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From Gender Regimes to Violence Regimes: Re-thinking the Position of Violence

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What happens when we focus primarily on violence as a central question—either within the gender regime approach or by making violence regime an approach in itself? The article first interrogates gender regimes theoretically and empirically through a focus on violence, and then develops violence regimes as a fruitful approach, conceptualizing violence as inequality in its own right, and a means to deepen the analysis of gender relations, gender domination, and policy. The article is a contribution to ongoing debate, which specifically and critically engages with the gender regime framework.

Introduction

In this article, we interrogate gender regimes through a focus on violence. In doing so, we critically assess the position of violence and violence regimes in undertaking comparative, analytical, and policy work. The article is a contribution to ongoing debate, especially in sociology and social policy, critically engaging specifically with the gender regime framework developed by Walby (2009). While other contributions in the Special Section focus on the gender regime's domains of polity and economy, this article engages with (the domain of) violence.

Following initial consideration of different approaches to studying violence, we discuss the concepts of regime, welfare regime, gender regime, and then violence regime. We argue for the usefulness of the concept of violence regimes, as a way of framing the wide range and diversity of violences, and

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relevant policies promoting or countering violence. We ask: what happens when we focus, as a starting point, primarily on violence, its definition, form, and breadth, as a central question, either within the gender regime approach or by making violence regime an approach in itself.

Studying Violence

The range of studies on violence is immense. This follows partly from the wide range of *forms* of violence—for example, genocide, homicide, assault, sexual violence, coercive control, as well as less directly physical violences, such as symbolic and systemic violence (Bourdieu 1998; Žižek 2008), emotional violence, and online abuse—and the *character or process* of violence—for example, one-off or persistent, sporadic or constant, random or highly systematic and organized.

The diversity of studies on violence also follows from different *disciplinary* (and indeed interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary) framings, and different *theoretical and methodological approaches* used, for example, across structuralism and poststructuralism (Evans and Carver 2017; Hanssen 2000; Lawrence and Karim 2007). Different disciplines have tended to focus on different forms of violence, for example, from psychological studies of offenders to international relations, as well as varying in the extent to which the gendered nature of violence is highlighted (cf. O'Toole and Schiffman 1997; Pease 2019; Ray 2011). For example, in their overview of *essential* concepts in sociology, Giddens and Sutton (2017) do not include violence amongst such concepts. While violence is referred to, it is employed to explain *other* social processes or as instrumental means for other ends, but not as a fundamental sociological concept.

Having said that, there is increasing critical concern across various disciplines with approaches that seek to be more inclusive, with Galtung's (1972) work, and the concept of structural violence, often an inspiration. Violence has thus been theorized broadly, as: a gendered and structural phenomenon in analyses of state formation as violent (Tilly 1990); a temporal and spatial "continuum" in Cockburn's (2004, 2014) concept of a gendered "continuum of violence" (cf. Kelly 1988); and in feminist political economy of violence addressing violence and harms across multiple levels and spheres of social reproduction (Gentry, Shepherd, and Sjoberg 2018; Hearn et al. 2020; Meger 2016; True 2012; True and Tanyag 2018), for example, the depletion framework (Rai, Hoskyns, and Dania 2014).

Such scholarship shows the vast range of violences, the connections between different forms, scopes and sites of violences, and their systemic character. These studies point to the need for analyses of: (i) various, diverse forms of violence; (ii) violence in and across public and private spheres; (iii) interpersonal violence within and after institutional and public violence, such as

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war, and impacts of institutional and public violence on interpersonal violence; (iv) violence within and by nation-states, and violent processes between and across nation-states.

As we shall argue, Walby and colleagues' (Walby et al. 2017; Walby and Towers 2017) concept of gendered violence (as physical and illegal) is far too limited to address these issues, and is indeed at odds with broader feminist and critical conceptions noted, which we synthesize as violence regimes, covering deadly, damaging, diffuse, dispersed violences. As such, we bring together work on gender inequality regimes and that on gendered violence (see Appendix).

The Concept of Regimes

Before going further, we consider briefly the term regime. In international relations, regime was conventionally defined as "principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge on a given issue-area" (Krasner 1982, 185; cf. Rittberger and Mayer 1993), thus explicitly including informal institutions. In contemporary usages, regime tends to denote: (i) a mode of rule or management; (ii) a form of government, or the government in power; (iii) a period of rule; or (iv) a regulated system. The regime metaphor adopted here draws on all four, even if in contemporary research it is often used more narrowly.

Empirical measurement of regimes has often used state-defined boundaries, while recognizing that social relations are not so easily contained. Regimes is a flexible concept, incorporating macro, meso, and micro levels. The notion of regime can thus accommodate both systemic approaches, as expressed by Walby (2009, 301):

> a *set of inter-related gendered social relations and gendered institutions that constitutes a system.* [emphasis added]

and more institutional, meso-level insights, as expressed by Connell (1987, 120):

> *diffuse institutions* like markets, large and sprawling ones like the state, and informal milieux like street-corner peer-group life, . . . [which] are structured in terms of gender and *can be characterised by their gender regime.* [emphasis added]

We focus on the concept of regime, rather than only that of domain, as regime suggests greater flexibility and accommodation of macro-systemic, meso-institutional, and everyday relations of ruling. The use of "regime" to encompass multiple facets and dimensions to gendered violence and inequality can advance insights into social policy-making.

