IN DEPTH

The interdependence of peace, security and justice

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Feminist studies have traditionally drawn attention to the continuum connecting all kinds of violence, on a scale that goes from the personal to the international sphere, and from the home to the street.[1] Hence, for example, violent conflicts are fuelled by the provision of arms and by impoverishment in the social domain while, in turn, causing forced displacement of populations, destruction of infrastructure, and depletion of resources. However, this is managed by opting for increased arms expenditure and policies of economic austerity.[2] Moreover, in situations of armed conflict, the prevalence of domestic and interpersonal violence increases, and sexual violence becomes a strategy of war.[3] In brief, the various kinds of violence are interconnected and often have a domino effect.

Meanwhile, globalisation has broken the dichotomy between the global and the local[4] and everyday experiences of insecurity are also consequences of macro dynamics. In other words, what might appear to be "a conflict specific to cities", for example homelessness, is connected with global systems and structures of power which create a discriminatory routineness, as in capitalism.[5] It is not unlike the way that sexual violence is embedded in the structures of patriarchy, among others. Understanding all these correlations draws attention to different simultaneous needs when it comes to managing conflict.

On the one hand, it is necessary to insist on coherence among local, regional, and international politics. Pressures are often managed in paradoxical or inverted ways. Hence, for example, while state borders are being reinforced as (anti-)immigration

policy cybercrime and transnational crimes are on the rise. Accordingly, systematic analysis that shows the interconnections between peoples and conflicts is essential.

At the same time, a balance must be found between individual and collective responsibility. It is necessary to understand the structural nature of violence in order to design just and distributive policies but without falling into the trap of relativisation and being blind to responsibility for individual acts, or overemphasising community or state responsibility.

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On the other hand, the question of the interdependence of peace, security, and justice must be explored, as described below. It should be borne in mind that these three dimensions seek to understand how power is structured and manifested on all scales and that they largely share the aim of managing violence. Nevertheless, they are often presented as compartmentalised, while the spaces that link all three questions, in theory and in practice, are somewhat anecdotal. Advocating for this relationship is no easy task, especially when starting out from the baseline knowledge that the notions of "peace", "security", and "justice" are so broad, as well as sometimes being labelled as abstract or ambiguous, and also that they are totally adapted to the intentions of the transmitter. However, adjectives often help to clarify intentions and allow more specificity: positive peace, negative peace, inner peace, social peace, citizen security, human security, private security, personal security, retributive justice, restorative justice, social justice, global justice, and so on. This broad semantics enables us to establish different positions on what the response to violence should be and, in particular, which response or responses we wish to support. However, this conceptual elasticity also entails risks.

First, is the co-opting and misrepresentation of terms by interests other than human needs and wellbeing. Thus, for example, in the name of security, ethnic and religious communities are discriminated with the use of mass surveillance, and dissidence is silenced by the repressive use of public forces. Lynchings are committed in the name of community justice and, in the name of state justice, destitute people are imprisoned while the crimes committed by elites are not investigated. Meanwhile, war crimes are committed in the name of peace. Unsurprisingly, oxymorons like "military peace" and "armed security" abound. To sum up, in the name of peace, security, and justice, basic rights are violated, atrocities are committed, and counterproductive responses are presented in that they do not offer any long-term solution to the violence they are supposed to be tackling. Yet, such manipulation of the more humanistic sense of the concepts should not deter us from upholding them because something that is not named does not exist. In fact, if we detect and denounce this reactionary or totalitarian manipulation of just causes, we are already doing our bit to support them.

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In a nutshell, "how" peace, security, and justice are named has a political and ideological component. It is therefore necessary to keep defending the meanings that best fit the guarantee of human rights and dignified conditions of life. This redefining of terms entails indicating which security and which justice functions and, consequently, which are the ones we want in the name of peace. It also means confronting the associated prejudices and stereotyped constructions that stand in the way of their reappropriation: peace is not utopian, and neither is security the preserve of the police and military, nor justice a matter for judges alone.

The second risk, which is related with the previous one, is that the proliferation of wholesale progressive notions associated with peace and security means that their limits and aims become hazy. For decades now, a rich theoretical and practical corpus has been produced from each of the sectors and, although this provides a wide array of orientations, it also leads to conceptual overlapping, and a surplus of proposals and counterproposals for dealing with what is not working. When misdirected, the multitude of forces can neutralise each other.

