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ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

El lugar de la violencia armada en el espacio político: dimensiones micro, meso y macro

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Resumen

El propósito del estudio es analizar la violencia armada en el espacio político, a nivel del estado, a nivel de una región separada y a nivel geopolítico. La tarea de este trabajo es estudiar el tema de la violencia armada en el espacio político: micro-, meso- y macro-dimensiones. Los métodos utilizados en la investigación fueron: método de análisis, sistémico, comparativo, estructural-funcional. La hipótesis del estudio es el supuesto de que la violencia armada es un medio de control de un determinado espacio político, que permite cubrir a las masas políticas con sus propias fronteras nacionales o convertirlas en un ámbito de dominación. Está comprobado que la violencia armada conduce a la desintegración del espacio político-estatal, socioeconómico y, en cierta medida, cultural y espiritual. Se señala el grado de influencia de la violencia armada en las transformaciones políticas que tienen lugar en el espacio micro, meso y macropolítico.

Palabras clave: violencia armada, transformaciones políticas, microespacio político, mesoespacio político, macroespacio político.

Abstract

The place of armed violence in the political space: micro-, meso- and macro-dimensions

The purpose of the study is to analyse armed violence in the political space, at the state, separate region, and geopolitical level. The task of this work is to study the issue of armed violence in the political space: micro-, meso- and macro-dimensions. The hypothesis of the study is the assumption that armed violence is a means of a certain political space control. Micro-levels of political, meso-level of political space, political macro-space is analysed in details. It has been proven that armed violence leads to the disintegration of the state-political, socio-economic, and to some extent cultural and spiritual space. The degree of influence of armed violence on political transformations that take place in the micro, meso, and macro political space is noted. It is indicated that the consequences of armed violence or the threat of its use, as a rule, occur suddenly, unlike other forms of violence.

Keywords: armed violence, political transformations, political microspace, political mesospace, political macrospace.

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1. Introduction

Violence remains a key sign of world political map transformations and the factors influencing socio-political relations, shaping the political order, or leading to political turbulence. The struggle for hegemony in the world space, the attempts to establish, promote and consolidate their initiatives and rules within a single state or a region become more violent and refined, and the priority is still given to brute force and weapons. Armed violence remains one of the means of political processes influence taking place in a certain political space (Andersson et al., 2022; Leitsinger & Tolan, 2014; Shmorgun, 2015). During the topic evaluation, it is worth identifying the authors and their works on which this study was based. Mezhenka and Vovk (2017) as well as to point to a military coup as a violent way of reformatting power in the state, which remains a frequent phenomenon in politics aimed at overthrowing the current or civilian regime and changing the subjects of state power.

It always involves the use of weapons and results in human casualties. A form of armed violence in a coup is the so-called military coup, putsch, pronunciamiento, which is the interference of the military in the process of political governance of the state; a type of attempt to seize power by military formations. As a result of such a seizure of power, political governance in the country is transferred to the military; they introduce a state of emergency in the country, restrict civil rights and freedoms, and launch repressions against opponents of the military regime (Mezhenka & Vovk, 2017). Kravchenko (2015) draws attention to the spread of private armed violence, which occurs with the consent of the state, by transferring certain security functions to private military companies.

This type of armed violence is associated with various kinds of interventions in the form of military missions of peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and peace building. In the context of growing aggressive attitudes in societies that see globalisation agents

as their main enemies, armed violence is becoming a global threat to the international political space. The issue of armed violence has become particularly relevant in the process of formalising the post-Soviet geopolitical order and shaping the political spaces of the newly created states that emerged from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (hereinafter referred to as the USSR). This problem has been the subject of study in many scholars' scientific works. The essence consequences of civil war and coup d'état as forms of armed violence Brik (2019), their role in addressing the geopolitical interests of global and regional policy actors, and their impact on the transformation of the political system have been the subject of a study by Mezhenka and Vovk (2017).

Research Problem

In the modern political space, there is a significant escalation or renewal of frozen armed conflicts of varying degrees of intensity, different in scale and consequences of local and hybrid wars. The scale and intensity of destructive activities of international terrorist organisations are increasing. Armed violence remains a pejorative means of influencing political processes in a certain political space (Bilal, 2021).

