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POLITICAL POWER, POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY IN THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF VLADIMIR JOVANOVIĆ AND SVE- TOZAR MARKOVIĆ

Abstract

The notions of power and violence represent essential elements of every political science research and even deliberation. On the other hand, nowadays democracy represents the regularity in the political systems of the mankind. The deliberation on these notions and forming attitudes towards them were not overlooked by the Serbian thinkers who have discussed politics since the restoration of the modern Serbian state. Precisely this is the topic of this brief overview – how the two eminent representatives of the Serbian political thought in the 19th century viewed political violence and generally the use of power in the political relations. We will discuss the thoughts of Vladimir Jovanović, one of the most significant representatives of liberal thought and Svetozar Marković, probably the most important representative of the socialist thought among the Serbs. As both their bodies of work are truly extensive, this paper could not thoroughly research each part of the theoretical and practical work of the observed thinkers.

Keywords: Power, Democracy, Vladimir Jovanović, Svetozar Marković.

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INTRODUCTION

The notions of power and violence represent essential elements of every political science research and even deliberation. What is power? What is it based on, what are its forms and ways of expressing? Likewise, the questions – what is the cause of violence? Is violence an irrational or rational action and does it have its purposefulness? All of these are questions posed by political science researchers in their research. One of the most significant common characteristics of these phenomena in politics and political sciences is the large capacity of abuse which can be carried out, primarily by the political elite – whether it be in power or in the opposition.

On the other hand, nowadays democracy represents the regularity in the political systems of the mankind. Democracy as a political system poses as a barrier for the abuse of political power and an obstacle for using violence for accomplishing political objectives. Yes, political violence is present in democracies but only in cases when legitimate interests are defended and when they are defended by the elite which gained support and legitimacy from the citizens.

The deliberation on these notions and forming attitudes towards them were not overlooked by the Serbian thinkers who have discussed politics since the restoration of the modern Serbian state. Precisely this is the topic of this brief overview – how the two eminent representatives of the Serbian political thought in the 19th century viewed political violence and generally the use of power in the political relations. We will discuss the thoughts of Vladimir Jovanović, one of the most significant representatives of liberal thought and Svetozar Marković, probably the most important representative of the socialist thought among the Serbs. As both their bodies of work are truly extensive, this paper could not thoroughly research each part of the theoretical and practical work of the observed thinkers. It is important to note this in the beginning, as a more thorough analysis of the theoretical postulates of Vladimir Jovanović and Svetozar Marković demands an extensive study of their work, a work that is measured in thousands and hundreds of thousands of pages and discussions about the political reality Serbia at that time.

Taking into account the close relation between the notions and the phenomena of power and violence, the intention of this paper is to point to the first specified definitions of these notions in a primarily descriptive manner and to briefly present a view on the ideas of Jovanović and Marković which concern these notions.

Firstly, this paper will showcase a brief overview of theoretical deliberations of these individual notions and then their mutual influences and counter-influences. Then, the attention will be directed towards a research of the thought of the mentioned Serbian thinkers so as to illustrate their attitudes towards the mentioned phenomena, above all the forms of political violence.

POWER AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN DEMOCRACY

We will start with the discussion of power. This notion is one of the most present in the deliberations about politics, the political and jobs of a community. Therefore, the possibility of defining this notion depends on a multitude of variables. Let's single out only the key ones in my opinion – the one who defines, the context of time in which it is defined and the context of power which needs to be concretized – the type, the scope etc. This is why the thesis of Vukašin Pavlović that it is extremely difficult to talk about a universal theory of power which can be applicable in each case is highly acceptable, as well as that there can be no talk about the possibility of a generally accepted theory of power.² This kind of attitude can be viewed in at least two manners. Firstly, each researcher must consider a definition of power when creating their research project. This means they must pay enough attention to defining or redefining the notion in accordance with their research intentions. Secondly, each author can prove or refute the initial thesis and the definition of power in their research design. This can be both an advantage and disadvantage. The advantage is the freedom researchers have to create a purposeful research design and the disadvantage is that while constructing this notion, one may easily fall into a trap which turns the freedom of defining into anarchy, which can lead to the disregard of the scientific truth.