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Gender Regimes and Violence Regimes

For Walby (2009), gender regimes both cut across and comprise the four institutional domains of civil society, economy, polity, and violence. These domains are social systems and take other social systems as their environments. These domains are seen as "equally" important:

> Each institutional domain is a different kind of system. The four domains are the economy, polity, violence, and civil society . . . . It is necessary to theorize the full ontological depth of each regime of inequality. Rather than there being merely a single base to each regime of inequality, there is a much deeper ontology, including all four institutional domains of economy, polity, violence, and civil society, and all levels of abstraction, including macro, meso and micro. (Walby 2009, 65).

In this article, we question whether violence ought to be regarded as an institutional domain, or as a regime of inequality in its own right. "Violence regimes" is a relatively new concept, theoretical framework, and policy tool. When Schinkel (2013) wrote on the relation between different forms of violence, claiming he "introduces the idea of a regime of violence" (313), he was not entirely correct. Kössler (2003) had earlier used "regimes of violence" to discuss the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and the changing relationship between states after 9/11. Schinkel's later use of the concept describes the relations between various forms of violence, arguing that regimes of violence constitute a way of governing conduct via the medium of violence. The concept is useful, especially with expanded understandings of violence.

So what happens when we place violence center-stage, and see violence as a form of inequality itself, but not simply part of an overarching gender regime? As violence is gendered, violence regimes are likely to also comprise gendered violence regimes, as well as other forms and aspects of violence regimes. Violence, when seen not only as an institutional domain, but as a regime, is not "equal" to other domains; rather, it is central, hierarchical, and regulates and works across all domains—the extent to which or how that is done is an empirical question we are seeking to conceptualize and measure (Strid et al. 2019).

Violence and Its Frequent Avoidance

Violence is an extensive global problem connected to power, inequality, health, capital, crime, and security, which significantly impacts all societies. While the international relations literature on gender, militarization, security, and war certainly engages with violence, mainstream social theory and sociological social policy have frequently overlooked violence as one of the most substantial, deep-rooted obstacles to gender equality.

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A first set of consequences of excluding violence is that, if one considers policy responses to gendered violence, one might miss some far greater differences between the same welfare regimes and gender regimes than commonly assumed (Lister 2009; Pringle 2005). Introducing violence as a key analytical variable in existing research paradigms enhances comparative research findings, could potentially resolve problems related to silencing, marginalization, knowledge transfer, and evaluation, and also contribute to advancing gender equality policy.

A second set of consequences of underestimating the importance of violence in much mainstream social science is the relative fragmentation of research. Different forms of violence are often studied separately in different disciplines: (i) interstate, that is, violence between states (e.g., war) predominantly in political science; (ii) intrastate, that is, violence within states (e.g., state–citizen violence) in sociology; (iii) interpersonal violence (e.g., assault, homicide, sexual violence) in criminology, psychology, and gender studies (Walby 2013). This third approach is overwhelmingly in focus in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Violence* (Lombard 2018); the first approach figures in *The Oxford Handbook on Gender and Conflict* (Ní Aoláin et al. 2018); while this journal's Special Section on Postconflict Care Economies (True 2019) and *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Security* (Gentry, Shepherd, and Sjoberg 2018) are more concerned with the first and second. An exception to such separations is *The Palgrave Handbook of Criminology and War* (McGarry and Walklate 2016). Despite its significance, large parts of mainstream sociology and social policy, even much contemporary gender studies, have *often* either avoided violence or underestimated its importance (Abraham 2019; Hearn 2013; Hearn et al. 2016; McKie 2006; Ray 2011; Strid, Walby, and Armstrong 2013; Walby 2013). The regime approach here seeks to bring a focus on violence and re-center violence in the analysis.

Welfare Regimes, Critiques, and the Avoidance of Violence

Key examples of downplaying or avoidance of violence are to be found in much welfare regime research. Esping-Andersen's (1990) *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* was predominantly occupied with socioeconomic class and (de)commodification. Initial identification of social democratic, conservative corporatist, and (neo)liberal welfare regimes led to extensive welfare state research in Europe and beyond, along with feminist critiques thereof (Lewis 1992; Orloff 1993; Sainsbury 1999). Esping-Andersen's feminist critics have gendered welfare state regime typologies, thus recognizing *gender(ed) welfare regimes*, in terms of, for example, care, unpaid work, and welfare structuring. However, violence and gendered violence are typically missing. Welfare regime approaches have been critiqued for neglect of not only gender relations, but also racialization and intersectional relations. Some regime studies have examined intersections of gender and race (Sainsbury 2006), but

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without highlighting violence. Classifications of gender welfare regimes do not necessarily fit easily with racialized regimes, based on anti-racist policy/practice, migration, and refugee policy, or those highlighting bodily integrity and violence (Pringle 2011).

