knew how to use them and for whom violence was mundane. Revolutionary violence, then, cannot be understood without studying it in its broader social context and in order to do that we need to focus on cultural regimes of violence.

My article proceeds from two fundamental propositions. The first of these is that states seek to exert a monopoly over legitimate violence. This is an idea with a long history going back to the foundational works of Max Weber and associated most recently with numerous studies by Charles Tilly.[5] It stems from the fact that a violent act in and of itself is either lawful or criminal depending on the dictates of the state as expressed in law. States, then, determine the legitimacy or illegitimacy of violence, deeming acts committed by state agencies such as the military and the police as lawful, while those perpetrated by others as criminal. States, then, strive to create a situation where there is a single node of legitimate violence, and where multiple nodes exist – as we will see, they often did in the past – it strives to suppress them.

My second proposition is that revolutions must be studied globally and across time. Most frequently, historians have adopted a comparative approach whereby they examine revolutions and compare and contrast them.[6] This has, of course, produced very fruitful insights, but we need to go further. As well as highlighting similarities and differences between different insurrections and revolutions, we need as well to examine them in a transglobal framework that emphasises what connects them. We need to focus on the flows and movements of people and ideas that connected revolutionary movements around the world in the past – or indeed in the present for that matter. Whether it be jihadists from around the world flocking to Syria to join Isis today or Harvard students motivated by the spirit of philhellenism to support the Greek insurrection of 1821, revolutions have always been transregional phenomena. We should also reconstruct what I call repertoires of revolution that both motivated and shaped collective action. These repertoires included modes of action, intellectual discourses and verbal and material symbols as well. In order to conduct this type of research, however, we need frameworks of analysis that allow us to examine revolutions cross-culturally. Without them we risk either lapsing into simple empiricism, whereby each revolution is seen as an entity unto itself, or into exceptionalism, whereby each revolution, particularly a national revolution, is seen as being *sui generis*.

I would submit that one of the frameworks of analysis that we need focuses on regimes of violence. In the next section, I lay out two models of polar opposite regimes of violence. The models consist of a set of interlinked variables, some cultural, some political and some structural. They are meant to be seen as ideal types or models, and thus are only approximations of reality. In other

words, they are not descriptions of any actual lived reality but instead represent hypothetical extremes. The models are not intended to predict where or when revolutions will break out, though I suspect that there is a relationship between certain types of regimes of violence and sociopolitical instability that could lead to insurrections. That can only be determined, however, when other frameworks of analysis are employed to examine critically important related topics, such as the development and dissemination of revolutionary ideologies and economic factors that could lead to political instability. What the models are intended to do is to help us understand which sorts of regimes of violence produce men of violence, or military entrepreneurs as I labelled them earlier. We need to envision a spectrum of regimes of violence, with the two to be described in the next section as the extremes at either end. By inserting historical data into each of the variable categories of the models, we can reconstruct actual regimes of violence and then assess where they fit on the spectrum. Let me begin with what I will call the type I or the weak/decentralised state model.

