# Malešević, Siniša. 2017. *The Rise of Organised Brutality: A Historical Sociology of Violence.* Cambridge University Press, 340 pp, $ 24.00 (eBook)

*The Rise of Organised Brutality* is the latest book in a series of books and articles on the sociological study of war and violence written by the University College Dublin professor, Siniša Malešević. The author uses historical sociological approach to address the question if (organised) violence is really in decline? The book hence is a part of a larger social and philosophical debate about the decline of violence in history. Malešević is firmly opposed to authors such as Steven Pinker or Azar Gat, claiming that violence in human history is not in decline, on the contrary, it increases. Historical sociological method in examining the long-lasting social structures is the cornerstone of understanding why violence increases, despite the long period of peace in the second half of the 20th century.

Malešević's analysis is similar to previous historical sociological research (like that of Michael Mann or Charles Tilly), in that it re-evaluates existing interpretations and findings about history, with the use of sociological theory. The book is not based on a research that would produce a new dataset about violence in history. Its originality, instead, stems from important conceptual and interpretive contributions. The conceptual contribution is the notion of organised violence, rooted in the Weberian sociological tradition. He uses this concept to reinterpret the spread of violence in history, through comparative examination of historical, archaeological and anthropological research.

The book is organised in nine separate chapters. In the first and the second chapters, Malešević theoretically elaborates his approach to violence, explaining the concept of organised violence and introduces *longue durée* perspective. In the third and the fourth chapter the author deals with the historical development of violence and explains why it is on the rise throughout history. Chapters five to eight are case studies of warfare, revolutions, genocides and terrorism in perspective of the rise of organised violence. The ninth chapter concerns the question of social cohesion in organised violence. It is also noteworthy that Malešević makes some very interesting remarks on the future of warfare in the context of organised violence in conclusion.

The foundation of Malešević's historical sociological analysis is his innovative approach to violence. Discussing with authors such as Žižek, Galtung or Bourdieu on the nature of violence, Malešević concludes that their approaches are biased, for they overemphasize

corporeal and intentional nature of violence. Concepts of collective violence developed by Charles Tilly or that of political violence used by Donatella della Porta, in his view, are also biased for they do not recognise the structural origin of violence. Therefore, Malešević redefines violence through a distinction between organised and unorganised violence. Such distinction allows violence to be connected with social structures and disconnected from corporeality or intentionality. Moreover, such distinction allows violence to be treated as "a variable, situational and contextual" phenomenon (308), and not as "a stable, transhistorical and transcultural" phenomenon (4).

The greatest disagreement over the character and the decline of violence in history Malešević has with the standpoint of Steven Pinker. Malešević criticizes Pinker's understanding of violence as transhistorical, corporeal and intentional. Because of such understanding of violence, Pinker believes that the decrease in numbers of interstate wars and the number of casualties in these wars imply that humankind is becoming more peaceful. Pinker's analysis of the level of violence in history is based on the comparison between the number of victims in interstate or civil wars and total world population at a specific time. In Malešević's opinion such view is biased because it does not take into account the organisational capacities of polities involved in conflicts and does not pay attention to the duration of conflicts.

The author defines organised violence as "a scalar and historical social process through which social organisations, including organised collectivities, find themselves steeped in situations or influenced by structural conditions that, intentionally or unintentionally, foster some substantial, coercively imposed behavioural changes or produce physical, mental or emotional damage, injury or death" (15). According to this definition, durable and systematic violence is possible only mediated through specific social structures. Dependency of organised violence on the level of development of social structures is what enables variations in manifestations of violence and contextual dependency. This definition emphasizes that consequences of violence do not need to be physical injuries, but could be overall changes in behaviour. Also taking part in organised violence does not need to be intentional social action, but participation in violence could be dependent on being part of specific social structures.

Social structures that enable organised violence are the development of organisational power and its bureaucratisation, centrifugal ideologisation and the influence of these two on microsolidarity. The development of organisational power in modernity Malešević interprets in a Weberian manner. Organisational power comes from adjustments of *Homo sapiens sapiens* to sedentary life and agriculture some 12 millennia ago. Organisational power develops irregularly with numerous new beginnings, significantly accelerating in the 18th century. Bureaucratisation accelerates the process of accumulation of organisational power by installing rational organisation, transparent rules and professionalism, which then in turn enhances durability and efficacy of violence producing organisation. Malešević emphasizes that coercion and possibility of violence lies in foundations of every social organisation, for most of them do not ask for consent of its subjects.