These welfare regime debates are relevant for debates on gender regimes and violence regimes, in four ways. First, the term regime is used in a more institutional and policy sense in relation to welfare regimes than as in the broader social-relational concept of gender regime. Similarly, usage of social democratic and (neo)liberal is similarly more confined in welfare regimes than in gender regimes. Second, nations located within the same welfare regime, such as Denmark and Sweden, can have extremely different policies on violence (Balkmar, Iovanni, and Pringle 2009; Pringle, Balkmar, and Iovanni 2010), and countries in different welfare regimes, such as France and Sweden, can exhibit contradictory features in anti-violence policies (Delaunay 2019). Third, feminist critiques of welfare regimes show that a wider range of issues needs to be included in theorization and comparison of gender regime, and violence is one of them. Some uses of gender regime (Sörensen and Bergqvist 2002) do not take violence into account.

In contrast, gender regime theory incorporates violence as an institutional domain, albeit in a limited way. This is a more macro-approach than welfare regime approaches, with development of earlier debates on the structuring of patriarchal relations, such as capitalist work, the family, the state, violence, sexuality, and culture (Walby 1986, 1990). Such work not only pluralized patriarchies (e.g., public, private), but also considered overlaps and relations between patriarchal domains.

Subsequently, Walby (2009) argued for the overarching framing of gender regimes founded in and structured through four domains: civil society, economy, polity, violence. In her broadly framed gender regime theory, the institutional domain of violence takes the other institutional domains (economy, polity, civil society) as its environment, with the whole making up a gender regime (figure 1). This allows the (at least partial) analytical separation of "violence" from those other domains shaping or containing it: the "environment of economy, polity, and civil society." In that way, violence, while analytically separate, can cut across the domains of polity, economy, and civil society.

The gender regime approach (Walby 2009) is well established, initially in relation to varieties of modernity in the global North, and later in applications elsewhere. However, several key issues around violence are raised within the gender regime framework. One basic question is what is meant by and included within, the domain of "violence." The understanding of violence used in the recent *Measurement* book (Walby et al. 2017, 4) limits violence to physical violence and illegal violence:

> For the purposes of a theory of change—in order to potentially make visible the relationship between violence and other forms of power and

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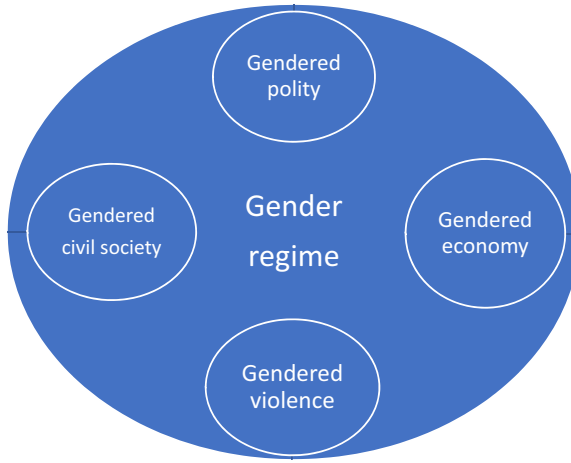

Figure 1. Separate gendered violence regime.

> to identify the levers of transformation—it is better to restrict the concept of "violence" to a specific and precise definition connected to intended physical acts that cause harm. Yet, many of those who use a precise definition of violence underestimate the extent of violence against women, leaving this dimension invisible.

On this basis, what we call a *minimal violence regime*, in terms of co-variance and interrelations between different forms of *direct physical violence*, or their institutional proxies, is comparable to Walby's (2009) analysis drawing on OECD data (table 1).

Second, gender regime theory focuses on interpersonal violence and formal (violent or potentially violent) institutions, not violence in civil society, economic, polity, or informal (violent) institutions. Violence is in practice much wider than interpersonal violence and formal violent institutions. Third, the focus is on how violence is governed, by law and policy, not governing more generally by violence. But this is not the whole story, as forms of violence may co-vary more with each other than be in close relation to what may seem their most relevant other domain, and some forms of violence may indeed not co-vary with other domains. Violence is more pervasive than only being something to be governed in and as an institutional domain.

From Gender Regimes to Violence Regimes

There is much evidence to suggest significant interconnections and disjunctions between welfare regimes, gender regimes, and violence regimes (Strid et al. 2019). For example, Walby (2009) pointed to the relations of

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Table 1. Minimal (deadly) violence regime

	Homicide	Prisoners	Death penalty	Military spend as percentage of government expenditure	Military spend as percentage of GDP	Law spend as percentage of GDP
Homicide						
Prisoners	0.851**					
Death penalty	0.454**	0.589**				
Military spend as percentage of government expenditure	0.681**	0.629**	0.787**			
Military spend as percent of GDP	0.658**	0.614**	0.332	0.786**		
Law spend as percent of GDP	0.671**	0.660**	0.037	0.121	0.551*	

Source: Walby (2009, 311, Table 8.10), data from the OECD. *$P \leq 0.05$; **$P \leq 0.01$.