In search of a shared framework

To begin with, it should be borne in mind that the conceptual framework of the three questions is partly shared. Among the words they have in common are "conflict", "human rights", "freedom", and "wellbeing". Independently of the political option or management model that is being defended, almost everyone will agree that justice is related with human rights, and that security is connected with freedom, and vice versa. Hence, although recognition of the different genealogies, and of the varying contributions and functions is essential, it is also crucial to combine efforts in order to underpin the same vision.

In the quest for and materialisation of this shared framework, I believe that it is necessary to identify the many elements that shape and condition the way in which peace, security, and justice are simultaneously understood and applied. As I see it, one of these factors is punitivism, understood as a system of everyday beliefs and practices where punishment is seen as the proper means for resolving conflicts. In other words, it can be defended and upheld by the institutions but also by the general public. I think it is important, therefore, to name and expose punitivism because it is the mainstay of the circle of violence and the justifying corpus that sustains it.

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In other words, the main paradigm of the culture of punishment and the culture of war is punitivism, and the symbolic framework of reference is violence. With this paradigm, the violence that attracts most attention is direct, the most visible, and especially physical violence. When confronting it, defensive and offensive logics appear, together with that of the battle and more or less direct revenge. The ultimate aim is to guarantee order and stability, and to preserve the status quo. Conflict is understood and managed as a negative, toxic symptom that must be suppressed. Difference, minorities, dissent, and simple dynamics of coexistence are problematised and susceptible to being managed reactively by punitive and retributive agents and instruments. In this framework, then, justice is mainly legal since it focuses on supposed aggressors, the enemy to be combatted, and its aim is deterrence.

By contrast, the culture of peace is expressed in anti-punitivism where the symbolic frame of reference is care. It addresses cultural and structural violence as well as direct forms. In this approach, there is confidence in social power, and conflict is understood as a symptom of life, and thus also positive and viewed as a driving force for social change. When violence breaks out, social justice and restorative practices are among the tools of analysis and response. From ethical foundations, social justice calls for fairness and a restorative approach to reparation of damage and transformation of violence.

It is essential to be aware of the main punitivist and anti-punitivist moral principles that condition everyday life, as every society creates its own culture, while culture also has an influence in the structure of society. Here, this is a simplified, or reductionist characterisation for establishing a comprehensible basis for reflection and also to facilitate responses on how to reorient peace, security, and justice themselves and, in turn, how to construct a shared political agenda.

The trio in public management

Any model of security and justice that deals with conflicts without peacebuilding is doomed to failure. It is not surprising that public strategies in the name of peace, security, and justice spring from a profound lack of understanding of the conflicts that cause them, and that they end up being more part of the problem than of the solution.

Obedience is frequently pursued through punishment without consideration of the fact that, paradoxically, the message conveyed is that of legitimating violence, and that the right to abuse is claimed by those with most power.

With these punitivist policies, people are at the service of the state, so the production of public policies in the name of peace, security, and justice is "top-down". The underlying framework is individualism or extreme doctrinal communism. In other words, they are policies that are concerned with the effects of violence from a behaviouralist standpoint, and they do not take into account the causes, context, or circumstances that give rise to them. The strategies are, in essence, reactive, competitive, and authoritarian, imposing physical and symbolic force by means of coercion, repression, and social control. The purported security is armed and government controlled, created, interpreted, and imposed by the state. Even if this security is also understood as a right, it is limited to security that deals with criminality and guarantees territorial integrity and public order. As for justice, it is mainly retributive, and is also known as "punitive" or "correctional" justice, which is to say that the main focus of its deployment is the aggressor and offences against laws established by the state. The agents of reference are the military, police, and judges.

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The peace that is achieved in this political framework is negative and mostly short-lived. By this I mean that institutional violence is applied in order to ensure the absence of any visible violence. It ends up being a false truce and, therefore, this *pacification* resulting from punitivism is itself a paradox.

