

POLITICAL VIOLENCE VS HUMAN SECURITY: A GENERATIVE AND CHALLENGING RELATIONSHIP FOR THE RESILIENCE OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY

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Abstract: *In this paper we support the idea that politics as a system can generate important structural shocks and changes. Politics has long been associated, or even identified with violence. We must highlight the idea that political violence is not a new problem, only that it has been widely reflected by scientists since the 20th century and is mainly due to the events that marked the last century – wars, revolutions, massacres and world terrorism, which have constantly attacked human security. The political violence Europe faces today is to a certain degree surprising for the 21st century, at least for the countries that have gone through World War II, as well as suffered from repressive political regimes or many terrorist aggressions. However, this has not prevented armed conflicts and the topic of violent political objectives. Nevertheless, despite the hardships of political violence, research suggests remarkable strength and resilience within individuals and communities.*

Keywords: political violence, human security, wars, societal resilience, generative relationship.

Among the most current topics under discussion in political science, we have chosen two for this paper: political violence and human security. As reflecting on them separately would be too sterile, we propose, *as the goal of this work*, to analyse them within a generative and challenging relationship to the resilience of the European society. Following this goal we also define some objectives. First of all we would like to agree on how we *define political violence*. After that, going through several sources and thoughts of different authors, we want to *justify the consideration that political violence represents a generative phenomenon*. As we have specified in the goals of the paper, our third objective is to elucidate the *relationship between political violence and human security*, and finally to *reflect on the perception of human safety and security* as a result of the aforementioned relationship.

In the contemporary society, politics contributes to the achievement of several objectives that vary according to the political systems and the specific values of a society. These may include establishing social justice, promoting economic well-being, guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms, protecting the environment, resolving conflicts and promoting cooperation, ensuring security and stability, preventing conflicts and violence, and others. Therefore, the concept of human security involves these objectives emphasizing the protection of people as well as of the states or their borders.

In recent years, the concept of human security has gained increasing attention within the international community and has become an important element in the development of security policies and strategies.

On the other hand, the second concept we touch upon – political violence is not a new problem. We just have to mention it has been widely studied by scientists in the XX century, and is mainly due to the events that marked the previous century - wars, revolutions, massacres and global terrorism, which constantly threatened the human security.

The development of the concept human security is, in some ways, an obvious response to the political violence that humanity has gone through in the past. Therefore, we support the idea that politics as a system can generate shocks and important structural changes, which, in

turn, affect the resilience of any society in different ways, and currently particularly of the European one. In the same vein, we consider appropriate the theses highlighted by Sousa et al., citing Summerfield, Bonanno, Norris et al., (Summerfield, 1999; Bonanno, 2004; Norris et al., 2008 cited in Sousa, Haj- Yahia, Feldman, Lee, 2013, pp. 3-4), who argue that despite the hardships political violence creates, research suggests remarkable strength and resilience within both individuals and communities that tend to effectively manage the factors of stress, showing substantial resistance and demonstrating a much more positive functioning than might be expected. Also, as with other stress factors, in the context of political violence, resilience may well be part of a normal, expected course of adaptation to trauma for both individuals and communities.

Transposing the individual and collective qualities to the whole society, as Dumitrașcu mentions citing Manca et al. (Manca et al., 2017 cited in Dumitrașcu, 2020, p. 291) “*a resilient society is able to face and react to shocks or persistent structural changes, either resisting it (through absorptive capacity) or adopting a degree of flexibility leading to changes in the system (through adaptive capacity)*”.

In a methodological context, we would like to mention that the stated theses come from several sources specific to the next domains: political science, sociology, psychology, which gives the proposed subject an interdisciplinary approach. In turn, this allows us to take into account the multitude of social, economic, political and cultural factors that underlie the formation of individual and collective resilience. The basis of discussing the present subject is the analysis of specialized literature that deals with the concepts: political violence, human security and individual and collective resilience, combined with the results of specialized studies and debates carried out on the presented issue. Great attention is paid to the historical method that allows clear elucidation of the events generated by political violence and which marked human society as a whole and the European society in particular. Comparing the conclusions presented by various authors in the field lets us highlight certain particularities of resilience in terms of culture, values, politics, etc.