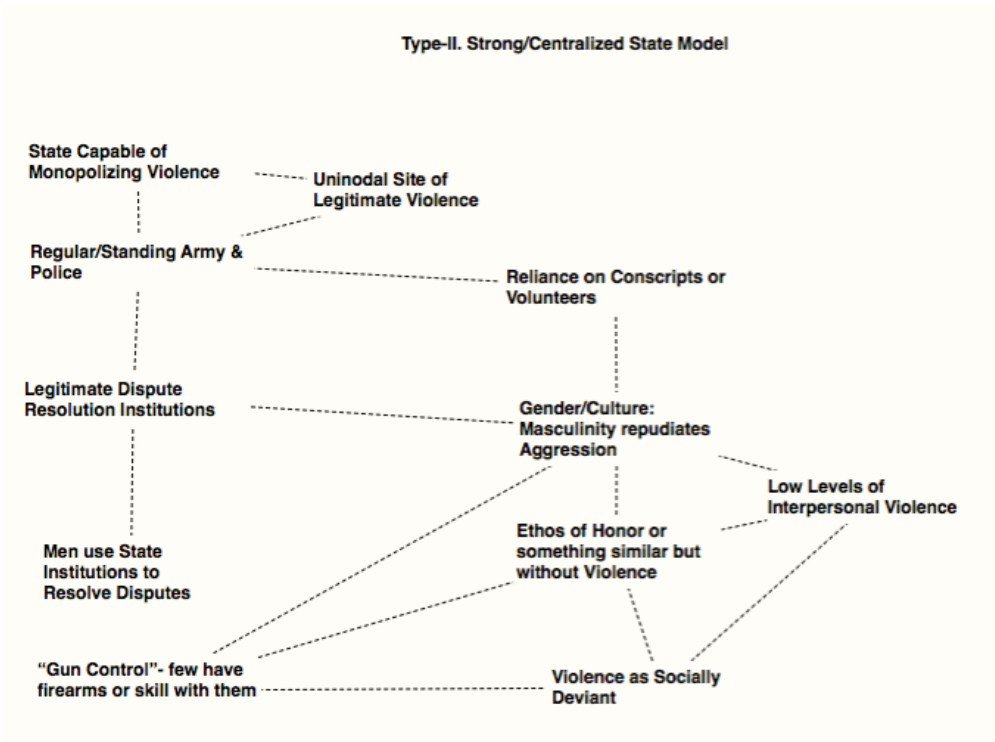


In this model the state is incapable of exerting a monopoly over legitimate violence. The reasons for its inability to do so could be many and they need to be determined in each historical instance. The key variable here would be the efficacy of the institutions crucial for maintaining social order, those being in most instances the police and military. The result of their inability to maintain public order and to enforce the writ of the state is the creation of multiple and competing nodes of violence. This in and of itself would create a state that is riven with divisions and fissures. These alternative sources of power could challenge the power and authority of the central state and could be in competition with one another. In the absence of a strong police or military, the state has to rely on irregular forces or militias to maintain public order. When the men of violence who staffed these institutions operated with the blessing of the state, they are legitimate; but when they do not or when they sell their services to one of the competing nodes of power in a decentralised state,

they are illegitimate or outlaws. A recurring characteristic of the weak state is the fluorescence of banditry. But where do these men of violence, these military entrepreneurs, come from? To answer that question, we have to look to cultural variables.

Another characteristic of the weak state is that its institutions of criminal justice are either underdeveloped or lack legitimacy. The result is that men do not turn to the state to resolve interpersonal disputes but instead do so on their own. Men in such societies seek "self-help justice", even if in doing so they violate the state's laws. They also need to demonstrate publicly that they are willing to deploy all means at their disposal to right a wrong or to address a perceived slight, even if that entails resorting to violence. Almost invariably in cultures where this is the case, aggression becomes a prized feature of masculinity. Correspondingly, they also develop a cultural ethic that legitimises male aggression and frequently that ethic is "honour" or something like it. Violence in these situations becomes socially normative. Two critically important elements emerge in this situation: first, these become societies that manifest very high levels of interpersonal violence, and much of that violence is ritualised, taking the form of duels, vendettas, revenge killings and feuds and, second, weapons, especially firearms, and the men who know how to use them, become plentiful. Not all men in such societies, of course, take up violence as a vocation and become military entrepreneurs but many do.

Our second ideal type or model resides at the opposite end of the spectrum of regimes of violence and we can refer to it as the type II or strong/centralised state model.



In this situation, the state exerts a monopoly over legitimate violence. In this unimodal situation, the state's institutions of public order, the police and military, are strongly developed and enjoy legitimacy in society as a whole. In this model the military is usually a standing army that relies on conscription or mandatory military service. The criminal justice system in this situation also appears as a very prominent feature. People recognise the authority of the court system to adjudicate disputes and to address grievances.

Culturally a very different manifestation of masculinity develops. While ethical concepts such as honour may remain culturally present, absent is the prevalence of aggression in them. Instead, interpersonal violence is seen as deviant and socially dysfunctional. In addition to there being new social norms that anathematise violence, institutions such as the military inculcate values that channel masculine violence towards goals defined by the state. This is where the military plays an important role. This models envisions a situation where very large numbers of young men go through military training during which they internalise values such as obedience and self-control. Most certainly they are also trained to kill but the key difference here is that that violence is directed to serve the interests of the state. The critical outcome of the interaction of the variables in this model is that: first, they produce societies in which only a limited sector of the population has access to weapons and, second, they manifest much lower levels of interpersonal violence. The regime of violence manifested in a strong state model is one unlikely to produce either military entrepreneurs, who could play that critically important role in an insurrection, or nodes of violence outside of the state's control that could challenge its monopoly over legitimate violence. I would also suggest that revolution is less likely in societies whose regimes of violence resemble more closely the strong state model.

