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The dominant emotion in violence-threatening situations is confrontational tension/fear (*ct/f*), which causes most violence to abort, or to be carried out inaccurately and incompetently. For violence to be successful, there must be a pathway around the barrier of *ct/f*. These pathways include: attacking the weak; audience-oriented staged and controlled fair fights; confrontation-avoiding remote violence; confrontation-avoiding by deception; confrontation-avoiding by absorption in technique. Successfully violent persons, on both sides of the law, are those who have developed these skilled interactional techniques. Since successful violence involves dominating the emotional attention space, only a small proportion of persons can belong to the elite which does most of each type of violence. Macro-violence, including victory and defeat in war, and in struggles of paramilitaries and social movements, is shaped by both material resources and social/emotional resources for maintaining violent organizations and forcing their opponents into organizational breakdown. Social and emotional destruction generally precedes physical destruction.

1. Introduction

There are a large number of kinds of violence, and no simple theory will explain all of them. Domestic abuse does not have the same causes as dueling, not to mention player violence in sports, police violence, war, armed robbery, or ethnic massacre. No theory of individual motives for violence will explain much of what actually happens, not only because motivations for violence are diverse, but because most attempts at violence are abortive and most violent actors are incompetent. Socio-demographic categories are very weak predictors of violence, since there are far more persons who are (to name the usual suspects) male, young, or disadvantaged than the number who are violent. Interactionally, committing legitimate violence (such as war or policing) depends on similar processes to illegitimate (criminal) violence; this is another reason why social backgrounds remote from the interactional situation cannot be a general explanation of violence.

How then can we shape a theory that will explain the varieties of violence? My strategy is to begin with a key feature of interaction in violence-threatening situations: confrontational tension and fear (*ct/f*). Using evidence of photographs, physiology, reports of subjective experience, and behavior, I conclude that the dominant emotion in violent confrontations is tension, sometimes rising to the level of paralyzing fear, and almost always making the performance of violent acts inaccurate and incompetent.[1] Most persons in violent situations do little or nothing, and that minority who do shoot or punch often miss their targets, hit innocent bystanders or their own side. Soldiers and police are much more accurate on shooting ranges than they are in actual combat, and the intention to be violent does not itself determine what will happen when there is an actual confrontation. Humans are not naturally good at violence in real-life situations; direct confrontation with human beings produces physiological stress which makes violence largely incompetent. The existence of anger can lead us to overesti-

1 Evidence for my arguments in this paper are found in Collins 2008; for the ubiquity of fear among combatants and its effects on violence, see also Grossman 2004

mate its causal importance; although anger is a widespread and evolutionarily based emotion, it does not automatically or easily turn into violence. The expression of anger usually is bluster, impassioned gestures which are characteristic of standoffs rather than actual violence.

In this paper, I draw on a larger work on the micro-sociology of violence (Collins 2008). Its emphasis is on how violence happens or fails to happen, in the immediate situations where humans threaten each other in naturalistic settings. It draws heavily on evidence from video recordings, photographs, ethnographic observations, and in-depth interviews, bolstered where possible by historical comparisons and relevant reports in the research literature. It is micro in its emphasis on small slices of time, sometimes on the order of fractions of seconds, and on the emotions, body postures, sounds, and movements, both synchronized and at cross purposes, that make up the details of violent action. In this case, the main part of the theory is in the details, the micro-mechanisms. The book emphasizes, as well, the diversity of kinds of violence. A common thread among them is the existence of *ct/f*, while their diversity comes from the variety of pathways around the barrier of *ct/f* which otherwise keeps threatened violence from happening. A companion volume, now in progress, connects micro-mechanisms of violence with large-scale macro-violence.

The first part of the paper will examine micro-interactional violence: what happens on the level of situations where individuals or groups confront one another. On this basis, the second part will discuss macro-violence, large patterns over time and space.

2. Micro Violence

For violence to be successful, persons must find a pathway around the barrier of confrontational tension. There are five such pathways:

1. Attacking the weak.
2. Audience-oriented staged and controlled fair fights.
3. Confrontation-avoiding remote violence.
4. Confrontation-avoiding by deception.
5. Confrontation-avoiding by absorption in technique.

2.1. Pathway I: Attacking the weak

Attacking the weak is the most common form of violence. Photographic evidence of the active phase of crowd violence almost invariably shows the crowd split into small clusters, with a group of three to six persons attacking an isolated individual, who has usually fallen to the ground. The pattern is found in many different ethnic combinations all over the world; it applies alike to police violence, and to violence by nationalists, labor, political movements of any ideology, and by sports fans. The most successful form of gang violence is when a rival individual or dyad is caught by a larger group out of their own turf. Most successful violence is thus very one-sided, not so much a fight as a beating. In contrast, when groups confront each other in concentrated numbers, there is typically a standoff confined to bluster, insult, and eventually deescalation through boredom; and the same is generally true when isolated individuals quarrel.

Professional criminals learn techniques of attacking weak victims; the key is not so much physical dominance as finding those who are situationally weak. Muggers learn to approach from behind and to locate a fearful or startled target; successful robbers develop timing, dramatic gestures (including those made with their weapons) in order to catch their victim interactionally off guard, imposing the attacker's momentum on the situation.

