The Justification of Violent Revolution

Proposing a Justification for Violent Revolution in the Face of Stark Lessons from

History

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (International)

POLIS

May 2020

Word Count: 10697

Abstract

The following paper is an exploration of the question of whether staging a violent revolution can be justified. The history of violent revolution is ugly, and many have paid a heavy price for its ventures – not least the price of their life. This paper's first begins by exploring these lessons from history – the high risks and heavy costs that come with a revolutionary endeavor. It then turns to the justification of violent revolution when considered through our conventional moral frameworks on violence and war – namely the consequentialist approaches of our dominant moral theory of warfare, 'Just War Theory' – and violent revolution's inability to be justified within these frameworks. The inadequacies of Just War thinking in this instance are, however, clear – and the important moral considerations excluded by the theory, namely the expressive dimensions of violent revolution, will be considered last. These expressive dimensions – the expression of rights and equality in the face of their grave denial – are where, in the face of severe oppression, and with no other routes to resistance left, we may find a justifiable violent revolution. In such a situation, it is found that, resistance to such evil is demanded of us. What is certainly clear, however, is that justified violent revolution is likely to be a considerable rarity.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank ███████████ for his invaluable help and contributions to the fulfilment of this project, and for his and ███████████ inspiring teaching in the field of political theory during my time at the University of Leeds – without which I would not have chosen this topic for study.

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Introduction

At the end of 2019, the New York Times published a piece reflecting on the events of the decade past. The paper's managing editor, Joseph Kahn, writes in the opening to the article that, "the 2010s will be remembered as a decade of unceasing upheaval". Kahn (2019) describes the way the decade opened with the "brief, flickering notion" that the Arab Spring was a sign of the democracy and accountability that lay ahead. A notion that, once the events of the Arab Spring began unfolding, "vanished quickly" (Kahn, 2019). The decade was bookended by civil unrest: 2011 "a year of revolution", and 2019 a year in which, "the news played out on the streets, with protests from Hong Kong to Venezuela, to France, Britain and Chile" (Kahn, 2019).

Such events "have proven the renewed urgency of this age-old question: under what circumstances are citizens justified in taking up arms against their government?" (Iser, 2017, p.1). This paper offers a response to this critical question, in particular with respect to the right of citizens to stage a violent revolution. The history of violent revolution is ugly, and many have paid a heavy price for its ventures – not least the price of their life. As such, this paper's first chapter will explore these lessons from history – the high risks and heavy costs that come with a revolutionary endeavor. The second chapter of this paper shall explore the justification of violent revolution through our conventional moral frameworks on violence and war – namely the consequentialist approaches of our dominant moral theory of warfare, 'Just War Theory'. What will be shown is that violent revolution seems unlikely to be justifiable within this thinking, given its dark and unpromising history. The inadequacies of Just War thinking will, however, also be shown in this second chapter. The important moral considerations it excludes, namely its expressive dimensions, will be considered in the final chapter. These expressive dimensions are where, in the face of grave oppression – and with

the sense that we may have no other choice – we may find a justifiable violent revolution. What is certainly revealed, however, by the first and second chapters – the history of violent revolution and the lessons from Just War thinking – is that justified violent revolution is likely to be a considerable rarity. Nor does the fact it may be justified mean it does not still offer many serious moral concerns. As Dunn wrote of violent revolution in 1989 (p.247), "the perception that the issue is morally complicated is in itself the realization that it is an issue of real moral substance".

Two concepts firstly require clarification – namely revolution, and violence. Defining revolution is not an easy task and it does not have a single answer (Skocpol, 1979, pp.12-13). Two political scientists could easily disagree about whether the same set of events constituted a 'revolution' (Blecher and Schmitter, 1975, p.549). Nor is there a consensus on when "ordinary change" becomes "revolutionary change" (Jacobsohn, 2014, p.2). Blecher and Schmitter (1975, p.546) draw attention to this through an illuminating comparison of two different studies: the work of John Dunn (1972), which finds eight revolutions between 1900 and the time of writing, and the work of Peter Calver (1970), which finds 375. For the purpose of this paper, what shall be meant by revolution is a movement that aims to overthrow an incumbent government and "establish its own authority" (Skocpol,1979, pp.14-15). Though some revolutions may certainly aim for much more, including an overhaul of the entire social order (Skocpol,1979, pp.14-15).

To understand what it means to stage a revolution *violently* is also a complex, debated matter. "'Violence' is one of the most confused terms in our moral vocabulary" (Norman, 1995, p.36). We have no consensus on whether damage to property, for example, or psychological harm should be included in the same category of 'violence' as killing. Despite this obscurity, when we consider the morality of war, and why we

may or may not embark on it, what we are ultimately most concerned with is the loss of life (Norman, 1995, pp.36-38). To stage a *violent* revolution, in this paper, will therefore mean to stage a revolution which uses lethal force.

Chapter 1: Lessons from History

Staging a violent revolution is a risky and a costly business, as history has proved time and again. Revolutionary conflict and the post-revolutionary state-building process are proven to be fraught with pitfalls. Much is risked, and often much is lost – not least people's lives. This first chapter shall with some of the successes of violent revolution, but following that it will illuminate why revolutionary conflict, and subsequently its aftermath, are inherently so risky and costly.

Firstly, then, in consideration of their successes, many revolutions have clearly achieved the most fundamental definitional requirement of a successful revolution – the toppling of the old regime. From direct armed defeat – such as Vietnam's defeat of the French colonial army in 1954 – to sustained persuasion through violent action that the regime has lost control – as in Ireland and Algeria – violent revolutionary campaigns have frequently overthrown regimes (Finlay, 2015, pp.291-292). Many of these regimes we were likely glad to see fall – characterised by tyranny, oppression and dictatorship (Goldstone, 2003b, p.85). At the time of writing in 2013, Albertus and Menaldo noted that, since World War II "50 major revolutions… have either toppled autocratic regimes or led to significant political reform in "flawed" democracies".

Some of these revolutions have also been much more transformative than just the changing of leadership. Some of the last four centuries' most comprehensive revolutions have "transformed state organizations, class structures, and dominant ideologies" (Skocpol, 1979, p.3). Some have seen improvements in national literacy, health and education. Many have redistributed land, ended systems of hereditary aristocratic privilege (Goldstone, 2003b, p.85), or created more egalitarian systems than existed previously (as in Mexico, Bolivia, Cuba and Peru) (Eckstein, 2003, p.135).

They have also given "independence to hundreds of millions" (Goldstone, 2003b, p.85), and sometimes – even within the difficult limits of poverty and international opposition – they have created a pluralist democracy, as in Nicaragua (Foran and Goodwin, 2003, p.120).

Some have gone much further, spreading the values and norms they fought for across the world (Skocpol, 1979, p.3; Katz, 2003, p.153). When the French violently revolted under the banner of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity", these powerful ideals were felt not just within France's borders – but in the change inspired in Geneva, Ireland, India, and Latin America (amongst others), and in the writings of such prominent revolutionary theorists as Karl Marx and the anticolonialists (Skocpol, 1979, p.3; Bukovansky, 1999, p.200). Katz (2003, p.153) writes of the "revolutionary waves" that have swept across the globe: the wave of antimonarchical revolutions that began with America, establishing the now widespread belief that monarchy rule is illegitimate; the wave of anticolonial revolutions, also beginning with America and shaping a world in which non-consensual colonial rule is also largely held to be illegitimate; and the wave of democratic revolutions, first attempted in Britain and achieved in America, moulding the now global and popular support for democratic rule (Katz, 2003, p.153).

