

## SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENCE: NEW CHALLENGES OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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### PREVENTING AND EXITING VIOLENCE: A DOMAIN FOR SOCIOLOGY?

PREVENTING AND EXITING VIOLENCE: A  
DOMAIN FOR SOCIOLOGY?

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**Abstract.** Preventing and exiting violence is a central problem of social sciences. Violence-related information mainly comes from medical specialists, consultant psychiatrists, experts, lawyers, diplomatic officials, representatives of NGO and others. Today this area of knowledge needs a separate discipline operating at individual and group level (recovery of

ПРЕДОТВРАЩЕНИЕ И ПРЕКРАЩЕНИЕ  
НАСИЛИЯ — СФЕРА СОЦИОЛОГИИ?

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**Аннотация.** Предотвращение и прекращение насилия — одна из центральных проблем социальных наук. Информация о насилии исходит в основном от врачей-специалистов, психиатров, экспертов, юристов, дипломатов, представителей общественных организаций и т.д. Сегодня настал момент сделать эту область знаний

victims or punishment for abusers), national level (building democracy or justice during the interregnum) and global level (for example, how the ISIL activities will shape the situation in the Middle East). Nonetheless, the idea of transformation of violence, crisis logic, discourse and institutional conflicts is core.

отдельным социологическим направлением, начиная с индивидуального и группового уровня (реабилитация жертв или наказание насильников) и заканчивая государственным (построение демократии и правосудие переходного периода) и геополитическим (например, что станет с ближним Востоком в связи с деятельностью ИГИЛ?). При этом ключевой здесь является идея о трансформации насилия, логики кризиса, дискурса и институциональных конфликтов.

**Keywords:** violence, preventing violence, new disciplines in sociology

**Ключевые слова:** насилие, предотвращение насилия, новые направления социологии

Violence<sup>1</sup> is an issue of particular significance for the humanities and social sciences. Most researchers and schools of thought have at some point explored it or dealt with it. It has been the central theme of countless theories and empirical studies in sociology and more broadly speaking for the humanities and social sciences.

Defining violence is not easy. A universalist, objective approach will, for example, propose a quantification — the number of crimes in a country, of persons killed in a war, of suicides, etc. But violence is also subjective. The definition depends on what a person, a group or a society considers as such at any given point in time. Now other people, other groups or other societies may have different perceptions which makes it difficult to generalise and encourages tendencies to relativism. This difficulty is particularly obvious with terrorism. As we already know the terrorist for some is the freedom fighter for others.

Suffice it to say that the humanities and social sciences have by no means exhausted the attempts to conceptualise violence and go further than the non-scientific definitions of daily life or found in the media. This type of endeavour demands discussion and we shall engage therein.

For example, at the beginning of the 1980s, at the time when the Red Brigades and other armed struggle organisations were operational, I had the opportunity of attending a meeting in Florence. The historian Charles Tilly, a leading exponent of the mobilisation of resources school of thought, discussed his approach to terrorism as opposed to that of Ted Robert Gurr. Gurr is a leading exponent of the current in American political sociology which considers that the participation of the actors in this type of violence is explained by their relative frustration (see for example: [Gurr, 1970; Tilly, 1978]). On another occasion, during the Congress of the International Sociological Association in

<sup>1</sup> My focus here will be more particularly on physical, political or social violence; I will leave aside in particular State violence, symbolic violence and also the violence associated with delinquency or crime.

Goteborg in 2010, I had a fascinating discussion about the analysis of violence with Randall Collins; we continued this discussion in an Italian sociological review<sup>2</sup>. He defended an interactionist approach, in a book which has become a classic, whereas I advocated research based on the subjectivity of the actors, which exists well before the point of the intersubjective encounter in which the violence may break out. Last example: the emergence in 2016 in France of an interesting discussion concerning Jihadis which rapidly had an impact at global level. The discussion focussed on the motivation in the decision to take action. Was it primarily Islam, or was it the radicalisation resulting from situations and social processes associated in particular with a history shaped by poorly assimilated decolonisation, precarity or exclusion, discrimination, etc. Gilles Kepel focused on the radicalisation due to Islam while Olivier Roy discussed the Islamisation of social radicality; finally Farhad Khosrokhavar demonstrated that there is no one reply but a wide variety of possible situations [Khosrokhavar, 2018]. Other important discussions also posed the question of the relations between religion and political violence, for example in relation to Salafism.