It is important to bear in mind that punitiveness is, *per se*, an abuse. It should not be confused with ordinary "punishment" or "punishability" understood as formal criminal or coercive responses for combatting violence and criminality. In this regard, not every

anti-punitivist position is opposed to punishability. Often, anti-punitivist practices like restorative justice programmes function as a complement to the penal system. The point is that punitivism perpetuates the *power over* model. This power dynamic can be destructive and it has many negative associations, among them discrimination and corruption. At the most basic level, it works to grant privileges to some people while excluding others. In politics, those who control resources and decision-making have power over those who do not have this control. They exclude others from access to resources and participation in public decision-making, thus perpetuating inequality and injustice. This is a model of toxic accumulation. In the absence of other relational models, people repeat the *power over* pattern in their personal and social interactions.[6]

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In anti-punitivist policies the state is at the service of people and is attentive to human and contextual vulnerabilities. The underlying framework of these policies is cooperation, and nonviolence can be a guideline.[7] It fosters strategies of human security and restorative justice. On the one hand, special emphasis is given to the causes and roots of violence through security of rights with the aim of managing human and planetary needs and attending to personal and community matters, as well as the economic, political, and environmental dimensions. On the other hand, it is committed to restorative justice because it starts from the premise that crimes harm the common good. The approach is comprehensive and supports the victim, the community, and even the offender, giving priority to humanisation and resocialisation.

Political anti-punitivism therefore has a mainly collectivist logic where social agents and citizens play a highly relevant role in conflict management. While, as noted above, the military, police, and juridical forces are the primary and purported guarantee of peace, security, and justice in the traditional punitivist approach, civil society is the key

agent in anti-punitivist policies.

The peace that can be achieved in this framework is positive and long-term. In other words, it is not only committed to eliminating violence, but it also seeks to promote relations and structures that improve people's lives.

A good part of anti-punitivist thinking and learning comes from pacifism, feminism, critical criminology, prison and death penalty abolitionism, and restorative justice approaches. In any case, all anti-punitivist positions believe in the potential of *power among*. Anti-punitivist activists and academics alike have sought more collaborative ways of exercising power and creating more equitable relations and structures by means of transforming *power over*. *Power among* is constructive. It values the ability of people and communities to act creatively and collectively to maintain peace, security, and justice, and it calls for the construction of social and institutional networks that could contribute and refresh knowledge from different sources for a better understanding of the nature of the phenomena concerned. From this political standpoint, any radical change requires acceptance of human and ecosystemic vulnerability and interdependence, as well as prompting uncomfortable discussion that can break with endogamy of thought and action.

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It is important to mention that collective action is often romanticised but, on occasion, it can also lead to segregationist and discriminatory dynamics. At the same time, in the name of the collective, an "association" or a "family", a horizontal relational culture that is also toxic can arise, as well as spaces of reclusion where autonomy is denied and sacrifice is preached in the name of the group. *Power among* is not authoritarian and it

sees opposition as natural. Hence, in order to become inclusive and peaceful, it must be based on mutual support, collaboration, and recognition of and respect for differences. Only then, can it help to build bridges between divergent positions, openly recognise conflicts, and seek ways to transform or diminish them. As Martin Luther King said, "one of the great problems of history is that the concepts of love and power have usually been contrasted as opposites, polar opposites, so that love is identified with a resignation of power, and power with a denial of love". What we need to do is engage in politics in the awareness that "power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic".[8] This anti-punitivist power can achieve a greater impact because it is able to transform violence while, at the same time, strengthening a sense of community, which acts as a factor to prevent further violence. Yet attention must be given to its perversion or instrumentalisation. It should not become a gateway to trivialisation of some forms of violence, lack of protection of victims or unduly blaming them, or institutional or personal negligence *vis-à-vis* the damage that has been done. It must not be a synonym of impunity. The state must guarantee life and freedom, and this requires action and acceptance of responsibility.

Commitment to anti-punitive options can do much more than punitivism to eliminate violence, but anti-punitivism—as a critical but purposeful paradigm—does not have the solution for everything. Understood as a set of ideas, it guides a necessary way of understanding conflict and relationships. When manifested, however, anti-punitivism strikes a balance between the urgency of the moment and the depth and complexity of the violence. Although punitivism and anti-punitivism are dichotomised here, in practice they are coexisting paradigms.