A final notable success is the frequently demonstrated ability of violent revolutions to vastly strengthen state power. In France, Vietnam, Russia, China, Iran, and Nicaragua, amongst others, vast increases in state power and international influence have recurrently resulted from violent revolutions (Skocpol, 1979, p.3; Foran and Goodwin, 2003, p.117). In fact, some of "the least withered state apparatuses in the modern world have been created by revolutions" (Dunn, 1989, p.251).

In France, the Revolution cleared the way for evolution beyond the old regime. With its hinderances to industrialization and development, Skocpol (1979, p.205) describes the French Revolution as a "gigantic broom" that swept away the ""medieval rubbish" of seigneurialism and particularistic privilege". Domestically, the state's administrative sector swelled, and with significant improvements to the nation's legal and administrative framework, long-term economic growth and industrialization ensued. Internationally, the Revolution propelled France to its status as one of Europe's greatest players (Skocpol, 1979, pp.199-205; Bukovansky, 1999).

Similarly, as a consequence of its strengthened post-revolutionary state Mexico became one of the most industrialized postcolonial nations and the Latin American state least inclined to military coups (Skocpol, 1979, p.3). Despite the fact this state looked quite different to the movement's socialist aims, the revolution lifted Mexico out of the peripheries of the global political-economy – gaining considerable global significance and influence (Tardanico, 1982, p.401). China's Revolution allowed it to overcome the barriers the previously fractured nation had been facing to unified, centralized rule (Skocpol, 1979, pp.263-365), and consequently to crucially industrialize (Meisner, 1999, pp.7-8). Post-Revolutionary Russia became a world industrial and military superpower, and post-colonial Vietnam has "[broken] the chains of extreme dependency" (Skocpol, 1979, p.3). In sum, consolidation and extension of state power has been a clear and frequent result.

It is certainly worth noting, however, that this would rarely have been considered a success in the eyes of the original revolutionaries – for whom a stronger, more bureaucratic and centralized state was hardly the goal (Himmelstein and Kimmel, 1981, p.1152). Nor was it a success for those for whom this strengthened state meant facing terrors and abuse (something that shall be studied in more detail

further on). Despite this, the 'achievement' of strengthened state power as a result of revolution is worth noting.

These achievements seen thus far, however, are far from the full, notably grimmer, picture. Turning now to the many pitfalls of violent revolutions, I will first examine what makes revolutionary conflict, and following that post-revolutionary state building, so risky and often so costly.

If revolutionary action is not immediately quashed – or does not immediately topple the old regime and create an unchallenged new one (not a very likely outcome) – we enter revolutionary conflict, or 'war'. This is the process of toppling the regime and competing to succeed it (Goldstone, 2003a, p.15). In 2017, Buchanan remarked that "revolutionary conflicts, like other intrastate wars, are often especially brutal". This is, however, somewhat controversial. There is a long-running tradition of labelling intrastate (including revolutionary) conflicts "as exceptionally brutal and barbaric" (Kalyvas, 2006, p.53) – above and beyond the horrors of interstate wars. There is certainly some important truth in this – of the previous two centuries' thirteen deadliest conflicts, ten were intrastate conflicts (Kalyvas, 2000, p.2). However, what constitutes "crueller" violence is a subjective judgement. Intrastate conflicts typically take place in poor countries. With less advanced military resources, killing is often of one man by another. That rich countries can afford to fight their wars elsewhere and use military technology that allows them to be far removed from the violence, does not mean that intrastate wars are always more "barbaric". Many intrastate conflicts avoid high fatalities, and many interstate conflicts are highly destructive, including of civilians. We should, to a certain extent, resist this treatment of revolutionary conflict as particularly "barbaric", above and beyond conventional, interstate warfare (Kalyvas, 2006, pp.53-54).

But this does not mean that revolutionary conflict (like all war) does not come at great cost. The aforementioned French Revolution, thus far noted for its successes, killed 1.3 million people in a total population of 26 million. Similarly, 2 million of a roughly 16 million Mexicans died in the Mexican Revolution, and tens of millions were killed in the Russian and Chinese (Goldstone, 2003b, p.85). Dunn (1989, p.2) noted that "revolutions are very destructive and brutal affairs, but no revolution has ever failed to destroy much that is bad as well as much that is good".

Revolutionary conflict is particularly predisposed to lasting for many years. Initial support for the revolution may be very low (Tiruneh, 2014, p.9), and if this support is mostly rooted in rural areas and revolutionaries face a relatively strong state, the conditions favour a "drawn-out guerrilla war" (Goldstone, 2003a, p.15). International parties also frequently intervene, and often with ulterior motives. They may deliberately prolong the conflict to serve their own interests (Buchanan, 2017).

The second, and perhaps greatest, concern of revolutionary conflict is its often-indiscriminate nature. Both those fighting (combatants) and those not (non-combatants) are frequently the targets of attack. This is perhaps why revolutionary conflict has its barbaric reputation – bucking the international trend of the last century to treat the attacking of civilians as illegitimate, something that has been seen as the "civilizing" and "modernizing" of warfare (Kalyvas, 2006, pp.54-55). The Just War convention, our dominant thinking on warfare, holds that the innocence and/or defenceless of non-combatants differentiates them from combatants, and as such to kill them is a much greater wrong (Lazar, 2020). Whether we concede that the attack of non-combatants is inherently more immoral than the attack of combatants or not (an in-depth study of this complex debate cannot be attempted here), it is still concerning for its consequences. Johnson (2000, pp.421-422) articulates the concern

that there is a particularly heavy burden of harm on non-combatants – given that they are less likely to have adequate shelter from attack, do not have access to the military privileges of food and medical care, and are unable to fight back. Indiscriminate fighting may also be particularly prone to escalation, its uncontrolled nature meaning it is more likely to mutate into warfare of rape, torture and pillaging, or even mass killings and genocide (Johnson, 2000, pp.435-36).

Revolutionary conflict is often indiscriminate for a variety of reasons. Being an intrastate conflict, with both sides already present within (and possibly throughout) the disputed territory, it is often unable to operate around a clear front line (Finlay, 2015, pp.211-212). Revolutionaries "fight where they live" (Walzer, 1977, p.184), and without a clear division between areas of fighting and of peace, civilians are unable to be kept away from danger zones. "The theatre of war is likely to overlap unavoidably with the spaces occupied by civilian life" (Finlay, 2015, p.211).