On occasions, the academic conflict has become heated, even extremely so in some cases. This happened for example with the genocide in Rwanda. There was a confrontation, including in the media, in which two currents of research disagreed with one another. One school of thought went as far as accusing the other of negationism<sup>3</sup>.

Usually, researchers listen to each other, and consider where they agree and what separates them, even if some do at times disagree vociferously in public. That discussions of this sort be possible, is an indication of the existence of a field or a domain in sociology which deals with violence.

## 1. Two domains separate and different

In a joint article, John Gledhill and Jonathan Bright (Oxford Internet Institute) [Gledhill, Bright, 2018] demonstrate that, generally speaking, more space is devoted to the study of violence than to the study of peace. They point out that there is little academic exchange between those who study war and those who study peace; they report the existence of methodological divisions but also divisions in the regions studied or whether or not gender is an issue.

This finding is in keeping with my own observations and emphasizes the difference between research on violence, which is well developed and varied, and the research focused on exiting and preventing violence, which is much less studied. Closer consideration reveals a fragmented space in which technical, militant and institutional technical skills are mobilised. These may include medical doctors dealing with traumatism associated with the experience of terrorism, transitional justice lawyers, international consultants in 'peacekeeping', 'conflict resolution', 'nation building', etc. However, this cannot be said to be sociological research as such.

<sup>2</sup> In *Sociologica*, n°2/2012. Cf. [Collins, 2008], I clarify my approach further in [Wiewiorka, 2015a].

<sup>3</sup> Cf. for example, the polemic between a collection of historians, in the article «Rwanda: the «Que sais-je?» — the book that re-writes history: URL: [http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2017/09/25/rwanda-le-que-sais-je-qui-fait-basculer-l-histoire\\_5190733\\_3232.html#hZesgGtp02c7qXOX.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2017/09/25/rwanda-le-que-sais-je-qui-fait-basculer-l-histoire_5190733_3232.html#hZesgGtp02c7qXOX.99) (accessed: 16.09.2018), and Filip Reyntjens « Le difficile débat sur le Rwanda en France », *Mediapart*, 11 oct. 2017: URL: <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/fatimad/blog/111017/le-difficile-debat-sur-le-rwanda-en-france> (accessed: 16.09.2018)

If we have to start, as Gledhill and Bright do, with the image of a separation between the two registers, we observe that the second, unlike the first, is in no way reminiscent of a structured domain of research in the humanities and social sciences. It must also be admitted that exiting, or preventing, violence is not simply the reverse of violence — the two are not symmetrical — as if for example, once the causes of an episode of violence are known, one could deal with it simply and erase it, by dealing with these causes. There are specificities inherent to the prevention of, and exit from, violence which also demand consideration. To articulate the two sets of issues, we first have to constitute the exit from violence as a domain for sociological research in its own right, with its specificity. Once its autonomy has been ensured, we then have to consider how this domain can define its relation to the pre-existing domain constituted by research on violence.

Throughout the world, countless actors intervene in the reduction, prevention or ending of violence, including its effects or its impact once it has ceased. Each element of these issues is part of a very extensive arena (cf. [Wieviorka, 2015b]). At one extreme, the question is one of avoiding, minimising or ending what, in violence, affects or has affected individual persons as such, people whose physical and moral integrity has been affected. What can be done for the American Vietnam war 'vets', who witnessed, or possibly participated in killings, sometimes in barbaric ways, and cannot recover? What about child-soldiers enlisted at a very young age in a guerrilla movement in Africa which has now surrendered? At the other extreme, the question is one of confronting global issues: global terrorism, organised criminality and international drug trafficking, whole regions of the planet devastated by war, as is the case today in the Middle East.

Between the two extremes, there is no shortage of problems at town, village, local area or nation-state level, but also at community level in a locality beset by problems.

