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Violence in non-war settings

ICIP

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INTRODUCTION

Editorial

ICIP

We were finishing revising the translations for this monograph when the Russian invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February, devastating the lives of millions of people and giving rise to new concerns about peace and security around the globe.

With Ukraine painfully present in all of us, we also believe it is necessary to keep working on other violent situations causing pain in different parts of the world. War is still wreaking havoc on Yemen, Tigre, the Central African Republic, and Syria. Afghanistan spends every day under merciless Taliban rule. The population of Palestine has been suffering an apartheid regime for decades. Extremist groups are continuing their lethal expansion across the Sahel. Around the world, 690 million people are hungry. More and more people are forced to leave their birthplace every year.

Other situations of significant violence are not related to extremism or traditional warfare. These do not necessarily occur in authoritarian regimes, in what is known as "failed states", or in the poorest countries. They are situations of violence that are closely linked with criminality and the inadequate response of governments. Hence, it is direct violence coexisting with high structural and cultural violence levels.

During the last four years, ICIP has focused on situations we call "violence in non-war settings" when we need to provide a label. This characterisation has not been free of debate because, as very well expressed in one of the articles that follow, the line separating the violence of an armed conflict and an unarmed conflict becomes very difficult to discern in countries like Mexico.

"In recent years, the ICIP has endeavoured to focus on situations of intense violence in non-war settings"

The view that ICIP wants to take on these difficult-to-label realities is, as it could not be otherwise, a peacebuilding vision. What does this peace perspective mean? Among many other things, it entails a multidimensional reading of these kinds of violence without seeing it as being limited to its more direct and visible expressions. It goes to the root of conflicts, understanding their dynamics and identifying the actors who play roles in them. It pays attention to how violence affects people's everyday lives and projects. It draws attention to individual and especially collective initiatives to change these situations. It determines the extent to which classical peacebuilding measures are applicable in contexts that have been given very little attention unless from an exclusive security viewpoint. It recognises victims' rights to truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition as an essential condition for coping with the future.

In this regard, the ICIP has organised various activities to exchange knowledge, experiences, and tools. Notable among them is the online seminar series "Amèrica Llatina. Fer front a les violències des de la construcció de pau" (Latin America: Confronting Violence by Constructing Peace), in which some twenty well-known speakers discussed how the lessons of peacebuilding can contribute transformative proposals in these complex situations of violence in non-war settings.

With this monograph, the ICIP aims to keep presenting ideas in the hope that they will help to make visible situations that are highly alarming but of low priority, to provide tools to people, groups, and institutions striving to deal better with them, and to propose measures which, rather than feeding back into more violence, can bring about real change.

"This monograph aims to make highly alarming violent situations visible and provide tools to people, groups, and institutions working to change them"

The first article, written by Sabina Puig, coordinator of ICIP's "Violence in non-war settings" programme, aims to identify some of the basic features of these kinds of violence that are characterised precisely by their many manifestations. Without aspiring to be exhaustive, it also lists some of the essential aspects that could be included in a peace agenda.

In the following article, Ana Glenda Tager (Alianza para la Paz) explores some of the expressions of violence that affect humanity without necessarily being related to the existence of armed conflict. These include gender violence, attacks against environmental defenders, human trafficking, organised crime, etcetera which, in the author's view, have received scant attention by comparison with conflicts between states or struggles for political control of a state.

The response to criminality and its violent manifestations has mainly been based on a militarised and punitive security approach. In her article, the third in this publication, Carolina Ricardo of the Instituto Sou da Paz del Brasil, describes how such responses have not managed to diminish violence but, on the contrary, have fuelled it. Brazil is a clear example. She warns that routine use of the armed forces for public security leads to the logic of war being introduced into everyday public security, thus giving rise to serious human rights violations.

Next, José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez (Autonomous University of Tlaxcala) examines data from Mexico. This country presents enormous challenges in security and raises many questions for peacebuilding endeavours. In Guevara's words, "In terms of international law, the situation of violence that Mexico is dealing with can only be understood as non-international armed conflict". This fact is crucial when designing strategies to confront the kinds of violence it gives rise to and protects human rights.

These types of "violence in non-war settings" are frequently associated with Latin America, a continent that, while representing only 8% of the world's population, accounts for one in every three homicides globally. Nevertheless, they also affect other parts of the world. Mohamed Daghar (ENACT- Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organised Crime) offers an account of what is occurring in the pastoral lands of East Africa. This region is gravely affected by violence associated with the presence of organised crime and the consequences of climate change, and the political marginalisation inflicted by the various governments.

"The types of "violence in non-war settings" are frequently associated with Latin America, but they also affect other parts of the world"

The three following articles offer a different picture when reflecting on the role of civil society in reporting, preventing, and even interrupting cycles of violence. Roger Mac Ginty, director of the Durham Global Security Institute, speaks about the potential of local and even individual actions to break cycles of violence, describing how small acts of resistance can disrupt the logic, stance, and narrative of actors in a conflict who are fighting to take control of social space.

Esperanza Hernández, a lecturer at the University of La Salle (Colombia), invites us to learn more about the meaning of civil resistance and everything that such initiatives can achieve, even in situations of vast asymmetries of power. Still, she warns of enormous challenges in contexts like those studied in this monograph. For her, as for the ICIP, "Experiences of civil resistance are a heritage of peace and must be recognised as such, defended, and strengthened by all relevant actors working in peacebuilding".

Finally, and enlarging this focus, Jordi Mir, lecturer at the Pompeu Fabra University of Barcelona, offers some interesting thoughts on the role of social movements in peacebuilding. One of the significant contributions of these movements is that they manage to make visible a whole range of kinds of violence, especially structural violence, which are not recognised by society or the authorities, or that have not always

been acknowledged as such. This recognition is essential in any country and particularly relevant in situations where direct, lethal violence can eclipse other kinds of violence that are equally perverse but less visible, even when they affect the everyday lives of millions of people.