The use of guerrilla warfare also involves civilians in the conflict. Revolutionaries are likely to begin at a severe disadvantage in terms of military power, and as such rely on guerrilla combat (Buchanan, 2013, p.297). Guerrilla combat involves and risks civilian lives for a multitude of reasons – including the wearing of civilian camouflage or disguise, or inciting violence against civilians from the state in order to fuel hatred of the regime, or to gain international support (Walzer, 1977, pp.179-180; Buchanan, 2013, p.297; Finlay, 2015, pp.206-207). Revolutionaries may also result to acts of terrorism – that is, indiscriminate killing in order to stir up fear – because of this imbalance of military power (Buchanan, 2013, pp.297-298; Finlay, 2015, pp.247-253). From the side of the regime, violence against the population is a frequent response to resistance (Finlay, 2015, p.72). Due to all these factors, there is likely to be more harm to civilians during the war than there was under the regime –

"regimes often kill many people but usually not at the same rate as wars do" (Finlay, 2015, p.146).

The third concern for revolutionary conflict is its tendency to rely on brutally coerced participation. Acquiring the needed manpower is very difficult, and revolutionaries frequently coerce citizens into participating with the threat of executions or mutilations, for example (Buchanan, 2013, pp.299-302). Of grave concern is that this can tend towards a "spiral of coercion" between the regime and the revolutionaries – with each raising the costs of not supporting them ever higher (Buchanan, 2013, p.320). Consequently, level of participation becomes a weak indicator of support, given that much of this participation may have been the result of coercion and manipulation (Kalyvas, 2006, p.93; Buchanan, 2013, p.316).

Fourthly, revolutionary conflicts are rarely just a fight to overthrow the state but also to compete for its replacement. Once a regime is toppled, "the struggle to shape revolutionary outcomes has… only just begun (Goldstone, 2003a, p.15). Coalitions formed frequently fall apart with the regimes collapse, and such begins the "sometimes bloody scramble for power among former allies" (Foran and Goodwin, 2003, p.108). This competition is not unknown to erupt into coups or civil wars (Goldstone, 2003a, p.3), and unfortunately, extremist revolutionaries have a "natural advantage over their rivals" (Huntington, 2003, p.41). Extremist groups will be willing to do more to succeed (Buchanan, 2013, p.305), and may, in their readiness to do whatever is needed to acquire the necessary participants, become the largest force (Huntington, 2003, p.41).

A final pitfall for the revolutionary conflict and the behaviour of revolutionaries (that also crosses over into concerns for the post-revolutionary state) is the risks and costs that accompany the fact that revolutionaries usually have ideological objectives

(Goldstone, 2003a, p.2). When revolutionaries fight for such ideological objectives, a particularly concerning likelihood is that they become prepared "to subordinate all other ends to this single end" (Dunn, 1989, p.22). When fighting is in aid of what is perceived to be a justified ideological cause, it inherently tends towards excess – "such that great aspirations may be used to justify great crimes" (Finlay, 2006, p.391). Some revolutionaries may earnestly believe that their excessively violent actions are justified by their ideological goal – others may simply deploy ideology as justification.

Crucially for the question of justifying violent revolution, these pitfalls of revolutionary conflict also tend to be greatest when revolution is waged against the most oppressive states. Problems resulting from the need to obtain participants are likely to be ever more exaggerated, with: divisions fostered under the oppressive regime likely preventing cooperation; the regime's increased willingness to raise the costs of participation; and likely manipulation of the population preventing realization of their mistreatment and support for the revolution (Buchanan, 2013, p.304; Finlay, 2015, p.292; Buchanan, 2017). Revolutionaries are also likely to be at a greater military disadvantage, and as such will rely ever more on acts of terrorism and harms to non-combatants (Buchanan, 2013, pp.294-297; Finlay, 2015, pp.311-312). The toppling of the regime may also, if deep identity-group divisions have been fostered, lead to the unleashing of bloody intergroup conflict (Buchanan, 2017). Finally, all these conditions will create even stronger selective pressures for revolutionary groups that are "exceptionally ruthless, and willing… to disregard even the most basic moral constraints" (Buchanan, 2013, p.305). Where revolutions are fought against the most oppressive states, then, conflict is likely to be even more uncontrolled, bloody, and favouring of brutal extremists.

Thus far we have seen the ways in which revolutionary conflict is inherently vulnerable to becoming uncontrolled, indiscriminate, and excessive. Unfortunately what lies at the end of this dark tunnel – the outcomes of this revolutionary conflict – is no less fraught with dangers. "History suggests that the outcome of revolutions is highly uncertain or, perhaps more accurately, that there is a significant probability that the outcome will be bad" (Buchanan, 2013, p.296). Violent revolutions rarely fulfil the promises of freedom, equality, and prosperity on which they were waged (Dunn, 1989, p.246; Goldstone, 2003b, p.85). Importantly, they are usually also less successful in this respect than nonviolent campaigns – which are more likely to create durable, peaceful, and democratic regimes (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011, no pagination).

The key reason behind these often-bad outcomes, is that post-revolutionary state building is a very difficult task. Creating durable political and economic institutions may take many years (Goldstone, 2003a, p.15), and it is made considerably more difficult by the preceding conflict. Post-war hostilities, anger, and lack of trust all make cooperation and peace extremely difficult (Gurr and Goldstone, 1991, p.344; Buchanan, 2017). Imposing limits on conflict, such as the protection of civilians, aims to prevent war from "[destroying] everything that is worth living for in peacetime, or [making] it hard or impossible to return to peace" (Johnson, 2000, p.447). When revolutionary conflict spirals, as it often does, it makes this process ever more difficult – because of how much has been destroyed, and the intensity of hostilities and anger (Johnson, 2000, p.447).

The possibility of continued opposition from rival groups, limiting legacies of the old regime with respect to resources and administrative power, international opposition, and a weak position or dependency in the global economy all make this task ever harder (Skocpol, 1979, p.289; Eckstein, 2003, p.135; Foran and Goodwin,

2003, pp.108-109). Such problems are significant in the Third World countries in which most contemporary revolutions take place – often characterized by high levels of dependency, stronger international powers eager to influence outcomes, and severe underdevelopment, poor resources, and low levels of inherited administrative power. All these problems pose serious limitations for the potentially transformative power of post-revolutionary state-building in Third World countries (Eckstein, 2003, p.135). Cuba provides an illuminating, though extreme, example here – its Revolution allowing it to break free from dependency on the United States only for it to become highly economically and politically dependent on the Soviet Union (Skocpol, 1979, p.289).

Crucially, we also have no reason to believe that those able to win a revolutionary conflict are able to handle these great challenges of building a post-revolutionary state. That revolutionaries fought for a just cause does not mean they have the capability to create successful governments (Dunn, 1989, p.253), and that they were successful in war does not necessarily make them good governors of a society, nor ones that can be trusted to protect rights and freedoms.

These limitations combine to mean that revolutionary outcomes are highly unpredictable. In fact, Dunn (1989, p.236) asserts that, "all revolutions are supported by many who would not have supported them had they had a clear understanding of what the revolutions were in fact to bring about". The ideologies held (or purported to be held) by revolutionaries are no recipe for the outcomes, and post-revolutionary states rarely resemble what was hoped for at the launching of the revolution (Skocpol, 1979, pp.170-171; Foran and Goodwin, 2003, p.108; Goldstone, 2003a, p.15; Goldstone, 2003b, p.85). Revolutions do not start new timelines; they are imbued with history and all its limitations on their transformative potential (Skocpol, 1979, p.171; Goldstone, 2003b, p.85). That is not to say that major transformations have not been

achieved, but that outcomes cannot just be whatever revolutionaries dream of – they are moulded and restricted by many external and historical forces (Skocpol, 1979, p.280). The Russian Revolution provides a stark example, "[twisting] and [upending] virtually every Marxist ideal" for which it had fought (Skocpol, 1979, p.171).