Consequently, countless skills are mobilised and, over and above the material results, the outcome is the knowledge produced by the actors. Doctors, psychiatrists, lawyers, diplomats, consultants of all sorts, militants and officials from humanitarian NGOs, soldiers, national or international politicians, etc. may draw lessons from their experience and think about their actions, thus contributing to a fund of knowledge which has the advantage of being based on experience. Occasionally there are documents prepared by authors who are capable of adopting a sociological or anthropological viewpoint, if only as a result of their training. But this in no way affects the overall image which we retain from all this production and, for example, from the reports of humanitarian organisations, international institutions or consultants. As far as they are concerned, the prevention of and exit from violence in no way constitutes in their opinion a specific domain in the humanities and social sciences. At best, they constitute a domain which is loosely structured, dominated by empirical knowledge with no recourse to theorising.

If this is the case, it is not because these questions are of little interest to citizens, political actors, public policies makers or diplomats, humanitarian organisations, or social scientists, etc.; quite the contrary. In the first instance, it is perhaps because our traditional conceptions of violence have long rendered the project of constituting a domain in sociology, or a field in sociological research devoted to violence, unnecessary.

## 2. The emergence of victims

The first question is therefore the evolution of the political and social status of violence.

Before extending their sphere of activity to the whole world and becoming globalised **the humanities and social sciences** were originally a Western invention; confined in the first instance to countries in Europe, then rapidly and powerfully extending to North America and, later to Latin America. In these societies, violence was considered the main threat to social order. This justified the perspective opened up by Hobbes<sup>4</sup> of the resort to the State to avoid violence which he defined as a state of war «of every man against every man». The sociological tradition, amongst others is located in this perspective; we have for example Max Weber decreeing that the state has the monopoly of legitimate force or Norbert Elias considering the role of the State and, in the first instance, the Royal courts, in the decline of human aggression (cf. [Weber, 1959; Elias, 1973,1975]). Henceforth these activities fall within the jurisdiction of the State and its action which is primarily, but not uniquely, repressive. The State can hardly be questioned from this point of view, except to challenge its abuse of power or shortcomings or when the population resorts to violence to challenge a régime and justify a revolutionary action. This has been a constant issue and important schools of thought and action have thus stressed the need for revolutionary violence. Friedrich Engels, for example, highlighted the 'role of violence in history'. Some explained that a degree of violence may be necessary to ensure progress and social emancipation or asserted, with Georges Sorel, that the necessary violence of the working class would encourage the bourgeoisie to become radicalised also and would, ultimately, raise the level of civilisation. Later others considered violence essential to end colonisation. Jean Paul Sartre wrote a celebrated and quite radical preface to Franz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* in this sense.

Whether it be a question of asserting that the State has the legitimate monopoly of the use of violence, or of appealing to the positive and emancipatory role of violence, in both cases there was no space to make of the exit from violence an issue for research in the humanities and social sciences. These had little vocation for the analysis of the action of the State assuming its monopoly on violence; nor did they have any great interest in questioning sociologically the prevention of violence in the face of revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist, anti-imperialist or decolonising etc. ideas.

But in the 1960s in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the viewpoint of the victims began to be perceptible in the public sphere in Western societies. The way in which whole human groups within these societies had been decimated or brutalised began to emerge as a subject for discussion. These included Indians and Black people in the United States, Jews in Europe, Armenians in Turkey, regional minorities and many others. At the same time, the voices of the men and women who denounced the violence suffered by women, children and the disabled began to be heard. In short, the voice of the victims was being taken into consideration.

This evolution developed along two distinct paths which were already perceptible in the context of the processes leading up to the Nuremberg trials (cf. [Sands, 2016]) On

<sup>4</sup> «Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that conditions called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man». [Hobbes, 1651]

the one hand, there is the personal nature of the suffering endured, and in the most serious cases, offences involving human rights, whence the concept of crime against humanity forged by the legal expert, Hersch Lauterpacht. On the other, we have the collective nature where the object of the mass violence is the group to which the victims belong, which is in extreme cases subject to systematic destruction, or 'genocide' to use the term forged by the legal expert, Raphael Lemkin.

Whether it be a question of individual or collective subjectivity, or whether the violence affects individual human beings, or targets a group as a whole, this evolution has led to extraordinary changes. These have been impelled by organisations devoted to the defence of human rights, movements demanding the recognition of historic suffering affecting certain groups and possibly demanding compensation, intellectuals initiating public discussion and the elaboration of policies, for example in the form of multicultural measures or Affirmative Action.

