The Long-Term Effects of Violence: How Conflict Frequency Effects Cultural Values

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Introduction

As far back as the historical record reaches, conflict has been a part of human history. It has been the rise and fall of almost every culture that exists today. The world is continuing to evolve at an exponentially increasing rate, and with it the role that violence and conflict plays in the ever day lives of the peoples of the world. According to the U.N., "The absolute number of deaths has been declining since 1946. And yet, conflict and violence are currently on the rise" (United Nations, n.d.).

This phenomenon may be due to a myriad of things. Perhaps our rapidly advancing technologies have made the organized conflicts of war safer and more predictable while also enabling chaotic individual groups more destructive power. It could be that the conflict-steeped past has warped the cultural values to be more accepting of violence. This is the question that I will be exploring through my study. How does a country's history of conflict effect cultural values and perceptions toward violence.

Literature Review

Previous research has shown that views on violence are not strictly black and white, as there are those that see conflict as necessary for societal progress. When focusing on WWII, Bobowik et al. (2014) showed that "acknowledgement […] that WWII was a social catastrophe and caused the Cold War was stronger than the belief that it was a just and necessary war. However, the purpose and the burden of WWII were perceived as predominantly positive, as it was related to the reconstruction of democracy, resulting in technological advances and the

creation of the United Nations". Essentially, they have shown that, from the 36 countries they examined, individuals saw WWII in both a positive and negative light, which is an important distinction that allows for those positive views on war to interact with previously withheld ethical values. Sometimes that violence can even be the point.

"Creating a culture of violence is in the interest of both the state and insurgency movements during war since both groups need their respective support bases to support their use of violence and to extract contributions" (Steenkamp, 2005). Conflict is not entirely a spontaneous consequence but can also be the initiating action to achieve some desired outcome. Warped cultural views on violence can also become a self-fulfilling prophecy. As violence is more readily accepted due to conflict, more conflicts will arise, and this will begin to feed into itself. Lansford and Dodge (2008) concluded that "the more frequently a society employs corporal punishment of its children, the more prevalent adult violence is at a societal level and the more adults endorse the use of violence". They have shown the cycle that violence can perpetuate itself.

These previous studies have focused on specific factors of the conflict-values relationship. What I will aim to do is paint a broader picture of conflict frequency and how a country's longer histories of violence morph cultural values.

Data Summary

To explore this topic, I will be using data provided by the World Values Survey, specifically round seven, which contains public data from 64 countries/territories and took place from 2017-2022. The survey asks individual respondents a series of questions and records their responses. I will include general baseline values and contributing factors such as age, country of

birth, education level, feelings of happiness, what individuals find important in their life, in their children's lives, etc. Alongside these baseline values, I will be focusing on questions related to violence. Some examples of these would be how justifiable it is to steal property, for a man to beat his wife, terrorism as a means to an end. Finally, I would like to examine the individuals' values as they surround their preferred political system between dictatorships, expert rule, army rule, democratic rule, and religious rule. These parameters will allow me to build a strong model that will examine the effects of high-frequency conflict on cultural values.

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