

Chapter 4

Violence and Complexity: An Approach from Security*

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Abstract: Violence is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that has been addressed by multiple disciplines. This diversity of approaches has facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of its nature and its role in society. However, to fully understand its impact on the State and its security dynamics, a deeper analysis is required. This chapter aims to foster a critical and thorough reflection on the phenomenon of violence, addressing both its theoretical conceptualization and the methodologies employed for its empirical analysis. Methodologically, a qualitative, descriptive design was adopted, enabling a deep, contextualized analysis that elucidates the multiple dimensions and manifestations of violence. In conclusion, the imperative need to transcend disciplinary boundaries in the study of violence is highlighted, thus fostering a holistic, profound, and pluralistic understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the relevance of the culture of peace is emphasized as a fundamental epistemological and practical strategy that not only contributes to a more complete understanding of the phenomenon but also to the formulation of effective policies and actions to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violence across diverse social and political contexts.

Keywords: Complexity; culture of peace; State; security; violence

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Introduction

Although there is no universally accepted definition, violence can be understood as an omnipresent phenomenon (Robles, 2004). This concept manifests itself in a wide variety of cultural contexts, from gender-based violence to armed conflicts in different regions of the world. Thus, violence is presented as a cross-cutting axis of human culture.

Violence is configured as a complex and multidimensional object of study that, despite having been extensively addressed by a diversity of actors—from academic research centers to governmental and international agencies, both state and non-state—continues to give rise to a multiplicity of interpretations. The heterogeneity in the definition of the concept and the methodologies used to analyze it has created a landscape marked by ambiguity, in which the phenomenon is addressed across different disciplines, each with its own theoretical frameworks, analytical approaches, and specific purposes.

Although violence can be conceived as a form of language or expression inherent to the individual, society, and even the State itself, it is the latter that ultimately takes responsibility for mitigating it. It is therefore incumbent upon this entity to promote alternatives that build more peaceful paths to prevent human self-destruction.

The State is not the only actor capable of addressing violence, a phenomenon with deep social roots. However, in the complex and endless search for its causes and consequences, the State repeatedly consolidates itself as a key and indispensable agent, whose participation is essential to understanding the problem and confronting and mitigating its effects.

The security approach—whether in its national, human, or international dimension—presents itself as a relevant perspective for the analysis of violence.

However, this approach faces significant intellectual challenges in grasping the complexity of the phenomenon, since, as mentioned, violence has been addressed from multiple disciplines and frames that, far from offering a unified vision, contribute to its conceptual ambiguity. Consequently, it is necessary to transcend reductionist perspectives and move towards a more comprehensive approach, one that allows us to capture the multidimensionality of violence and, from there, pave the way for its decomplexification through a culture of peace.

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a critical reflection on violence, addressing its conceptualization, the methodologies used to study it, and exploring the potential of a culture of peace as an alternative for confronting this complex phenomenon. To this end, the chapter is divided into four sections: i) violence as an object of study; ii) the need to make its analysis more complex; iii) a culture of peace as an alternative approach; and iv) conclusions and recommendations.

From a methodological standpoint, this work is framed within a qualitative paradigm and adopts a descriptive approach, relying on documentary research. The information was organized into three categories: i) the theoretical analysis of violence; ii) complexity as a method; and iii) theories surrounding the culture of peace. To complement these sources, empirical data on violence in various regions of the world were incorporated, drawn from official reports, documents issued by international agencies—both governmental and non-governmental—and research articles published in indexed journals. Based on this corpus, a hermeneutic analysis was conducted, which facilitated the critical interpretation of the data, the substantiation of the findings, and the formulation of conclusions.

Violence as an Object of Study

Studying violence presents a significant challenge, especially given the breadth and heterogeneity of the concept, which encompasses everything from acts of struggle and domination to various forms of repression. A pluralistic, at times fragmented, research agenda is evident in the literature on violence, which is studied by multiple disciplines within the social sciences, including political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. This conceptual and disciplinary diversity not only increases the complexity of the phenomenon but also creates multiple scenarios that hinder its comprehensive understanding.