A particularly concerning and frequent outcome is a post-revolutionary state characterized by terror. Many revolutions create more authoritarian governments than they succeeded (Goldstone, 2003b, p.85), and only a third of the fifty major revolutions since World War II have created democracies (Albertus and Menaldo, 2013). "Post-revolutionary states are too often brutal, corrupt, tyrannical and incompetent" (Dunn, 1989, p.256). Without a monopoly of coercion in the territory, and in the face of the disorder of a post-revolutionary nation that has no established procedures of governance, post-revolutionary states have often resorted to reigns of terror to cling onto power (O'Kane, 1991; Goldstone, 2003a, p.4). Revolutionaries may also have become habituated to relying on force for control. Gurr and Goldstone (1991, p.344) assert that "it takes a full political generation or more to overcome the battle-hardened revolutionaries' habit of relying on force to maintain power", a trend seen in every revolution of the twentieth century at the time of their writing.

Reigns of terror can be and have been avoided, particularly when moderate revolutionaries triumph, as in America or the Philippines (O'Kane, 1991, p.269; Goldstone, 2003a, p.15). Or if, as in Nicaragua, all opposition has been defeated in the preceding conflict and widespread support already established (O'Kane, 2000, pp.982-986). But if throughout the process of conflict military leaders have risen to rule revolutionary groups – or more radical groups prepared to make heavy sacrifices for their ideological goals succeed – states prepared to use heavy force will emerge. Such was the case in the Soviet Union, China, Russia, Cambodia, Iran and Ethiopia,

amongst others (Skocpol, 1979, p.230; O'Kane, 2000, p.980; Goldstone, 2003a, pp.4-15).

In sum, this chapter has been an examination of the stark lessons from the history of violent revolution – namely that it is highly risky, and often comes at a heavy cost. Successes were also revealed – namely the toppling of oppressive regimes, beginning waves of international change, and consolidating state power. But following that has been an important insight into the unpleasant truth of revolutions. Revolutionary conflict is often excessive and uncontrolled – with indiscriminate, coercive fighting that often favours extremist victors. Competition for succession can be fierce, and ideological ends can be seen to justify any means. Outcomes are also highly uncertain and, frankly, often bad. The post-revolutionary state-building process is fraught with obstacles and frequently creates more oppressive governments than were succeeded. Crucially, the possible outcomes are not whatever we dream we can dream of – a naïve, mistaken belief held by many revolutionaries past. These are clearly grave lessons from history that must not be forgotten. Violent revolution is ugly and its successes are limited, and if we are to try to justify it, or to embark on it, we must not pretend otherwise.

Chapter 2: The Struggle for Justification Within Conventional Frameworks

Having seen these lessons from the history of violent revolution, we turn now to whether, knowing this, violent revolution can be justified. This chapter shall first explore our traditional mode of justifying violence and war – the dominance of 'Just War Theory' – and its instrumental, consequentialist approach. It shall then show how violent revolution is likely unjustifiable under such a framework, given its consequentialist conditions. What this importantly illuminates for the justification of revolutionary violence will be studied, as will how these systems fall short. What is clear is that violent revolution is likely to be unjustifiable through these consequentialist and instrumental frameworks, but that this is not reason to believe the issue of justification of revolutionary violence is settled.

Conventional thinking justifies violence on its instrumental ability to achieve (justified) military or defensive goals. Consequentialist arguments are "the simplest and probably the commonest way" in which we justify warfare (Norman, 1995, p.73), and Just War Theory draws heavily on consequentialist thinking (Norman, 1995, p.117; Hurka, 2005, p.34). This, of course, begs the question of what consequentialism is. Consequentialism judges the morality of actions on their final results. If an action is likely to lead to a bad result, consequentialism considers taking this action immoral (Harbour, 2011, pp.235-236). Conversely, the morally right course of action is that which is likely to have the best consequences (Shaw, 2013, p.21). It judges an action instrumentally – on what it leads to – rather than the action itself. What constitutes better or worse consequences is unspecified – though Utilitarianism offers one potential answer, judging actions only for their impact on our happiness or well-being (Shaw, 2013, p.21). To take a consequentialist approach to justifying violent revolution would thus be to say that: it was justified if it led to more good consequences than bad,

or, that it could never be justified if it led to more bad consequences than good. This clearly also begs the question of what is included in, and what constitutes, a calculation of 'good' and 'bad' consequences – the traditional Just War response to this will be discussed further on.

Just War Theory began as Christian thinking and has since evolved over the course of many centuries to become the dominant secular thought on the morality of warfare in the West. It has become so influential that it is the basis for many of our international laws of war (Norman, 1995, p.117; Fisher, 2011, p.64). The tradition takes the position that war may sometimes be morally justifiable and even necessary, but also recognises the great cost it often comes at. To limit this harm, it prescribes a set of conditions a war must satisfy to be considered justified (Fisher, 2011, p.66). "The overriding aim is to ensure that war takes place only when more good than harm will result" (Fisher, 2011, p.84) – clearly demonstrating its instrumental consequentialist grounding. It has, however, traditionally addressed interstate rather than intrastate warfare (Fotion, 2006, p.55).

The theory is split into two parts, *jus ad bellum* – conditions required to justify going *to* war – and *jus in bello* – conditions required to constitute just fighting *in* war (Walzer, 1977, p.21). The principles of *jus ad bellum*, that is the conditions that must be met for Just War theorists to conclude it was just to go to war, generally include the following: the war must be fought in aid of a just cause; initiators of war must have the right intentions; the war must be a last resort; there must be a formal declaration of war by a legitimate authority; the war must have a reasonable prospect of success; and the violence must be proportional to the aims sought. The two principles of *jus in bello*, that is the conditions that must be met for Just War theorists to conclude that the war has been fought justly, are: the force used must be proportionate, and force

should aim for legitimate targets only (i.e. for combatants and not for non-combatants) (Moseley, no date).

Typically, Just War Theory considers defence against aggression (or defence of others, notably against such significant humanitarian wrongs as genocide or ethnic cleansing) to be the sole just cause for waging war (Lazar, 2020; Hurka, 2005, p.35). This characterisation of just causes is reflected in our international laws of warfare, including the UN Charter (Norman, 1995, p.120; Fisher, 2011, p.70). Whether we accept this conception of just causes or not, violent revolution (such as against tyrannical and violent regimes) could certainly satisfy this condition.