Bullying is a long-term, institutionalized form of attacking the weak. Bullies in schools and prisons do not attack popular and socially connnected persons but isolates who are emotionally intimidated; the bullying becomes perpetuated as the victim becomes trained into a subservient relationship, which often constitutes that individual's entire social network. As in most violence, success comes more from attacking the emotionally weak than the physically weak.

One spectacularly atrocious form of attacking the weak takes the form I have called *forward panic*. This is a dynamic sequence over a period of minutes or hours. It begins with a tense conflict, such as a chase or a prolonged confrontation in battle; then one side suddenly shows itself to be weak—by falling down, retreating in confusion, or becoming emotionally dominated; this sets off the other side, which rushes upon the now-weak victim in a mood of

hot rush, piling on, and overkill. Military massacres usually follow a tense standoff which is broken by organizational chaos on one side; at such moments the victims become emotionally passive and unresisting, asymmetrically entrained with the emotional dominance of the attackers. If a retreating enemy cannot be found, forward panic may lead to the killing of civilians who are in the targeted area. The famous atrocities of police violence are typically forward panics begun by high-speed chases. Violence is prolonged into what outside observers perceive as overkill; the attackers are caught up in their own emotional rush, self-entrained in the bodily rhythms of their own violence, for a period of time unable to stop beating the opponent or firing their guns.

Domestic violence comes in several forms. The most violent form of domestic abuse resembles bullying: one partner (usually male) trains the spouse into subservience based on repeated taunting and degradation; like bully victims, such spouses tend to be social isolates whose entire network is comprised by their abuser. Domestic violence however varies across a spectrum; more frequent is symmetrical couple violence, practiced equally by males and females, in minor scuffles and escalated quarrels; here violence is kept within bounds, as equal-sided violence usually is. A third type of domestic violence is forward panic, beginning with tense quarrels, suddenly errupting into angry emotional dominance by one partner, with violence taking the form of a prolonged beating or use of weapons—overkill resulting from emotional self-entrainment. These moments of seemingly irrational, continued frenzy of attack are typically experienced as dream-like or distorted consciousness; I have referred to it as going into the emotional tunnel of violence.

During their interactional history, couples develop their own pattern of emotional equality or inequality which determines the degree and kind of violence. Each type of violence is learned as an interactional skill; in the more repetitive kinds of violence (relationship violence), the interactants learn their roles together. This situational explanation has an optimistic side: police, soldiers, and other official agents can be put on their guard against the emotional dynamics of forward panic; attention to interactional skills in domestic situations, schools, and total institutions could also head off attacks on the weak.

2.2. Pathway II: Audience-oriented, Staged, and Controlled Fair Fights

The audience-oriented, staged, and controlled fair fight is the idealized and culturally celebrated form of violence. In contrast to attacking the weak, which is dirty, secret, and very unpleasant to witness (hence regarded as atrocity when it comes to light), staged fighters are treated as social elites. Duels, historically, were limited to the aristocracy or gentleman class; they followed rules and were scheduled for particular times and places; although sometimes deadly, duels limited violence to a short period of stylized conflict, and afterwards (unlike vendettas) declared the matter settled. Like all violence, staged fair fights must overcome the barrier of confrontational tension/fear; they do so by directing attention to the audience in front of whom the fighters must perform; micro-interactionally, the fighters are focussed not merely on the confrontation but on how they look while they are carrying out the dispute. A contemporary equivalent of staged fair fights occurs in communities like high schools where reputations are widely known; thus fist-fights are arranged for the playground after school, with an audience cheering on the fight, but also limiting it.

Staged fights are often used as gang initiations, in this case with a degree of asymmetry since the novice must prove himself against a more powerful opponent. Fights inside gangs are generally staged as limited fair fights. Fights between gangs, however, are attempts to find a momentary situation of attacking the weak; drive-by shootings are one-sided, not full-scale battles with firing by both sides. Full-scale fights between gangs have the same problem as military battles: most display of violence between assembled groups is bluster, even when it takes the form of making noise with guns; as long as both sides maintain the confrontation, most shooting is inaccurate. Prolonged violence between gangs thus usually takes the form of a vendetta or cycle of reciprocal killings; this is a series of unfair fights, alternating attacks on an isolated or surprised situationally weak victim from each side in turn. Because such situations are not easy to find, vendettas may take a long time; contrary to idealized images of reciprocity, vendettas often

peter out, through incompetence and loss of emotional energy.

Staged fair fights are the format for many kinds of competitive sports. Fighting among players outside the rules also occurs, and this typically takes the form of symmetrical fights between equal numbers from both sides; it always involves tacit rules which limit the amount of damage, and it is emotionally supported by the crowd of spectators. Player violence follows the emotional rhythm of the game, and is predictable at dramatic moments at the peak of struggle for emotional dominance. We should note, again (as in the case of domestic violence), that several analytically different kinds of violence can take place in what appears to be the same rubric: sports violence is split among several types, since it does not consist of one single technique for circumventing the barrier of confrontational tension, but two different kinds: the players are the honorific elite, who fight fairly (i.e. equally matched); spectators' violence, in contrast, is a form of attacking the weak, such as the mass of the crowd attacking visiting-team players or small minorities of opposing fans. Soccer hooligans, who arrange fights with opposing fans away from the stadium, act like other violent crowds, and unleash violence (as opposed to bluster) only when they have an outnumbered enemy broken into isolated fragments that can be attacked by larger groups. The difference between these subtypes of sports violence shows that fair fights depend on the existence of an audience which treats the fighters as elite; lacking this, sports violence by fans falls back into the easiest form, attacking the weak.