Violence has become an issue for analysis and is not only a self-interested choice. Studying it to endeavour to reduce or prevent it or to adequately manage the impact was no longer a matter for the State alone but involved considering demands from civil society. For example, when *Médecins sans Frontières* demanded a 'right to intervene' for humanitarian reasons despite the refusal of the State concerned, it was a matter which went beyond the morals of classical politics. It could also be, as was already the case in Nuremberg, a supranational or international concern.

The legitimate monopoly of the State, sole guarantor of the control of violence, was challenged from above and from below. The interest taken in the victims and not only in the maintenance of order had had an effect. Henceforth numerous actors, whether at State level or not, work to prevent or exit violence thus reflecting the view that there should be more systematization of the knowledge enabling a better understanding of the facts and appropriate action. Whence the creation of think tanks and specialised institutes, and, as far as we are personally concerned, a platform in the FMSH which, **with the aid of several institutions**, mobilises some three hundred researchers, **moderates the IPEV<sup>5</sup>** panel and is preparing to launch a journal devoted to these questions<sup>6</sup>.

### **3. Loss of legitimacy and destructuration of political violence**

We also observe in Western societies at least, that the past fifty years have been marked by the increasing rejection of violence which has become almost taboo.

Half a century ago, major intellectuals and numerous **researchers in the humanities and social sciences** still considered violence to be genuinely legitimate. This is not often the case today, which makes it politically easier and more desirable to constitute the exit and prevention of violence as an object of analysis. The debate is no longer a case of opposition between advocates and opponents of certain types of violence, the adhesion or rejection for example to guerrilla or revolutionary movements as it sometimes tended to be.

Finally, violence itself has considerably evolved and not only in the societies to which I give priority consideration here. The most spectacular example is political violence,

<sup>5</sup> IPEV International Panel on Exiting Violence

<sup>6</sup> Violence and Exiting Violence, n°1, janvier 2019.

in many ways weakened, its decomposition giving way on one hand to metapolitical violence, in particular religious, as in Islamic, Hindu or messianic Jewish nationalism and on the other, to infra-political procedures, organized delinquency and criminality. For example a guerrilla movement may become a key player in drug trafficking.

#### **4. From the analysis of violence to its prevention and exit. Classical approaches.**

The humanities and social sciences offer a wide range of approaches to violence, each with the potential to lead to coherent proposals for the exit from or prevention of violence.

The classical arguments are structured around two main types of approach. The first prioritises the idea of reaction or response: violence is here seen as individual or collective behaviour enabling an actor to confront difficulties, disruptions or crisis. This type of approach may include the concept of 'relative frustration' which I referred to above in relation to Ted Robert Gurr: the origin of violence lies in changes affecting the position of a person or a group who, as a result, feels frustrated. Researchers, in particular those in North America, who developed this approach often quote the Tocqueville of *L'Ancien regime et la Révolution*. In this case, exiting violence, or preventing it, involves preventing or minimising or rapidly ending the crisis. The focus is not on the actors of the violence as much as on the social, economic and cultural conditions which cause the crisis and their reaction.

A second type of approach focuses on the calculations of the actors, once again either individual or collective. Violence here is not reactive but instrumental; it is a resource mobilised to a specific end — in particular a political one. Thus the 'theory of mobilisation of resources' illustrated by Charles Tilly, referred to above, is very influential in political science today and focuses on the way in which a social movement, at the outset excluded by the political system, endeavours, by using violence, amongst other resources, to enter the political system, establish its presence there and to either maintain its position or to exclude others. In this case, exiting violence means ensuring that the cost for those who might consider using it would be too high.

Other approaches tend to focus on the culture and personality of the actors or perpetrators of violence. For some, a 'primary socialisation' in the family or at school may encourage tendencies to violence, forging personalities which would be receptive thereto or even shaping a whole culture. The renowned study by Theodor Adorno (et al.), published in the United States in 1950, is often quoted in support of this type of approach. Adorno suggests that an antidemocratic 'authoritarian personality', formed in childhood, enables the worst collective crimes to be committed [Adorno, 2017]. In understanding the violence of the Jihadis today, in particular the dimension of hatred of Jews, some consideration has to be given to their family background. For example, it is important to be aware, as was said to be the case for Mohammed Merah, that anti-semitism may have been rife from birth. From this perspective, the so-called 'de-radicalisation' public policies should address primary forms of socialisation, education and the family and be implemented as early as primary school.