My second argument is that understanding how regimes of violence change over time is critically important. In regards to this article, I suggest that revolutions create a void, as Furet suggested, and that they represent a transitional and transformative moment. Whether an insurrection fails or is successful, a process of state formation or reformation ensues in its aftermath, and an essential part of that process focuses on regimes of violence. It is through the process of state (re)formation that the institutions at the centre of the regime of violence take shape and form and, by so doing, create a regime closer to the type II end of the spectrum.

The case of Greece and the Ottoman empire from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries provides us with a good example for examining the applicability of the frame of analysis outlined above.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, the once mighty and feared Ottoman military machine was but a pale comparison of its former self. There were still the Janissary corps and a sizable contingent of timar cavalry, but neither of them were the formidable forces that they had once been. In the case of the Janissaries, the abolition of the devşirme system earlier in the century, the Patrona Halil revolt of 1730 and the long period of quiescence between wars (1739–68) transformed the corps from a full-time military organisation into part-time militia manned by cooks, petty craftsmen and pimps.[7] Indeed, in many ways they had become an impediment rather than a means to the state's ability to maintain public order.[8]

Even more dramatic was the precipitous decline in the competency of the cavalry. Though timar-holders were still expected to take to the field as sipahis, heavily armoured mounted warriors, their numbers were greatly reduced and few of them were trained and combat ready. For the first time, the majority of the Ottoman military consisted of armed irregulars of the levend. Like other states in Europe, the Ottoman empire recruited men to form armed militias. These men were mobilised and served in the region they were from and their main function was to assist the local government in maintaining law and order. In wartime they would be mustered to supplement the Janissaries and the sipahis. During the eighteenth century, as more power was devolved to the local level, regional officials had to rely increasingly on the levend. When the empire embarked on war with Russia, the orders went out to ayan and kadis at the kaza level (this being a district within an administrative province) to enrol militia troops. According to the best estimate we have, the main fighting force mobilised by the empire at the start of the 1768–74 war with Russia consisted of between 100,000 and 150,000 troops, which were recruited through the levend. Poorly trained and lacking in discipline, these irregulars constituted the core of the Ottoman army that faced Russia in the northern campaign along the Danube.

The following quote from the leading Ottoman military historian captures some additional dimensions regarding the development of a Muslim militia:

> Roving bands, once organized into fighting forces, were called household levend, or state levend, the distinction being whether they were part of the provincial governor's personal forces (kapili or kapi halki) or were paid directly by the state (miri). The bands were organized into companies (bayrak or bölük), generally of 50 soldiers, and could be either cavalry or infantry. Their commander was a bölükbaşi.[9]

The first important point is that some militia groups were controlled by the central state, while others were under the command of local officials. This created a multinodal military apparatus, or to put it another way, this was a system in which the central state certainly did not exercise a monopoly over legitimate force. Local officials had under their command a military force, which, as we will see, could be used either to support or to challenge central state authority. Some regional officials, like Tepedelenli Ali Paşa of Ioannina and Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa of Vidin, had at their disposal so many men that we could actually consider their militias as small armies. The second element to note is that when not operating in an official capacity and paid for by the government, militiamen became "roving bands" of outlaws. There developed then a large cadre of Muslim military entrepreneurs. But the story does not end there: certain factors led to the development of large numbers of Christian military entrepreneurs as well.

Each time the Ottoman empire went to war, tens of thousands of Muslim men were mobilised through the levend system to serve as irregular troops; at the same time, non-Muslims, particularly Greek and Christian Albanian warriors, were hired and deployed as armatoles and derbends to guard the empire's roads and mountain passes. At war's end, the levend troops were demobilised and many armatoles went out of government service. This produced a huge number of unemployed or underemployed armed men. Some were hired by local lords to fill their private gangs, while others were retained for garrison duty. Many, however, took to the mountains and became

outlaws. At times the fighting between the armatoles and brigands was fierce. So, in some ways, when the empire's external wars ended, a form of internal strife took their place.

The Napoleonic wars quickened the pace and expanded the magnitude of military entrepreneurship in the region. The war stretched Ottoman resources thinly and, since so many Muslim levend troops were fighting on the Danubian front, the empire and many local authorities had to rely on non-Muslim, mostly Orthodox Greek and Albanian armatoles, to act as the internal police force. In addition, there were other Orthodox Greeks and Albanians who were getting weapons and learning how to use them. The Great Powers, and especially the British, organised and trained local men into bands of irregulars.