Probably the most frequent audience-oriented violence consists in fights at entertainment venues, bars, and parties. Although the common denominator might seem to be alcohol, my calculations (for both the United States and the United Kingdom) show that the proportion of drunken episodes which lead to violence is on the order of 1 to 7 percent (the higher figure in the United Kingdom).[2] Violence remains difficult to carry off, as *ct/f* must be overcome even if antagonists are drunk. My comparison of ethnographic episodes shows that the attitude of the crowd is highly influential: when the crowd cheers and supports the fight, it is prolonged; when the crowd is divided or ambivalent, fights are short and mild; when the crowd is uninterested or opposed, fights abort (Collins 2008: 202–6).[3] Drunken violence is also limited by the pattern that one fight per venue takes up the attention of the audience, and eliminates emotional support for additional fights on that occasion.

On the whole, audience-oriented fair fights produce quite limited violence compared to attacking the weak; even dueling with weapons did not cause many casualties because much shooting or sword-play was ineffective, and there were widespread provisions for ending the duel short of death. This suggests a policy implication. More realistic than the utopian ideal of eliminating all violence, the amount of violence could be limited if the types of fights which normally involve attacking the weak (such as drive-bys and vendettas) could be substituted by staged fair fights.

2.3. Pathway III: Confrontation-avoiding Remote Violence

The easiest way to carry out violence is entirely to avoid direct confrontation with the opponent. In military combat, long distance (indirect fire) weapons—artillery, aerial bombs, rockets—are psychologically easier to operate and invoke less shirking and non-firing, and also cause more casualties than guns used in direct battlefield confrontation. The difficulty from a military viewpoint is that long-distance weapons are expensive, use up a large amount of munitions per casualty, and may be quite inaccurate without clear identification of the location of the enemy—and nearby civilians. Guerrilla or terrorist tactics using remote-controlled bombs (IEDs) are similarly easy to use insofar as they avoid *c/tf*. Long-distance weapons are much less frequent in violence among civilians; they are generally very expensive or require considerable organization to operate them effectively (even roadside bombs need a team and local complicity). Hence distance weapons—chiefly

2 Calculations based on surveys of binge drinking, compared to victim surveys of assault (Collins 2008, 265–7).

3 Total of 89 first-hand observations of violence-threatening confrontations, compiled from my own observations and from student reports.

bombs—are sometimes used in organized crime, but not in ordinary gang fighting or individual crime.

An exception here would be mass poison attacks (such as anthrax) through the mail; nevertheless these are the rarest of violent acts. Long-distance violence is affected by social support, as are all other kinds of violence. Violence carried out by big organizations—governments, armies, guerrilla movements—has a strong ideological component which legitimates and moralizes it at least in the eyes of most members of their communities. Long-distance violence by an isolated individual—someone who mails anthrax letters—is morally condemned by virtually everyone. Lacking social support, such isolated individuals have rarely had much success in causing casualties. Mass murderers and serial killers, in comparison, have occasionally killed dozens or even a few hundred victims; the most prolific of these have been medical personnel who poisoned individuals, one at a time, by clandestine administration of medicine—thus avoiding confrontation via deception, rather than by long-distance weapons. The more typical serial killer engages in confrontation, using conventional weapons (guns, knives); their technique has been to locate a reliable source of weak victims (isolated street prostitutes, immigrant nurses, homeless boys) and to keep up a conventional identity behind which their clandestine violence was intermittently carried out. Such techniques are very unusual; serial killings are by far the rarest type of murder, comprising a fraction of one percent of all murders.

2.4. Pathway IV: Confrontation-avoiding by Deception

The most competent violence is that which reliably hits its target, achieves its kill. The vast majority of threatened or attempted violence is completely ineffective, remaining abortive. Attacking the weak (technique no. 1) is episodic and can be rather unpredictable (from the point of view of its perpetrators' intentions), and when it happens the result is typically irrational overkill. Audience-oriented staged fights (technique no. 2) usually come off as planned, but the pair format tends to limit the amount of violence done. Long-distance violence (technique no. 3) has serious problems of imprecision and target identification. The most effective violence, with the highest chance of success, is this fourth type, where the attacker gets up close to the victim and shoots him/her in the head from a few inches away, or carries a bomb right up to the target and detonates it. In order to do so, the key tactic is a clandestine approach, requiring good information about the target and an attacker disguised as normal and non-threatening. The technique is shared by professional contract killers and suicide-bombing terrorists.