Nonetheless, a first methodological approach to the study of violence can be traced to the efforts of various academic, governmental, and non-governmental

organizations. These entities, both nationally and internationally, have dedicated resources to rigorous, systematic monitoring of the phenomenon, with the aim of categorizing violence and giving it concrete meaning in social reality.

One of the most important organizations in this field is the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), based in Australia with a global presence. The IEP is dedicated to research and knowledge production, with its annual Global Peace Index (GPI) report being particularly relevant. This document ranks countries by their levels of peace, becoming a recurring source for the international press to identify the most violent or dangerous nations, as well as those that stand out for their high levels of political stability.

However, the IEP reports offer a detailed analysis of peace levels across 163 countries, representing 99.7 % of the world's population. This assessment is based on 23 indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, grouped into three core categories:

1. security and protection of society;
2. intensity and scope of current conflicts (national and international);
3. level of militarization.

Based on the organization's 2022 study, a brief summary of the ranking of the evaluated countries is presented. The purpose is to highlight a representative sample of nations that exhibit exemplary levels of peace, as well as those that register the most adverse results. It is important to note that the index classifies countries into six levels of peace: very high, high, medium, low, very low, and not included.

Table 1. *Summary of the Global Peace Index Ranking in 2022*

Rank	Country	Score	Level
1	Iceland	1107	Very high
2	New Zealand	1269	Very high
3	Ireland	1288	Very high
4	Denmark	1296	Very high
5	Austria	1300	Very high
68	Namibia	1908	Medium
69	Argentina	1911	Medium
70	Senegal	1916	Medium
71	Kosovo	1938	Medium

72	Rwanda	1945	Medium
143	Nigeria	2655	Low
144	Colombia	2729	Low
145	Turkey	2785	Low
146	Burkina Faso	2786	Low
147	Pakistan	2789	Low
148	Venezuela	2798	Low
149	Ethiopia	2806	Low
156	Somalia	3125	Very low
157	Irak	3157	Very low
158	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3166	Very low
159	South Sudan	3184	Very low
160	Russia	3275	Very low
161	Siria	3356	Very low
162	Yemen	3394	Very low
163	Afghanistan	3554	Very low

Source. Adapted from the Institute For Economic and Peace (2022).

The sample reveals that the regions with the most critical levels of violence—characterized by armed conflict, high militarization, and persistent insecurity—are concentrated mainly in Africa, the Middle East, and some South American countries. In this context, Ukraine and Russia are exceptional cases due to the military conflict that began in early 2022.

Examination of this index reveals that, although a specific methodological framework for measuring violence is not established, it is implicitly manifested in the categories of geopolitical analysis. These categories allow us to understand the degree of predisposition to the use of violence—legitimate or illegitimate—especially in relation to levels of militarization and conflict. In contexts of crisis or war, violence serves as a means to materialize conflicts (wars, military attacks, and internal confrontations). However, this methodological approach, although indirect, contributes valuable elements to the study of violence, particularly in its military dimension and its link to political and social problems at the national and international levels.

Moreover, the study of violence can be approached through more specific and rigorously developed methodological monitoring criteria at the national, regional, and international levels. In this context, observatories play a fundamental role. Conceived as entities dedicated to the systematic monitoring of social phenomena,

they are usually promoted by academic and scientific groups (Marcial, 2009). The promotion of these observatories frequently falls to non-governmental organizations, both national and international, or to universities interested in the academic and scientific analysis of various social problems.

A preliminary survey revealed that violence, as an object of study, is approached in a fragmented manner. Likewise, an intermediate level of complexity was identified when categorizing the observatories that analyze this issue. This is because violence is usually conceptualized in terms of its manifestations, the subjects to whom it is directed, and the consequences it has for human life, as well as for social, political, and economic development.

A prominent example of this approach is the Inter-American Security Observatory of the Organization of American States (OAS). This observatory addresses violence as it manifests itself in reality, using various analytical categories that facilitate its study from multiple perspectives.