It is a pleasure for the ICIP to feature in the "Interview" space of this issue Mary Kaldor, an internationally known specialist in the study of armed conflict. This section discussed the points of connection between violent situations in non-war settings and what she described twenty years ago as "new wars". As she notes, in the analysis of conflicts or violence, excessive attention is still being given to factors related to the political motives of confrontations to the detriment of other elements that are much more important today. This situation worsens severe security crises, which, without typically political causes, do not have the international visibility and attention they should be getting.

Once again, the ICIP wishes to express its gratitude for the contributions of the experts who have contributed to this monograph. We trust that this collection of articles will help endeavours working towards a broader understanding and knowledge about the situations of violence that are so devastating for millions of people. They will contribute by offering proposals to construct just, inclusive, and sustainable peace.

Photography

Photography by Ruido Photo for the exhibition 'Facing Violence: Stories of Resilience in Central America', produced by ICIP.

IN DEPTH

Notes for a peace agenda

Sabina Puig
International Catalan Institute for Peace

The idea that peace is not just the absence of war is well consolidated among specialists in the field. In all likelihood, a good part of public opinion also shares the insight that it is not only in the context of war that peace is missing. Difficulty of access to essential needs; obstacles to the exercise of human rights; real or perceived insecurity, at home or in the street; mistrust of public institutions; inequalities, discrimination and exclusion; and even polarised social relations are all determinant in whether people live in peace or not. The opposite of peace, then, is not war but violence in all its various direct, structural, and cultural manifestations, whether or not it occurs in the context of armed conflict.

This broad view of the concept of peace is especially relevant at a point in history when the statistics reveal extraordinarily high rates of violent deaths in supposedly "peaceful" countries, sometimes exceeding those of countries at war. Caution is advised when comparing statistics because ways of measuring can differ from place to place but even so, the regularly systematised information of the UNODOC Global Study on Homicide, the Conflict Data Program of Uppsala University, and the Homicide Monitor of the Igarapé Institute, among others, alerts us to the serious situations of homicidal violence in countries where there is no ongoing armed conflict recognised as such. The data about Latin America and the Caribbean countries are especially alarming in this regard.

There can be no doubt about it: peacebuilding must focus on these situations which are different from those where it has traditionally worked. To a considerable extent, these circumstances suggest that the analytical and methodological frameworks of

peacebuilding need to be rethought. They also raise new and vital questions.

We want to focus on violence in non-war settings, but what kinds of violence are we talking about? How do we characterise them? How do we rate them? How do we define them? Even if we consider direct violence alone, we find a phenomenon that is both huge in its impact and complex in its dynamics. Massacres and forced disappearances committed by organised crime in Mexico (frequently in collusion with the authorities); extorsion and murders committed by the "maras" of Central America; extrajudicial executions of young black people in the favelas of Brazil; excessive use of force by security forces in crushing social protest; pervasive and non- investigated femicide,; large-scale human trafficking; humanitarian crises and abuses along migratory routes… What do all these situations have in common? How can we think about them from the standpoint of peace?

"The opposite of peace is not war but violence in all its various direct, structural, and cultural manifestations, and whether or not it occurs in the context of armed conflict."

These are exceptionally high levels of direct violence, placing the territories where they occur at the top of worldwide rankings of homicide and other grave attacks on human beings' physical and mental integrity. However, this direct violence occurs in places that are deeply marked by structural violence with extremely grim indicators of inequality and social exclusion, poverty, and denial of basic human rights, including the rights to health, education, and decent housing. All of these abuses are aggravated by long-established forms of discrimination that condition the lives of girls, boys, women, and men. Direct and structural violence are, in turn, reinforced by a discourse that, is replete with the sexist, racist, individualist, and militarist values that have permeated society for years feed back into them.

A diversity of factors and the complexity of their highly fluid, dynamic interactions are other characteristic features of these situations. Tensions do not arise only in the case

of traditional armed conflicts and among a restricted, internally homogenous number of actors with a political agenda and evident power over a territory. We frequently find a kaleidoscope of armed groups with alliances and splits that are difficult to monitor. The dividing line between "legal" and "illegal" actors becomes blurred because of the collusion of the institutions with the delinquents. Many of these groups have diversified their activities to such an extent that they might operate both in criminal networks and legal markets. Then again, the political interests of these actors are essentially limited to controlling routes and markets.

The researcher John Paul Lederach recently analysed this as follows; "The aim of violence might be control over certain local, territorial spaces but, more importantly, it is control over the networks where people—very vulnerable people—flow, as do weapons, drugs, and illegal economies, etcetera. [...] These are transnational and *openly hidden* networks, in the sense that they have a powerful presence while working from clandestine positions. [...] Violence is often performative, symbolic, horrific, and exaggerated in its ways of conveying fear. This poses local and transnational challenges, but they are not struggles for political power in the national sphere. They are trying to control the nation's economic and social connections."[1]

Nevertheless, it has also been observed how criminal groups have gained legitimacy among sectors of the population for whom the state does not guarantee basic needs or offer any hope for the future. This became particularly evident in the most critical moments of the COVID-19 pandemic.[2] When suggesting a roadmap to peace, it is essential to consider the interlinking of the three—direct, structural, and cultural—dimensions of violence and its chronic character.[3] It is also crucially important to understand the complex dynamics through which this violence is expressed and to construct a map of the most prominent actors.

When suggesting a roadmap to peace, it is essential to consider the interlinking of the three—direct, structural, and cultural—dimensions of violence and its chronic character.