In both cases, the killer avoids confrontational tension because he or she (here the term is not merely pro forma, since suicide bombing is the one form of violence in which a substantial number of killers are women) is concentrating on presenting a normal everyday self; the attacker's attention is on the Goffmanian staging rather than on the confrontation with the enemy. The process of deceiving others also helps to deceive oneself; the adrenalin rush which makes confrontation so difficult and violence so inaccurate is replaced with calm. Suicide bombings are the most effective form of terrorism, killing the largest average number per incident. The technique is very far from most other kinds of violence; it lacks the crowd support of audience-oriented violence, and avoids the extreme adrenalin rushes of forward panics; it is very distant, too, from the normal blustering and ritual insulting which makes up most confrontations in crowds and in gangs. Thus it should not be surprising that suicide bombers rarely come from a criminal background, but are quiet, well-behaved middle-class individuals. The technique demands either a background culture of self-restraint and politeness, or highly disciplined learning. The latter appears to be the pathway for professional hitmen (in high-level organized crime, they are virtually all men): within the crime community, they are regarded as a special elite because they are the ultimate insider, viewed with high respect by most other criminals.

There is an important element of clandestine deceptiveness in the techniques of serial killers as well as rampage killers (such as those who attack schools; Newman et al. 2004) Much of their motivational buildup comes from the period of preparation for the attack, secretly storing up weapons, planning the details of the attack, even practicing and rehearsing. They take delight in having an exciting backstage life which is denied to them in conventional social life. It has been noted that school rampage killers are isolated,

socially unpopular, even bully victims; it should be added that they are not gang members or otherwise embarked on criminal careers. The techniques of violence in gangs and in crime are not those of confrontation-avoiding violence, but rather the opposite, the use of flamboyant, message-sending violence, often more as symbolic statement than as real destruction. Because there are a variety of social techniques of successful violence, violent persons can emerge from quite different social contexts; we cannot find a single background profile or personality for violence.

2.5. Pathway V: Confrontation-avoiding by Absorption in Technique

A small number of individuals are very effective at violence. In every arena of violence, a small proportion of the total nominally engaged population does the great majority of the violence; this pattern was initially found in World War II, where 15–25 percent of the frontline infantry were doing almost all the firing, and is paralleled by the small number of active rioters in a rioting crowd, the small proportion of police who account for most of the use-of-force incidents, and the small proportion of criminals who do large numbers of crimes. What is distinctive about this "violent elite," those who are much better at violence whereas most of their peers are incompetent or hanging back? It is tempting to call them sociopathic personalities; but this does not account for the fact that the pattern is found on both sides of the law, that small numbers of ace fighter pilots account for the majority of enemy aircraft destroyed, and a small number of military snipers kill far more than the average combat soldier. In addition, the sociopathic explanation implies that these individuals are socially incompetent; but in fact, violence is a technique that must be learned; it involves sensitivity to the emotional components of interaction, careful observation of others, and in the case of clandestine approaches, a great deal of self-control. Psychologically reductionist labels point us in the wrong direction; instead we must examine the career trajectories of persons through violence-using groups, which result in some few becoming near-monopolists of the skills of competent violence.

A close-up view of those skills comes from the practices and subjective phenomenology of the highest-performing military killers (Collins 2008: 381–87; interviews in Pegler 2004 are especially useful). Snipers are less sociable and group-oriented than other soldiers; they spend much of their time observing enemy hiding places and vulnerabilities, and finding hiding places of their own where they can operate without detection. Snipers are unusually focussed on the enemy, and attempt to select particular individuals through high-powered scopes. How then do they avoid confrontational tension? Their key skill is not so much their shooting accuracy as their ability to make themselves invisible to their targets; interaction with the enemy thus lacks the reciprocity of perspectives which is a key aspect of normal social interaction, and which makes confrontation so difficult. Snipers are a subset selected from those who are good at target practice, but many other good shooters fail in the field for lack of these specialized interactional skills. Snipers put aside thinking of their target as a human; they concentrate on the technical calculations of shooting under the given conditions of distance, wind, etc. The combination of deceptiveness and technical absorption results in avoidance of the tension of confrontation, and in highly competent violence. The highest-performing specialists in violence use their technical orientation to avoid confrontational tension; they are able to keep their adrenalin level in violent action down to a point at which it does not interfere with their performance.

Ace fighter pilots, like top snipers and proactive cops, are highly identified with their role, and very aggressive in seeking out targets (Collins 2008: 387–98; see Gurney 1958). Violent cops are action-seekers, proud of their policing skills. The pilots with the highest number of kills developed techniques which concentrated on vulnerable spots in enemy planes and lines of attack which enabled them to approach these spots without being seen. They dominated the social psychology of the skies, finding enemy pilots who were passive and unaware; their technique was that of attacking the weak, but a variant which required considerable learning and subtle perception of others in the social environment. At the same time, ace pilots engaged in a version of confrontation-avoiding form of fighting, similar to the hitman shooting his victim in the head from behind, since the preferred approach was almost always from behind the plane and the enemy's face was rarely seen; the plane was the kill, not the pilot.