Table 2. *Categories of Analysis Used by the Inter-American Security Observatory*

Categories	Indicators
International homicide	Crimes
	Victims
	By relationship and sex
	By nationality and sex
Violent crimes	By city
	Acts causing harm
	Harmful acts of a sexual nature
	Violent acts against property
	Threats of violence against people
	Victims of serious assault
	Victims of sexual assault
Other crimes	Victims of sexual exploitation
	Arms trafficking
	Migrant smuggling
	Drug trafficking
	Terrorist financing
	Money laundering
	Theft
	Affiliation with terrorist groups or criminal organizations

Categories	Indicators
Criminal justice system	Accused
	Convicted
	Convicted of intentional homicide
Prisons	Total number of inmates and related characterizations
Criminal justice system personnel	Personnel serving politics and judicial and penitentiary entities
	Infrastructure of prisons

Source. Adapted from the Organization of American States (2023).

As shown in Table 2, the monitoring carried out in the Latin American region—which includes specific violent crimes, the ways in which violence is perpetrated, the number of people convicted for these acts, and the deployment of personnel responsible for community intervention—constitutes a methodological approach centered on the qualitative analysis of the phenomenon. This analytical strategy not only allows for the systematization of available information but also for its categorization as a form of empirical representation of violence.

In this context, observatories with specialized approaches are identified: the International Observatory on Terrorism Studies, focused on the analysis of the terrorist phenomenon, and the Observatory on Violence against Refugees, promoted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which focuses on violence against migrant and displaced populations. Likewise, there are numerous national observatories dedicated to monitoring different forms of violence, especially in regions such as Latin America and Africa. Among these, the notable development of observatories focused on the study of gender-based violence stands out, gaining increasing relevance in both academia and social activism.

To date, a series of variables aimed at quantifying violence has been examined, understood as a set of political and social experiences that impact different spheres of collective life. However, it is necessary to move towards a deeper, more complex analysis that addresses the multifaceted nature of violence. Only in this way will it be possible to undertake a process of deconstruction of the issue, contributing to a critical understanding of the phenomenon and to the formulation of more comprehensive strategies for addressing it.

Complexifying Violence

As discussed in the previous section, prevailing approaches tend to address violence from a global perspective, relying on variables standardized by international

agencies, whose main objective is to quantify and classify the phenomenon based on its most visible expressions. However, one of the central premises of this work is that violence must be understood through a deeper approach, particularly in regions such as Latin America, where it persists as a complex structural phenomenon and remains without effective solutions for its diverse social, political, and economic manifestations. Therefore, it is imperative to problematize it from a more intricate and integrative perspective.

Why resort to complexity? This approach rejects the tendency to individualize or analytically reduce social phenomena, allowing for a more holistic understanding. According to Morin (2007), “complexity appears where simplifying thinking fails” (p. 22). While complexity manifests itself in contexts marked by chaos and uncertainty, its purpose is not to perpetuate confusion, but rather to contribute to establishing order, precision, and ultimately, clarity in the interpretation of phenomena as multidimensional as violence.

One of this author’s most relevant positions—which, in turn, justifies and conceptually supports the present study—emphasizes the imperative need to address the problems of reality through strategies that transcend quick, uncritical solutions. In contrast, he proposes an approach that recognizes uncertainty and randomness as intrinsic components of social phenomena.

Along these lines, the importance of not fragmenting or dissociating the object of study is emphasized, rather than grasping it in its entirety and considering the diverse contexts in which it can manifest itself. This conception stems from a critical awareness of the risks of “blind intelligence”—understood as a form of knowledge that operates without recognizing its own limitations—and the urgent need to overcome it.

The central concern lies not only in addressing violence from a strictly conceptual perspective, but also in doing so from a state-centric approach. This stems from the conviction that it is the State’s responsibility to guarantee the protection of human integrity against any manifestation that may represent a threat.

In this context, three key dimensions emerge for addressing violence: the what, the how, and the from where. The “what” refers to the definition and conceptual specification of violence. Understanding its attributes enables a more precise approach to the phenomenon, which is fundamental for both its analysis and for unraveling its complexity and achieving more holistic interpretations.

The Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung is one of the intellectuals who has paid the most attention to the phenomenon of violence. His contributions transcend

the scientific sphere and significantly influence conflict resolution. Galtung addresses violence with the aim of fostering peaceful scenarios. His extensive academic work provides valuable epistemological and theoretical contributions that deepen understanding of the phenomenon.