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economic/gender inequality and (gender) violence. In her work, she pointed to connections between gender inequality and femicide, as well as economic inequality and male homicide. Holter (2014) examined connections between gender equality and less violence in Europe and U.S. states. Cross-national studies of men's domination of labor force participation and women's exclusion therefrom show greater likelihood of societal internal conflict (Caprioli 2005), while women's well-being tends to link with extent of societal peacefulness (Hudson et al. 2012), including treatment of "others," propensity or not to use violence, recruitment or not to terrorist groups and violent extremism.

We build on the gender regime approach to deepen analysis by investigating variations in violence and the institutions that generate and regulate violence. We examine whether violence ought to be understood as an institutional domain—whether to shift toward a broader understanding of violence as a regime, where violence is center-stage, not only as an institutional domain cut across by an overarching gender regime. Violence can be seen as more than a domain—but rather as a regime.

In moving from gender regimes to violence regimes we ask: to what extent do gender regimes map onto violence regimes? How relatively independent or semi-autonomous are violence regimes from gender regimes? How is violence empirically interconnected, or not, to the other three institutional domains within gender regimes. Violence certainly relates to the domains of economy, polity, and civil society, but how? How comparable are they? Are they based on different principles or logics in relation to violence?

There are several avenues for interrogating (gender) violence regimes, but to what extent can they be subsumed within gender regimes? One possibility is that all three other domains differ in relation to violence, so that violence is a different set of subsets of each of the main domains (figure 2). Within the gender regime approach, in order to incorporate gender, there would then be: gendered economy-based economic violence or violence within economy; gendered polity-based political violence or violence within polity; and gendered civil society-based violence or violence within civil society, including within the family. A relevant test case could be the differential effects of austerity on violence and violence policy within civil society, economy, and polity.

Another possibility is that violence within all three main domains has more in common with each other than with each of the three main domains (figure 3).

Such interconnections, as with the well-established co-variance between several different forms of violence, would suggest a stronger case for a violence regime. *Thus, one argument for a violence regime is that different forms of violence co-vary more with each other than they co-vary with their most relevant other institutional domain* (*e.g., forms of violence located mainly in one domain, such as domestic violence, intimate partner violence* (*IPV*), *and child abuse located in civil society co-varying more than each form of violence co-varies with other measures of gender inequality in civil society*).

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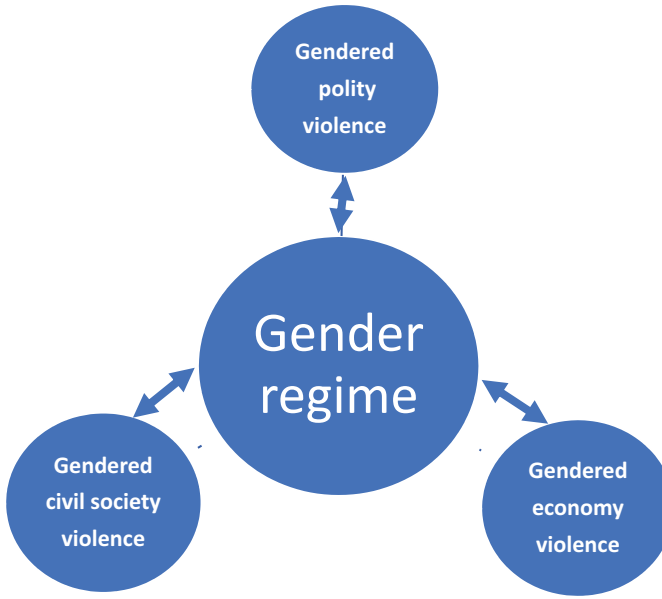

Figure 2. Three violence sub-domains with different relations to violence.

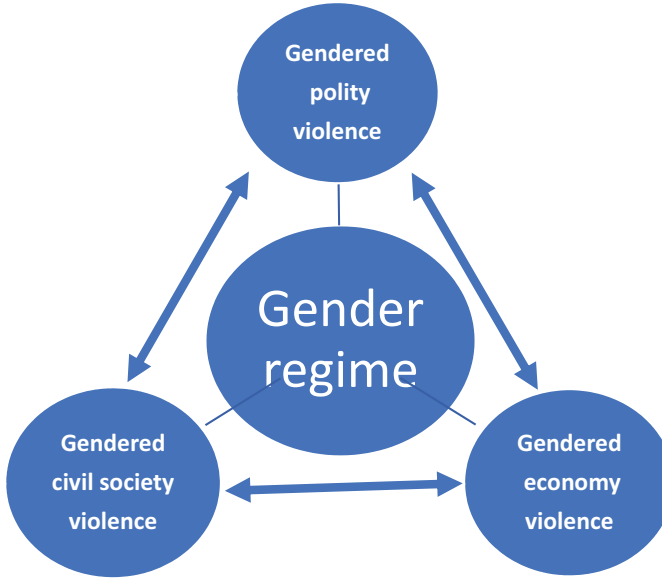

Figure 3. Three domains with commonality in relation to violence.