Research Focus

In view of the above, the relevant research is focused on determining the place of armed violence in the political space of a particular state or region, as well as in the international arena.

Armed violence "is identified with any force used against an individual, group, population, state, or usurpation, forced restriction of freedom" (Huseinov, 1992): aggression, wars, sabotage, coup d'état, armed conflict, interventions, deployment of military bases on foreign territories, border provocations, revolutions, terror, which are characterised by pathological manifestations and consequences.

Research Aim and Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to analyse armed violence in the political space, at the level of the state, at the level of a particular region, and at the geopolitical level. The hypothesis of the study is the assumption that politicians, scholars, and experts associate political space with the territory of the state or its separate administrative units, which are subject to legitimate management and control of various state institutions and the zone of influence of non-state structures. The political space is a kind of field of political gravity of various socio-political forces.

Therefore, the study of armed violence should be considered from the perspective of political actors in the following dimensions: local and regional - micro and meso-level, and, accordingly, global (geopolitical) - macro-level. Since the political life of society is influenced by objective and subjective factors, it is imperative to take them into account when determining the place of armed violence in the political space, which is a component of political life.

2. Research Methodology

- *General Background*

The objective factors of the study of armed violence in the political space are: the processes of globalisation and regionalisation, political transformation, systemic and functional components and statistical indicators of the dead and wounded, people forced to leave their places of residence/refugees, and the scale of destruction. The subjective factors include the interests of political actors, their goals, political determinants of armed violence, and its consequences. With these important research subjects in mind, this paper aims to illuminate gun violence in the political sphere through the use of qualitative data analysis. The methodology of interpretation of the selected sources was based on a complex content analysis, which was used systematically and step by step.

- *Sample, Instruments and Procedure*

The selection of documentary sources was based on clearly defined criteria.

1. Relevance of the research. Preference was given to studies that shed light on the phenomenon of gun violence based on the introduction of new and relevant data.
 2. Relevance of the topic. Research should address various aspects of the development of armed violence.
 3. Availability of a broad research methodology. Preference was given to sources in which the course of the research was covered in detail, and the main methods of interpreting the sources were characterized.
 4. Agreement with the purpose of the study. Each source has been evaluated to see if it is consistent with the goals and objectives of this work.
1. After using these criteria to select the most relevant works, additional criteria were developed that take into account the chronological and geographical perspective.

Chronological criteria:

- Preference was given to modern relevant literature from 2010. However, some fundamental works were also used, which explain the very phenomenon of armed violence through the prism of theoretical and methodological study.
- The chronological framework of the study covers the period from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. The focus is on a selection of sources that analyze the Bolshevik coup, the First World War, the Second World War, and modern wars and conflicts in various regions. Thus, the work characterizes the phenomenon of armed violence in different time periods in order to highlight the development of approaches to its interpretation in scientific discourse.

Geographical criteria:

- Attention is drawn to the literature that analyzes the phenomenon of armed violence in different parts of the world. Therefore, the main focus is on Ukraine, Cambodia, Belarus, Sudan, Vietnam and China. Also, the main attention is paid to the problem of the functioning of terrorism in such countries as the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, Israel, the Russian Federation.
- The focus of the selection of documentary sources is also directed to certain regions that suffer from wars and conflicts: Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Transcaucasia.

Moreover, there are a number of methodological approaches studying and determining the consequences of certain political phenomena. With the regard to armed violence, one recommends to use the criteria proposed by Schmitt (1999), namely:

- 1.- Severity. The nature of the use of armed violence, the involvement of civilians in the struggle, the range of participants and weapons, etc;
- 2.- Immediacy. This criterion determines the speed of the use of armed violence and the onset of consequences;
- 3.- Directness. What does the use of violence lead to, what are the consequences for the state, region, or international relations, how are legal norms violated?
- 4.- Invasiveness. The degree and scope of violent armed intervention by one state or several states in the internal affairs of another state (aggression, invasion, intervention)
- 5.- Measurability is determined by the extent of measurable consequences of armed violence, such as the amount of destruction, demographic data, and damage ratio;
- 6.- Presumptive legitimacy means that the use of armed violence is assessed from the standpoint of domestic or international law