We can also quite easily imagine a situation in which revolutionaries have the right intentions, and that, to whatever extent the 'Last Resort' condition is ever satisfiable, a violent revolution constitutes the 'last resort'. With respect to the requirement of a 'Formal Declaration of War by a Legitimate Authority', whilst perhaps unsatisfiable, this arguably does not prevent justification of violent revolution. Restriction of legitimate warfare to states is premised upon the ability to entrust states with defence of individual rights and interests. If the state is not doing this, and is in fact violating these rights, it seems just that the right to defend these rights and interests can transfer back to the individuals (Fabre, 2008) – whilst still subject to constraints, of course. We might, however, contend that this reduces the chance of satisfying the *ad bellum* Proportionality principle. If there is not clear authorisation for the conflict from the people revolutionaries claim to represent – as might be the case for a democratic state's decision to go to war – the good aimed towards might seem of smaller weighting, given that we do not know that this end is desired by those it will affect (Lazar, 2020).

Where violent revolution finds its greatest challenge in Just War Theory is the remaining *ad bellum* conditions: satisfaction of the Reasonable Prospect of Success principle, and satisfaction of the Proportionality principle. These also constitute the consequentialist components of Just War thinking. Satisfaction of the 'Reasonable Prospect of Success' condition requires more than just a hope or chance – there must be considerable reason to believe that the war will be won (Harbour, 2011, p.232). This principle is founded in the belief that, if the just causes are unlikely to be achieved, "the war's destructiveness will be to no purpose" (Hurka, 2005, p.35). The violence of war is justified instrumentally and consequentially – if it does not succeed, the result is *only* a moral loss (Harbour, 2011, p.236), and to cause such harm without any resulting moral compensation is "not merely imprudent but also unethical" (Eckert, 2014, p.63). What constitutes success is somewhat debated within Just War circles – whether it is simply the military defeat of the enemy or also the ultimate achievement of the just causes (which may constitute more than just military defeat). But some military success is always required – otherwise it would seem that the just cause could have been brought about without it, and as such it was not a last resort (Eckert, 2014, pp.64-65).

The Proportionality principle says that the harm of war must not outweigh the harm avoided through prevention of the initial threat. Proportionality will thus be heavily impacted by the chance of success – if a war is unlikely to succeed, it will usually also be disproportionate (Lazar, 2020). Harm done cannot be outweighed if the threat was not averted. These two principles are intimately connected then, with both applying consequentialist constraints on the waging of war (Fisher, 2011, pp.73-74). War is justified based on what it instrumentally achieves – this achievement concerning the military success of the 'just' side and the self- or other-defensive just causes.

The remaining *in bello* conditions will not be considered separately, but this will be considered within the *ad bellum* Proportionality condition. We are asking whether it is justified to stage a violent revolution (the *ad bellum* question) – not whether individual acts of a revolutionary conflict are justified (*in bello* questions). The issue for our investigation is the extent to which violent revolution is *likely* to be able to satisfy these in bello conditions and what acts are *likely* to be required – considerations for the *ad bellum* Proportionality principle.

Having outlined our conventional thinking on war – its consequentialism and the Just War principles – we now turn to violent revolutions struggle for justification under these frameworks. Firstly, with respect to the Reasonable Likelihood of Success principle, violent revolution may satisfy a *narrow* definition – that is, if we consider success to constitute only the overthrowing of an incumbent regime (and perhaps the establishment of a new one, no matter how successful or unsuccessful). As we saw in the previous chapter, fifty revolutions have managed such a feat since World War II (Albertus and Menaldo, 2013). We might, however, take a broader definition of success and require satisfaction of at least some of the aims of the initial just causes. We saw in the previous chapter that this very difficult and quite unlikely. Revolutionary outcomes are rarely what were initially aimed for, and post-revolutionary states are often more authoritarian than their predecessors. Whether we take a narrower or broader definition of the Success principle, however, is somewhat irrelevant for our overall consideration of whether violent revolution is 'just' under Just War frameworks. We still have the same outcomes to consider for the Proportionality principle. If we take a narrow definition of success (just the overthrowing of a regime), violent revolution may satisfy it – but this does not mean much good has been achieved (no

new state may have been established, for example). Failure of the Proportionality condition, and thus an overall judgement of unjustness, is still as possible.

It seems that failure of the Proportionality principle is, in fact, very likely. Many, many lives are frequently lost – as we have seen, as many as 1 in 20 French and 1 in 8 Mexicans died in their respective nation's revolutions. More lives are generally lost from the conflict than saved from the regime over the same period - "regimes often kill many people but usually not at the same rate as wars do" (Finlay, 2015, p.146). We have also seen that revolutionary wars are particularly likely to drag on, and as such, not just many lives, but also much of the nation's infrastructure and resources may be destroyed. Whilst certainly a more extreme example, various news outlets have reported on the powerful contrast between satellite images of Syrian cities before and after the nation's still-raging nine-year revolutionary conflict (BBC, 2020; CNN, 2018). We have also seen that revolution is unlikely to be able to discriminate between combatants and non-combatants, and will thus be unlikely to satisfy the *in bello* conditions. Given that we have also seen there is a considerable chance the post-revolutionary state will be more authoritarian and tyrannical than its predecessors, it seems quite likely a Just War theorist would conclude a violent revolution is unlikely to be proportional. There is a certainty of at least some level of harm, a considerable chance that this harm will be very significant, and a considerable chance that infliction of harm will be continued by the new state post-conflict. Harm inflicted thus seems likely to outweigh harm avoided.

What's also of particular concern is that for cases in which the just cause is greatest, satisfaction of the Proportionality and Success principles seems least likely (Finlay, 2015, p.154). This is so because when fighting the strongest, most brutal regimes, revolutionaries are likely to begin at a greater disadvantage, and to have a

chance of succeeding will need to rely ever more on unconventional fighting (including terror attacks), and brutally coercive participation. The regime is also likely to respond most brutally, and if it is a strong state (with a strong, loyal military), it may take longer to topple (Buchanan, 2013). More harm could be avoided by the overthrowing of such a brutal regime, but the war is likely to inflict considerably more harm, and the regime will perhaps be harder to overthrow and thus success even less likely. Harbour (2011, p.232) argues that the Success principle should allow for greater risk levels when the cause is of greater importance – i.e. waging a war with a lower chance of succeeding can still be just if the moral cause is significant enough. However, any extra allowance in cases of the severest regimes may be counterbalanced by the increased risk and decreased chance of success.

Having considered violent revolution through these principles, it thus seems that under our dominant Just War framework, a violent revolution is likely to be unjustifiable. In general – though there are likely to be exceptions – staging violent revolution seems unable to satisfy the consequentialist Proportionality and Success principles.

Yet, failure to satisfy these consequentialist principles is not a reason to conclude that the judgement of the justification of violent revolution is settled. "The simple fact that any criterion happens to be on the list does not, of course, mean that it is a morally valuable contribution to decision making about going to or fighting war" (Harbour, 2011, p.231). Firstly, they do certainly point to an important moral point. The consequences of our actions (the harm or good they bring) undeniably have moral weight (Norman, 1995, p.46). As do the consequences of waging a violent revolution. We could not possibly say that the significant resulting harms and likely unsuccessful outcomes of violent revolution are not of serious moral concern. Dunn (1989, p.15)

writes that revolutionaries, "have political responsibilities like any other contenders for political power…. in the morality of politics, consequences have weight as much as do intentions". The consequences of violent revolutions thus certainly offer a significant barrier to their justification – the lessons from history explored in the previous chapter are unquestionably moral issues, and ones that will certainly weigh against violent revolution's possible justification.