Pavlović continues with the historical development of this notion. While talking about the ancient times, he lists the characteristics of power. “Firstly, there is a close relationship between power, authority and force. Secondly, in a way, power is above the authority and force. Thirdly, power acts through authority and force. Therefore, the authority and force are a follower and a servant of power.³ Fourthly, not even the highest power may, in the opinion of the old Hellenes, avoid the fickle finger of fate.” Therefore, we can observe that even in the ancient times,

² Pavlović 2012, 329.

³ The same, 330-331.

a relationship between power, authority and force was perceived in the political sphere, with power being above the two subsequent ones.

Furthermore, considering the Latin tradition, we can identify the following meaning of the notion/phenomenon of power: “First, potency-ability to perform an activity; second, power can exist in a potential state; third, power as the rights of what a person is allowed to do or what is expected of him.”⁴ The Latin tradition underlines the dimension of the potency of power, which is closely connected to the perception of power. Therefore, it is not always necessary to use power in political processes and political phenomena in different regimes. It is sufficient for the actors who are supposed to comply to demonstrate they have a potential to use the power, that is, that the actor who identifies power perceives that there is a potential of power present. The classical authors, Machiavelli and Hobbes, also discussed how the awareness of someone’s power itself often does not have to be real but it produces real consequences for the order.⁵

We could continue to observe the historical development, but the basic characteristics of power have not changed throughout time. Thus, Oppenheimer defines power as the ability to influence, limit or punish.⁶ Max Weber defines power as using “every chance to exercise one’s will within a social relationship, even against resistance and regardless of what that chance is founded on.”⁷ On the other hand, Simeunović states that “...political power is the ability to affect the key courses of development of the society, in a formal or informal manner, and it is most commonly expressed through relations of inferiority and superiority, whereas the level of influence usually corresponds the level of power.”⁸ In another place, Simeunović defines political violence as “...direct or indirect – latent use of force in the sphere of politics or the political, that is, as a direct or indirect use of force over consciousness, will or material assets of the real and the potential, that is, the assumed political opponent... it is a form of political act, activity.”⁹ Likewise, Milosavljević defines the political power as “...the ability of the holders of social power to, through political activity – action, accomplish their interests and objec-

⁴ The same, 331-332.

⁵ See more in “The Prince”, Machiavelli and “Leviathan”, Hobbes.

⁶ Simeunović 1989, 7.

⁷ According to Simeunović 1989, 7.

⁸ The same, 6.

⁹ The same, 27.

tives independently of will, interests and objectives of the other social and political subjects.”¹⁰ All of these definitions talk about the same categories – action, interests, objectives; in a nutshell, exercising one’s will contrary to the will and the desire of others. In the political sphere this means accomplishing one’s own political interest in spite of disagreement or resistance from the political opponents.

Let’s look back on the definitions of the notions of authority, force and violence which are, as indicated by the ancient role models, closely related to the notion and phenomenon of power, especially in political processes/relations. *Pojmovnik liberalne demokratije* [The Glossary of the Liberal Democracy] defines authority as follows: “Authority is legitimate depersonalized power bounded by the legal and institutionalized framework and entrusted to formal structures.”¹¹ Next, the Glossary makes a distinct difference between raw power and political power within the authority: “While power is the ability to influence someone’s behaviour without their choice, that is, to force them to do something they would not choose to do by themselves, authority is the power being exercised through recognized and legitimate channels, that is, it represents political power based on rules and procedures and thus a legalized political power.”¹² Dragan Simeunović points out that: “If the political power is institutionalized and rests on positions with the legal ability of decision-making, whereas the holders of these positions possess institutionalized abilities to make decisions, it is labelled as authority.”¹³ This is why democratic governances have successfully imposed the rules of the game for the political processes which dominantly exclude violence as a method of a political fight. Democratic governances are, in every sense of the word, legitimate governances which possess legitimate institutionalized power.¹⁴ Therefore, it is clear that democracy, as a system of government, is a system which does not approve the use of political violence in order to accomplish an individual political interest. However, even democracies recognize the possibility of the use of political violence, but only in the event of defending the system itself, defending democracy. This is why Simeunović’s attitude proves correct: “Political violence is an integral part of politics to the extent to which it is a functional method of politics

¹⁰ According to Simeunović 1989, 6.