Galtung makes a fundamental contribution by questioning the traditional conception that considers violence an intrinsic trait of human nature. He argues, instead, that while human beings possess the potential to exercise violence, its expression is determined by the social and structural environment in which they develop. Building on this idea, he introduces his influential model of the violence triangle, which conceptualizes violence as a phenomenon observable in direct actions (direct violence) and supported by less visible dimensions: cultural and structural violence (Galtung, 2004).

Regardless of the analysis's starting point or the independent variable chosen, each manifestation of violence is interrelated and functions as both a cause and an effect of the others.

Galtung (1990) already warned that direct violence, given its visibility, tends to monopolize attention. This is understandable, since global public opinion tends to focus on current events, which are interpreted as symptoms of a historical malaise.

At this point, Galtung (1990) shifts his analysis to structural and cultural violence. The former is defined as a more comprehensive type of violence, encompassing any condition that obstructs the fundamental right to life. That is, the transgression of essential human needs—such as survival, well-being, identity, and freedom—constitutes a manifestation of structural violence.

In this sense, everything that violates the basic needs—such as poverty, harassment, indoctrination, repression, or alienation—constitutes a form of violence. Although they do not always manifest as direct aggression, they are more insidious and lasting, as they emerge from the State's political and economic structures. For Galtung (1990), the second category, cultural violence, acts as a bridge between structural violence and direct violence. It is important to emphasize that it is precisely in the cultural sphere that the legitimization that justifies and rationalizes both forms of violence takes place.

Despite the interconnection between these types of violence and their potential to act as reciprocal causes and effects, it is essential to discern a fundamental difference, especially when analyzing them across the individual, collective, state, and cultural spheres. Direct violence always manifests as an event; structural violence, as an unstable process; and cultural violence, as a persistent phenomenon.

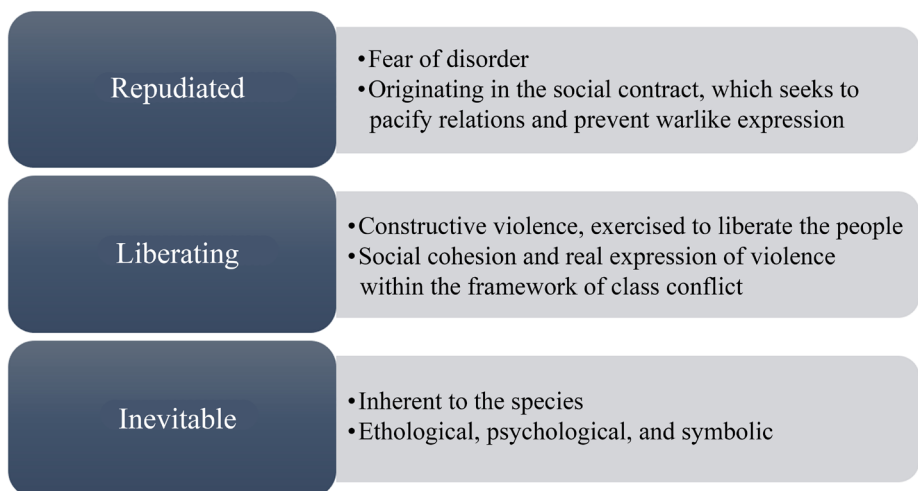
Galtung focuses on the latter, postulating that the main task of academia is to identify appropriate mechanisms to counteract a behavior that is difficult to eradicate: the culture of violence (Tavares, 2013).

This brief overview of Galtung's theory allows us to draw a first conclusion: it is a multidimensional phenomenon whose roots lie in both individual and collective behavior. Any attempt to understand it requires considering not only its concrete manifestations but also the context in which it originates and acquires meaning. However, regardless of the sphere in which it is expressed, violence shares a constant: the infliction of harm.

This perspective aligns with the definition proposed by Sanmartín (2007), who maintains that violence constitutes a form of aggression modified by sociocultural factors. Unlike automatic impulses, it implies an intentionality oriented toward harm, the manifestation of which varies according to diverse factors. Consequently, violence can be classified into different categories—active or passive—and typologies, according to the nature of the harm, the methods employed, or the target of the violent behavior.