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis of selected documentary sources is based on hermeneutics and content analysis. In particular, hermeneutics was used to explain individual texts in a political-military sense. Using hermeneutics, the authors of this work aimed to determine the deep meanings found in the selected sources. Such analysis included the stage of contextual analysis - the study of armed violence based on the study of different cultures

and periods. At the same time, critical reflection was also important, which involved a critical attitude toward the selected documentary sources and an assessment of their relevance, representativeness, and reliability. In order to process the received sources, content analysis was also used, which involved a detailed study of information based on the principles of systematicity and criticality. After that, the results obtained using the above-mentioned research approaches and methods were integrated.

3. Research Results

The political space micro-level

The policy of "red terror" became the basis of the Soviet government's policy, which was launched by the Bolsheviks immediately after the October Revolution of 1917 ([Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, n.d.](#)).

The victims of Bolshevik crimes committed by various structures of the new government in 1918-1919 alone were 1,766,118 people. Representatives of religion (bishops, clergymen), the academic elite (professors, teachers), doctors, officers, soldiers, and representatives of law enforcement agencies (police officers, police agents) were murdered. Landlords, workers, peasants, and intellectuals were also killed. The terror of 1917-1919 became a tool for the Bolsheviks to retain power in the occupied territories, the basis of the communist totalitarian regime throughout its existence (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory).

It was aimed at: the mass destruction of combat-ready and unreliable elements; the elimination of opponents of Bolshevism, political opponents; intimidation of the population, and suppression of anti-Bolshevik uprisings. The next large-scale campaign of mass extermination of citizens, which was launched in the USSR in 1937-1938 on the initiative of the USSR leadership and J. Stalin personally, went down in history as the "Great Terror". Its goal consisted of two parallel operations: one against peasants, former kulaks, former parties, priests, and believers, and the other against so-called national lines. During the period of the "Great Terror," historians estimate that more than 260,000 Ukrainians were killed in the Ukrainian SSR alone, about two-thirds of them were shot (Shtohrin, 2020).

The consequences of the communist terror in Ukraine included the destruction of the political, artistic, and scientific elite, deformation of social ties, destruction of traditional value orientations, spread of social depression, and denationalisation. The unspoken principles of state governance formed by J. Stalin and continued by the leaders of totalitarian states, which legalised the right to violence in the state, became established:

- A people can be qualitatively governed if the only method of governance is terror;
- The terror is not only a means of exterminating the unruly but also a means of subjugating the social masses;

The victims of the genocide in Cambodia in 1975-1979, organised by the military forces of the Communist Party, which seized power and established a totalitarian Maoist-nationalist political regime, were the middle class, urban population, ethnic and religious minorities, and all those who expressed at least the slightest disagreement with the Khmer Rouge's policies. In total, 25% of the urban population and 15% of the rural population were killed. The overall estimate of the number of victims, including those who died of starvation, ranges from 1.7-2.2 million (Karen, Palian). The result of the idea of "one loyal million" was a complete cultural and economic decline. It led to an aggravation of the political situation and civil war.

The struggle of the Ukrainian people for democratic values (2013-2014), against the establishment of an authoritarian regime, began with political protest and ended with the use of armed violence. The determinants of this confrontation were the aggravation of the political, economic, and social crisis in the last years of Yanukovich's rule. The Maidan events themselves showed the world that Ukrainians are ready to actively shape their political life, that they are willing to fight for their rights and defend democratic values. It should be recognised that fundamental political transformations took place that brought Ukraine to a qualitatively different level of politics: the Association Agreement was signed and implemented; the Ukrainian party system underwent changes; the public demand for renewal of the country's political system was partially met; the prime ministerial-presidential model was restored (return to the 2004 Constitution was among the key demands of the protesters), etc.

The struggle for their rights continues in Belarus. An attempt to express distrust in the election results in Belarus on the night of August 10, 2020, ended in a violent dispersal of protesters. The protests were unsuccessful, but in case of "mass unrest", the legislature allowed the army to be involved in suppressing the protests, introduce a state of emergency, and use the armed forces to suppress them (Radio Svoboda, 2021). Unfortunately, Belarus remains an authoritarian, police state led by a dictator.