¹¹ Milatović, Vujačić, Marinković 2008, 30.

¹² The same.

¹³ Simeunović 1989, 9.

¹⁴ The same, 11.

and a form of political activity.”¹⁵ Therefore, violence is also used in democracies when deemed purposeful.

Likewise, Simeunović thinks that “force is a means of accomplishing and maintaining power, and violence is a way of demonstrating and implementing power when the subject of power exercises its influence through violence while communicating with the object of power”¹⁶ For Simeunović “conducting violence is a manifestation of power – but violence can also be a manifestation of powerlessness.”¹⁷ Mills also has an interesting opinion that violence is the last form of power.¹⁸ The final form of power. It is necessary to point out, no matter how incompatible they may be at times, that power, force and violence are an integral and organic part of politics and they have their place and role in the political processes.¹⁹

According to Simeunović “The basic relation between force, violence and governance is as follows. Force is a means of governance and violence is a way or method of governance used by the governing to exercise their influence on directing the movement in a social community or another area of the social life.”²⁰ A theoretical framework formed in such a way will help us gain a better understanding how violence is viewed in the works of the Serbian thinkers of the 19th century, as well as its role in the political processes. A thesis of Professor Simeunović is also interesting in this context: “...each social violence as a practical activity represents a type of communicative behaviour, although not as explicit type of communication as language.”²¹

Why is this thesis interesting? This sheds a new light onto a multitude of theses that view political violence as a consequence of the aggression of individuals who make decisions conditioned by their mental state. The individual psychology affects the political processes indirectly. It is interesting to mention an example from the electoral practice of the Republic of Serbia where there is a number of

¹⁵ The same, 31.

¹⁶ The same, 7.

¹⁷ The same, 7.

¹⁸ According to Simeunović 1989, 7.

¹⁹ The same, 12.

²⁰ The same.

²¹ The same, 20.

citizens who make their political decision either based on their personal attitude towards the personality of the candidate or the political organization. Therefore, decisions are made based on a personal feeling and not reason.

On the other hand, if we emphasize the communicative dimension of political violence, the research of causes and purposefulness of political violence may point to the practical value of violence in politics. A certain kind of teleology that the political decision-makers keep in mind when deciding to use violence in accomplishing their political objectives. If we look back on the recent events in Kosovo and Metohija and the violence of the Albanian majority over the Serbian minority of the northern part of Kosovo and Metohija, we can, by using this thesis, interpret the motives and causes of that violence in a different manner. Someone is trying to communicate certain attitudes and political positions to the other side and they are using a certain form or forms of violence as a tool. This teleological dimension of political violence is interesting to us because we will analyse the political ideas of Vladimir Jovanović and Svetozar Marković who emphasized the teleological dimension of political violence, primarily for the purpose of national liberation in the 19th century.

In the previous part of the paper, we tried to establish a theoretical framework of power, violence, force and especially political violence for the purpose of building a foundation for an analysis of attitudes on political violence and its use in the work of the Serbian political thinkers of the 19th century.

VLADIMIR JOVANOVIĆ – FREEDOM IS POWER!

After giving a brief theoretical overview of the notions of power, violence and especially political violence and the relationship between power and violence, we will begin our analysis, first of the content of the political thought of Vladimir Jovanović, followed by a shorter²² analysis of Svetozar Marković's work. The goal of this analysis is not to provide a definitive answer to the question of how the Serbian thinkers perceive the use and forms of political violence, but rather an initial consideration for future research.