Politics covers a wide range of issues, including the establishment and implementation of laws and rules, the organization and functioning of governments and political institutions, the interactions between different interest groups and citizens, the formation of political alliances, the promotion and defence of individual rights and freedoms, the management of resources and economic politics, international relations and diplomacy etc. The exact definition of contemporary politics may vary depending on the perspective and context in which it is used. However, in general, contemporary politics addresses current themes and issues such as human rights, social inequality, sustainable development, migration, climate change, globalization, terrorism, human security, technology and other challenges and opportunities specific to the 21st century. At the same time, it has long been associated or even identified with violence.

There are several definitions to identify ‘violence’ in the explanatory dictionary of the Romanian language, but the following fits best in our case: *The act of using brute force; coercion, violence; rape; violation of the legal order*. Correspondingly, political violence predominates the main part of the fact: brute force, coercion, rape that is directed towards obtaining or holding political power, defence or achievement of political goals.

Some thinkers, including humanists such as John Locke and others, recognized the legitimacy of violence directed against the abuse and violation of human rights, the usurpation of power and the enslavement of citizens, as well as in the conditions of a defensive war. In the same context, the German philosopher Düring considered violence as crucial for social

development, and Weber, Mosca and Spenser, in their works regarded violence as a tool for maintaining or changing power.

In this context we can also state the thesis that political violence is inevitable and to a certain extent it is justified by the classic adage of the Italian philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli “the end justifies the means”. Beyond the ethical dilemma, the author argued that political leaders can and must use any necessary means to preserve their power and achieve political goals. However, we must emphasize that there are also approaches that reject any form of political violence and argue that there are peaceful and non-violent alternatives to solve political problems and conflicts. These approaches focus on the values of democracy, human rights, negotiation and dialogue as means to promote change and achieve political goals.

We have to admit that currently there is no single definition of political violence and this is primarily due to its complexity. Effectively all authors who dealt with the subject tended to regard it from their point of view. However, we can highlight some common features such as Kirwin and Cho’s (2009) “*the use of force to achieve a political result*”, Lischer’s (2000) “*violent activity organized for political purposes*”, Los Rios’s (2004) “*violence politics refers to the acquisition of power through violent acts*” taken over by the United Nations Development Program in the study *Political Violence in West Africa: A critical analysis of the role of parliamentarians and political parties* (Kirwin and Cho, 2009; Lischer, 2000; Los Rios, 2004 cited in UNDP, 2010, p. 2) or in the works of such Russian authors as: Kugay (1993) “repression or coercion of the free will of a social subject who aspires to political power”, Lipatov (1989) “the use of coercive means to acquire, preserve, exercise state power, to obtain political domination on the international arena”, Pidzhakov (2008) “physical coercion used as a means of imposing the will of the subject in order to seize power, primarily state power, its use, distribution and protection” (Lipatov, 1989; Kugay, 1993; Pidzhakov, 2008 cited in Kovrizhnyh, 2010, p. 74). Basically, most of the time international subjects (especially states) behave like any other political actor - obviously to the extent s/he can aspire, and international political dominance has more often tended to be achieved by starting wars. In fact, the entire history of mankind is a history of wars. Some historians believe that humans have started more than 15,000 wars, some of them being of duration, others of proportions, the third from an interest of domination, but there were also those which started as a misunderstanding, etc. The fact is that they all created a state of shock and stress for the society. In this context, a recent history of wars has shown us that since the creation of civilization, mankind has lived in peace for only a few hundred years, compared to the millennial existence of human society.

In most cases acts of violence led to violent responses. In this sense, we believe that **political violence can also be considered a generative phenomenon**, because it can generate or amplify political, social and economic tensions, leading to new forms of violence and conflict. For example, a terrorist attack may lead to an increase in xenophobic or racist reactions from certain groups of people, who may respond with violence against minority groups.

In the same vein, Solvit’s theory suggests that war is a generative and self-modifying social phenomenon. According to this theory, war is not only the result of initial political stakes, but is itself a dynamic process that generates changes and new political stakes. For instance, during a war, new political alliances, interests and aspirations may emerge and these may influence the course of the conflict and lead to significant changes in terms of objectives and outcomes. (Solvit, 2011, p. VII)

In these conditions both a war in particular, and political violence in general can be considered **generative and resilient phenomena**, but resilience capacities can help reduce the negative impact of political violence and create a more stable, secure and better prepared society to face such events. Likewise, political violence can also be a resilient phenomenon, as people and communities can learn to cope with it, find ways to adapt and recover. Research suggests that despite the hardships that political violence creates, there is a remarkable force

and resilience within both individuals and communities. By developing resilience capacities such as social support, conflict management skills, and material resources, people can cope with trauma and find ways to build societies that are more stable and resistant to political violence.