For example, the self-proclaimed government of Myanmar, created by pro-democratic politicians in parallel with the junta that seized power in a February coup (November 2020), declared "war" on the military leadership. The nationwide uprising (February 14-March 27, 2020) was suppressed by gunfire. Journalists and human rights activists estimate that more than 400 demonstrators have been killed in the confrontation since February 1 (Shchur, 2021).

Another type of armed violence within the state is civil war. In this case, military actions can be both limited in nature (Ireland - 1919-1921; China - 1927-1950; Algeria - 1991-2002) and determine the entire socio-political life of the state over a long historical period (the conflict in South Sudan is one of the longest ethno-political conflicts in Africa, which led to two bloody civil wars (1955-1972), 1983 - 2005); Sudan - the struggle for the distribution of power, government positions and seats in the parliament between different ethnic groups in the country (1983-2005); Lebanon - civil war between religious communities, clans, etc. (1975-1990). Civil war within the state is aimed at destabilising the internal political situation, overthrowing the constitutional order, or fighting against the mafia and gangs (Vovk, 2017).

Political space meso-level

Regional armed conflicts arise on the basis of historical, territorial, economic, political, interethnic, and other contradictions between neighbouring states or different socio-political groups for a sphere of influence in a particular territory, for example: Transcaucasia, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in Karabakh (1992 - present); conflicts in the Kodori Gorge (2001, 2006); Africa, Algeria (1991-2002), Libya (2011-present), Sierra Leone (1991-2002), Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2007); Middle East: Israeli-Palestinian conflict (2008-2009); Lebanon (2011-2017), Iraqi-Kurdish conflict (2017); Europe, Albanian-Macedonian conflict (2001) and others.

The Russian-Ukrainian war is a war of a new type of violence, or low-intensity conflict, which has been called a "hybrid war," a local war. OHCHR estimates that the total number of human casualties related to the conflict in Ukraine (from April 14, 2014, to January 31, 2021) is 42,000-44,000: 13100-13300 dead (at least 3374 civilians, approximately 5700 members of armed groups); and 29500-33500 wounded (7000-9000 civilians, 9700-10700 Ukrainian military and 12700-13700 members of armed groups), nearly two million Ukrainians forced to seek new housing, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (Radio Svoboda) reported. As a result of the deployment of hostilities in eastern Ukraine, the work of the judicial system has been hampered, as many institutions have been virtually paralysed (Gorinov & Mereniuk, 2022).

Political macro space

A world war is a war of large coalitions, blocs, or states alliances, which directly or indirectly involves all the leading powers of the world, and which extends to all or most of the continents and waters. World wars are long-lasting, pursue large-scale goals, and, when they become global, are accompanied by great destruction and numerous losses of armed forces and civilians. History knows two world wars that took place during the twentieth century: The First World War of 1914-1918 and the Second World War of 1939-1945.

The First World War (1914-1918) was a long-armed struggle between the most powerful geopolitical players for the conquest and/or preservation of colonies, for new markets, for sea trade routes, and for the expansion of political and economic influence. The war involved 38 countries. The First World War marked the end of the old-world order that emerged after the Napoleonic Wars and laid the groundwork for the Second World War and has a direct impact on modern armed conflicts.

The Second World War of 1939-1945 is an example of a global armed conflict, a large-scale external, organised, collective armed violence involving 61 countries (80% of the world's population), with hostilities taking place on the territories of 40 of them. 110 million civilians were mobilised into military formations. In the macro-political dimension, World War II led to a complete change in the system of international relations, to the redistribution of political and economic forces and spheres of influence in the world. Most importantly, it transformed the system of international relations from multipolar to bipolar.

Such hegemony as Germany, Italy, Japan, France, and to a large extent the United Kingdom have weakened their positions. The United States entered the world political arena, and by the end of the war, it was the richest and strongest country in both economic and military terms (until 1949, the United States had a monopoly on nuclear weapons). The role of the USSR increased, as despite being exhausted by the war, it was the winner in the war and occupied a large part of Europe at the end of the war. In addition, in 1949, the USSR created its own nuclear weapons. As a result, two poles of power were formed around which other states grouped.