But that they offer important points for the case against violent revolution does not mean we have conceded that they show it cannot be justified. Crucial is the critique that calculation of the Proportionality and Success principles is essentially impossible. Firstly, judgement must be made beforehand, and at this stage there is so much uncertainty (Lazar, 2020). Fisher (2011, p.74) notes the criticism of "impossibility" lauded by critics with respect to predicting the consequences of such ever-evolving, drawn-out processes as war. Nor do we have an exact answer for the point in time post-conflict in which consequences stop being included in the calculation – a particular concern for revolutions which aim at building new states, something with no exact end point and which can extend far into the future (Shue, 2016, p.384). And even if we *did* know exactly what was going to happen, there is no sense in which we can actually mathematically calculate the net harm or net good caused by violent revolution, as suggested by the Proportionality principle. Questions are not just quantitative considerations of 'lives lost versus lives' saved, but unquantifiable qualitative considerations such as the harm prevented by the freedom from tyranny and oppression (Orend, 2000, p.537; Walzer, 2004, pp.89-90). Orend (2000, p.536) asks the critical question, "how can we pretend to measure, on the same scale of value, the benefits of defeating aggression against the body count needed to achieve it?"

Fotion (2006, p.58) notes that, Just War principles are so imprecise that "two sincere just war theorists could disagree about the justice of this war or that one". This point, however, though it reveals a serious flaw, certainly does not erase all the moral value of what the Proportionality principle points to. That it is difficult and cannot be precise does not mean that some estimation isn't still required, and that consequences aren't still of critical value (Hurka, 2005, p.66; Fisher, 2011, p.75).

Beyond just the *difficulties* of its calculation, we must question whether we agree, particularly with respect to the Success principle, with the *necessity* of its calculation. Of all the Just War conditions, the Success principle is "especially vulnerable to criticism" (Harbour, 2011, p.231). If we accept this principle, we seem to conclude that resisting a superior force is morally wrong (Harbour, 2011, p.231). This principle favours the strong and is biased against the weak. Fotion (2006, pp.58-59) believes that, for this reason, this principle must be modified for conflicts between states and non-state actors. When non-state actors are likely to always be at such a significant military disadvantage, and will rarely (if ever) be able to say that there is a *reasonable probability* of success – "it doesn't seem quite fair… to insist that they must adhere to a principle of Just War Theory that they cannot possibly satisfy" (Fotion, 2006, p.59). We reach a conclusion that seems clearly unintuitive – that the weak are unlikely to be justified in standing up to the strong. "Is it not sometimes morally necessary to stand up to a bullying larger force…?" (Moseley, no date) (such questions will be further explored in the subsequent chapter). Whilst some weighting of the Success principle was conceded earlier on, we might allow for satisfaction at even the smallest of odds if the threat is great enough. To not stand up to such threats – in this case, perhaps the most tyrannical and oppressive of states – even at great cost and

with very little chance of success, might seem to be ignoble and wrong (Uniacke, 2014, p.63).

What this points to, and what we find with the Success and Proportionality principles, is that they miss important moral considerations – something consequentialism is generally criticised for (Fisher, 2011, pp.49-50). Proportionality and Success principles measure violence instrumentally. What is measured in Proportionality is the harm that the violence of war inflicts and the good it secures via. the harm it avoids. Securing of such good (i.e. defeat of an unjust enemy) is also what constitutes 'success'. But crucially, revolutionary violence is not just instrumental, it is also *expressive*. And it aims at instrumental ends other than just the securing of defensive 'good' as considered in Just War Theory. Given violent revolution's low chance of instrumental success in securing such goods, Iser (2017, p.222) writes that, "if… one still wants to justify a revolution the emphasis must shift – at least partly – to its expressive dimension".

Such reflexions, then, lead us on to the following and final chapter – and the considerations for the justification of revolutionary violence that are crucially missed by the Just War framework (and that ultimately might offer us a justification for violent revolution). What we have seen in this chapter is what Just War Theory and consequentialism importantly highlight for the justification of violent revolution – that any attempt at justification must treat its consequences, as seen in the previous chapter, with serious moral concern. Justification of violent revolution within dominant Just War frameworks alone seems highly unlikely. However, we have also seen that such thinking faces serious flaws – how can we ever make a Proportionality principle-style calculation? It also leads us to conclusions we might disagree with – notably the denial of the right of the weak to stand up to the strong – and its thinking is too narrow,

missing important dimensions of revolutionary violence beyond its defensive, instrumental value. We turn now to these more expressive, often intangible, justifications.

Chapter 3: The Expressive Qualities of Violent Revolution

Ends other than military victory in war "have existed empirically and are morally legitimate" (Harbour, 2011, p.233). This is particularly the case for asymmetrical conflict and a weaker victim that knows it cannot defeat its opponent – as in revolutionary conflict. A war can be lost and still be, to some degree, successful (Harbour, 2011). Similarly, objectives in and justifications for violent revolutionary action other than solely the overthrowing of a regime and establishment of a new one have existed. Some of these justifications hold up to scrutiny, others do not. This chapter shall explore these often more 'intangible' and expressive dimensions of revolutionary violence, that seem to be achieved regardless of if the revolution succeeds.

These 'intangible' justifications, explored in this chapter, will be: the expression and assertion of rights, freedoms and equality; the reclaiming of self-hood, self-respect and agency; and the enacting of punishment and revenge. Some of these (namely the expression of moral equality and reclaiming of agency and the self) point to important justifiable ends for revolutionary violence, some (namely the aims of revenge and punishment) do not. But justification on any of these more intangible bases also has some serious limitations that must not be ignored. Justification on these bases has a tendency towards excessive permission of violence, these moral goals may be seriously and fundamentally undermined during and after the revolution, and despite these expressions of morality they offer little to show how the cycle of violence can be broken. Whether these are enough to justify violent revolution, given all the areas of concern seen so far in this paper, is an incredibly difficult judgement. Ultimately, I suggest that these ends are so valuable for us all that, in the direst of circumstances, and when no other choices are left, violent revolution can be justified.

When considering violence as justified on these expressive and restorative bases, Frantz Fanon's theory – perhaps the most prominent supporter of such violence – must be addressed. A black man born in French Martinique, Fanon moved to Algeria after World War II and became involved with Algerian revolutionaries, the Algerian Liberation Front (ALN). Having seen what French colonialism had done to Algeria and its people, he advocated for the violent decolonization of Algeria and beyond (Zahar, 1974, vii-xx). His final book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, opens with the infamous chapter *On Violence* – in which Fanon lays out his argument for violent decolonization and its liberatory potential. For Fanon, the colonized is not just liberated through the instrumental role violence plays in achieving decolonization, but through the act of committing violence itself - "the colonized man liberates himself *in and through* violence" (Fanon, 1963, p.44, italics added). Such arguments will be echoed throughout this chapter's exploration of the expressive qualities of violent revolution.