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Many forms of violence—interpersonal (e.g., crime, gender-based violence), interstate (e.g., war), state–citizen (e.g., death penalty), and group–state (e.g., terrorism)—may be connected, so that an increase in one form is likely to lead to an increase in other forms. Specific connections have been made between violence against women and child abuse. The most gender unequal and homophobic countries are also those with the highest levels of societal violence and most at risk of armed conflict in their own territory (Ekvall 2019). Links have been made between control of women's bodies, "honour cultures," and interpersonal violence (Brown, Osterman, and Barnes 2009), between violence against women and armed conflict (Beyer 2014), and between hate crimes and terrorism (Mills, Freilich, and Chermak 2017). However, such connections do not all work in one direction.

A second argument for violence regimes is that violence does not co-vary with other measures of gender regimes and the other domains (*e.g., domestic violence, IPV, and war co-varying more than with gender inequality in domains other than violence*). Interestingly, societies with the most positive attitudes to homosexuality are those most likely to be arms exporters, suggesting a particularly complex violence regime (Ekvall 2019), perhaps linking with homonationalism. How and why can it be that societies, by many measures among the most gender-equal in the world, report, by some measures, high levels of violence against women, as with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA 2014a, 2014b) interview data: the so-called Nordic paradox (Gracia and Merlo 2016; Humbert et al. 2020). Comparisons of *disclosure* rates of violence against women are possible from the FRA data, with the highest in the Nordics, and lowest in Poland and Cyprus (figures 4–and 5). This ranking of countries by disclosed prevalence is somewhat surprising in that there is a positive correlation with higher levels of gender equality. Thus, the FRA violence prevalence data do not tally with "more general" measures of gender equality or measures of gender regimes (figure 6), suggesting the violence regime as more independent from either welfare regimes or gender (equality) regimes (Strid et al. 2020).

Preliminary empirical investigation shows, however, that prevalence rates as measured by FRA weakly (and negatively) correlate with variables linked to welfare regimes, such as long-term unemployment, or risk of poverty and social exclusion. FRA's prevalence rates also weakly and negatively correlate with perceptions of how common domestic violence is in society (table 2). This adds complexity to understanding the Nordic paradox beyond gender (in)-equality alone and calls for further work to understand alternative classifications regarding extent of violence toward women.

Importantly, the FRA data are open to re-analysis and re-interpretation. Disclosed prevalence can be re-examined in relation to a range of methodological, personal, situational, and societal factors—taking into account inbuilt variations across Member States. Our own analyses show that country rankings shift drastically from the original FRA classification, according to which

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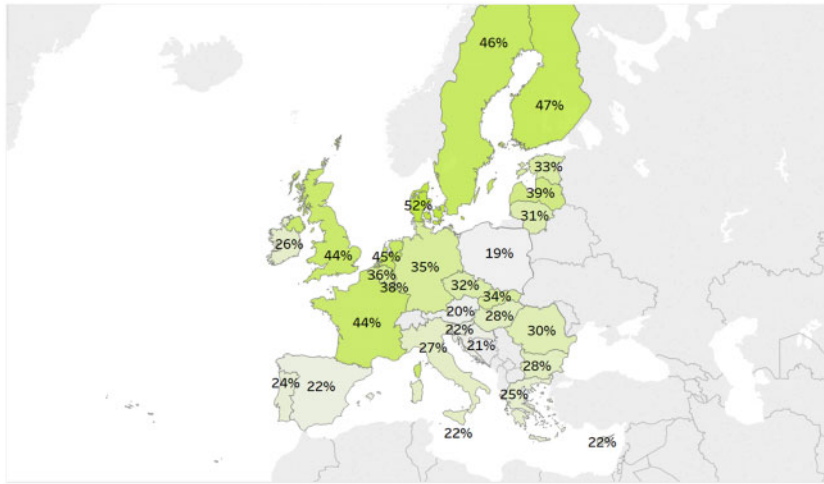

Figure 4. Disclosed prevalence of violence by EU Member State in 2012. *Note*: EU average 33%. *Source:* EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014a).