Generally, the concept of violence is approached through categories that facilitate its classification and systematic analysis. In line with the aforementioned authors, Crettiez (2008) proposes a typology that integrates philosophical, political, and psychological approaches, thus offering a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Figure 1. *Categories of Violence by Approach*



Source. Adapted from Crettiez (2008).

This categorization reveals that violence does not solely exhibit a negative connotation, but can also be perceived as positive, just, and even liberating.

The concepts and categories analyzed represent a significant contribution to the scientific study of violence, insofar as they enable its problematization from a multiplicity of theoretical and contextual frameworks. However, this analysis not only broadens the understanding of the phenomenon but also raises a more far-reaching question, shifting the discussion toward ethical and practical dimensions: Is it possible to eradicate or prevent violence? And, if so, what would be the necessary conditions for its materialization?

According to the microsociological theory formulated by Collins (2008), the predominant approaches tend to identify antecedents and analyze conditions that, directly or indirectly, favor its emergence. While these approaches contribute to scientific knowledge, they do not fully explain the phenomenon's dynamics. This is because factors such as poverty, discrimination, abuse, or stress do not constitute sufficient conditions for its manifestation. Consequently, causal explanations are almost always relative, context-dependent, and, in many cases, insufficient to account for its eruption.

The author points out that studies focused on the situational analysis of violence begin with a hypothesis: the presumption that violence is a behavior that tends to emerge more readily than others. As a result, certain conditions are more likely to trigger violent episodes.

However, Collins (2008) argues that violence does not emerge with the spontaneity commonly attributed to it. For it to manifest, it is necessary to cross thresholds of tension, confrontation, or conflict that depend on specific conditions and particular interactional dynamics. Although violence can serve as a means, it should not be understood as an immediate or inevitable reaction.

It is necessary to differentiate between aggression and violence. Aggression, linked to biological factors and primary impulses, does not necessarily culminate in a violent act, since not all aggressive behaviors presuppose intentional harm. In contrast, violence always involves an aggressive manifestation, characterized by the deliberate intention to cause harm or suffering.

This author's reflections are especially relevant for understanding violence, a phenomenon that has typically been investigated from a linear logic of cause and effect. However, it is also necessary to approach it from a nonlinear perspective, where complexity is presented as a valid alternative. Thus, violence reveals itself as a phenomenon that emerges from social disorder, frustration, and irrationality.

Violence and Complexity

Complexity arises from recognizing that violence is not a one-dimensional, single-cause phenomenon, nor can it be addressed from a single analytical or conceptual approach. It is worth noting that its manifestation is ambiguous and difficult to categorize. To understand it and, ultimately, prevent or control it, adopting a reductionist view is not feasible. It is precisely in this complexity that the true challenge lies: determining which approaches and strategies yield effective responses. In both theory and practice, violence demands multiple interpretations, even though the common purpose is to understand it and mitigate its effects.

[...] Although navigating the theoretical realm is complex, the situation becomes even more so when we venture into the field of intervention. While in the first case an inclusive approach may suffice, integrating the various intervening factors and maintaining an appropriate balance between theory and practice, the specific characteristics of the situations to be addressed, the interrelationship among professionals, social actors, the problem itself, and both macro and micro contextual forces come into play in the field of intervention, in addition to the various factors. That is to say, theory leans toward the realm of ideas, while intervention leans toward the realm of action. (Sánchez & Escobar, 2007, p. 59)

In this context, Quiroz and Chávez (2022) propose three categories for addressing violence from a complexity perspective: nonlinearity, fuzzy sets, and fractal theory. Although these categories originate from formal sciences, such as mathematics, and are applied to the study of abstract objects, they are also useful for analyzing phenomena characterized by chaos and complexity.

Over time, nonlinearity has become established as an interdisciplinary approach that, although rooted in the natural sciences, has been applied to the social sciences. While its basic premise is causality, this approach questions the idea that all phenomena derive exclusively from linear causes, characterized by predictable, regular, and stable patterns. Nonlinearity arises when a phenomenon exhibits erratic or unstable behavior, making it impossible to trace its trajectory in a linear fashion. In such circumstances, confusion, disorder, and complex scenarios emerge that challenge and surpass conventional explanations (Quiroz & Chávez, 2022).