There are also examples of societies that have managed to overcome their history of political violence and find lasting solutions to their conflicts. For example, Germany managed to get over the “stigma” of fascism, condemn the historical past, assume the consequences caused in the Second World War and become one of the states most dedicated to peace. Another example is the South African Republic that has managed to move away from apartheid to a pluralistic democracy and address historical issues of racial inequality. People can talk about past abuse and find ways to move on to create conditions for the development of prosperous, democratic and secure relations from internal and external dangers. On the other hand, to promote human security, it is essential to try to solve the root causes of political violence and to promote peace, respect for human rights, dialogue and reconciliation or realisation the preventive measures such as the promotion of democracy, justice and social inclusion.

Generative and resilient phenomena have the ability to create and innovate while maintaining their integrity and ability to recover when facing change or disruption. These phenomena are important to ensure progress and development in different fields, such as technology, culture or economy, but also to help us adapt to changes in the environment and defy the stressors and challenges we face daily.

Culture is an example of a resilient generative phenomenon. Culture can be considered generative because it has the ability to generate new ideas and adapt to social and historical changes. Culture can also be considered resilient because it can survive and recover from traumatic events or dramatic changes in society, such as wars or major political changes.

The relationship between political violence and human security is complex and can be analyzed from several perspectives. As previously mentioned, political violence adversely affects human security, bringing threats to the life, liberty and well-being of individuals and communities. In this context, following those exhibited by Cavaropol (2016), we can highlight some aspects that characterize the relationship between political violence and human security:

1. Physical threat - acts of terrorism, armed conflicts, repression and political persecution are forms of political violence that endanger individuals' lives, result in the loss of lives or injure people and create a sense of general insecurity.

2. Limitation of freedom - through the use of force, authorities or violent political groups can impose control and oppression, limiting the freedom of expression, the freedom of association and the freedom to choose one's political beliefs.

3. Impact on welfare - political instability and conflict can disrupt the economy, destroying the infrastructure, affecting the business environment and creating financial insecurity for citizens. Political violence can also generate forced migration and refugees, increasing the burden on public resources and services.

4. Impairment of social cohesion - when people experience violence and conflict based on political, ethnic or religious differences, trust and social cohesion can erode. This can create a climate of tension and social instability.

5. Impact on sustainable development - political violence can hinder social, economic and ecological progress. This can discourage foreign investment, affect access to natural resources and prevent the implementation of sustainable development programmes.

Under these conditions, the relationship between political violence and human security can be characterized as close and interdependent. Political violence has a major impact on human security by affecting civil rights and liberties, destabilizing society and endangering people's lives and property.

On the other hand, human security is necessary to prevent and counter political violence. In order to ensure human security, a holistic approach that takes into account the social, economic, political and cultural factors that can influence political violence is needed. This may include actions to prevent conflict, protect civil rights and liberties, promote economic and social development, improve governance and the justice system.

We believe this relationship can be generative because it has got the ability to generate new ideas, concepts or behaviours and to adapt and return to a state of equilibrium or normal functioning after being subjected to a disturbance or significant change.

Under these conditions, we consider it important to continuously evaluate **the perception of safety and security** both at the individual and the collective level. Numerous schools and institutions aim to identify this level by suggesting and evaluating different criteria that can create a more objective picture of a society's perception of the level of safety it is in. Thus, at the NATO summit in Rome in 1991, the importance of the multiple approach to security and the need to analyze the different dimensions of the security of human collectivities were emphasized. The following “sectors” have been put forward for the analysis of the security perception of the human collective: military, ecological, economic, social (*societal*) and political. Later, the authors of this methodology, representatives of the Copenhagen School, Buzan, Wæver and Wilde (1998), in the work *Security: a New Framework for Analysis*, develop the ideas regarding these sectors and claim that each of them has a distinct importance and is interdependent with the other. Such as:

- *the military sector* refers to the ability of a state to protect and defend its interests through military means. This involves both the defensive and offensive capabilities of states and the ability to recognize and anticipate the actions of adversaries.

- *the environmental sector* refers to the protection of the biosphere and the natural world. This involves the sustainable management of natural resources, the conservation of biodiversity, the fight against climate change and the prevention of environmental pollution and degradation.

- *the economic sector* refers to the ensuring of the state economic well-being and the efficient management of resources and capital. This includes energy security, access to international markets and the protection of the economic infrastructure.