The most famous of these groups were the Corsican Rangers, a highly decorated and battle-hardened corps that was made up of men of many different nationalities and not just Corsicans. As Britain and France became more deeply involved in the Balkans, they formed local irregular corps there. During the French occupation of the Ionian Islands, for example, General François-Xavier Donzelot recruited and trained a force of over 5,000 Greeks and Albanians, mostly from the mainland. After the British established a stronghold on the island of Zakynthos in 1809, many of these men joined the Duke of York's new Greek Light Infantry. Austria organised ethnic Serbs into irregular units called the Freicorps. The Russians regularly recruited irregular bands of Balkan Christians (Serbs, Greeks, Albanians, Romanians and others) in Moldavia and Wallachia to support their regular army. The bottom line was that at the end of the Napoleonic wars there were many more Orthodox Christians who had guns and knew how to use them.[10] In sum, by the 1810s the Ottoman regime of violence was moving increasingly closer to a type I model. But what of the other element we discussed earlier, that of a culture of violence? That also seems to have been prevalent.

While more work needs to be done on the topics of masculinity and violence in the Greek world before 1821, the existing scholarship strongly suggests that the Ottoman criminal justice system lacked widespread legitimacy, particularly among the non-Muslim population. One of the characteristics of the system of that time was legal pluralism, whereby there were a number of different legal fora that people could resort to to settle disputes. These included the kadi court, the Orthodox ecclesiastical court and local level councils usually composed of elderly men. While the system had certain strengths, it also had profound weaknesses, the most important of which for our purposes was that none of them could command total respect and enforce the writ of law. The result was the development of a flourishing system of self-help justice.[11] Correspondingly, as we discussed earlier, this led to a cultural ethos that privileged masculine aggression. It was this type of cultural system that produced men well-versed in violence, some of whom would deploy skills with guns and swords professionally as military entrepreneurs.

The existence of a type I regime of violence in the Ottoman empire in the early nineteenth century is insufficient to explain the insurrection of 1821. No revolution can be attributed to just one single factor or cause. But I would submit that the existence of this type of regime of violence made revolution possible, if not even more likely. Regarding what transpired during the course of the insurrection itself, little need be said here.[12] That for most of the time the actual fighting was between Ottoman levend militia and Greek military bands is a point that has been made repeatedly.[13] What I

want to do in the remainder of this article is to examine the nature and the character of the regime of violence that developed in independent Greece. In spite of state-building efforts during the nineteenth century that included attempts to shift the regime of violence from being closer to the type I to the type II model, the process remained incomplete and the transition unfulfilled. The failure of the Greek kingdom to transform the regime of violence had profound consequences that would continue to reverberate well into the twentieth century.

In regards to developing the critical institutions that shaped its regime of violence, the fledgling Greek state faced formidable challenges, the most of important of these being financial. I begin with the military. Even during the course of the war, the provisional revolutionary government and then the government of Ioannis Kapodstrias tried to create a regular, western-style army. Neither got very far. During the first years of the Bavarian monarchy, the Greek army consisted of a core of 3,500 well-trained Bavarian troops, augmented by 5,000 German volunteers and a relatively modest number of Greek recruits. By the time of the first constitution (1844), the German troops were mostly gone and Greeks constituted the central element of the army. But the force remained small in size and thus incapable either of providing the state with an effective fighting force against external foes, meaning essentially here the Ottoman empire, or of enforcing internal public order.

This impaired development had many consequences; the most important one for our purposes was that the Greek state had to rely continually on irregular fighters to perform basic military tasks. For example, throughout much of the nineteenth century, the state hired such military entrepreneurs to patrol the border with the Ottoman empire.[14] In like vein, recurrently the state deployed irregulars against the Ottomans in furtherance of Greek irredentism.[15] This occurred in 1853 and 1854 in the context of the Crimean war, and again in the 1860s on Crete and even as late as 1877 and 1878 during the Russian–Ottoman war. It was really only during the 1880s that Greece began to develop a regular army of significant magnitude.[16]