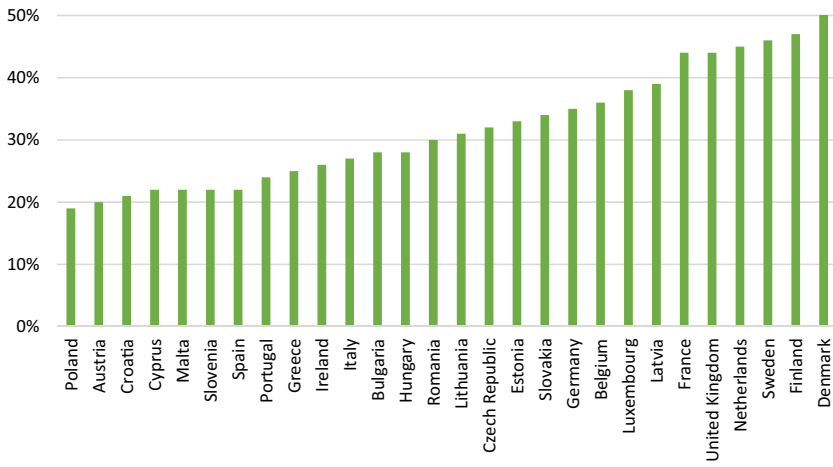

Figure 5. Physical and/or sexual violence by a partner or a non-partner since the age of 15 years (2012). *Source:* EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014a).

variables are considered. Using multilevel modeling, major changes in country rankings have been computed, with relative lowering (of relative prevalence) for Sweden and Finland; and relative raising for Italy and Cyprus (Humbert et al. 2020; Strid et al. 2019). New classifications should not be understood as definitive, as rankings change according to which factors are considered.

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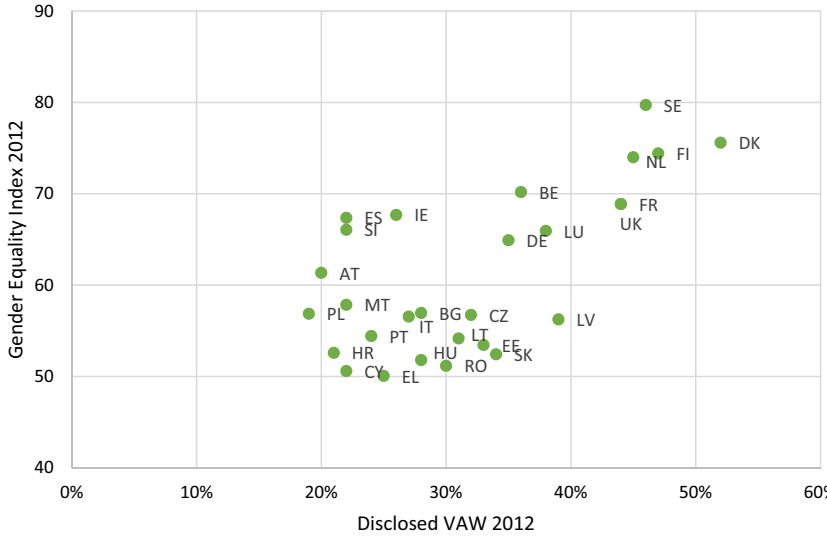

Figure 6. Gender Equality Index and disclosed prevalence of violence against women (VAW). *Source:* EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014a)

Prevalence surveys, however, only provide a partial picture. Measuring violence is more complicated than applying given measurement methods; it relates to conceptualizations and ontologies of violence.

In a gender regime approach, civil society, polity, and economy are all relevant domains. The main location of violence against women of much of the violence reported above is civil society; the polity is central in reforms and policy development; and perhaps surprisingly, being in employment appears to increase disclosed prevalence, but the societal level of women's employment appears to have no statistically significant effects on reported prevalence. There are several reasons why gender equality and violence may not always correlate: gender equality can reduce violence, but it can also make reporting violence more legitimate, even less shameful; it can lead to reactive "backlash" violence against women by some men. Finally, in some situations, previous societal or interpersonal violence or threat of violence may make violence, or at least physical violence, unnecessary to maintain dominance.

Violence Regimes

The gender regime approach is useful and powerful, but there are differences from how we develop the violence regime as a framework for comparative, analytical, and policy work. The concept of violence regime is developed to interrogate if and how the institutionalization and production of violence co-

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Table 2. Correlations of violence and social exclusion factors

	Long-term unemployment, 20–64 years (2018)	People at risk of poverty and social exclusion total population (2017)	Perception that domestic violence against women is very common (2016)	Physical and/or sexual violence against women by a partner or a non-partner since age of 15 years (2012)
Long-term unemployment, 20–64 years (2018)	1.00			
People at risk of poverty and social exclusion total population (2017)	0.49	1.00		
Perception that domestic violence against women is very common (2016)	0.16	0.32	1.00	
Physical and/or sexual violence against women by a partner or a non-partner since the age of 15 years (2012)	−0.26	−0.35	−0.30	1.00

Sources: Long-term unemployment and people at risk of poverty and SE: Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data
Perception of DV: European Commission (2017): Eurobarometer 85.3 (2016). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA6695 Data file Version 1.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.12719.
Physical and sexual violence: FRA (2014a, 2014b).

vary to constitute violence regimes and distinct systems. Previous work has theorized violence as a gendered, structural, temporal, and spatial continuum (Cockburn 2004, 2014), or perhaps continua, across multiple levels and spheres of social reproduction, especially within feminist political economy, international relations, security studies, and depletion approaches (Rai, Hoskyns, and Dania 2014; True 2012). Cockburn's continuum of violence

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spans from personal to international, including structural violence and economic distress, militarization and arming, discursive shifts in ideology, war and political terror, mobilization, disruptions of everyday life, brutalization of the body and sexual violence, peace processes—across pre-conflict, conflict, peace-making, and reconstruction (cf. Hearn et al. 2020).