Proposal for a peacebuilding agenda

When peace is understood as a plural, relational, contextual, and dynamic concept,[4] there is no single or fixed prescription for dealing with such complex violence. Action at different levels, in various dimensions, and at different times will always be necessary, adapted to the peculiarities of the places where conflicts and violence occur. However, some shared reflections could help outline the essential elements of a peacebuilding agenda. In 2021, the ICIP organised a series of online seminars to identify these elements: Amèrica Llatina. Fer front a les violències des de la construcció de pau.[5] The following reflections draw on some of the outstanding ideas endorsed by the ICIP that were presented in these discussions.

1. Taking a comprehensive, long-term perspective

Peacebuilding is a slow process that requires a long-term perspective, looking back at the past and with specific actions in the present. It is necessary to accept that this is complex and difficult. It would be illusory to imagine that problems that have been entrenched for decades or centuries can be solved with a single election cycle, for example.

Immediate measures are certainly needed to reduce violence and guarantee the physical security of people. Still, they will be ineffective unless they are part of a genuine effort to ensure access to all human rights—economic, social, cultural, civil, and political—without discrimination at either the individual or the collective level.

In some cases of chronic, multidimensional violence, a peace agenda must study the historical inequalities (including those related to gender) that have led to conflict and not rule out the systemic transformation, even in power structures. Undoubtedly, this would be met with resistance by both armed groups and the political, social, and economic elites benefiting from the conflict and responsible for the reproduction of violence over decades.[6] Modifying the roles of some elite members so that, with their powers of influence and bringing about change, they will work for peace must also be part of the agenda.

These changes must also include strengthening democratic institutions to endow them legitimacy and the ability to deal with social conflict in a nonviolent manner.[7]

"Good governance – exhibited by states that are participatory, accountable, effective and founded on the rule of law – sets the foundation for building and strengthening institutional and non-state frameworks to better society and counter organised crime."
[8]

"Peacebuilding is a slow process that requires a long-term perspective, looking back at the past and with specific actions in the present. It is necessary to accept that this is complex and difficult."

2. Adopting another security model

To return to the measures that are necessary to guarantee the human rights to life and physical integrity, it is evident that, given all the kinds of violence described above, security policies are a priority for peacebuilding. But what policies, and what security?

The concept of security has been hijacked by a very restricted and exclusive standpoint that does not take into account the plurality of vulnerabilities, threats, and needs while also prioritising control and order over the necessary conditions for full exercise of human rights. When confronting delinquency, most governments have chosen to apply their coercive power with more social control, securitisation of public space, involvement of the armed forces in internal security operations, creation of special armed forces, and toughening of prison sentences.

Decades after introducing these "iron-fisted" policies, no significant reduction has been observed in the statistics on violence. More importantly, everything suggests that repressive policies have encouraged its reproduction.

How can the failure of security policies that have predominantly been applied so far be reversed? Some of the proposals that are being considered as ways of bringing about change are a comprehensive view of security that also responds to many kinds of social

problems; high-level political will, sustained over time; precise diagnoses; more transparency; decentralisation; more capacity building and cultural changes in the security forces; and civilian control over security forces.[9]

In other words, peacebuilding means reorienting security efforts towards a human security model aiming to create the conditions for people to have a dignified existence and develop their skills in freedom with full respect for their human rights. It is worth adding here that truly valuable contributions are being made in enriching this concept of security from the theoretical and practical standpoints of feminism, proposing models that are "less antagonistic, more cooperative, and intercommunity, where networks of support and companionship, and relations of mutual care make a virtue of interdependence."[10]

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3. Deciphering the connections between organised crime, violence, and peace

The various expressions of violence perpetrated by organised crime and its adverse effects on economic and democratic development in the countries where it is active represent an obvious challenge for global peace and security. Nevertheless, peacebuilding endeavours are now beginning to tackle the problem and offer proposals. [11]

It is essential to understand how criminal groups—in all their heterogeneity—function if we want to combat them. Owing to their opacity and complexity, the picture we have of them is still very partial and blurred. In this regard, there is still much work to be done, especially in peace studies.

What exactly is the relationship between organised crime and violence? The presence of criminal groups does not necessarily mean more violent episodes. On the contrary, in places where they exercise their power, which is directly proportional to the fragility of state institutions, they can sometimes regulate the occurrence of homicide and, when it suits them, reduce it.[12] Naturally, however, this comes at the price of other severe

forms of abuse and scrapping the rule of law. The use of violence by organised crime is highly tactical. The type and level of violence may depend on the message that is to be sent to the authorities, rival groups, and the population. There are times when criminal groups need the violence to be brutal and visible. On other occasions, their business interests need a "pacified" milieu where violence is avoided or hidden.[13] These dynamics, which vary from place to place, need to be thoroughly understood if they are to be combatted. A misguided response can exacerbate the violence perpetrated by criminal groups. In keeping with the approaches I have outlined in other sections, it is necessary to think about informed, innovative, and creative strategies to improve on the repressive, compartmentalised responses that have been applied so far.

One of the pending issues for peacebuilding is the need to explore in greater depth the conditions in which dialogue and negotiation with actors linked with organised crime would be possible and desirable.[14] What legitimacy would these groups have? What can be negotiated? What might motivate negotiation with the groups that benefit from conflict and violence?[15]

Another set of questions is concerned with the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of members of these groups. The lessons we have accumulated from such processes should guide activities aimed at demobilising people linked with violent organised crime.

4. Restorative justice for victims

Extraordinarily high levels of violence coincide with extraordinarily high levels of impunity, which aggravate even more the pain of victims and feed back into the cycles of violence. In these situations, reinforcing the justice-peace binomial is essential.