After the end of World War II, the planet was shaken by more than one armed confrontation that caused destruction and massive casualties. The bloodiest in Asia was the Vietnam War of 1955(57)-1975. About 4 million people died in the war between North Communist Vietnam, supported by the USSR and China, and South Vietnam, supported by the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea. A unified country under the rule of the Communist Party of Vietnam appeared on the world political scene. In the Afghan war, which has been going on since 1978 (about 2 million victims), the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988 (more than a million dead), the Korean war of 1950-1953 (about 2 million victims), and others (SIPRI, 2016: 204). The danger of these wars is that they continue mainly due to "foreign hands", supported by rebel groups, private military campaigns that exist outside the international law of warfare.

At the micro level of the political space, armed violence should be divided by its essential characteristics into violence initiated by state structures and violence initiated by groups of the population that differ in size and socio-political characteristics. In the first case, state institutions and other political actors (political parties, blocs, government and administration bodies, party functionaries, government officials, etc.) resort to armed violence. Violence in this case is legitimised by the state and can be both collective (repression, terror, genocide) and individual (elimination of individual political figures who pose a threat).

This type is characteristic for states with non-democratic political regimes. In turn, as for democratic countries, it is proposed, for example, in the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the EU) to resolve issues and prevent the use of weapons and armed violence - a coalition of national parliaments, taking into account the principle of subsidiarity in resolving disputes and conflict situations, which will contribute to the effective distribution of powers between different authorities to resolve a particular issue for EU member states (Kumar, 2021).

As for terror as a type of armed violence in the political space, its goal is to create in the minds of the people total fear, powerlessness, and slavish obedience to the power of the state (Badrak, 2010). In the "interests of the state", all law enforcement agencies had the right to use any punitive and repressive methods, including criminal methods that violated human rights and deprived people of their lives (Rezvorovych *et.al.*, 2023).

Stalin's terror and political repression became a method of subjugating the population in the state, a way to devalue the value of human life in totalitarianism, and a way to assert the supremacy of state rights over human freedom. Thus, terror and

genocide are large-scale forms of unilateral, collective armed violence against national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups and political and ideological opponents.

It has been proven that a powerful totalitarian ideology promoted violence and isolation. And the use of armed violence and mass extermination became a method of exercising control over society for many decades in many countries of the world. Regardless of the type of armed violence that takes place within a particular state, it leads to the disintegration of the state-political, socio-economic, and to some extent cultural and spiritual space and has tragic consequences at the cost of human life.

The meso-level of the political space includes all meso-subprocesses at the regional level, both political events in the regions and the interaction of central and local authorities with regional authorities in terms of policy-making in a particular region, the formation of regional elites, and political systems.

Most armed conflicts in the early 21st century are internal conflicts where the central government of a state is opposed by an ethnic, social, or religious group of its own population. Armed conflicts are usually sudden, without an official declaration of hostilities, and their political goals are rather limited. They are characterised by the involvement of limited armed forces, conventional warfare with a constant threat of more powerful means of destruction. The danger of armed conflicts is that they become protracted, tend to expand both in terms of participants and territorial scope, involve civilians or become victims of armed violence, and have unpredictable political, socio-economic, and demographic consequences.

Armed border clashes between two or more states affecting their political, economic, national, territorial, ethnic-confessional, and other interests, characterised by narrow political goals, limited spatial scope of warfare, participation of small troops (forces), and the use of conventional weapons are identified as local wars (Siryi, 2006; Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, 2019; [Ukrinform, 2021](#)).

The purpose of local wars by the aggressor country is usually to deprive the opponent of independence, depriving it of political subjectivity as an independent international player; to deprive it of subjectivity in resolving internal issues (administrative division, language, faith, etc.); and to destroy national identity. Despite the strict prohibition on the use of armed forces, the use of armed violence in the international political arena remains a reality that must be taken into account.

Political macro space

The main political actors using armed violence are nation-states, empires, and global corporations. The struggle is for natural resources, for geographical/territorial space, which is actually a struggle for real survival and improvement of the quality of life of the country, for zones of economic and political influence. The struggle of states for the expansion of their common geopolitical space is conducted almost exclusively by military force.

