

Force

by Lord David Davies

Abstract

Force, published in 1934, was Lord Davies' third major work. In it he addresses the central question posed in his entire oeuvre: "What is the right use of force?" Throughout the book he deals with the use of force in various political contexts.

Almost one hundred years ago, in the aftermath of the First World War, the first chair for international politics was founded at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 1919. One of its leading financial supporters was Lord David Davies of Llandinam.¹ Both practically (most notably perhaps through his involvement in the 'New Commonwealth Society'* and the League of Nations Union), and academically influenced by what has come to be called (liberal) internationalism, David Davies, published a series of books discussing the nature and future of international relations.² The first, and perhaps most well-known of these, *The Problem of the Twentieth Century*, was published in 1930. Therein, Lord Davies first presented his conceptualization of an international police force (IPF), which, based on the assumption that "the unchecked state system would lead to perpetual war," advocated for a predominantly structural (as opposed to moral) restraint on the exercise of state sovereignty.³ Though, ideally, this police force was to be internationally centralized, Davies recognized the necessity to retain some power and determination over national interests at the domestic level, and thus advocated for a mixed system, which would ensure swift military sanctions.⁴

¹ Morgan, Kenneth O., *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 1980, p. 202

* Although only founded in 1932, the New Commonwealth Society was supported by a series of public figures, with whom Davies stood in close (political) affiliation, and who, therefore, are likely to have influenced his thinking. Some of the most prominent of these patrons include: Lord Gladstone, Lord Robert Cecil (President of the League of Nations Union), Winston Churchill, and Clement Attlee (then Deputy Leader of the Labour Party); several political ideas developed by the members of the New Commonwealth Society were later incorporated into the Charter of the League of Nations; (see Michael Pugh's article cited below for more details)

² Morgan, Kenneth O., *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 1980, p. 202

³ Pugh, Michael, 'Policing the World: Lord Davies and the Quest for Order in the 1930s', *International Relations*, 16(1), 2002, p. 98-99

⁴ Pugh, Michael, 'Policing the World: Lord Davies and the Quest for Order in the 1930s', *International Relations*, 16(1), 2002, p. 99

In this sense, the concept of the IPF was grounded in two concerns at the core of international relations of the 1920's: 'pacifism' and debates over disarmament.⁵ Davies' later works, which are widely regarded to be variations of this first publication, seek to move beyond this purely structural approach.⁶ This is particularly true of his third book, *Force*, published in 1934, whose aim, as Davies declares, is to establish a "moral foundation" upon which his former thesis can be built.⁷

Deeply concerned with the role of the League of Nations, and its shortcomings as an established international authority, the two central research questions discussed in *Force* are: "What is the right use of force?" and "For what purposes may it [force] be morally and usefully employed in the domestic and international spheres?"⁸ In this sense, Davies is concerned with "the application of force in its usual or narrower sense [where it] denotes a coercive act on the part of an individual, group or nation in an attempt to impose their respective wills upon other persons, groups or nations."⁹ While Davies remains convinced that only a global consensus on the moral underpinnings of the right use of force, controlled by a centralized governing body, can ensure peace among nations, he maintains that "[t]he character of force is determined by the purpose for which it is employed."¹⁰ The central question over the right use of force is thus explored from a variety of different political angles, each presenting a chapter of the book: the use of force in democratic- and non-democratic states, force and imperialism, force in the international sphere, force and the factions, force and the youth, force and the church, as well as force in relation to mentality.

Much like other authors of the time, whose theorizing was often influenced by that of early classical realists and their central concern over *community*, the strong affiliation between the domestic and international realm is immediately apparent in Davies' writing. This is evident, for example, from his praise of the democratic state, which he regards as one of the greatest achievements of humanity,

⁵ Pugh, Michael, 'Policing the World: Lord Davies and the Quest for Order in the 1930s', *International Relations*, 16(1), 2002, p. 97; 102

⁶ Pugh, Michael, 'Policing the World: Lord Davies and the Quest for Order in the 1930s', *International Relations*, 16(1), 2002, p. 98

⁷ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. vii

⁸ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 5; 4

⁹ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 7

¹⁰ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 10

“because it is the only system which has solved the problem of the right use of force.”¹¹ Claiming that “its success [...] depends upon the development of a progressive morality in the relationship of all sections and classes of the community,” which in turn is exclusively ensured through a centralized police force, it is this democratic arrangement which he regards as necessary also at the international level.¹² In this sense, Davies’ theorizing, at its core, is informed by what has come to be known as the ‘domestic analogy,’ where, as some have suggested,