On the micro-level, the crucial skill in violence is dominating the emotional attention space. In ordinary non-conflictual interaction, there is a tendency for individuals to be inducted into a common emotional mood, a shared definition of the situation; the most enjoyable situations are where this emotional contagion reaches the level that Durkheim called collective effervescence (Collins 2004a). This helps explain why violent confrontation is interactionally difficult; there is tension between our normal tendency to align our micro-behaviors and physiology with others, and the action of violence at cross-purposes with the other. This tension causes most violence to abort or to be carried out ineffectively. The small proportion of persons who become effective at violence have found a technique for avoiding or overcoming *ct/f*. Only a small proportion of people can do this because (among other reasons) only a few persons can dominate the emotional attention space at one time; others in their presence are dominated, either as victims, but also as less active members of the winning team. Only one cop can be point man on the SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics) team; and those who are crowded out of the violent elite, we may expect, lose their emotional energy for this role with the passage of time. Less emotional energy means less confidence, and less risk-taking; the behaviors and emotions feed back upon each other. Shifting levels of emotional engagement and disengagement with the exercise of violence can in principle be measured on the micro level, although researchers have yet to attempt this.

A career in crime—but also a career as a police officer, or a sniper or fighter pilot—is a competition in which many are tested in confrontations, and most winnowed out. Thus it is not merely criminals who tend to end their careers by their early twenties, or by age thirty at most. Most other kinds of specialists in violence also face a period of burn-out; on the micro level, this involves loss of emotional energy—of confidence, enthusiasm, initiative—which comes from being overmatched by someone more competent in the micro-emotional techniques of violence. Conversely, those who have developed a trajectory of winning their confrontations become further pumped up by episodes of success; their emotional energy gives them further commitment to look for occasions to use their superior competence at violence. Through a series of competitions in the display of violence, some gain emotional energy, others lose it.

At least on the micro level, the field of violence is a self-limiting field. It is not possible for everyone, or even a majority of a population engaged in an area of violent conflict to be competent at violence. Emotional dominance of the confrontation is the main prerequisite for successful violence; one must dominate emotionally in order to dominate physically, and emotional dominance is intrinsically scarce. From a practical point of view, this is a hopeful sign. To reduce violence, we need to take advantage of humans' widespread incompetence at it, and the tendency to limit violence to a small number of perpetrators.

2.6. Long-term Causal Sequences, Motivation and Personality

I have concentrated on situational pathways around the barrier of *ct/f* because this is the trigger which determines whether or not violence will happen and how much damage will ensue. This may be regarded as the last of a sequence of conditions which lead up to the violent situation and motivate actors to attempt violence. Thus situational theory of circumventing *ct/f* might be integrated into a larger family of theories dealing with the sequence of causes which precede the sticking point.

I would caution that a heavy emphasis on individual motivation can lead us astray, even when treated merely as a condition initiating the sequence that brings about confrontational situations and ends, at times, in violence. Theories which have been constructed to explain common forms of criminal violence (poverty, family, etc.) are useless in explaining violence on the other side of the law, such as police violence, military snipers, ace pilots, not to mention upper-class carousing, and middle-class participation in demonstrations, political movements, or terrorism. In addition, situational conditions can launch otherwise unviolent individuals into violence. Such situations include not only war but also state breakdowns fostering violent crowds and paramilitary activities; there is evidence that individuals who take part in this kind of politically-initiated violence are neither long-term criminals nor even of the disadvantaged classes, but are often recruited from respectable occupations such as teachers, officials, sportsmen, and

even sociology professors (Derluguian 2005; Volkov 2002). Further research is needed on the long-term personality patterns of such individuals, even if on the face of it most of them have not shown violent and anti-social patterns from an early age, but acquired their techniques of violence as the unfolding historical situation presented the opportunities.

Since there are a variety of techniques for circumventing *ct/f*, there may be at least five different personality patterns of violent persons; the carousing party-fighter or pub brawler surrounded by an ebullient clique is a different type than the anti-social, self-withdrawn sniper. Thus we might pursue the research pathway of tracing individual personalities which develop over the course of different kinds of violent careers. I would stress that personality should not be assumed to be constant over long periods of time; this needs to be shown empirically, and the documented pattern of falling-off in at least one type of violence (criminal violence) with age and life-course events suggests that an imputed violent personality is a construct resting upon stable opportunities for circumventing the *ct/f* barrier.

Motivation and personality are both conceptual constructs, abstracted from the ground-zero of social reality, the sum total of persons' interactions in micro-social situations. From a micro-sociological point of view, human life is a sequence or chains of micro-situations; all cognitions, emotions, motivations and behaviors build up in real moments of time, and fade away as well if they are not exercized for a considerable period. Elsewhere I have presented evidence for a model of successful and unsuccessful interaction rituals, which generate varying levels of emotional energy (Collins 2004a): at the high end of the continuum, an individual acquires confidence, enthusiasm, and initiative for particular kinds of social activities; at the low end, failed micro-interactions produce depression, avoidance, and passivity towards those kinds of encounters. Thus motivation for a particular kind of violence (being a military sniper, for instance, or an armed robber, or a school bully) is constructed as a particular kind of success in an interaction ritual chain; and at the core of this success is the development of a technique for circumventing *ct/f* and establishing emotional dominance within the situation. Such emotional dominance is subject to many situational contingencies, however, and thus the individual who reaches the peak of violent success will not necessarily stay there. The ups and downs of violent careers, personalities, and motivations are best understood in situational chains. In principle, this could be investigated by further research.