These relatively classical approaches to violence and others which we could refer to, each have their specificity. While each sheds light which could be useful, building

on one or other to exit violence demands considerable caution. It is preferable not to get the explanation wrong. Furthermore, these approaches, while they may be useful in some ways, do also have their limits. The most obvious are related to the gratuitous, or apparently totally meaningless, nature of some acts of violence or of certain dimensions of a phenomenon of violence. Why did the jailers in the death camps, described by Primo Levi [Levi, 1989] in his last book, choose to humiliate the prisoners and treat them like animals? Was this really necessary? What explanation is there for the cruelty of the soldiers in the American army for example in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2006, or during the My Lai massacre in Vietnam in March 1968? What should we make of the incomprehensible floods of words of the extreme-left terrorists in Italy at the time of the decline of their movement in the 1980s?

This brings us to the consideration of other issues, where it is the rationales of de-subjectivation and re-subjectivation which deserve our consideration.

### 5. The perspective of the subject and of meaning

I have suggested [Wieviorka, 2012] constructing our considerations on violence on the basis of the subjectivity of the actors. My idea is that subjectivity emerges in the course of the process of de-subjectivation and re-subjectivation. To do this, I identify various figures of the Subject of violence which I list briefly here to show the coherence of each, together with possible proposals for the exit from and prevention of violence.

— **the 'floating' subject:** here at the outset, the violence is restricted because the subject cannot become an actor in non-violent democratic interaction. For instance, young people in deprived urban areas who take part in a riot in reaction to the announcement that a death in the area had been caused by a police 'blunder' express a rage which cannot be conveyed in any other way. In this case, exiting violence involves the accession to a material space transforming the crisis, ending it and enabling these young people to express their subjectivity in action. This is a space which may be conducive to non-violent conflictuality, a point to which I shall return.

— **the non-subject** claims to act in obedience to a legitimate authority, a head of State, for example, like Adolf Eichmann explaining before his judges that if Hitler had ordered him to kill his own father, he would have done so. There would be no personal responsibility in his act, since he had to obey, nor would there be any emotion — for example, anti-Semitism — which is difficult to believe. In this case, theorised by Hannah Arendt as being due to 'the banality of evil', exiting violence involves holding the person who resorts to violence responsible for their acts, and restricting the situations in which obedience to a legitimate authority gives rise to violence. It should be noted that today, in some democracies at least, a soldier who receives a barbaric order, that of torturing for example, has the right to refuse to obey.

— **the hyper-subject** moves from the loss of meaning, which could make of the actor a 'floating subject' to the overload or recharging of meaning; this was formerly provided by the grand ideologies, in particular revolutionary and is to be found today primarily in religion, beginning with Islam. This overload enables the hyper-subject to act, to break with being passive or feeling impotent. The most important thing to ensure here is that this overload does not entirely permeate the conscience of the hyper-subject so much so that there is a risk of passage to action. Thus the present-day



Jihadi terrorist (and here I tend to agree with Gilles K epel referred to above) cannot be explained without religion, even if the terrorist is a very recent convert and does not know much about Islam. Faith gives them the strength, the *impetus* to kill and to die at the same time. Preventing or exiting violence means confronting religion if not as such, at least as a force impelling violent action. This does pose a problem: should we, as Voltaire did, combat religion in general, or one religion in particular, to avoid violence? Or should we mobilise one religion to combat another mobilised in the cause of violence? Or should we, as is the case in some ‘deradicalisation’ programmes, for example in Denmark, rely on the moderate, secularised sectors of the religion which the terrorists take advantage of?

— **the anti-subject** attributes no meaning to violence, violence is an end in itself. Cruelty, when it is not instrumental, aimed for example at terrorising an enemy, is a powerful method of denying any subjectivity to other people; the anti-subject needs this to be aware of being the actor of their own existence. When confronting violence for the sake of violence, it is essential not to allow the actor any space: the presence of witnesses, journalists, and photographers, the prohibition of alcohol or drugs which facilitate disinhibition, all play an important role. If not, only repressive action is efficient.