“the argument from the experience of individual men in domestic society [is projected on]to the experience of states, according to which the need of individual men to stand in awe of a common power in order to live in peace is a ground for holding that states must do the same. The conditions of an orderly social life, on this view, are the same among states as they are within them: they require that the institutions of domestic society be reproduced on a universal scale.”¹³

Particularly this latter point is crucial to understanding Davies’ theorizing in *Force*. Thus, Davies argues: “A policeman cannot function without a court. It is equally true that a judge cannot dispense justice without the aid of the policeman. Therefore, if force is to be limited to the police function in international affairs, there must at least be a court to administer the law.”¹⁴ Much like in the domestic sphere, then, this suggests that the anarchy problématique of the international – in other words the Hobbesian state of nature – can only be overcome by a centralized police force on the one hand, and a centralized understanding of moral political conduct, on the other. This dual nature of Davies’ conceptualization, where neither force nor morality alone are justified, let alone effective, is central to his thinking.

For Davies, the conditions of the latter must be inherently democratic, based on two main premises: first, it must ensure the equality of all before the law; second, it must ensure the right to participation.¹⁵ Unlike at the national level, however, Davies claims that neither of these premises

¹¹ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 31

¹² Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 31, 30; 69

¹³ H. Bull, 'Society and Anarchy in International Relations', (H. Butterfield and M. Wight, eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations* (London: 1966), pp. 35-50, at p. 35, in: Suganami, Hidemi, 'Reflections on the domestic analogy: the case of Bull, Beitz, and Linklater', *Review of International Studies*, 12(2), April 1986, p. 145

¹⁴ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 71

¹⁵ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 21, 23; 79, 81

can be fully implemented at the international level. This, he claims, is due to the difference in population- and territorial size of countries, as well as their different stages of development, all of which requires discrimination in terms of voting powers.¹⁶ “Consequently,” he claims, “it is clear that equality between states, in the sense of equal voting power, is unattainable. It is not, however, beyond the bounds of human ingenuity to devise a system which will fairly and equitably assess the relative voting power which should be accorded to each state-member.”¹⁷ Davies’ solution to this seeming impasse is remarkably close to the function of the General Assembly of the United Nations and the role of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, today.¹⁸ Thus, he claims that “[t]he principle of equal and equitable participation in the settlement of political disputes and the revision of the public law can be achieved by a more practical, direct, and appropriate procedure, namely, the submission of all these questions to an impartial tribunal empowered to settle them upon the grounds of equity.”¹⁹ It was this structure, then, which David Davies envisaged as an alternative law-maker, where he argued that “at the moment, as between States, force is the only law-maker.”²⁰

It is evident from the exploration above that Lord David Davies’ theorizing of *Force* is strongly related to both academic and elite political narratives of his times. The sentiment of the post-war period of the 1920s, particularly the Wilsonian idea of liberal internationalism, clearly influenced Davies’ writing. In this sense, it is perhaps of little surprise that his works do not count to the contemporary IR “bestsellers”, as some have claimed.²¹ Nonetheless, it is evident that his work is both grounded in the conceptual heritage of political philosophy and other IR scholars, and relevant to contemporary IR theorizing. Here, notions such as ‘smart power’ and a revived interest in theorizing along partially

¹⁶ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 81-82

¹⁷ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 82

¹⁸ For a strong correlation between Davies’ conceptualization of IPF and the UN Charter in his earlier works see for example: Pugh, Michael, ‘Policing the World: Lord Davies and the Quest for Order in the 1930s’, *International Relations*, 16(1), 2002, p. 112

¹⁹ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 83

²⁰ Lord Davies, David, *Force*, Ernest Benn Limited, Great Britain, 1934, p. 72

²¹ Pugh, Michael, ‘Policing the World: Lord Davies and the Quest for Order in the 1930s’, *International Relations*, 16(1), 2002, p. 98

domestic analogical lines, particularly among critical international relations theorists is indicative.²² Most importantly, perhaps, Davies' conceptualization of an international authority, through the merging of both an international police force *and* an international judicial body to implement a consensual moral conduct, remains at the heart of many debates over the role and the use of international organizations, including the successor of the League of Nations, the United Nations. Given then, that "a philosophical structure [... is] true, if at all, only under the conditions of a particular historical experience,"²³ it stands to reason that the work of Lord Davies remains a crucial element in the genealogy of the international relations discipline.

²² Suganami, Hidemi, 'Reflections on the domestic analogy: the case of Bull, Beitz, and Linklater', *Review of International Studies*, 12(2), April 1986, p. 147

²³ Morgenthau, Hans, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, Purnell and Sons Ltd., London, UK, 1947, p. 12

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