There are several factors explaining the impunity enjoyed in each country by people implicated in human rights violations and violent crimes: connivance of the authorities with criminal actors, lack of training, weak institutions, and so on. Dealing with each of these factors will require specific reforms in the structures of government, the judiciary, and the security forces. In cases where ordinary legal resources are not sufficient for responding to vast numbers of serious crimes, it may be necessary to introduce extraordinary measures that could provide truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of

non-repetition for victims and society as a whole.

The various experiences of transitional justice we know about are really helpful in what they tell us about how to deal with episodes of mass violence. These experiences have so far occurred with regimes "in transition" from a conflict to a post-conflict state or from a dictatorship to a democracy. Does it make sense to transfer the lessons and tools of transitional justice to situations that are (apparently) not "in transition" to regime change?

No formula is applicable *per se* in other contexts. Still, the vast number of victims and the seriousness of human rights violations involved, the overload that is paralysing ordinary legal mechanisms, the urgency of introducing mechanisms to guarantee non-repetition, and the need, as mentioned above, to probe to the roots of conflicts unquestionably demonstrate the appropriateness of being inspired by contributions from the domain of transitional justice when dealing with these kinds of violence. They are inputs that are not limited to criminal proceedings alone since they also contemplate a whole series of practices of restorative justice that contribute enormously to change and satisfy the victims' needs for justice.[16]

"Extraordinarily high levels of violence coincide with extraordinarily high levels of impunity, which aggravate even more the pain of victims"

5. Creating a cohesive civil society

Although the state is a mainstay, the peacebuilding process does not involve only the institutions or, still less, only the elites in power. It is essential to have an active, cohesive social fabric that challenges tolerance of violence and makes proposals for positive change in times of conflict. A growing number of people are moving away from the postulates of "liberal peace"[17] and saying that peacebuilding must start at the local level with the participation of people and communities, especially those who are affected by conflicts.

Civil society involvement becomes a marvellous array of actions that can range from exercises of nonviolent civil resistance, encouragement of dialogue, protest, projects for preventing violence, training, and simple, individual, often unnoticed gestures against the reproduction of violence.

However, the terror engendered by violence can separate and create even more tension among people groups and communities. It is therefore especially important to create conditions for keeping dialogue alive and fostering social cohesion, not only to promote peaceful coexistence but also to work collectively to cope with the most entrenched problems, and to construct shared visions of the future.

In situations of extreme violence, people and groups that are working for change are at high risk. The list of murdered local authorities, community leaders, journalists, and human rights and environmental defenders is growing by the year to levels that recall the darkest times of the worst dictatorships.

"Peacebuilding endeavours require an active, cohesive social fabric that challenges tolerance of violence and makes proposals for positive change in times of conflict."

International peacebuilding actors must support these individuals and groups and reaffirm the legitimacy others have tried to take from them, make their voices more heard globally, and to provide protection for them. Another task for these actors is to draw attention to the efforts of organised civil society and ensure that they become part of peace processes that transcend the strictly local level.

6. Understanding the relations between local violence and global phenomena

Most of the more brutal expressions of violence in non-war settings described above tend to occur in peripheral areas, far from centres of power and decision-making and escaping international scrutiny. Yet, a more or less close relationship with transnational

phenomena can be identified in many cases.

The connection between local violence and global affairs is especially stark in the following statistic: 75% of violent deaths in Latin America are caused by weapons (legally and illegally) imported from other continents. [18] Added to the arms trade are human trafficking and other illegal economic activity, extractive practices to meet the demands of different populations, and restrictive migration policies that worsen the situation. Neither is the inordinate liberalisation of the global economy any stranger to the expansion of illegal markets and bolstering of the criminals who dominate them.

These phenomena have in common the fact that they produce profits in the international sphere while, at the same time, causing violence, exploitation, and impoverishment in some populations, as well as ravaging the environment.[19]

Suppose one of the great lessons of peacebuilding is that its processes must be focused on local conflicts and led by local actors in all their diversity. In that case, this transnational dimension of violence means that processes in the local sphere need to be combined with actions of global influence. Being able to intervene in a more effective, coordinated way at the different levels—local, national, regional, and international—is another of the significant challenges faced in peacebuilding. And it is one that directly meets us.

To conclude, violence in non-war settings pose colossal challenges, but we have valuable insight; we have accumulated knowledge about how to deal with them from a peace perspective, and, above all, we have a constellation of people, organisations, communities and institutions with the capacity and the will to transform violent situations into more peaceful, just, inclusive, and sustainable conditions. Identifying them, connecting them, and expanding their influence is also peacebuilding. It is both necessary and urgent to give to these challenging situations the priority they deserve.

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[1] John Paul Lederach in the opening session of the seminar cycle "Amèrica Llatina. Fer front a les violències des de la construcció de pau". Accessible at: https://youtu.be/7cpMZTV80XU

[2] See the discussion "Las despensas del crimen organizado", organised by the College of Mexico on 13 May 2020. Accessible at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqWSQPXdlgc.

[3] By chronic violence we understand "violence that is reproduced in all spaces of socialisation and between generations, taking many forms and mutating over time. There is lethal violence and non-lethal violence, including disappearances, forced displacement, intrafamily aggression, and police violence, among other variations. Chronic violence profoundly affects the ways in which people relate among themselves, with state institutions, in the spaces they inhabit, and their expectations of the future." Pearce, Jenny et al., *Hacia una agenda de Seguridad nacional humana en México: Por una seguridad que no reproduzca las violencias*, London School of Economics and Political Science. Accessible at: https://www.lse.ac.uk/lacc/assets/documents/AGENDA-NACIONAL.pdf.