This typology, even if only an outline and incomplete is already a contribution to the bases for considering the prevention of and exit from violence. Each subject portrayed has its own specificities. The exit from violence (or preventing entry) depends on the type of subject; for example, the ‘floating’ subject only wishes to be able to become an actor of non-violent, negotiable conflicts whereas hyper-subjects are totally involved in a religious approach which is non-negotiable. Each figure has its own variations and its own specific sensitivity to attempts at exiting violence or to a public policy for example.

## **6. The applied humanities and social sciences and the sociological analysis of action**

Thus, it would be possible to envisage an applied approach for the **humanities and social sciences** that would throw light on action and decision-making in matters of violence. But the listing of a set of considerations and proposals is not sufficient in itself to constitute a genuine domain in the humanities and social sciences. If we are to make progress towards achieving such an aim, it should be ensured that practical action, ultimately informed by the concrete analysis of **researchers**, becomes an object for research and discussion in its own right.

The preceding observations and remarks reveal a characteristic specific to the issues posed by the exit from and prevention of violence. Contrary to the analysis of violence, which does not require to be accompanied by action, it is difficult to separate the analysis of the exit from and prevention of violence from operational concerns, for example, from the idea of leading to recommendations. Basically, one of two things must be true here.

**Either** the research on the prevention of and exit from violence is in fact an **extension of the research on violence**. This extension may call for co- production or cooperation with actors in this field. However, it does not fall within the scope of an autonomous field of research. The main questions which the researcher must then consider concern the nature of the links which they may, or which they must, maintain

with the actors. Which relationships should be chosen and how can researchers ensure that these do not jeopardise their independence, their liberty and their difference vis à vis other players? This is what we have been working on up till now in this text.

**The other alternative is that** the issue at stake in the research is **the action and its actors**. In this case, a very different approach is involved. Here we must examine the meaning of the action, the relationships in which the actors operate and which they contribute to changing, the processes in which they appear, collectively, in the form for example of an NGO or associations, and the sources of their involvement including the personal reasons, etc. The research opportunities are numerous, whether it be private actors, either individual or collective, or actors connected with public authorities at local, national or supranational level. Who are the negotiators, the intermediaries in the meetings leading up to the Oslo Accords or the exit of the FARC from the armed struggle? How do humanitarian organisations recruit and continue to recruit their staff? What type of militants do they target and what support, what obstacles or opponents do they encounter? Is international justice not, in fact, the justice of the victorious? Is the geopolitical order which is being prepared by those who purport to be contributing to peace and the return of the rule of law in Syria or in Iraq not in fact consistent with certain interests, which go beyond what is stated?

**This second set** of approaches is the reverse of what we referred to as the applied **humanities and social sciences**. Applied approaches consist in finally contributing directly, perhaps with the help of some actors, to improving the knowledge available about the mechanisms and procedures of exiting from or preventing violence. However, from the point at which **their** focus is on the exit from and prevention of violence as research objects their approach is quite distinct. The claim is no longer one of doing more and better than applied sociology by systematizing knowledge and organising it in a global structured space. **This second perspective** in no way implies that analysts and actors no longer have any contact with one another. It authorises or even demands considerable collaboration; for example researchers may invite the actors to jointly reflect upon the meaning of their action, or discuss with them on the basis of findings of a study carried out on the actors. But this set of approaches makes a clear distinction in the roles. The researcher is not an actor and the actor is not a researcher.

If we accept this duality of approaches, we now have a firm foundation on which to base our conviction that the analysis of the exit from violence and its prevention, at one and the same time maintains strong links with the analysis of violence, but at the same time it also has its own dimensions and (its own) scientific autonomy.

## 7. The return of conflict

What can then be the specific issue at stake in a genuine **social science** of the exit from violence, integrating the two dimensions which have just been highlighted? One answer demands examination. It is based on an empirical observation. Violence is frequently, but not always, the reverse of conflict, the reverse of a conflictual relation when this relation is institutionalised and negotiable. When no conflictuality of this order is conceivable, the space for violence is much larger. When it is possible to transform the violence which is merely a threat or which is already very present into

discussions, by recognising the other as a person in their own right, the result is that the other will now become an adversary and no longer an enemy as was the case till then.