Although the possibility of coercion is ever present as a part of organisational power, organisations produce consent through ideology and more specifically centrifugal ideologisation. This type of ideologisation means that ideology develops at the centre of social organisation, diffusing through various channels to its audience. It is also a very competitive process, because different ideologies use the same values in different manner in constructing their worldview and they usually try to address universal issues such as liberty or equality. Ideology is necessary for bureaucracy because rationality itself could not create functioning social cohesion. Therefore, organisation and ideology both create a context and a code for a development of microsolidarity. For Malešević humans are not inclined to live in large collectives, but prefer small groups and eye-to-eye contact. Therefore, organisational power and ideology are successful only if they can intervene and reshape networks of microsolidarity for their own ends.

Another analytically very useful feature of Malešević's historical sociological approach is its level of abstraction allowing the author to analyse numerous structurally different societies in a large timeframe of more than 12.000 years. Sedentary lifestyles and agriculture caused the emergence of complex organisations that unite people around durable and cyclical projects. From Neolithic revolution social organisations became more and more complex in order to coordinate more sophisticated human action. Malešević points out that organisational power or possibility of control of coordinated human action is not itself violent. It only allows social action to be regarded as organised violence in certain contexts.

It is important to notice that when speaking of organised violence Malešević emphasizes inter-polity violence, which points out the significance of state and war in studying the organised violence. At this point I believe Malešević's book becomes very interesting for International Security Studies, since it allows a somewhat different perspective on the origin of war and interpretation of dynamics of the international system. It is particularly interesting to compare Malešević's approach with a neorealist position over the interstate warfare and the increase of military power.

The organised violence follows the rise of organisational power since the Neolithic revolution, but polities and armed conflicts in which they were involved were profoundly different from polities and armed conflicts following the rise of bureaucratisation and centrifugal ideologisation. The rise of bureaucratisation and complex organisation are related to the geopolitical conditions of numerous, competitive, but weak European states that needed a mechanism to secure durable military funding and people's loyalty in case of war. Loyalty was acquired by securing citizens' rights and moral equality of all people. Such situation of moral equality of all people provided an impetus for centrifugal ideologisation. By means of centrifugal ideologisation different armed conflicts could be legitimised as a defence of universally important values, such as liberty, equality or civilised way of life.

Malešević emphasizes that organised violence in form of mass warfare which includes entire populations is distinctive for technically advanced, bureaucratised and ideologised societies during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Their use of organised violence only reflects overall level of overall social organisational power. That means that war that emerged in the 19th century or the 20th century is not a constant in international relations, but a social form of violence contextually dependent on a particular degree of organisational power and ideologisation. Although the anarchical nature of the interstate system could cause a rise of organisational power as a precondition of violence, from the historical sociological viewpoint realism takes contextually dependent form of violence as a constant in international relations. Malešević explains this by comparing highly ritualised warfare between noblemen during the Middle Ages with bureaucratically organised and mass warfare emerged after the French Revolution.

The current development in hybrid or cyber warfare could be quite illuminating when thinking of contextual and structural dependency of warfare in international relations. Realists hold that the anarchical structure of international relations pushes states to increase their relative or absolute military power. This military power is usually regarded as a capacity for physical and massive destruction of lives and infrastructure. From the historical sociological perspective, military power is only a historical form of organisational power capable of producing violence. According to Malešević, technological advances, such as drones or techniques of precise targeting make full scale war obsolete. Such new forms of organised violence are hybrid and cyber warfare, because they require higher levels of technological and organisational power than classical warfare, but produce less casualties due to precise targeting in accomplishing the same goal. Following Malešević, International Security scholars should take organisational power more seriously.

*The Rise of Organised Violence* provides valuable insights to both historical sociology and International Security Studies. In the domain of historical sociology these insights come from a productive use of Weberian approach in determining what organised violence is and in what ways it relates to organisational capacities and bureaucracy, ideology and microsolidarity. For International Security Studies his insights are questioning realist views of war as a constant in international relations and increase in military capacity as a timeless strategy. Overall this book provides a coherent and solid argument for further research of organisations and organisational power in both historical sociology and International Relations. The book is an excellent example of an insightful historical sociological analysis that highlights the need for further empirical research of organised violence.

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