Authors such as Chaparro (2008) highlight that this approach considers two perspectives when analyzing phenomena: i) ordered systems that evolve toward chaos; and ii) those that emerge from chaos to form a new order. The first is

associated with strange attractors, which reveal an ordered structure in the system's trajectory that nevertheless culminates in chaos. The second approach, linked to dissipative structures, describes processes of spontaneous self-organization that emerge amidst chaos.

Both approaches, in one way or another, stem from a fundamental problem: the imperative need to simplify analysis, given the large number of variables and components involved, as well as the complexity arising from their nonlinear interactions (Agüero, 2013).

Fuzzy set theory, conceived by the mathematician Lotfi Zadeh, provides a valuable perspective on how data are represented and categorized. According to this theory, linguistic labels are essential to human thought, as they facilitate flexible, gradual categorization of elements (Universidad Internacional de Valencia, 2018).

This approach focuses precisely on what escapes strict definitions and classifications. Its purpose is to make sense of that which can only be partially understood, allowing for a more conceptually flexible approach to complex phenomena (Juca et al., 2020). It is also establishing itself as a valuable methodological tool for describing the reality of complex social relationships. As Quiroz and Chávez (2022) point out, "fuzzy logic allows the creation of thresholds for the analysis of variables and enables the use of subjective, vague, uncertain, and difficult information to transform it into comprehensible information" (p. 10).

Finally, fractal theory is addressed, which aims to offer a geometric and mathematical understanding of natural phenomena that lack an established order (Quiroz & Chávez, 2022). Generally, these phenomena result from the system's self-organization, and their emergent structure can only be recognized as it takes shape within the chaos. It is worth noting that this form can be unstable, irregular, or interrupted (Álvarez, 2012; Quezada, 2006).

Security, Violence, and Culture of Peace

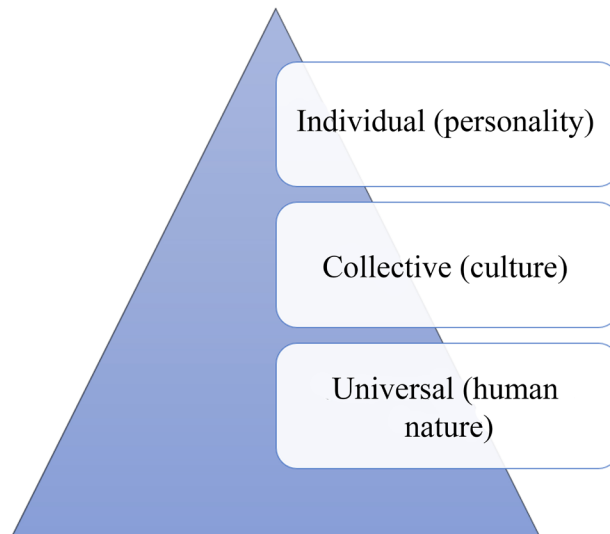
Up to this point, it has become clear that violence is far from a fixed concept or a one-dimensional phenomenon. Its complexity represents both an interpretive obstacle and a fertile analytical avenue for its study, regardless of its typology, dimensions, or effects. Throughout this document, a premise shared by various authors has been developed: violence is not a natural act per se, but rather can appear and disappear depending on specific contextual conditions (Collins, 2008; Crettiez, 2008; Galtung, 2004).

Even from an Aristotelian perspective, violence can be conceived as a potential capacity, that is, as a latent possibility for transforming human behavior (Xirau, 2003).

Within this framework, direct violence can be understood as the actualization of that latent possibility, triggered by contextual conditions that foster a violent response.

If violent behavior is triggered by specific contextual conditions, then it is within those same contexts that the keys to understanding and confronting violence must be sought. From this perspective, culture and peace become key tools for demystifying it. Why? According to Hofstede's approach, culture can be conceived as a collective mental programming. This programming can be inherited, learned, or adopted (Fariás, 2007).

Figure 2. *Levels of Mental Programming, According to Hofstede*



Source. Adapted from Fariás (2007).