3. Macro Violence

We turn now to the macro level, where violence is coordinated in large organizations such as states, armies, and social movements. Micro and macro theories cannot be entirely distinct, since macro always contains micro within it. Macro organizations and interorganizational processes are full of pockets of micro; but there are also distinctive macro patterns that connect small events into larger patterns, and these must be theorized in their own right. An organization consists in the sum total of the behavior of its members, although we often conveniently overlook this because the concept of structure concentrates on reciprocal interdependencies among individual actors. But an organization as a whole can do only what its members are capable of as micro-situational actors.

This means that macro violence, to be successful, must find ways by which organizational agents at the point of contact with the enemy can circumvent the barrier of *ct/f*. It should not be taken for granted they will do so. Most soldiers in combat, throughout history, have not consistently fired their guns or used their weapons against the enemy, and when they have done so they were largely incompetent; battles are prolonged and stalemated because both sides typically miss. I have argued that violence on the micro level is largely incompetent and abortive. It should not be surprising if the same were true on the macro level.

What the macro-organization of violence does, above all, is to train, supply, and transport violent agents to the place where they should fight; and it attempts to discipline them to fight and to keep them from running away. Primitive tribal warfare lacked much macro structure, hence battles consisted in brief displays of bravado by a few individuals charging the enemy and quickly running away. Such battles were typically short and ended when there was as little as one casualty. The history of warfare has been the history of social inventions for keeping soldiers under control at the

front, even in unwieldy and vulnerable formations such as marching in lines and columns. Along with this has come a history of technological innovation in weapons, making them more powerful and eventually, more accurate, at greater distances.

Thus armies have gravitated towards micro-technique no. 3, confrontation-avoiding by remote violence. Early muskets, rifles, and artillery were effective mainly when enemies came within a few hundred meters of each other or even closer; this was in the face-to-face confrontational zone and thus put soldiers under great tension in trying to hit anyone or even just to fire their guns. Battles were won or lost depending on which side was able to break through the emotional barrier of *ct/f* and act with a degree of competent violence greater than their opponent. Most of the time both sides are approximately equally incompetent, and the result is a battlefield stalemate. Clausewitz coined the term friction for the fact that in battle hardly anything goes the way it should in the strategic plan; friction is a reflection (among other things) of pervasive *ct/f*. Battles are won, not so much by one's own bravery and competence, but by undergoing a little less friction than the enemy. In combat both armies are unwieldy and their soldiers largely incompetent through *ct/f*; the one that breaks down last can take advantage of the one that breaks down first. If one side loses its organization and breaks up (sometimes merely through traffic problems in attempting to move to another position), runs away, or becomes passive, its opponent can find itself in the position of attacking the weak (micro-technique no. 1) and become energized into a frenzied assault on an emotionally dominated enemy (for an example, see Keegan 1976: 82–114; more widely, Collins 2008: 104–11). In effect, local victory on a battlefield came about through accidents which allowed one side to unleash a forward panic on the other. Most casualties happened after one side had broken down socially; this produced very one-sided casualty ratios in decisive battles, since most killing was done when one side was incapable of resisting.

Such forward-panic victories could happen on particular parts of the battlefield, but remain confined there if the enemy organization held up in other places; in major victories, disorganization in one place spread throughout the army. Often this happens through attempts to retreat which turn into logistical chaos, resulting in further widespread demoralization and eventually in surrender. This is what happened in the German conquest of France during six weeks in 1940: once the Germans gained momentum in movement, the French were never able to recover their organization or establish an orderly retreat, and were defeated by forces which were no larger than their own in troops and weapons (including equal numbers of tanks). Victory comes through disorganizing the enemy, whether this happens at the meso level of a particular part of the battlefield, or the macro level of an entire war.

There are two main doctrines of how victory is achieved in battle: maneuver and attrition. Maneuver is movement, initiative, surprise, positioning one's troops in locally superior numbers (or sometimes just locally superior emotional energy) to break through the enemy line (although in fact what is broken is not so much a line as a mood and an organization). If the enemy is demoralized into surrendering in large numbers (e.g. World War II battles on both the Western front of 1940 and the Eastern front of 1941–42), actual physical casualties may be rather low (surviving as a prisoner of war was another matter, especially on the Russian front where the logistics of war gave lowest priority to keeping prisoners alive).

The doctrine of attrition has gone under various names, including frontal assault, prolonged bombardment, softening up, and force superiority. Here victory is a matter of sheer size of relative resources; the side with the larger population and the bigger economy will outlast and wear down the other. In the American civil war of 1861–65, Southern generals were better at maneuver warfare; the Union under generals Grant and Sherman eventually hit on an attrition strategy which cost many casualties but won the war through sheer depth of resources. Attrition is chiefly achieved through prolonged use of distance weapons; artillery has caused most casualties throughout the gunpowder era, even though the symbolic glory usually went to soldiers carrying small arms at the point of contact.