[4] Pearce, J., Dietrich, W. "Many violences, many peaces: Wolfgang Dietrich and Jenny Pearce in conversation", *Peacebuilding*, 7:3 (2019), 268-282, https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1632056

[5] Summaries and the videos of the sessions are accessible at: https://www.icip.cat/ca/seminaris/america-llatina-fer-front-a-les-violencies-des-de-la-construccio-de-pau/

[6] See the session with Jenny Pearce and Mariano Aguirre, "Conceptualitzar una agenda de pau enmig de violències cròniques" of the ICIP seminar cycle at https://youtu.be/_DbOdcz_660.

[7] See the session with Esperanza Hernández, Sabine Kurtenbach, and Verónica Zubillaga, "Democràcia participativa, moviments socials i resistències noviolentes" of the ICIP seminar cycle at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sYfFT6ACmE&t=3s

[8] "Global Initiative Against Organized Transnational Crime", *Global Organized Crime Index 2021*, p. 16. Accessible at GITOC-Global-Organized-Crime-Index-2021.pdf (globalinitiative.net).

[9] See the session with Lucía Dammert, Miguel Garza, and Geoff Thale, "Polítiques de seguretat per a la construcció de pau" of the ICIP seminar cycle at https://youtu.be/ucw6yu4CLSA. See also Maydeu-Olivares, Sergio, "Per a una nova estratègia de reducció de les violències fora de contextos bèl·lics", *Policy Paper* 19, ICIP, Abril 2019. Accessible at: https://www.icip.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/pp18_cat.pdf

[10] "Introducció. Reorientant la seguretat des del feminisme", *Revista per la Pau*, ICIP 2021. Accessible at: http://www.icip-perlapau.cat/numero39/portada

[11] Banfield, J., *Crime and Conflict: the new challenge for peacebuilding*. International Alert, 2014. Accessible at: https://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CVI-Crime-Conflict-EN-2014.pdf

[12] Garzón-Vergara, Juan Carlos, "What is the relationship between organized crime and homicide in Latin America", in *Homicide Dispatch* 3, Igaraoé Institute, June 2016.

[13] Durán-Martínez, Angélica, "Les múltiples dimensions de la violència relacionada amb les drogues", in *Per la Pau*, ICIP, November 2018. Accessible at: http://www.icip-perlapau.cat/numero35/articles_centrals/article_central_1/

[14] See Angélica Durán, Falko Ernst, and Achim Wennmann in the session, "Diàleg, negociació i mediació amb actors violents" of the ICIP seminar cycle: https://youtu.be/tTHlSnuE-Bw

[15] The Institute for Integrated Transitions has made a notable contribution with its work on issues in this area. See Freeman M., and Felbab-Brown V., *Negotiating with Violent Criminal Groups: Lessons and Guidelines from Global Practice*, IFIT, 2021. Accessible at: https://ifit-transitions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/001-Negotiating-with-Violent-Criminal-Groups-v4.pdf

[16] See the session with Guillermo Trejo, María Camila Moreno, and other expert guests, "Mecanismes extraordinaris per a violències extraordinàries" of the ICIP seminar cycle: https://youtu.be/njL1T3TFQV4. See also the contributions of Glaucia Foley, Marisol Ramírez, and Raul Calvo Soler in the session "Justícia i transformació dels conflictes

violents" in the same series: https://youtu.be/7OPUvMci4_g

[17] Pérez de Armiño, Karlos, and Zirion Landaluze, Iker (eds.), *Pax crítica, aportes teóricos a las perspectives de paz posliberal*, Tecnos, Hegoa, 2019.

[18] This is not to underestimate the importance of Brazil's arms industry.

[19] See the conversation of Robert Muggah and Luis Jorge Garay in the session, "Reptes globals en construcció de pau en l'àmbit local" of the ICIP seminar cycle: https://youtu.be/kPXOCBlDkuE.

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Photography

Photography by Ruido Photo for the exhibition 'Facing Violence: Stories of Resilience in Central America', produced by ICIP.

IN DEPTH

Serious expressions of violence outside contexts of warfare

Ana Glenda Tager
Alianza por la Paz

A major concern since the end of the Second World War has been protection of civilians from the effects of violence caused by armed conflicts. These conflicts (inter-state and civil wars) are presently diminishing and are no longer the only setting of high-intensity violence affecting populations. In the period between the Second World War and the end of the Cold War, attention to armed conflict and violence was related with questions of disputed national sovereignty: conflicts between states or struggles between warring parties to obtain political control of a state. Violence that did not fit with such motivations received scant attention and was deemed to be *criminal.* [1]

However, according to data of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in today's world, "Criminal activity causes many more deaths than conflicts and terrorism combined. The 464,000 victims of homicide surpass by far the 89,000 killed in armed conflicts and the 26,000 fatal victims of terrorist violence in 2017." [2] Furthermore, the number of transnational terrorist attacks is now greater than it has been at any time since 1970. The reach of criminal organisations extends across regions and countries.

According to the 2021 Global Peace Index of the Institute for Economics and Peace, violence is considered to be the greatest security risk in 49 out of 142 countries worldwide, while more than fifty percent of people in Afghanistan, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic say that violence is the greatest risk they face in their daily lives.

"Today's world criminal activity causes many more deaths than conflicts and terrorism combined"

Some expressions of violence which are not necessarily related with the existence of armed conflict but that most affect humanity are discussed below. They include violence encouraged by organised crime and its connections with political institutions; violence against the environment and the individuals and groups that defend it and claim their rights; violence resulting from gender inequality; violence produced by human trafficking and unlawful smuggling of migrants; and a series of forms of structural violence, including racism, poverty, and exclusion.

Criminal and political violence

Violence and criminality are part of a web of institutional and non-institutional power relations that are manifested in social interactions. These can range from micro expressions, power dynamics in territorially defined spaces, through to the macro types that are defined by state policy and their relationship with international interests.