Vladimir Jovanović is one of the first liberal thinkers among the Serbs in the 19th century and he is most recognizable for his unfinished *Political Dictionary* as one

²² Primarily due to the small size of this paper.

of the first thinkers among the Serbs who talked about politics as a science.²³ We can even say that precisely this piece of work is the first true piece of work in political science in Serbia. It can serve as an amazing basis for analysis of thoughts and actions of this famous father of an even more famous son.²⁴ It seems as if nowadays this coryphaeus of the Serbian liberalism is more known to the contemporary generations of political scientists as a creator of the names Slobodan (A Free Man) and Pravda (Justice), and not as an independent thinker whose ideas and thoughts can still be used today for understanding the complex social reality. The significance of Jovanović as a theorist does not lie in the magnitude of the ideas put forward in his political deliberation, but in the craft of choosing them and modifying them to suit the conditions and the needs of the Serbian society at the time.²⁵

When talking about power, Vladimir Jovanović deems it morally and spiritually inferior to freedom, the highest value a person can possess. He considers freedom – power, ability of choice, ability of defining your own self. For Jovanović, freedom in political relations is precisely power, the ability and the right of choice.²⁶ Therefore, freedom is power or power is in freedom and only when we are free and when our political relations are free can we speak about possessing true political power. This may seem too idealistic at first, but it primarily reflects romanticism of the 19th century which arrived in Serbia a little bit later than in the Western Europe.

In his political thought, Vladimir Jovanović strives for the society and the state to be based on the rule of law.²⁷ We can use this attitude to draw a conclusion that Jovanović deemed procedure and not violence the basis of the functioning of a state. Therefore, he can be seen as someone who would never, and never did, support the use of violence to accomplish political interests of either a group or an individual in his political practice. The choice of proceduralism and debate as an important element of the democratic political order can also be concluded from the following Jovanović's opinion: "The individuality of the society itself is expressed

²³ More in Simeunović 2003, 177.

²⁴ The author of this article could not get a copy of the *Political Dictionary* as it is very rare at the libraries. There is no doubt that further research of this book will contribute to a better understanding of the development of various notions of our political science.

²⁵ Simeunović 2003, 125.

²⁶ The same, 180.

²⁷ The same, 126.

through the will of everyone, and not the will of one or few.”²⁸ So, conversation and dialogue and not autocracy which uses force.

Vladimir Jovanović believes that accepting the principle of competition, not only in the economic, but wider social, and dare I say political, relations is a prerequisite for the advancement of society...the main driving force of development and improvement of all the main abilities.”²⁹ Advocating the compliance with the principle of competition based on personal abilities and collective meritocracy tells us that this political doctrine and theory avoids the possibility of using political violence to accomplish political objectives. Of course, we need procedures and institutions to turn that competition into a match instead of a conflict. Therefore, democracy is an order which can establish the principle of competition between personal abilities.

The political thought of Vladimir Jovanović is characterized by pacifism. In the opinion of Simeunović, this is a specific form of pacifism which can be recognized as a characteristic of what can be labelled as *the Serbian liberalism*. The characteristic is defined by an attitude of condemning aggression and revolution³⁰ as forms of (political) violence, while a war of liberation is supported.³¹ This attitude towards the war of liberation is one of the rare characteristics of the Serbian liberalism which is shared with the Serbian socialism. In general, this attitude towards the national issue is common for all the ideologies of the 19th century in Serbia, that is, their study in Serbia at the time. Likewise, we can notice the aforementioned social component of political violence – the teleological, purposeful use of the war of liberation as a method of political fight.

The foundation for accepting the war of liberation as an acceptable form of political violence lies in recognizing the need to respond to violence with violence. Therefore, the occupant or the tyrant cannot be peacefully persuaded to change their attitudes and the only way to accomplish the political interest in that case is violence. Once again, violence should be responded to with violence.³² On the oth-

²⁸ According to Simeunović 2003, 126.

²⁹ The same, 128.

³⁰ There is, however, an exception. Namely, Vladimir Jovanović allowed for the revolution to occur - a civil revolution against tyranny of the feudal system based on the French or English revolution. (Simeunović 2003, 130.)

³¹ Simeunović 2003, 129.