Beginning with expression of rights and equality, Iser's 2017 paper, *Beyond the Paradigm of Self-Defence? On Revolutionary Violence,* offers invaluable insights. Iser shows how considerations of proportionality with respect to defensive violence that focus only on measuring harm inflicted versus harm avoided, "neglect the crucially important dimension of (dis)respect" (Iser, 2017, p.207). Legally-acknowledged rights serve two functions – instrumental and expressive. They allow us to attain goods e.g. private property laws allow us to acquire and maintain private property, which helps us live a good life. But they also express that we can expect others to acknowledge these rights, and more importantly, that we are all of equal moral status. For those living in societies without legally acknowledged rights, or in which such rights are frequently and gravely denied and abused, revolutionary violence fights not just to defend itself against this aggression, but to express and assert these rights and the

equal moral status of the oppressed. Such expression is also intimately tied to the instrumental goal of deterrence – perhaps deterring others or their own governments from acting as the incumbent regime has in the future, knowing that they cannot do so without resistance.

Iser (2017) highlights that, when tyrannical states deny the rights and moral equality of their citizens, they do not just harm them, they also *disrespect* them. When considering the proportional response to this, we must account for this disrespect. Thus when estimating the proportionality of violent revolution, we must account not just for the defensive, instrumental consequences of violent revolution, but also its *expression* of rights and moral status in the face of severe disrespect. To not include this is also likely to miss the principle reason why the oppressed fight for their rights – not for their instrumental value, but for their expressive value. For the assertion that they are moral equals, deserving of this respect and recognition (Iser, 2017, pp.212-213). Furthermore, if revolutionaries' goals are to some degree expressive – "to stand up against injustice, and to defend one's position of equality" – to not fight "would undermine exactly this end" (Iser, 2017, p.225). Here lies revolutionary violence's intrinsic value – even if the revolution fails, "the very act of fighting for principles of justice affirms those principles" (Iser, 2017, p.222). For Fanon (1963), this declaration of the oppressed's humanity and the retrieval of their self-hood through violence – and the demand that this humanity and self-hood be recognised – is why revolutionary violence is also intrinsically liberating, regardless of the outcome.

Such justifications, however, seem valid only in circumstances in which violence is the only means with which to make such statements and communicate with the oppressive force. In particularly tyrannical states there is the distinct possibility that all other forms of communication besides violence may have broken down, and that

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communication through violence is the only way (Cramer, 2006, p.284). When South Africa's freedom movement moved from nonviolent to violent action in 1961, they did so on the basis that their non-violent action was being completely suppressed – and as such, they claimed to no longer have any choice but to turn to violence. Nonviolent, expressive actions "presuppose at least a minimal level of dialogue" (Norman, 1995, p.220). If such actions are completely and immediately crushed by the state (as in South Africa), and expressions are neither listened to by the state nor, crucially, allowed to be heard by fellow citizens, such actions no longer make the needed statement. "There has ceased to exist a civil society within which rival political claims can be made", and as such, to fight may be the only way to force the state to recognise resistance and express these assertions of dignity and equality (Norman, 1995, p.221). Judging when things have truly got to this stage, however, will always be an incredibly difficult call (Norman, 1995, pp.220-221).

Beyond just the intrinsic value of asserting rights and equality, is that such assertions may also be a route to the reclaiming of self-respect. Those that are so gravely denied recognition of their equality become "lessened, devalued and demoralized human beings" (Chandhoke, 2015, p.112). When somebody violates our rights – as in tyrannical states – resisting this and affirming your rights is a route to reclaiming self-respect – self-respect that may have been diminished by these grave rights violations (Walzer, 1977, pp.67-73). This is so because, when the oppressed make claims to the rights they are denied, they are saying that they know they deserve those rights. They are thus claiming and affirming their own self-respect (Boxill, 1976).

Similarly, taking violent revolutionary action and speaking back to oppressors allows the oppressed to recover and assert their agency and voice (Chandhoke, 2015, pp.118-12; Fanon, 1963, p.21; Nayar, 2013, p.88). The oppressed are taking action in

an attempt to determine their fate, in a way which has been denied to them, and are speaking back and resisting their oppressors. Gurr and Goldstone (1991, p.342), in their study of ten of the most notable revolutions of the 20th century, note that "the one positive accomplishment of most of the ten revolutions is intangible: They reasserted national identity and autonomy". An important caveat to the point of agency, however, is that this is clearly and fundamentally undermined when citizens are coerced into joining revolutionary action (Chandhoke, 2015, p.150).

We also find these arguments for the assertion of humanity and reclaiming of agency in the face of severe oppression made elsewhere – notably in slave narratives. One such narrative is Frederick Douglass's work, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. A seminal moment in Douglass's life story occurs when – after enduring too many beatings on his slaveholder Mr. Covey's behalf – when Covey attempts another attack, Douglass (2014, p.48) instead "resolved to fight". Douglass (2014, p.49) emotively describes his beating of Covey as "[rekindling] the few expiring embers of freedom, and [reviving] within me a sense of my own manhood". Douglass powerfully demonstrates support here for the potential of violence to fulfil these expressive ends.

This cathartic potential is also echoed in the work of Fanon. Fanon writes that violence could be "a cleansing force" (Fanon, 1963, p.51) for the colonized (Laurent, 2017, p.127), and asserts that "decolonization is truly the creation of new men" (Fanon, 1963, p.2). What is crucial (and concerning) here, however, is that for Fanon some of this catharsis is derived from a sense of revenge. The colonized are cleansed by the act of punishing the oppressors for their wrongs. Fanon (1963, p.6) describes the way that the violence of the colonizers will be "vindicated" by the counter-violence of the revolutionary colonized. This is, however, a very concerning justification. Taking

revenge on oppressors "without the procedural precautions of fair state retribution" (Iser, 2017, pp.222-223) presents a revolutionary project likely to go particularly wrong. Revolutionaries must not be judge, jury and executioner – this is neither likely to create good outcomes, nor to reflect our intuitions on the morality of fair punishment. To fight for revenge is to create revolutions driven by hatred, and if a revolution is driven by hatred (rather than belief in the equality of man), they will become projects solely of "misery and devastation which lead only to greater misery and more pervasive devastation" (Jean-Marie, 2007, p.2).

Whilst this catharsis of revenge seems an invalid justification for violent revolution, the aforementioned expressions of humanity and moral equality, and the reclaiming of self-respect, selfhood and agency certainly are. What is so powerful about these justifications is that they are not just assertions on behalf of the particular revolutionaries, but assertions of the humanity and equality of all (that is, if fought by revolutionaries with the right intentions). When one group resists the denial of their rights and equality, they resist the denial of the rights and equality of us all. These are assertions of *universal* rights – intrinsically valuable on this basis, whilst also instrumentally valuable if they work to deter future oppression. This is why, for Fanon, the liberation of Algeria is "a moment in a wider destiny" (Azar, 1999, p.28). We have also seen in the first chapter of this paper that the assertion of important values in violent revolution *does* have the power to spread around the world – demonstrated by the transformative revolutionary waves of anti-monarchy, democracy, and decolonization.