The violence regime concept continues this analytical mode and attends to both the production of violence and wider material-discursive politics of violence, including institutions, laws, and policy to counter violence, extent of criminalization of violence, constructions of what counts as violence, intersectionality (Hearn et al. 2016), organized resistance to violence, and attitudes to violence. In the violence regime approach, violence is seen as a form of inequality, in itself (Hearn 2013), alongside other inequality regimes, such as gender and racialization cutting across domains. Theoretically, our approach concerns an autotelic ontology of violence (Schinkel 2010), whereby violence is done for itself and begets further violence, and questions whether violence is always to be explained by "something else." Violence regimes stand alongside gender as a regime, rather than simply "next to" other domains of civil society, economy, and polity.

Violence and violence regimes are hierarchical and regulate and govern all domains. How this is done is an empirical question. Violence regimes can be understood as based in the greater co-variance of different forms of violence with each other than with their most relevant other institutional domain, and/or lack of co-variance with other measures of gender regimes. Indicators of gender regimes and violence regimes can be compared with each other, and these indicators may or may not coincide or correlate. To conceptualize violence regimes further means broadening understandings of violence.

Broadening Violence in Violence Regimes

A conceptual framework of violence regimes forces consideration of different scopes of what is to count as violence—from direct killing to more open-ended approaches in which violence and violation are less easily seen in narrow agentic terms. This means identifying differential understandings: differential (violent) truths, of violence. Different violence regimes are themselves likely to entail different understandings of violence, how broadly violence is understood, and what forms of violence are included.

To move beyond the minimal violence regime approach requires attention to more than physical injury and more than what Walby et al. (2017) call legal, or state, violence (table 1). Definitions and labeling of violence range across intention, harm, damage, temporality, as well as physical, sexual, emotional, representational, organizational, and so on. Multiple meanings of violence include: domestic violence, violence against women, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, public violence, indirect violence, institutional violence, and structural violence. Structural violence can refer to, for

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example, institutional violence; violent (effects of) global inequalities; war and collective violence; structural relations historically violent or underwritten by violence; or conditions (re)producing violence. Considering violence in this broadening manner links with problematization of the private/public, impacts of technology on violence, transnational violence, long-term feminist work on violences of all kinds, interconnectedness of multiple violences, and contestations of what violence is. Forms of violence unacknowledged in one historical period, for example, marital rape, may become acknowledged subsequently.

In handling the diversity of violences (see Appendix), violence regimes can be seen as relatively autonomous and contradictory across different scopes of violence. They concern both direct and indirect violence across four clusters or pillars of comprehensiveness: deadly (or minimal), damaging, diffuse, dispersed (or maximal). These pillars vary in both (material) *manifestation* and (discursive) *understanding* of violence, extending Cockburn's continuum of violence (pre-conflict, conflict, peace-making, reconstruction) to a more open-ended, inclusive framework of enactment, policy, activism, and political contestation:

- deadly: manifestations of violence with a potential to kill, usually direct and directed toward someone (as a "victim" or "object"), as in deadly (or minimal) violence;
- damaging: manifestations of violence/violations with potential to harm or injury, usually direct and directed toward someone (as "victim" or "object");
- diffuse: underpinnings to manifestations of violence, usually less direct, and directed toward a group, usually with an identifiable "victim" or "object"; and
- dispersed: other manifestations not necessarily understood as violence, usually indirect, sometimes toward a group but with a less easily identifiable "victim" or "object".

Moreover, the pillars operate at micro- (interpersonal), meso-, and macro-levels. They move from *deadly* homicide, femicide, death penalty, and militarism (table 1), to broader conceptions of *damaging* violence, such as recorded violent crime, violence against the person, IPV, and stalking. Beyond those direct violences lie indirect, *diffuse* violences, including legitimizations and regulations of violence, and *dispersed* violences not usually recognized as such.

This last cluster of dispersed violence, of what is not yet accepted, measured, or politicized as violence is especially important; it raises wider questions of what constitutes violence? It includes systemic violence, transnational violence, environmental and slow violence, colonialist and capitalist violence, and symbolic and epistemic violence and violations. This suggests a much more open-ended understanding of the production of violence. This aspect of violence regimes connects with broader theorizing on violence as a constituent

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element of social and societal life (Evans and Carver 2017; Hanssen 2000; Lawrence and Karim 2007; Schinkel 2010). Seen thus, violence acts to produce economy, polity, and civil society and underlies economy, polity, and civil society, and their social organization.