Thus, when this possibility exists, actors who may be humanitarian, political, religious, diplomatic, or other may endeavour to transform a situation of chaos, civil war or guerrilla, into a negotiation in which the protagonists will succeed in finding the conditions for a form of cohabitation which may be tense but is not murderous. For example in 2017, the FARC guerrillas in Colombia accepted to sign a peace agreement with the government by which the FARC did not purely and simply disappear but was transformed into a recognised and legitimate political force.

Similarly the Oslo Agreement between Israelis and Palestinians in 1993 aimed at transforming violent confrontation into the possibility of co-existence.

Sometimes the expression 'post-conflict' is used to refer to the horizon targeted in this type of situation. In fact, this wording is inappropriate. It would be preferable to speak of 'post-violence' or the transition from armed or violent conflict to non-violent conflict.

What applies in political matters or civil war also applies in social affairs. In a firm, which is preferable: a total absence of meetings and discussions between employers and the employed, which may unexpectedly lead to a situation of non-negotiable crisis, or even of violence, the kidnapping of managers, or arson? Or a relation with the trade unions which indeed may not always be easy? For a mayor in a deprived urban area, is it preferable to have a network of young people's associations voicing, perhaps vociferously, the demands of the young who feel excluded and subject to discrimination, or nights of rioting?

We see clearly here how research can on one hand formulate this type of question directly, and, on the other, study those on the ground who are endeavouring to provide answers, including negotiators, consultants, diplomats, social workers, trade unionists, etc.

## **8. But is it really possible to exit violence?**

The exit from violence is not necessarily definitive, stable or total. According to Gallup International the five most dangerous countries in the world are Venezuela, South Africa, Salvador, southern Sudan and Liberia. Now, in South Africa, Salvador and Liberia political violence has disappeared; but it has been replaced by criminal violence. One can say the same of many other situations.

A society permanently exposed to certain sorts of violence develops a culture favourable to other forms. It has, for example, been observed that after years of political violence, the incidence of rape and domestic violence or homicides may be particularly high.

In the first instance, therefore, one form of violence may disappear, only to be replaced by another possibly because this violence was embedded in the previous one. Thus, to turn to the example of Columbia again, if the peace agreements ended the armed struggle waged by the guerrillas, here and there these forces have been replaced by forms of behaviour (rape, murder, extortion, all sorts of mafia-type practices, etc.) which bear witness to the total absence of any State or guarantor of order which the guerrilla had ensured in their own way. We should add that in some cases, the exit from violence is instantly replaced by violence, in others the processes overlap and yet others are more distant in time.

Violence leaves traces which may be profound and last long after it has ended. Traumatism, difficulties to project oneself into the future, a profound conviction of having experienced something irreparable, an intractable tension between the desire for peace and the desire for justice, etc.

The period of adjustment after violence for both the individual and the community, for the victims as for the guilty, may assume one of three key modes.

The first is in keeping with what Ernest Renan set out in his lecture 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?' in 1882 — when he explained that to function a nation must know how to forget *les violences au cours desquelles elle s'est formée*: How can we live together if we are obsessed by the past? The second mode consists in living in the past, what **Sigmund** Freud referred to as melancholy, refusing to leave the past behind and constantly brooding over this 'never-ending past' in the words of the historian, Henri Rousso.

The third option is 'mourning' — a term to be used with precaution because it might lead us to imagining that we are forgetting, whereas the issue is one of projecting ourselves into the future while not forgetting, but not being a prisoner of the suffering linked to the past. This option is never easy because the past, even if it is in some way transcended, can always resurface painfully in the memory and eclipse the present. Genuine 'mourning' implies that the sensitive questions of forgiveness, justice and peace or even reconciliation be settled. How can we accept an unjust peace, or a form of justice which does not bring with it peace? Who is in a position to propose to forgive — the guilty, their descendants or a community? Who has the right to give forgiveness: the victims, or their descendants? What can we expect from the State in this respect? How can the victims live alongside neighbours who have participated in extreme violence, as is the case in some situations in the former Yugoslavia or in the Great Lakes region in Africa?

## Conclusion

These are sensitive issues, all the more so as in the approach we adopt we cannot ignore considerations of the timescale. In the short term, exiting violence means above all preventing it from happening again if it has just been intercepted; this entails an immediate, possibly pragmatic response. In the long term, however, it may be possible to envisage much more far-ranging economic, political, social or educational issues and to distance oneself from the actual violence in its material aspects.