The high rates of violence shown in countries where peace agreements have been signed to put an end to conventional or guerrilla warfare are the result of criminal or territorial dynamics. Armed conflicts may have been ended but the necessary ability to prevent transformation of the expressions of violence and their continuity is limited. The evidence reveals that, apart from the negative consequences of armed conflicts, there are also practices that boost profit-related benefits for some groups when political power is consolidated on the basis of the existence of an armed conflict. Criminality, as a social phenomenon, is a domain where these dynamics are reproduced and interconnected. Criminal networks seek to increase the benefits of armed conflict and adapt their activities so that they will continue to be profitable in post-conflict times. By means of mechanisms like corruption and clientelism, the political-criminal link, for example, enables the logic of benefits deriving from the conflict to shift to the public institutions after they undergo processes of reform following the signing of

peace agreements.

In these kinds of contexts, violence can be understood as a set of interconnections among different sections of society (including the state) shaping a system that feeds back on itself through a myriad of individual motives that generate violence as part of a scheme that produces benefits for some to the detriment of others. The economic profitability of this system is expressed in powerful illegal economies and political profiteering through corruption and clientelism which is exacerbated in periods of electoral competition. Violence, then, is the circuit that connects these many interests revolving around power and, essentially, political power. From formal guerrilla groups, terrorist bands, criminal rings, and gangs through to corrupt security forces and extermination and social cleansing organisations, they all actively participate in a system of violence directly related with politics in which the transition from the criminal to the political stage occurs through negotiation or overt demonstration of force by means of physical or symbolic aggression.

"From formal guerrilla groups, terrorist bands, criminal rings, and gangs through to corrupt security forces and extermination and social cleansing organisations, they all actively participate in a system of violence directly related with politics"

Violence regularly occurs in places where there is no state presence and that are under the control of non-state groups which impose their power and delimit "invisible borders", thus affecting people's lives and mobility. These groups may be gangs or criminal organisations that produce an alternative social order as well as a system of power and resource allocation that provokes cycles of struggle to accede to, preserve, and transform the rules regulating political power. In order to secure territorial control, armed groups use violence against social actors who oppose their interests, and this increased control by non-state actors has been directly related with the upsurge in

armed social violence at the international level.

Violence and defence of land and the environment

Extractive activities and others generating, commercialising, and distributing energy have led to new expressions of conflict which, when not adequately addressed, aggravate pre-existing tensions related with systems of inequality, bias, exclusion, and discrimination that give rise to violent situations with repercussions at regional and national levels.

Access to, property of, and use of lands is another situation that causes conflict, especially with the expansion of the so-called monoculture crops and, most especially, the African palm. Concentration of land in very few hands, lack of access for most of the population concerned, the ecological impact because of loss of agricultural land, the devastating consequences for the soil, coercive land acquisition, and forced displacement are part of the problem of agrarian society in many areas. In these situations, when organised crime appears, attracted by the huge economic interests at stake, the conflicts become more complex and multidimensionality and multicausality acquire other characteristics and dimensions.

The struggle for the rights of populations that are vulnerable to agrarian conflicts is one of the reasons why so many human rights defenders have been killed. According to Front Line Defenders, 331 defenders were killed worldwide in 2020. Of these, 284 were in the Americas, with Colombia heading the list of numbers of murders (53% of the documented cases).

"In order to secure territorial control, armed groups use violence against social actors who oppose their interests"

With these controversies and attacks, there is a perception among a widespread range of social sectors that states are not fulfilling their obligation to safeguard the common

good, which then gives rise to mistrust towards and discrediting of the public institutions with the result that relations of respect and trust deteriorate to the point that they threaten governability.

The discontent of populations affected by what they see as violations of their human rights and attacks against their territory, traditional ways of life, and forms of organisation is expressed in "defence of the land" protests; demands made on the state; peaceful resistance and occupation of land [3] met with violent state responses.

Gender inequality and violence

Violence against women is the most exacerbated expression of patriarchal power relations in society and the historically unequal relations between men and women. As a structural part of the system, this kind of violence is perpetuated by means of social institutions including the family, schools, political and legal frameworks, and religion and belief systems, among others.

This kind of violence constitutes a violation of human rights, of equality and freedom while also restricting women's access to resources and opportunities for fulfilment. This is a social problem, situated on a continuum that is exacerbated in situations of criminal violence and humanitarian crisis.

The levels of violence against women range from verbal harassment to physical and sexual abuse, with the maximum expression of femicide, or murder of women and girls because of their gender. The factors that influence this type of violence are linked to systems of patriarchal domination, but also to a series of inequalities or forms of exclusion that generate violence that must be analysed from the intersection of the sexism, racism, and classism that permeate the lives of women and men in different ways, depending on the context.

"Tasks of consciousness, political advocacy and reflection on imaginaries and representations

are all urgent priorities if women are to aspire to live free of violence"

Notwithstanding the advances that have been made in international regulations, women are generally ignorant about the laws and policies that protect them from these kinds of violence. Moreover, observers have identified many barriers to their accessing of channels of protection and care that would guarantee their rights. Hence, the tasks of consciousness raising in broad sectors of society, political advocacy with the institutions, and reflection on imaginaries and representations are all urgent priorities if women are to aspire to live free of violence.

Violence caused by human trafficking and smuggling of migrants

Globalisation has favoured an increase in these kinds of unlawful activities. Smuggling of refugees and migrants, as well as human trafficking, has given rise to increased numbers of victims of physical, sexual, and psychological violence on a global scale.