What happens when long-distance weapons become so powerful and accurate that the battlefield becomes largely

empty, fighting between forces which hardly see each other? At this point, one would expect *ct/f* no longer to apply; the micro level of confrontation disappears and is replaced by thoroughly macro-organizational war. Western military doctrine since the 1990s (notably in the United States and United Kingdom) has emphasized a high-tech transformation (sometimes labelled by academics as postmodern war) in which precision weapons delivered by aircraft or ground-based rocket and artillery systems, guided by remote sensors (GPS, infra-red, radar-homing, etc.), and coordinated by computers, can hit their targets with a high degree of accuracy, controlled by soldier-managers who may be thousands of miles from the battlefield. US success in the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq are cited as evidence of the superiority of this high-tech system over any previous military technology and its corresponding social organization. From the point of view of violence theory, this is the ultimate shift to long-distance weapons, eliminating *ct/f* and the human emotional element which has historically determined victory and defeat in combat. Thus some claim that Clausewitzian friction has finally been eliminated.

Biddle, however, has argued that current developments are only an extension of a long historical trend towards increasing lethality of distance weapons (2004). He argues that the turning point came during World War I, when machine guns and artillery made face-to-face confrontation impossible to survive in conventional mass combat formations. When two armies equally supplied with modern weapons fought, the result was stalemate; the side that exposed itself in frontal attack would lose; hence war became attrition contests of bombardment in static positions. The state with greater economic resources would eventually win; hence war expanded into attacking the enemy's economic base, which became possible in World War II and subsequent wars by long-distance bombing and missiles, including nuclear weapons. Macro-war thus expanded beyond the battlefield to become a war on the entire society, including civilians.

Biddle, however, argues that maneuver war made a comeback as well (2004); around 1918 all major armies developed new tactics, dividing mass troop formations into small semi-autonomous groups filtering forward into enemy defenses. Large concentrations of troops and weapons provided easy targets for the enemy's long-distance lethality; the answer was to disperse, both at the point of attack, and defensively in layers of reserve lines many miles in depth. Higher lethality thus expands the battlefield and puts a premium on concealment and movement. Armored tanks alone did not solve the problem of vulnerability to lethal long-distance fire; these too needed dispersion and air cover, and mechanized warfare raised logistics costs and made supplies a key vulnerability. Under these conditions both attrition and maneuver play a part in victory, defeat, or stalemate; as enemies became similar to each other in tactics, sheer resources and political will to use them determine the outcome.

An important variant of modern warfare is asymmetrical war, fought between one side which has high-precision remote weaponry, and the other side which is technologically inferior. The solution for the weaker has also been to adopt their own version of highly lethal remote controlled weapons; roadside bombs detonated by cell phones, for instance, continue the trend to dispersed combat by small groups on an expanded battlefield; suicide bombing is warfare by very small units operating under concealment.

Here war may return to a species of attrition, with victory going to the side with deep resources which is willing to prolong the combat until the other is worn down. The priority given to enemy body counts by the US military in Vietnam was an example of just such an emphasis on measuring the progress of attrition (Gibson 1986). Nevertheless, the human emotional element re-enters in another way. Casualties in dispersed warfare tend to involve the civilian population; modern long-distance communications (especially the mass media) broadcast the horrors of violence and tend to create emotional revulsion in distant populations. An emotional element, equivalent to *ct/f*, reappears on the political side; thus a key weapon of the weak is the mobilizing effect of atrocities committed by the other side. The dynamic of these political-military processes has not yet been well theorized. Do atrocities cause revulsion against a war, and eventual peace? Or do atrocities form a cycle, in which each side's counterattacks provoke moral solidarity within the opposing community, leading to unending retaliation?

It is often said that contemporary war is political war for the hearts and minds of the enemy's supporters; but the trend of long-distance weaponry and non-human remote sensors, together with the dispersed battlefield, is to make the high-tech side repeatedly look guilty of atrocities. The trend to pure distance warfare eliminates *ct/f* but also eliminates the ability to identify targets by personal sight. One might argue that the trend of war is against the high-tech armies because they lose the political war of propagandizing atrocities. Modern peace movements are a part of the trend to long-distance communications and the widening battlefield, which has included expanding mass media coverage of battle; thus large-scale peace movements arose historically only in the early twentieth century, the first major instance being opposition in England to the Boer War. This implies that guerrilla/terrorist tactics always win because hiding in civilian populations makes their opponents guilty of atrocities. But there are counterexamples, such as Israel versus the Palestinians, which suggest that sheer advantage of economic resources (in this case including foreign military aid) plus political will can keep a state in a perpetual state of high-tech war against opponents using the weapons of the weak.

What we need is a theory which includes the mobilization of both material resources (population and economy) and social/emotional resources (group solidarity, organizational cohesion and breakdown, emotional energy both high and low). Escalation and counter-escalation are a process of feedback loops. Typically conflict causes both sides to mobilize more resources, calling up more troops, making more weapons, generating more solidarity, and reinforcing ideological polarization versus the enemy. The publicized atrocities of violence by the other side feed back into emotional mobilization on one's own side. Such a process of counter-escalation, hypothetically, would lead to endless escalation on both sides. But infinitely increasing processes are impossible, and wars do eventually come to an end. Theoretically, this must happen either through exhaustion of material resources (running out of population and goods, especially because they are destroyed by the enemy), or exhaustion of emotional/social resources (becoming disorganized or demoralized), or both. De-escalation through stalemate is also possible, if both sides wear down their resources at an equal rate. The counter-escalation model thus encompasses both attrition (winning by wearing down material resources) and maneuver (winning by causing the enemy to break down socially). The balance between the two components of victory is not well understood.