³² The same, 130.

er hand, the attitude towards revolution can point to the attitude of Vladimir Jovanović towards political violence. Jovanović considered that “...even the gravest political problems in Serbia at the time should be resolved peacefully and legally, without a civil war or shedding of fraternal blood.”³³ Therefore, there is no room for political violence in the political processes within a state. This means that an internal freedom is possible without using forms of political violence.

Deviating from political violence can also be recognized in Vladimir Jovanović insisting that one of the most long-lasting political elements of the Serbian tradition is the national self-government, characteristic of the Serbs since ancient times.³⁴ This form of national assembly and governance of a community means a certain kind of democracy among the members of the self-government. So, a dialogue and not violence.

Vladimir Jovanović’s attitude that the Dušan’s Code may be regarded as a true example of the Serbian tradition of democratic order is particularly important. Namely, he points out that the Dušan’s Code singles out the national assembly as the highest legislative body and that the authority enforcing laws is responsible for its actions and not actions in accordance with the Code itself.³⁵ We interpret the emphasizing the democratic tendency of the Serbian tradition as a clear determination of Vladimir Jovanović to be against political violence as a means of political fight and a legitimate tool for accomplishing political interests.

We will cite another example so as to argue that Vladimir Jovanović is an opponent of political violence as a practice in politics. He is of the attitude that the most appropriate system of government in a national state is the republic which includes “...only the establishments founded on the free will of everyone and which even find their calling in serving the general will. And such establishments can only be developed in a republican order.”³⁶

However, it is interesting to note that Vasa Čubrilović in his “Istorija političke moći u Srbiji XIX veka” [The History of Political Power in Serbia in the 19th Century] does not consider Vladimir Jovanović to be a Republican.³⁷ It is interesting

³³ According to Simeunović 2003, 130.

³⁴ Simeunović 2003, 141.

³⁵ The same, 143.

³⁶ The same, 171.

³⁷ Čubrilović 1958, 252.

to note that Čubrilović is a bit contradictory here because in his final assessment of Vladimir Jovanović he believes that he “...has lead the fight against personal government regimes and a non-democratic bureaucratic administration in the country.”³⁸ This perceived contradiction indicates a need to pay more attention in future research to thinkers who thought about politics and ideology in a scientific manner as early as the 19th century.

SVETOZAR MARKOVIĆ – THE LEGITIMACY OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

In the following section of this paper, we will briefly look back on some of the attitudes of Svetozar Marković, the leading socialist thinker in Serbia in the 19th century. His body of work is extensive, despite the fact he died very young and thus probably depriving political theory and practice of his ideas. Be that as it may, his attitude towards political violence is much more radical than the one of Vladimir Jovanović. For him, political violence is a legitimate means of political fight, while he agrees with Jovanović on the need for war as a means in the fight for liberation.

Svetozar Marković considers that “...rebellions are a form of personal, group or mass political or social protest in situations when brachial violence is being committed against a nation.”³⁹ Through this attitude we can see that Marković’s attitudes about the need for violence in the internal political relations somewhat diverge from the classic socialist and thus the attitudes of Vladimir Jovanović. On one hand, contrary to the classic socialism, Marković does not consider political violence to be the only means of fight for the oppressed, but that there are certain conditions to be met for violence to be used. In this case, according to Marković, those conditions mean the existence of brachial violence from the system, the state. We will translate the Marković’s term *brachial* to the contemporary term of structural violence of state institutions.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Jovanović in no way considers the use of violence but, as we have already seen, he believes that there is no alternative in the dialogue of the actors in the internal political processes.

³⁸ The same, 255.

³⁹ Simeunović 2003, 299.

⁴⁰ See more about structural violence in the work of Enzensberger.