Violence can practically and theoretically be a point of departure to examine and intervene in social life. Understanding violence thus forces a shift from seeing violence as incidental, aberrant, isolated, and exceptional. Wider framing of violence highlights historical and structural forms and impacts of violence, as in colonialism and imperialism. Without this wider reach, the study of violence, as domains, regimes, and/or systems, is likely to remain at the level of methodological nationalism and statism, and global-Northern-centered. Challenges posed by blurring of violence into control, power, and dominance should not inhibit analysis, certainly not on political and policy grounds. Indeed, all pillars of violence are relevant in conceptualizing violence regimes and violence as an inequality regime.

Conclusion: Violence Regimes and Gender Violence Regimes

To summarize, in relation to the Special Section that engages critically with the gender regime framework this article contributes to, we identify several distinctions between Walby's gender regime approach and our violence regime approach. First, Walby's violence domain is constituted by the combination of interpersonal violence, military violence, policing, and imprisonment. It is "institutional," including only formal institutions. In keeping with earlier definitions of regime, we include informal institutions, norms, attitudes, and values.

Second, the concept of regime draws on, but is not determined or defined solely by, to rule and govern; domain and systems lack this connotation.

Third, conceptually, "violence regimes" assist re-thinking the scope and range of forms of violence, and how it should be conceptualized as social relations. "What is violence?" becomes an analytically and empirically open question, rather than taking predefined forms of violence as given points of departure.

Fourth, Walby argues for going beyond the notion of a "society in which economy, polity, and civil society and relations of inequality are congruent with each other in the same territory," but "domain" is still linked to one society: the nation-state. We see violence regimes as national and transnational, as is clear with supranational configurations, global institutions, cross-boundary violences, online violations, as elaborated in transnational patriarchies (Hearn 2015).

Fifth, according to Walby, the distinction between systems and their environment does not presume hierarchy between domains; our violence regime approach does.

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Finally, measuring violence always brings methodological–ontological–epistemological challenges. Direct physical violence is not always necessary, especially following earlier violence or threat or existence of structural violence and power imbalance, as in slavery, colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and patriarchy.

* * *

Feminist work in international relations and contexts in conflict and post-conflict zones have made clear the gendered global nature of violence. Our approach builds on this in emphasizing how specific violence regimes take violence, not only as context but as autotelic, as point of departure, enabling and centering the interrogation of the interconnectedness of multiple forms of violence: interpersonal, intrastate, interstate, trans-state. Violence regimes is a fruitful approach in examining the strengths and weaknesses of alternative ways of re-thinking the shaping of violence, critically framed as social fact, system, process, institution(s), autotelic, inequality in its own right, structure, and regimes of (violent) truth. Violence is material-discursive; it needs analyzing both more materially and more discursively. These are both empirical questions and conceptual and theoretical questions.

Violence is both as an institutional domain, and a macro-regime that works both across and between all institutions, domains and structures. A violence regime can be understood as a particular structure, a general societal structure, and a system, in interaction with other systems. Violence regimes can be used to deepen analysis of patriarchy, policy, and inequality. One way forward for a deepened analysis of violence in welfare and gender regimes lies in the intersections of sociological work on violence and feminist international relations scholarship, through the concept of *violence regime*.

Notes

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Appendix

Table A1. Typology of violence regimes, with selected examples

	Violence→ Violation(s) → Underpinnings → Beyond recognized violence and violations			
Pillars of violence	Deadly	Damaging	Diffuse	Dispersed
Form of manifestation	Violence with potential to kill, usually direct(ed) toward someone (as "victim" or "object")	Violence/violations with potential to harm or injury, usually direct(ed) toward someone (as "victim" or "object")	Underpinnings to manifestations of violence, usually less direct, and directed toward a group, usually with an identifiable "victim" or "object"	Other manifestations not necessarily understood as violence, with less easily identifiable "victim" or "object"
Form of understanding	What are the most prominent and/or visible, manifestations of violence?	With broader feminist understandings of violence, what forms of violence are less prominent and/or visible?	What is underpinning these manifestations of violence? What measures are there to tackle these manifestations?	What is not yet accepted or understood as a form of violence? What constitutes a form of violence or not?
Micro (individual/ group to individuals/ group)	Homicide by sex Femicide Suicide by sex	Recorded violent crime Disclosed interpersonal violence against women and children Sex trade, pornography, online/ cyberviolence	Attitudes to violence Everyday sexism Legitimizations of violence via attributing negative characteristics to a group	Killing of animals for food Euthanasia (human and animals)
Meso (state/ community to individuals/ group)	Death penalty Military expenditure (percentage of public expenditure)	Law and order Domestic violence courts Honor-related violence	Regulation and criminalization of violence (pro/anti-)Violence organizing Animal welfare policies/laws	Extent of public debate on violence Sexualization of public space Meat-eating Ratification of protocols and treaties, for example, climate targets
Macro (state and beyond to state and beyond)	Military expenditure (percentage of GDP) State use of violence in dealing with conflicts Wars	Conscription Peacekeeping troops Forced migration, refugees and deportation	Political leaders' autonomy to declare war Legislation on guns as legitimate	Environmental/slow violence Epistemic/symbolic violence Violence to land, colonialism, imperialism, capitalism

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