What we need above all is a model incorporating time-dynamics, explaining how long social/emotional resources are effective. A classic theory of conflict, first formulated by Simmel ([1908] 1964), holds that external conflict produces group solidarity. But how long does such solidarity last? Examining patterns of displaying emblems of national solidarity after the 9/11/2001 attack, I have estimated that the peak of solidarity following a violent attack is three months, with normal factionalization returning around six months (Collins 2004b). We need many more such studies in a variety of situations to get a full-scale theory of the time-dynamics which govern escalation and de-escalation of violence; the length of time during which escalation can go on differs among riots (a few days), full-scale wars (years, depending on size of the populations and economies), and guerrilla wars (low intensity mobilization which can continue for decades). Doubtless a theory of the time-dynamics of conflict will require a multi-causal theory, since there are many components which go into both material and social/emotional resources.

As I said at the outset, there are a huge number of kinds of violence, and in this short paper I have concentrated chiefly on micro-violence and one type of macro violence—war—which meshes with micro theory most easily through the connection between *ct/f* and Clausewitzian friction. I omit here consideration of holocausts and ethnic cleansing violence (much progress towards theorizing their conditions has been made, e.g. Mann 2005). But ethnic massacres cannot be explained purely on a macro level; allegedly long-standing ethnic hostilities nevertheless are ideologically mobilized at particular points in time; and we cannot assume that the incitements of remote political leaders automatically translate into a chain of command which carries out massacres on the ground. Klusemann (2008) shows through video and other micro evidence that an ethnic massacre has specific situational triggers which establish emotional moods—a window in time and space where a

massacre can be carried out. Here again the micro theory of violence has optimistic implications: turning points to violence also mean that it can be headed off by the right micro situational moves.

Aside from war, a major area of macro violence involves the state. The state itself, in Weber's famous definition, is an organization which claims monopoly of legitimate violence over a territory. Since the work of Skocpol (1979) and Goldstone (1991), it has been recognized that a revolutionary change in power typically requires state breakdown; dissident movements from below are successful only to the extent that the state itself becomes ineffective in its use of repressive force, and this in turn happens through intra-elite conflicts, fiscal crisis of the state budget, and sometimes strains of war. But a state breakdown does not automatically lead to the seizure of power by a new regime; the breakdown can be prolonged in paramilitary conflict or civil war, or it could lead to permanent fragmentation of the old state's territory. The initial phase of revolution—the downfall of the old regime—is generally low in casualties. Most revolutionary violence develops later—whether in a Reign of Terror on the French guillotine, or rival paramilitaries (as in the streets of Germany in the 1920s), or extended civil war (Russia 1918–22; Japan from the Western incursions of the 1850s through 1877; Ireland 1918–23). Klusemann (2009) shows that the amount and kind of violence in situations of post-revolutionary state breakdown depend, like military violence, on rival paramilitary movements solving problems of material logistics, and on amalgamating a number of contending movements into a big movement united by ritual/symbolic tactics which give dominance in the realm of social/emotional resources.

There are a lot of loose ends. On the ultra-macro level, we need to integrate a theory of geopolitics—the centuries-spanning pattern of expansion and contraction in territories of states, including the question of when and why wars start. Our theory is better at the meso question of what happens during a war, and what causes a war to end. The rise of the modern state, with its violence-monopolizing, tax-collecting, society-penetrating propensities, is itself the framework in which other phenomena of conflict and violence arise. Social movements only became possible with the rise of the modern state, providing a centralizing arena as well as infrastructure to mobilize large-scale movements. The question of when such movements resort to violence, and what kind and degree, remains to be theorized. State penetration also has an effect on macro-trends in crime: for instance efforts at state prohibition or regulation (alcohol, drugs, sexwork, etc.) create the conditions for an illegal economy, and hence for a pseudo-government or protection racket in the form of organized crime. Gangs, as structures of illegal violence, range from small neighbourhood prestige groups to large coalitions to formalized mafias; the conditions for the growth and decline of gangs resemble the early history of the state itself (Tilly 1986). And I have not even touched on the topic of rape, which is tied into so many different institutional levels, micro and macro processes that it needs full-scale treatment in a treatise of its own.

4. Conclusions on General Theory

A general theory of violence is a useful orienting device, pushing us towards consolidating our insights from particular areas of violence and promoting cross-overs which crystallize new causal gestalts. What would a general theory of violence look like? Surely it will not take the form of simple statements such as "poverty and discrimination cause violence"; "discipline leads to rebellion"; or "frustration causes aggression." Any general theory must include nested levels of macro and micro conditions. And it must incorporate, on the micro-interactional level, the barrier of *ct/f* and situational configurations which cause this to be circumvented.

We are not nearly in sight of our end, a comprehensive theory of violence in all its forms. But, as Winston Churchill said, we may be at the end of the beginning.

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