- *the social (societal) sector* focuses on ensuring the collective rights and values of human communities. This includes the protection of human rights, cultural diversity, national identity, language and religion, as well as community support in specific situations where these rights are violated or threatened.

- *the political sector* focuses on maintaining the stability and functionality of the governance systems of states. This involves ensuring robust political institutions, respecting civil rights and liberties, and preventing internal and external political conflicts.

In our view, these five dimensions of security constitute the fundamental level of human security. For example, political instability or armed conflicts can negatively affect social and economic security, while environmental degradation can lead to social and economic conflicts and tension. Therefore, a holistic approach to human security involves managing and promoting all these dimensions in an integrated way.

On the other hand, as it has been mentioned before, such analyzes are currently carried out by different institutions. The following can be considered as the most recent: the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2022. Measuring peace in a complex world (*Global Peace Index 2022. Measuring peace in a complex world*) and the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2023. Measuring the impact of terrorism (*Global Terrorism Index 2023. Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*), carried out by The Institute for Economics and Peace from Sydney.

These reports provide scores for each country and region separately on the following components:

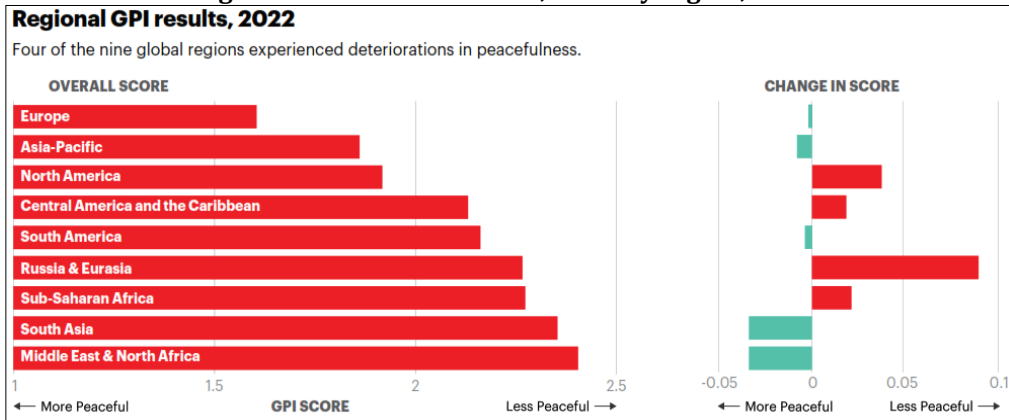
- GPI - militarization, safety and social security and ongoing conflict (GPI, 2022, p. 83);

and

- GTI - the total number of terrorist incidents in a given year, the total number of deaths caused by terrorists in a given year, the total number of injured by terrorists in a given year; the total number of hostages, caused by terrorists in a given year (GTI, 2023, p. 86).

According to the GPI 2022 index (GPI, 2022, p. 2) the average level of peace worldwide worsened by 0.3%. The greatest deteriorations were registered on the following scales: political terror, relations with neighbouring countries, intensity of internal conflict, number of refugees, internally displaced people, and political instability. The most peaceful countries in the world are located in Europe: Iceland, Ireland, Denmark and Austria; and Europe remains the most peaceful region in the world. It should be noted that Russia and Eurasia, in this report, are seen as separate regions. Along with neighbouring states in Europe, Russia and Ukraine are two of the 5 countries in the world with the greatest damage to peace. As the authors of the report claim, the conflict in Ukraine has had an immediate impact outside Russia and the Eurasia region, especially on the indicator of relations with neighbouring countries, which worsened sharply. Of the ten countries in the Europe region with the greatest deteriorations of peace in 2022, six share a common border with Russia or Ukraine: Slovenia, Finland, Poland, Romania, Estonia, Latvia (GPI, 2022, p. 17).

Figure 1. Global Peace Index, score by region, 2022.



Source: GPI, 2022, p. 15

In the Russia and Eurasia region, the Republic of Moldova is the most peaceful country (position 62 globally), although it has suffered percentage decline compared to previous years, but incomparable with the index registered by Russia, which is at the other end of the list (position 160 out of 163 globally), the least peaceful countries are Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan (GPI, 2022, p. 19-20).