Keys for transformative action

In an age of uncertainty and systemic crises, atomisation of struggles at the social level, and of jurisdiction at the institutional level, is a dangerous trend. From the construction of peace, defence of human rights, social activism, and community action, it is necessary to construct shared spaces of *power among*, together with political projects like feminism, antiracism, and ecologism, and to work towards a common minimum that would help us to move forward together in achieving a friendlier world

with fewer inequalities and a better quality of life. We should be aware of the added value held out by each demand, and should work on underlying privileges, but we also need a transversal approach in the struggle which, far from diluting our aims, would help us to strengthen our discourse and replenish our strength. Only thus will we be able to make realistic proposals that can bring us closer to those who are less convinced. This reinforcement is nourished by a necessary "bottom-up" political approach which focuses on the ability of people and communities to develop their own full potential, make collective decisions, and find just, inclusive, and equitable ways of participating in strategies of constructing sustainable peace, security, and justice.

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Similarly, it is also a challenge, at the institutional level, to produce a holistic anti-punitive approach that would move closer to positive peace, and this involves committing to a shared, sustainable institutionalisation of human security and restorative justice. Drawing attention to the many sources of conflict and insecurity faced by individuals and collectives requires cooperative, multisectoral responses that bring together a variety of agents that are involved in the implementation of policies. The "top-down" approach must also be called upon when people are faced with threats that are beyond their control (for example, natural disasters, and financial crises) and when confronted with serious violence that threatens their right to integrity and life. From this perspective, it is also important to address the differential degrees to which people have access to social and relational networks. Given this need for protection, states have a major responsibility to implement policies of peace, security, and justice in a committed and comprehensive but also preventive way. However, international and regional organisations, civil society, nongovernmental actors, and the private sector

also have key roles in managing the many sources of the insecurity to which we are exposed.

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Although the various kinds of violence are interconnected and there are similarities shared among localities, regions, and countries, approaching the problem requires a contextual and situated focus, while policies for constructing peace, security, and justice must bring responses closer to particular needs and causes. Models cannot be replicated automatically because there are as many possible solutions at hand as there are conflicts. In any case, however, it is important to affirm that, far from being idealistic or abstract ideas, other possible kinds of peace, security, and justice do exist, and they aim to satisfy tangible needs.

There are many windows of opportunity for constructing an anti-punitivist framework that is concerned with the wellbeing of people, among themselves and in their environment, which would finally transform and diminish violence and guarantee a decent quality of life. We only need to heed the scientific evidence, have the will and political courage, and make the effort. We can start by believing in the construction of horizontal spaces, understanding that it is possible to envisage life without vengeance, and that empathy and compassion are the most creative social and political option. It will not be easy, but it will be better. In the long run, then, we will move towards more peaceful, which is to say more secure and just societies.

[1] Cockburn, C., 2009. The Continuum of Violence. In: Linke, U., Smith, D.T. (eds.), *Cultures of Fear: A Critical Reader*. Pluto Press.

[2] Stern, M. 2017. "Feminist Global Political Economy and Feminist Security Studies? The Politics of Delineating Subfields". *Politics & Gender* 13(4): 727-33.

[3] Parashar S. "Gendering war and war bodies" in *Peace in Progress* e-magazine "Redirecting security from feminism", ICIP, number 39, January 2021.

[4] Puig S. "Notes for a peace agenda" in Peace in Progress e-magazine "Violence in non-war settings", ICIP, number 40, May 2022.

[5] Font T. i Ortega, P. *Violència, seguretat i construcció de pau a les ciutats*, Informe 38, Centre Delàs d'Estudis per la Pau, Barcelona, 2019.

[6] *Haciendo que el cambio sea una realidad: el poder*. Asociadas por lo Justo, 2008.

[7] Although nonviolence is more a historically recognised and practised strategy of civil resistance, here it is also understood as a philosophy of life that finds expression in praxis and that entails not using violent means to resolve conflicts. This means abstaining from the use of brute force, arms, or any other means that generates violence or that could could cause physical harm to others. Nonviolence does not mean passivity in the face of violence or actions or behaviour that are deemed to be unjust. Rather, it promotes struggle against them but using different tools and mechanisms (Sharp, 2018. *Defensa civil noviolenta*. Col·lecció Eines de pau, seguretat i justícia, 22. Barcelona: Institut Català Internacional per la Pau).

[8] Luther King, M. *El crit de la consciència*. Barcelona: Institut Català Internacional per la Pau; Angle, 2016. Col·lecció Clàssics de la pau i de la noviolència, 12 (In English, "Where Do We Go From Here?".

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Photography

Abstract prison image. Credit: Namning (Shutterstock).