Human trafficking is "a criminal phenomenon of a nature that has been evolving until becoming a globalised, highly profitable practice that is now the second-largest illegal business, ahead of the drug trade, and only surpassed by the arms trafficking," according to the Victoria García del Blanco.[4]

The organisation *Ayuda en Acción* describes human trafficking as an illegal business that begins and ends with the movement of migrants who voluntarily contact a human trafficker with the aim of crossing a border. In this case, the trafficker takes advantage of the adverse situation of migrants to exploit them persistently for personal profit. Most of the victims are women and girls who are subjected to prostitution, sexual abuse, and illegal marriage.

Extreme poverty, scarcity of food, violence, and insecurity are factors that make people vulnerable to human smuggling and trafficking.

Starting in October 2018, a new strategy of mobilisation to confront this phenomenon is the organisation of caravans of migrants, mostly from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador with large numbers of people moving together, fleeing together, and coming from the same experience of exclusion. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM),[5] the migrants believe that travelling together in caravans gives them greater protection from mafia groups since they are less exposed to crimes and abuses that often happen along the way; they have better chances of assistance from government entities and non-governmental organisations; and the related costs will be lower since there is less need to contract a coyote or trafficker to get them across borders.

"Human trafficking has been evolving until becoming a globalised, highly profitable practice that is now the second-largest illegal business, only surpassed by the arms trafficking"

It is difficult to confront this kind of violence since it not only entails prosecution of mafia gangs, but it also requires responses to the structural problems that make people risk their lives or fall prey to smuggling and trafficking when they are trying to find better living conditions.

Structural violence

In addition to the direct forms of violence mentioned above, the significance of the various forms of structural violence cannot be overlooked. Racism is one of them. Appearing in very complex forms, it has become increasingly prevalent in many societies and, more and more, a key element of several social and political problems. In Europe, for example, racism has intensified in recent years owing to the "terrorist threat" and fear of immigration.[6] Another example is the United States where economic and healthcare pressures on racial minorities and immigrants as well as the deeprooted racism against the African American population—which came to a head

with the murder of George Floyd—have led to a series of massive protests that were met with a repressive and violent police response.

Poverty and hunger come together in another kind of structural violence with devastating effects for millions of human beings and causing a much greater number of deaths than other more visibilised forms of violence. As José María Tortosa explains, increasing malnutrition has a huge human cost and is a breeding ground for violence since it places large numbers of the population in situations of vulnerability and thus becomes the trigger of possible social upheavals.[7]

"It is necessary to think about new kinds of equitable and sustainable development that can bring about changes in the present system of production and consumption so that it will be possible to face future challenges of violence"

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened some factors of these kinds of structural violence including existing inequality gaps since poverty levels have increased owing to the decline in economic activity as a result of confinement. Mainly affected, at the same time, are most of the informal economies on which a large part of the world's population depends in order to survive. The pandemic has also exposed the fragility of many states which, unable to manage the problem and provide solutions for citizens' demands, have resorted to authoritarian responses with major impacts on the levels of conflict and violence. According to the 2021 Global Peace Index, the worldwide level of civil unrest increased in 2020, largely driven by responses to the coronavirus restrictions. Many of these disturbances stemmed from social protest that channelled mass discontent and denounced injustice, corruption, inequalities, and restrictions on civil liberties.

The world is facing a period of rapid major changes in response to the fragility of the current model of development, and these changes will lead to conflict. To the extent

that violence continues to be the resort for solving such problems, they will persist in a variety of forms and at the cost of human suffering. It is necessary to think about new kinds of equitable and sustainable development that can bring about changes in the present system of production and consumption so that it will be possible to face future challenges of different kinds of violence.

[Article translated from the original in Spanish]

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Photography

Photography by Ruido Photo for the exhibition 'Facing Violence: Stories of Resilience in Central America', produced by ICIP.

IN DEPTH

Disrupting conflict

Roger Mac Ginty
Director of the Durham Global Security Institute

While there are extensive peacebuilding operations in many parts of the world, it is curiously absent – as a practice and technical language – in many contexts that are severely affected by violence. In particular, a number of countries – especially in Latin and Central America, and the Caribbean – suffer from very high rates of violence, and yet tend not to be considered candidates for peacebuilding activities. This is despite the high levels of violence having very disruptive impacts across society and government, and the violence often having a military-style in its scale and type. In the absence of peacebuilding initiatives, and often in the face of a lack of national government capability or concern, it is often left to individuals and communities to take steps to protect themselves. At times, individuals and communities have been able to take a stand to try to disrupt the conflict. This short article considers opportunities for conflict disruption.

The ascent of peacebuilding

Over the past fifty years, but particularly over the past thirty years, an extensive international and transnational peacebuilding infrastructure has been established. This is comprised of an often interlocking system of institutions – national, multilateral and transnational – aimed at preventing conflict, lessening its impact, facilitating its 'resolution', and rehabilitating societies and institutions after conflict has lessened. This infrastructure is complemented by a 'software' or an increasingly professionalised system of protocols and operating procedures. Decades of `best practice' have been internalised, and there is widespread agreement on the most suitable mechanisms and approaches to the range of problems impacting conflict-affected societies. A

vernacular, or a technical language of peacebuilding terms, has developed allowing easier comparison across cases.

In addition to the development of a peacebuilding infrastructure and the standardisation of operating procedures, we have also seen the growth of a professional class of peacebuilders. Now numbering in the tens of thousands and often educated with specialist degrees in peacebuilding, this transnational cohort of peacebuilders are employed by the United Nations, international organisations, national governments, and (international) non-governmental organisations. This is in addition to a substantial sector of private consultants, and for-profit peacebuilding organisations.

"Peacebuilding operations are curiously absent in many contexts that are severely affected by violence"

The picture that emerges is of a thriving sector operating in multiple conflict-affected contexts. In a sense there has been a peacebuilding 'caravan', with international attention and resources moving from context to context as conflict ebbs and flows; Cambodia to Bosnia to Sierra Leone to the Democratic Republic of Congo to Colombia, and many stops in between. Along the way, more lessons are learned and best practice is honed.

