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Evolutionary Background of Violence in Human Society

Unlike some speculations regarding the evolution of collective violence, evolutionary science suggests that chimpanzees as well as the human species have been designed for using violent means in within-group quarrels, as well as in intergroup strife. According to Darwin's theory of sexual selection, we should expect that males and females obey to different behavioral strategies. Therefore, it seems that physical violence is mostly male violence directed against other males.

Turning to the causes underlying collective violence in stateless societies, it seems that reliance upon violence against neighboring groups was inspired by the feeling that out-group behavior was motivated by sorcery and witchcraft against in-group members. People expected that their kinsman's natural death was caused by sorcery, setting off blood-revenge as well as feuding. Since life is the most precious resource in any type of society, people readily engaged in this sort of behavior. As for the results of primitive warfare, there was no major advancement in terms of cultural evolution.

However, with the advent of the state a dramatic change was brought about. According to evolutionary culture theory, the state arose due to the fitness enhancing consequences of larger grain and meat yields in domesticated areas in the Near East. Due to these favorable consequences, states ventured upon taking away the control over fertile land which traditionally was home to hunter-gatherer bands. As one would expect regarding the impact of violent means, state power was superior to these hordes and succeeded in pushing them to infertile and barren land. Moreover, the unequal diffusion of armor and other types of weapons exerted major consequences upon social stratification within states as well. In many European states, aristocracies reserved the right to control armor which helped them to subdue thousands of uprisings within their boundaries. Despite the impact of violence in daily life over the past centuries, it should be noted that the diffusion of law ever since Sargon of Akkad's times was the other side of the story. Due



to the progression of law, the execution of unlawful deeds was reserved for judges as well as for police officers in most advanced states, deferring blood-revenge and feuding to less advanced regions in southern Europe as well as other regions of the world.

Returning to the impact of violence in human interaction, industrial production of armor brought about a sharp increase of violence during the Nineteenth Century. The situation was even more aggravated in the course of the Twentieth Century with the two World Wars. Our present situation is still characterized by the menace of war, as well as by terroristic attacks throughout the world.