Individual programming refers to the fact that much of human behavior is inherited, as evidenced by the similarity of certain skills or characteristics among members of the same family or immediate environment. Collective programming—categorized as cultural—means learning shared by a broader social group. Finally, universal programming comprises cultural elements recognized and accepted globally, thereby constituting an essential part of human nature (Fariás, 2007).

This conception of culture is crucial for understanding violent behavior in contemporary societies. Violence—understood as a potential, that is, as a latent possibility—can arise as a response to environmental challenges. From the

perspective of levels of mental programming, this predisposition can manifest itself at the individual, collective, or even universal level.

The categories established by the Inter-American Security Observatory include, among others, monitoring gender-based violence. In this context, the Colombian case is particularly concerning. In 2022, it was reported that three women per hour—equivalent to 128 per day—were victims of domestic violence, totaling approximately 47,000 cases during that period (Procuraduría General de la Nación, 2023). This scenario highlights that even in the most fundamental units of society, such as the family, deeply rooted patterns of violence are perpetuated. In countries like Colombia, these behaviors can be interpreted as manifestations of individual cultural programming influenced by patriarchal sociocultural structures.

At the second level of cultural programming, known as *collective*, behaviors associated with structural violence are manifested, understood as that exercised within the institutional sphere and resulting in social injustice (La Parra & Tortosa, 2003). This type of violence is evident, for example, in the phenomenon of organized crime in Latin America, a major problem in countries such as Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, and Panama, among others. Structural violence manifests itself through illicit activities such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, arms trafficking, and smuggling.

This situation shapes a collective response that arises in areas of greatest socioeconomic exclusion and state neglect, becoming an alternative embedded in these communities' cultural programming. On the one hand, this dynamic entails a violent rupture with the State's legal culture. On the other hand, violence—or the explicit threat of its application—emerges as the primary tool for the materialization and perpetuation of these illicit activities.

At a universal level, this programming of violence is manifested in the conception of war as a legitimate means of conquering and defending sovereignty. War has been a recurring phenomenon throughout human history. While conquest has defined much of this trajectory, the defense of sovereignty assumes central importance with the consolidation of the modern State, when the delimitation of borders and national security become paramount.

From a Hobbesian perspective, the recognition of the need for government stems from the preservation of collective security. In this regard, history, marked by countless conflicts between states, has contributed to the legitimization of war to the point of promoting its regulation, as evidenced by the development of international humanitarian law.

Violence permeates all social spheres. Although it cannot be considered inherent to human nature, its manifestation is highly context-sensitive, and its historical recurrence suggests a process of acculturation and even the normalization of violent behavior. However, it is precisely in the cultural sphere that tools to counteract it can be found. Building a culture of peace is a viable way to confront violence in its multiple expressions. In this regard, Galtung conceives of peace as the negation of violence; that is, an environment will be peaceful to the extent that the absence of violent acts prevails (Tavares, 2013).

The absence of violence is embodied in the notion of a culture of peace, understood as a framework of values, attitudes, behaviors, and practices that rejects violence in all its forms, promotes human rights, and fosters fundamental principles such as freedom, justice, solidarity, and tolerance. This concept was consolidated by the United Nations (UN) in the Declaration on a Culture of Peace (1999). Article 1 defines this approach as an attitude and social practice based on respect for life, sovereignty, equality, freedom of expression, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This declaration underscores the urgent need to reshape humanity's violent behavior (Amnesty International, 1999).

Despite the declarations and principles established in support of a culture of peace, a fundamental question remains: what concrete strategies and effective policies are states implementing to truly advance toward this goal? To this end, the UN has led programs and promoted strategies through the decisions, pronouncements, functions, and mediations of the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Secretary-General. Among the actions undertaken, those related to preventive diplomacy and disarmament stand out, conceived as mechanisms to raise awareness of threats to international peace and security and to mitigate or prevent the escalation of conflicts. These measures can range from reducing the carrying of weapons in tense situations to their destruction, under the premise that "destroying the weapons of the past prevents their use in the wars of the future" (United Nations, n.d.).