Yet, before asserting that these potential justifications can equal a justified violent revolution, we must also be aware of their limitations. The first area of concern is that violence on these intangible and more expressive bases might tend towards

excess. When the oppressed fight on these bases, they can come to see their opponent "as the representative of everything that is oppressive" (Iser, 2017, p.222). Combined with the fact that violence is no longer controlled by choices over what is strategically effective, and that any and all violence against oppressors might seem to revolutionaries to serve these expressive revolutionary ends – excessive, unmoderated violence may ensue (Finlay, 2009, p.38). Iser (2017, p.223) warns against the possibility of this violence even becoming "hedonistic" – it's provision of agency and selfhood coming to provide pleasure to those who have suffered great injustice.

These justifications are secondly limited by the fact that revolutionary violence may seriously and fundamentally undermine the moral values it seeks to assert (Chandhoke, 2015, p.125). Fighting for the values of moral equality, dignity and self-respect is seriously undermined when that fighting "[consists] of terror attacks upon children" (Walzer, 1977, p.205). Revolutionary violence is particularly vulnerable to undermining itself through its tendency towards excess, to rely on brutally coercive participation, and to target innocent civilians, rather than those posing the threat and responsible for the oppression.

These values are further undermined by the fact that revolutionary violence most often leads to further violence and denial of these values. Revolutions are frequently unable to break the cycle of violence that plague societies, as we saw in the first chapter with the frequency of post-revolutionary states more authoritarian than their predecessors. Fanon (1963, p.9) might assert that only violence can break the existing cycle of violence, but in practice its ability to do so has proven to be very limited. Fanon (1963, p.10) believes that the transformation of the colonial subject through revolutionary violence will destroy the Manichean, divided order of things. But

instead of destroying it, as we have seen, new leaders frequently simply take the oppressors place. Even Fanon (1963, pp.21-23) is aware of this potential pitfall, and the outcome of revolutionaries simply slotting in where their own oppressors sat. He has unfortunately been proved right on my occasions, including in his own Algeria (Azar, 1999, p.30; Nayar, 2013, p.7). If the new state continues to gravely deny people's rights, any assertion of these rights made in the revolutionary conflict is clearly undermined. What this points to is the struggle for violent revolution with establishing "on what – besides violence – shall the liberated nation be founded?" (Azar, 1999, p.27). We saw this in the first chapter of this paper – and the frequent post-revolutionary outcome of states continuing to rely on terror and force (Gurr and Goldstone, 1991, p.344). Chandhoke (2015, pp.123-124) notes that, "the colours of violence do not wash out quite so easily".

All these things considered then, can these intangible and expressive justifications ultimately justify violent revolution? Having seen just how risky and how costly violent revolution is, are they enough to assert that, despite these risks and costs, violent revolution is still justified? Answering this question is an incredibly difficult task. As we saw in the previous chapter, we have no real way of measuring the opposing values at stake. In the first chapter, for example, we saw that the French Revolution spread the values of liberty and equality around the world. And yet it also killed 1.3 million people – 5% of France's population – and was infamously horrific (Goldstone, 2003b, p.85). To claim anything in which 5% of a country's population died was justified is always going to be an extraordinary claim.

Ultimately, what these intangible and expressive qualities of violent revolution can reveal is the sense in which we may, in the direst of circumstances, and with no other methods of resistance left, have no choice but to violently resist evil (Norman,

1995, pp.218-221). This idea of having no choice seems the clearest way of settling the dilemma of the opposing values at stake. When the South African freedom movement said that they had no choice but to fight, what was really meant was that the only options were to fight or to submit, and that to submit was not really an option (Norman, 1995, p.219). This is, crucially, "an inescapably *moral* assertion" (Norman, 1995, p.219, italics in original). To not fight, and to submit to an oppressive evil, "would be to abandon one's deepest moral convictions, those convictions which are a precondition for making any meaningful moral choices at all" (Norman, 1995, p.219). What we end up with is what Norman (1995, p.223) refers to as a "moral tragedy" – violent revolution may be, in particular circumstances, a moral obligation, despite the fact that we know it is also wrong. Even apostle of non-violence Gandhi conceded that, in particular circumstances, violence is an unavoidable moral obligation (Chandhoke, 2015, p.45). To not fight evil, to simply submit to it, diminishes our must fundamental moral intuitions of the equality and dignity of all, and the need to stand up for what is right. It "leaves us all impoverished" (Walzer, 1977, pp.70-71). Clearly a world without war, including revolutionary conflict, is what we all hope for. But as long as grave injustice continues to rear its ugly head and fundamentally deny the intrinsic equality, rights and dignities of our fellow man, it would be a greater loss for all to not stand up to it.

Such a conclusion, however, must be treated with caution. This does not mean that we should romanticise all and every revolution as a grand assertion of our common morality and humanity. Nor can we ignore the stark possibility of revolution undermining the morals it seeks to assert. But when revolutionaries do fight with moral motivations, avoiding as much brutality as possible, against dire circumstances of severe oppression and the denial of their humanity, and when revolutionary war is the

final option – it may be justified. This is, however, why violent revolution is likely rarely justified. These expressive justifications can only be called upon in situations of grave oppression – with fundamental and widespread denial and abuse of rights and a serious need to affirm these principles. When we can say that to not resist would have been a greater evil. In light of this, a greater understanding of when this point has been reached is certainly needed, something I shall, for now, flag as an area for future study. A particular revolution may, for whatever reason, be able to satisfy the requirements for instrumental justification as considered in the previous chapter – in which case, that particular revolution may be justified. But we have seen that this mostly will not be possible. Consequently, violent revolution must also turn to its expressive justifications, and in doing this, it becomes clear that it is then only justified in the gravest of circumstances.

In sum, this chapter has examined the expressive justifications for violent revolution, that sit outside our usual instrumental Just War frameworks. Violent revolution is an expression of our equality and rights and this in turn is a route to the reclaiming of self-respect and agency for the oppressed. These are important assertions that better the lives of us all. It has, however, also been seen as an expression of revenge and a route to punishment – something that must not be seen as valid. Ultimately, given the importance of the values asserted by violent revolution, we may, in the gravest of circumstances, conclude that we have no choice but to resist the evil faced.

Conclusion

The question of the justification of violent revolution continues to be raised, as revolutionary movements continue to crop up across the globe. This paper has shown the stark lessons from the history of violent revolution, the high risk and heavy cost it often bears. On such a basis, we have seen that violent revolution is unlikely to be justifiable within our conventional instrumental and consequentialist thinking on warfare, as it is outlined in Just War Theory. But Just War Theory and instrumental thinking alone misses important considerations for the justification of revolutionary violence, namely its expressive qualities. Ultimately, what these important expressive qualities reveal is that, in the face of grave oppression, and with no other options for resistance left, violent revolution may be justified on the basis that morality demands we resist this evil.

Having come to this conclusion – that it seems we may, in particular circumstances, have no choice but to wage a violent revolution – we now need a greater understanding of what can be done to help revolutionaries not undermine these moral goals in their fight, and to avoid the mistakes of the past. History has shown we must not romanticise violent revolution. But given that it I have argued it to be a moral obligation in particular circumstances, we must do what we can to make it as successful as possible when it is required. The role of the international community is likely to be crucial here, and a greater understanding of what intervention can help to create good outcomes is needed. I thus flag this as a crucial area for future study.

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