Today, there are different forms of warfare (world wars (mostly between several coalitions), regional wars, local wars, interstate wars (including low-intensity ones), wars between a state and a coalition, foreign intervention, civil war (of various intensity levels, including external intervention).

International armed conflicts are a type of armed violence close to war. "Armed/military/war/conflict", "hot spots", "trans nationalised insurgency", "internationalised armed conflict" (IISS) (Brick, 2019), and others should be understood as a specific type of interaction in which the interests of social actors, such as individuals, groups, strata, classes, and nations, intersect.

Armed intervention is a special type of armed violence characterised by interference in the internal affairs of other states by sending troops, using lethal and non-lethal weapons, or threatening to use them, by one or more states in the internal affairs of other states and directed against their territorial integrity, sovereignty, political independence (Hoehne, 2002, p. 29).

3. Discussion

It is impossible to give an unambiguous assessment of the success/failure of an armed intervention (international military intervention), even if it was carried out under the auspices of humanitarian intervention. As a rule, armed intervention leads to numerous human casualties, economic collapse, general destabilisation of institutions and governance mechanisms, deepening of socio-political chaos, and a new round of internal political struggle for a monopoly on violence.

Terrorism also exists in the political macro space (Zakharchuk, 2022). It affects all spheres of existence of modern society, primarily the security, stability, and functioning of political institutions of the state, the stability of the multilevel system of socio-political and international relations (Höhne, 2002).

The strategic goal of political terrorism is to destroy a stable political environment. Today, almost all countries of the world, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, Israel, the Russian Federation, and other actors in international relations, are the arena of its manifestations. The danger of terrorism lies in its cruelty, degree of immorality, indiscriminate means, and uncontrollability (Global Terrorism Index 2020 Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, 2020). Armed violence in the form of terrorist acts is not limited by geographical boundaries or any norms, without a clear front line, secrecy in the preparation of operations, and their unsystematic nature (Bilenchuk, Kofanov, & Kobylianskyi, 2009).

I would like to draw attention to the fact that modern armed violence is acquiring a special character, which demonstrates two new trends: the privatisation of armed violence, which leads to the destruction and suspension of the state monopoly on the use of force, and the spread of international interventions. This form of armed violence is characteristic of events in Liberia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, etc. The danger of armed violence by private actors is beyond the control of the state.

5. Conclusions and Implications

Armed violence has an ambiguous but significant impact on political life, the functioning of the political space, and the formation of the political map of the world as

a whole. It still remains a universal and popular means of achieving political goals, a decisive means of influence in situations of contradictions in state, regional, and interstate relations. It provides political actors with the opportunity to assert themselves and acts as a kind of tool for exercising power, achieving political dominance, regulating and comprehensively influencing economic, social, spiritual, and other phenomena and processes.

The above-mentioned and other armed conflicts have had and continue to have a decisive impact on political processes in the country and the region, on the transformation of the political space, and are characterised by enormous losses for economic and human potential.

A common feature of armed violence is numerous human casualties, destabilisation of institutions and governance mechanisms, economic collapse of the country and/or region, deepening of socio-political chaos, or repeated escalation of internal political struggle.

Regardless of the spatial level or form, armed violence is characterised by long-term and, in some cases, irreparable destructive consequences. Armed violence deepens discriminatory processes and is a gross violation of human rights. Armed violence or the threat of its use is a means of controlling a certain political space, a means of encompassing political areas within their own national borders or turning them into a sphere of domination, and can ensure domination of the most integral geopolitical areas. Armed violence can lead to a complete change in the system of international relations, to the redistribution of political and economic forces and spheres of influence in the world.

Regardless of the level of political space, there is a plane in which the reverberations of armed violence are long-lasting and tragic. It is about the socio-demographic sphere: deaths, increased mortality, falling birth rates, destruction of the intellectual elite, deterioration of public health, violation of the age and gender balance, migration processes, etc. The demographic consequences affect many generations of people, manifest themselves over time, and do not have a clear form. Therefore, the study of armed violence consequences in the demographic aspect is currently relevant and open.

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