Although the UN makes significant efforts to promote a culture of peace, it is necessary to acknowledge its inadequacies. The culture of violence is a much more complex phenomenon, one that transcends the scope of global policies and strategies. While international programs seek to address specific challenges in regions such as Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, the complexity of violence surpasses the immediate impact of each regional conflict. Therefore, promoting a culture of peace cannot be approached from a reductionist perspective,

but rather from an approach that recognizes its complexity. Given that conflicts are multifactorial and often manifest in confusing, chaotic ways, the construction of a culture of peace must also be multifaceted.

From a biological and complex perspective, Muñoz and Molida (2010) acknowledge this scenario and maintain that humanity is intrinsically linked to its environment. Human beings have developed learning and control mechanisms to maintain a dynamic equilibrium with the environment. In this dynamic, instincts, emotions, rationality, and freedom converge—elements that intervene in fundamental decision-making for the continuity and evolution of the species. Nevertheless, these decisions can also be contradictory, thereby generating a latent schizophrenic tension that hinders the resolution of life's essential problems.

Consequently, rationality, instinct, and emotions must be the starting point for understanding and interpreting the conflict inherent in human beings. Within this dimension, conflict-resolution strategies are delineated, which can lead to either peaceful solutions or the intensification of violence. Undoubtedly, this is a complex vision that demands rethinking and deepening the culture of peace, especially regarding the cultural mechanisms that have historically been used to resolve conflicts.

However, this challenge requires a coordinated effort among states, the academic community, and various methodological and epistemological approaches to studying and addressing conflicts. In other words, it is essential to adopt a complexity-based approach to developing a new culture of peace. As Muñoz and Molida (2010) warn, this is not a simple task:

Aspiring to manage the complexity of the Culture of Peace is not an easy task; it requires individual and institutional, academic and scientific, solidarity-based and cooperative efforts. There is the advantage of having countless interesting and useful contributions, but the difficulty lies both in the dispersion of their objects of study and in the methodologies employed. (p. 49)

If we intend to move toward more effective mechanisms for addressing the violence that permeates all spheres of human life, an approach that integrates multiple factors is necessary. This will allow us to understand and capture the complexity of the conflict. The objective should not be limited solely to reducing violence, but rather to fostering a process of acculturation for peace, based on reason, balance, and tolerance, and integrated into tradition, institutions, and human thought.

Therefore, any strategy, public policy, program, or initiative designed to break the cycles of violence must avoid reductionist interventions. Instead, it must

follow a path that allows for both the complexification and simplification of the phenomenon. This implies recognizing that the limited effects of many educational, security, or social intervention policies may stem from their operation within an accelerated and reactive rationality, driven by a survival instinct. This rationality prevents us from observing violence in its entirety, as it focuses solely on its most visible manifestations—such as homicide, the use of weapons, or sexual assault—while neglecting its structural, symbolic, and cultural dimensions.

Conclusions

Violence is a phenomenon that has sparked growing interest in academia and is the subject of numerous studies. However, it still requires new approaches to understand its dynamics within social relations. This paper proposes a more complex analysis to identify alternatives that move beyond conceptualization and progress to the intervention stage, ensuring effective outcomes.

This work demonstrated that, at the state level, violence is typically addressed through methodological and epistemological perspectives that prioritize its manifestations and social impacts, while its root causes and potential solutions are often relegated to a secondary position. In conclusion, this approach reveals a limited understanding of the phenomenon, underscoring the need for more holistic and up-to-date analytical frameworks.

Therefore, a series of alternative perspectives, based on complexity and chaos theory, was presented and considered potential tools for the study of violence. Among these, concepts such as nonlinearity, fuzzy sets, and fractals stand out. It was also argued that a culture of peace would be more effective at counteracting violent behavior, as it enables intervention at the various levels at which culture reproduces violent practices through acculturation oriented toward the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In this way, actors such as the State could have new alternatives to face the challenge posed by violence, understood as a latent threat to state security. This phenomenon requires a multidimensional approach, as its causes and consequences extend beyond linear or simplistic perspectives. Indeed, conventional causal explanations often reveal only superficial symptoms, without considering other determinants that institutional actors often overlook. This limitation contributes to the ineffectiveness of state responses.

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