The actual way in which an experience of violence was halted may play a determining role in the long run. Thus a statistical study carried out by the Swedish researcher, Peter Wallensteen, (who presented it in my seminar at the EHESS on 31 May 2017) consisted in comparing two modes of resolution of armed conflicts: one was based on the victory of one side over the other, the other involved the conclusion of a peace agreement through negotiation. The findings are informative: after a negotiated agreement, the percentage of return to violence within ten years was much lower than after a victory.

The exit from, or prevention of violence are complex questions which remain practical issues with a substratum of concrete aims but which cannot be settled uniquely by the expertise of specialists — consultants in 'Peace building' or in 'Conflict resolution' for example — respectable as they frequently are. These issues demand a capacity to

think in terms of different time scales, to analyse different subjectivities and to consider the reconstruction of subjects through processes of subjectivation which are always complex. In the last resort, these issues demand the acceptance of the idea that democracy, and the associated non-violent processing of differences, is the best tool for the management of divisions and tensions which, whatever one may think, are the lot of all human societies. In other words these issues call for **the social sciences** to extend their approach to violence, on one hand, and on the other, to focus on action to counter it. The analysis of action should be conducted by researchers who do not live in isolation on their own in ivory towers, but engage in discussions with the actors who construct their own analyses. In return, these analyses shed light on the action, but are distinct from it.

### **Conclusion (additive)**

This is precisely the goal which we (Jean Pierre Dozon, Yvon Le Bot and myself) defined when we set up the International Panel on Exiting Violence, (IPEV) in January 2016. The first findings will be presented by members of this group in Beirut in June 2018. This panel comprises approximately ten working groups all of which are resolutely multidisciplinary and international; each is responsible for a specific aspect of these issues. The final report (Autumn, 2018) will summarise the conclusions and will include recommendations.

Some groups have chosen to focus on the analysis of violence itself. For example, in considering Salafism, extreme caution is required when proposing any causal relationship or one of determination between religion and violence. We must bear in mind the complexity and variety of processes associated with issues of nationalist separation and the difficulties experienced by democracies in confronting problems of this sort. Generally speaking in these instances, the collective response is to refuse elementary forms of determinism. The reflection which concerns 'radicalisation' for example shows how the analysis gains by focusing on processes of subjectivation and de-subjectivation, and its role in personal strategies, including strategies of emancipation from a family. Researchers refuse all forms of essentialism, including culturalism, whereby violence is explained by a culture and insist that there be a separation between radical ideas and radical actions which have no intrinsic link. They are also concerned not to simplify the role of the Internet and the digital world. In short, research on violence rejects simplifications or short cuts and always gains by relying on knowledge acquired at first hand on the ground.

Other groups in the panel have preferred to focus more directly on the exit from violence. The group dealing with history and memory in the wake of mass violence point to the ambivalence of commemorative initiatives and demonstrate how exiting violence may be hindered as much as facilitated by 'memorial projects' in remembrance of the past. If certain conditions are not respected, including maintaining a distance from political power, provision for meditation, democratic discussion and mutual recognition, remembrance may exacerbate or revive the tensions which led to extreme violence in the previous phase. When the question of the psychological reconstruction of the victims of major collective violence is posed, when it is a question of treating the psychic wounds and traumatism and of enabling people to live together once again,

we observe the utility of individualized arrangements which are based on people, and not uniquely on a justice oblivious to personal expectations; features such as personal accounts for example find their place in a collective, national narrative. The most successful experiences combine both top-down and bottom-up initiatives to permit the restoration of the self and also that of the social space between the living and the dead.

The analyses focussing on the theme «Justice and reconciliation» are critical of government measures of amnesty, pardon, the cancelling of legal decisions which promote oblivion in the name of peace but at the expense of justice and highlight the considerable tension which exists between the two. Finally, the research, as is demonstrated by a group dealing uniquely with this question, should more systematically integrate the 'sexospecific', 'gendered' dimensions of violence and exiting violence. Consideration should also be given to the role of women and to their specific needs in strategies of exiting violence.

A body of knowledge will thus be constructed in which the humanities and social sciences provide practical responses to very real issues ultimately in the form of recommendations. At the same time, exiting violence is constituted as a domain which is structured around that of violence but is clearly distinct from it.

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