A further consequence of the absence of a large regular army was that the state was incapable of exerting a monopoly on legitimate violence. There continued to be during the formative years of the kingdom multiple nodes of legitimate violence, legitimate at least in the eyes of the people but not the state. Large gangs of irregular fighters rallied around captains, many of whom had participated in the war of independence; some of them, like the band led by General Theodoros Grivas, grew in size to rival a small army. As often happens in places where warlordism flourished, civil unrest in the form of violent protests and tax riots erupted. And this was certainly the case in Greece during the 1830s and 1840s.[17]

Another area of incomplete state formation related to the criminal justice system. This was not for want of trying. The Bavarian regime introduced a standardised, uniform code of criminal law based on the "modern" tenets of German jurisprudence, while at the same time taking into account the great diversity of local customs of dispute resolution.[18] In spite of this attempt to be sensitive to indigenous practices, neither the law nor the criminal court system given the task of imposing it gained much traction with Greek men. As numerous case studies have shown, throughout the nineteenth century Greek men opted for self-help justice to resolve their disputes rather than bringing them to the docket of the state's criminal courts.[19] Compounding the problem of the crim-

inal justice system's lack of legitimacy was the absence of effective police forces. More often than not, the rural gendarmerie, for example, was more exploitative than it was protective of rural populations. In large part this was because the state lacked the resources to eradicate banditry and outlawry by force and so resorted to the expedient of hiring brigands to be the police.[20] The result of the failure to create a fully functioning and legitimate criminal justice system was that many areas of Greece manifested extremely high levels of interpersonal violence. Ritualised violence in the form of knife fights, revenge homicides and feuds were normative features in much of rural and urban society. The cultural construction of masculinity had at its core an ethic that privileged aggression. A man was expected to respond to any challenge to his reputation or any threat to his household's property with aggression and violence, even at times lethal violence. It is from such a society that military entrepreneurs emerged.

In conclusion, then, the regime of violence in nineteenth-century Greece bore a marked resemblance to the one that flourished before the war of independence. This is not to say that state-building processes during the long nineteenth century failed completely to shift it to a point closer to a type II model on the spectrum of regimes of violence. Beginning with the reformist agenda of Harilaos Trikoupis, significant strides were made. His reforms of the criminal justice system, his expansion of both metropolitan and rural police forces, and the large investment his government made in expanding the Greek army, all contributed to reforming the regime of violence. These measures, along with other factors, inaugurated a social transformation, whereby Greek men began to accept the institutions of the state as legitimate, and so increasingly they called on them to solve disputes and to restore reputations. More concretely, what we see in the historical record is a diminution in the level of interpersonal violence and a shift, albeit a gradual one, in the social acceptance of masculine aggression.[21] Nonetheless, the process of transformation from a type I regime of violence to a type II one remained incomplete. The consequence of this was that many of the fault lines inherent in a political system with a type I regime persisted in Greece well into the twentieth century.

A second conclusion relates to the study of revolutions more broadly. In order to study revolutions across time and space, we need to develop analytical frameworks that will enable us to identify the most important causal factors. Some of these frameworks should focus on the ideas and ideologies that motivate men and women to rise in rebellion; others should concentrate on the social and culture milieus that enabled those ideas and ideologies to gain traction and popular acceptance. What I hope to have shown in this article is that we need a framework of analysis that examines violence.

Revolutions are by definition violent events and so require men for whom violence is a way of life. The analytical framework proposed in this article both identifies a set of key variables relating to societal regimes of violence and the interactive connections between those variables. It also postulates that there exists a spectrum of regimes of violence with two polar opposite ideal types, one that I have labelled as type I and the other as type II. All societies manifest a regime of violence that fits somewhere along the spectrum, and those regimes closer to type I are more unstable and more likely to produce the conditions necessary for a revolution to occur. I suggest as well that as part of the postrevolutionary state-building process, governments try to create a new regime of

violence that resembles a type II model. In this article, I used the case of Greece to show what such a study would look like. What we need now are studies empirically grounded elsewhere that both try to understand individual revolutions on their own but also as part of our efforts to comprehend revolutionary processes more broadly. We need in particular analyses of prerevolutionary regimes of violence. Above all, what I hope to have shown here is that the study of regimes of violence is essential if we are ever going to fully understand revolution and postrevolutionary state formation.

NOTES

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2 For an over of theories of revolution, see Jack A. Goldstone, "Toward a fourth generation of revolutionary theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001): 139–187. There is a very large body of literature that discusses specific revolutions. I have chosen not to present an overview of that vast corpus here but instead I want to concentrate on a few important works that endeavour to address the broader issue of violence in society and a propensity for political instability and insurrections.

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