Table 1. Russia and the Eurasia Region, regional score 2022

Regional position	Country	General score	Score dynamics	Global position
1	Moldova	1.882	0.034	62
2	Armenia	1.992	-0.024	83
3	Uzbekistan	2.001	-0.031	86
4	Kyrgyz Republic	2.028	0.109	91
5	Tajikistan	2.031	-0.027	92
6	Georgia	2.065	0.049	95
7	Kazakhstan	2.071	0.153	97
8	Turkmenistan	2.116	-0.028	104
9	Belarus	2.259	0.034	116
10	Azerbaijan	2.437	0.151	128
11	Ukraine	2.971	0.413	153

12	Russia	3.275	0.237	160
Regional average		2.261	0.089	

Source: GPI, 2022, p. 19-20

According to the GTI 2023 report, on average, for three percent of those surveyed, “war and terrorism were the greatest source of risk to the safety of their daily lives in 2021, and 6.1 percent of respondents in Russia, Eurasia and Europe indicated war and terrorism as their main concern.” (GTI, 2023, p. 40)

Of the nine analyzed regions, Europe is the third best performer in terms of terrorism, after Russia and Eurasia, Central America and the Caribbean. Four countries have also experienced damage in the past year: Sweden, Belgium, Norway and Slovakia, while sixteen European countries have not experienced any terrorist attacks since 2017. Turkey remains the most affected country in Europe in terms of terrorism, although it has seen a significant improvement in its score due to a reduction in deaths and attacks over the past four years. Greece ranks second in Europe with 35 attacks in 2022, down 34% from the previous year. France positions third, seeing an increase in terrorist attacks and deaths in recent years. Slovakia recorded its first terrorist attack in ten years in 2022, leading to a significant increase in the GTI score. Norway also saw a significant decline in 2022, recording its first terrorist attack in 2019. Finland has got the biggest improvement in its score in 2022, followed by the UK and the Netherlands. As for Finland, it has not had a single terrorist attack since 2017, and the UK has recorded its first year without a single terrorist death since 2014. (GTI, 2023, pp. 45-46)

The political violence that Europe faces today, and here we do not only refer to the terrorist acts committed in the European states or the war in Ukraine, are somehow unexpected for the 21st century, at least for the societies that went through the Second World War, as well as suffered from repressive political regimes or many terrorist attacks. However, this does not prevent armed conflicts and the designation of political objectives achieved through violence.

On the other hand, we suggest that the whole European society can be characterized by a high level of preparedness in dealing with and adapting to crisis situations, especially threats to security and other unforeseen events that can affect the well-being and stability of the society. European societal resilience, therefore, consists in developing the necessary capacities and resources to manage and prevent crises, including learning from past experiences and increasing the capacity for collaboration and coordination between different entities and sectors of the society. This approach is based on such principles as social inclusion, equal opportunities, protection of fundamental rights and freedoms and respect for common European values.

Overall, we believe that this purely descriptive approach was carried out in accordance with the announced purpose and objectives, and at the same time urges us to carry out much more extensive empirical research. In this context, we want to highlight some thoughts we have identified as conclusions, and that can serve as a basis for future scientific investigations.

There are differences of opinion regarding the legitimacy and justification of political violence in different contexts and circumstances. Some thinkers recognize that political violence can be justified as a necessary means to combat abuses of power, human rights violations, or to protect fundamental political interests and values. This is a realistic, pragmatic perspective that takes into account the aspects of power and conflict that are inherent in the political sphere.

Political violence can threaten human security in a number of ways, such as direct attacks on individuals, the uncertainty and instability it generates, as well as the destruction of

the infrastructure and resources necessary for people's well-being. At the same time, political development and security can play an important role in building and strengthening the resilience of the European society facing these threats.

The relationship between political violence and human security can be generative in the sense that it can generate new ideas, concepts or behaviours. For example, facing threats to human security, innovations and initiatives that promote alternative solutions to conflict resolution and reduce political violence can emerge.

This relationship can also be resilient in the sense that people and communities can develop resilience capacities to cope with political violence and to recover. By developing social support, conflict management skills, and material resources, people can find ways to adapt and build societies that are more stable and resilient to political violence.

It is important to understand that human security is not only about the absence of threats or violence, but also about creating an environment in which people can live in safety and prosperity. Therefore, identifying and assessing the collective perception of the level of security in each sector is a crucial aspect in understanding the population's needs and concerns, and in developing effective security policies.

As the state of security may vary over time and context, it is important to be aware of recent developments and promote in-depth studies to identify higher, better and more sustainable levels of resilience both individually and collectively.

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