When considering the forms of political violence, Marković differentiates between two forms of revolution – political revolution – the totality of the processes of a radical social upheaval, while he perceives social revolution as a process of transformation of both a person and a society.⁴¹ Revolution is a start of something new and not just the end of the old.⁴²

For the purposes of our analysis, we will single out the political revolution as it solely represents a part of the political sphere in the internal politics. Therefore, Marković believes that this type of radical social upheaval is not only allowed but also welcomed, as this form of political violence is an integral element of achieving a socialist state. We have observed that Jovanović is against revolution, apart from when the revolution is in context of overthrowing an autocratic society. But this type of revolution is a social revolution, as defined by Marković, so we can rightfully conclude that Jovanović is against the political revolution which Marković considers to be a legitimate means of political fight. Let's recall Jovanović's attitude – dialogue, and not violence.

When talking about the second type of revolution – the social revolution as a conscious radical progressive transformation of a person and a society.⁴³ This attitude tells us that political violence is not only acceptable but recommendable as well, because we can talk about revolution as a form of violence which is clearly supported in the process of accomplishing a more just society and human emancipation. Therefore, political violence as a method of political fight is more that acceptable to Svetozar Marković. With this sentence, we will conclude our discussion about Marković's attitude towards political violence while reminding that it is possible to discuss these issues even more thoroughly through the totality of work of this Serbian thinker of the 19th century, which is measured in hundreds of thousands of pages.

⁴¹ Simeunović 2003, 299.

⁴² The same, 300.

⁴³ The same, 301.

CONCLUSION

This paper outlines chosen attitudes of two thinkers of the Serbian 19th century which deal with political violence and its use in the political processes within a state, that is, in the political sphere. The underlying motive of this research is the belief that there is one significant part of the national tradition of the political thought which has been unjustly neglected due to it being unreachable to the researchers. This paper represent only one of the many steps which should shed light to the thought and the role of different thinkers in the development of the national state and society in Serbia.

We have begun this paper with a brief overview of the notions of power, violence, force and authority from chosen literature with no intention of giving a comprehensive overview but to primarily point to some key elements of political violence above all, which served us in the further analysis of the content of the chosen political thought of Vladimir Jovanović and Svetozar Marković. The basic conclusion of the analysis is that one author deems political violence legitimate only in the event of a war of liberation or civil revolution, while for the other author, however, political violence is a legitimate means in a political fight for political interests. The first author is Vladimir Jovanović, who in political fights gives advantage to dialogue and procedures, while the other is Svetozar Marković, who believes that a radical social change requires a revolution, as well as against the structural violence of the system.

Therefore, we have pointed out that there has been a debate in the Serbian political tradition of modern Serbia about the legitimacy of the use of political violence in political processes i.e. fight since the very beginning. Also, we can find some indicators of the direction the solutions of our contemporary problems might head to in the answers given in the work of the Serbian political thinkers of the 19th century. There is no doubt that the research of the Serbian tradition of political science must be continued, if nothing else, so as to avoid the already made mistakes in creating institutions and order in the modern history of Serbia.

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POLITIČKA SNAGA, POLITIČKO NASILJE I DEMOKRATIJA
U POLITIČKOJ MISLI VLADIMIRA JOVANOVIĆA I SVETOZARA
MARKOVIĆA

Apstrakt

Pojmovi moći i nasilja predstavljaju bitne elemente svakog političkog istraživanja, pa čak i razmatranja. S druge strane, danas demokratija predstavlja regularnost u političkim sistemima čovečanstva. Razmišljanje o ovim idejama i formiranje stavova prema njima nisu prevideli srpski mislioci koji su razgovarali o politici od obnove moderne srpske države. Upravo je to tema ovog kratkog pregleda - kako su dva ugledna predstavnika srpske političke misli u 19. veku razmatrali političko nasilje i uopšte upotrebu vlasti u političkim odnosima. Osvrnucemo se i na misli Vladimira Jovanovića, jednog od najznačajnijih predstavnika liberalne misli i Svetozara Markovića, verovatno najznačajnijeg predstavnika socijalističke misli među Srbima. Kako su oba njihova rada zaista opsežna, ovaj članak nije mogao temeljno istražiti svaki deo teorijskog i praktičnog rada promatranih mislioca.

Ključne reči: vlast, demokratija, Vladimir Jovanović, Svetozar Marković.