Selective Peacebuilding

Despite the extensive infrastructure of peacebuilding, and the resources devoted to it in multiple contexts, peacebuilding – as a practice and language – is applied selectively. In some cases, the conflict actors emphasise security approaches and see little value in peacebuilding. Israel-Palestine provides a good example of this, with Israel – as the most powerful actor – prioritising a security-led approach.[1] International interventions that might be labelled as 'peacebuilding' are often actually security approaches. In the case of some conflict in the global north, states might not want to admit that peacebuilding is needed. In a sense, peacebuilding might be seen as

something that is only required 'over there' in far-away conflict-affected areas. Thus, for example, the United States suffers significant levels of violence – much of it with a racial dimension – and on-going (if not rising) tension between black communities and police forces.[2] Yet, for the United States to admit that it required peacebuilding or some form of nationwide conflict resolution would be a humiliating admission of the depth of the problem. It helps too that the United States is a strong state and would be able to rebuff any international attempts to initiate peacebuilding interventions.

There are also cases in which there are high levels of violence, often with military characteristics, and yet the violence is regarded as criminal rather than political. In the view of national governments – and international actors – peacebuilding is not regarded as an option. A number of states in Latin and Central America and the Caribbean suffer from extremely high levels of violence. In 2020, El Salvador suffered 1,322 homicides – down from over 6,000 in 2015, but still at a high level.[3] Brazil experienced 50,033 homicides in 2020 (with 6,416 people being killed by the police).[4] In Mexico, the 2020 figure was 34,515.[5] In all of these cases, the homicide number exceeded (in some cases far exceeded) the widely accepted technical definition of war. According to the respected Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, war is 'a state-based conflict or dyad which reaches at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a specific calendar year.'[6] It is also quite possible that the official figures are an under-estimate given the number of abduction-murders in some of these contexts.

"Despite the extensive infrastructure of peacebuilding, and the resources devoted to it in multiple contexts, peacebuilding – as a practice and language – is applied selectively"

Indeed, if we ignore the aggregate number of homicides and concentrate on the homicide rate (that is the number of homicides per 100,000 in the population) then the situations in   Honduras, Guatemala and Jamaica are particularly noteworthy. The aggregate annual homicide numbers do not exceed the 1,000 mark as they have

relatively small populations, but at respective homicide rates of 44, 37 and 32 homicides per 100,000 it is clear that these societies are undergoing significant disruption. It should be noted that these statistics include nuance. Homicide rates are not uniform across countries, and they affect different age groups and genders in different ways.

The violence in many of these contexts is usually designated as "criminal". To some extent it is difficult to disagree with this designation. Much of the violence is motivated by profit and is often linked to narcotics. Yet, if we scratch the surface of this top-level explanation, we can see that the violence mostly occurs within complex political economies. So in addition to simplistic explanations linked to profits and the drugs trade, we also have to think about the partial legitimacy of states, corruption and limited capabilities among police forces, and the colonial legacies that still pattern economies.

The chief point is that all of these societies suffer from *political* violence. Even in a case like Honduras, which cannot point to the legacy of a recent civil war, it is difficult not to politically contextualise the current level of homicides. [7] Race, the land tenure system, and decades of US support for governments all collide to produce the current complex political economy.

Despite the high levels of (political) violence, the language and practice of peacebuilding tend not to be used in relation to these contexts. Peacebuilding frameworks and language are largely dominated by the Anglophone world and do not automatically transfer to Latin American contexts. The absence of many of the large international peacebuilding organisations is striking. Moreover, peace theory and practice is largely shaped around explicitly politically motivated violence and invest much energy into dealing with identity. As a result, many standard peacebuilding activities might be ill-equipped to deal with the high-intensity violence found in parts of Brazil or Mexico.

"Peacebuilding frameworks and language is largely dominated by the Anglophone world and does not automatically transfer to Latin American contexts"

There is no disputing the scale of the disruption caused by this violence and its often structural and systemic nature. It is embedded in how societies operate and the micro-actions of individuals, families and communities. The extent of the violence impacts everyday thought processes as people anticipate violence and take steps to avoid it as best they can, or persist in the midst of it. There are multiple reasons why peacebuilding may not be regarded as an acceptable response in these contexts. For example, to allow some peacebuilding practices to operate there may have to be a recognition of the legitimacy of certain groups and causes – something that is difficult to imagine if the group has been designated as criminal. Moreover, formal peacebuilding programmes and projects are often (although not always) initiated and sponsored by external actors. Chief among them, the United Nations, is primarily mandated to intervene in the case of international conflicts, and requires explicit approval from host states before operating.

The primary formal response to the high levels of violence has been security-led. This has had varying levels of success, not least because militarised policing has led to militarised responses from gangs. Each seems caught in a security dilemma in which the next step is to re-arm, and civilians are often caught in the middle of two violent actors. There have also been negotiations on violence reduction between governments and gangs, with informal deals struck between them.[8] Often these talks and deals are deniable. Yet despite the securitised responses, and occasional violence reduction talks, high rates of violence, and the complex political economies that underpin them are not going to go away. This leaves so-called 'ordinary' people in the position where they have to rely on their own ingenuity and resources to get by.

Citizen responses

Violence in some contexts is so prevalent that it impinges on multiple aspects of life. The mundane and everyday are patterned by the need to avoid as much violence as possible and persist with some semblance of family life. Whether it is the route the kids take to school or the confidence that citizens have in reporting the crime to the police, life is a series of calculations about what is safe or unsafe. It is often down to the individual or family to make these decisions. In many cases, the state is not only incapable or disinterested – it is also the origin of much violence. Whether violent police raids in Rio de Janeiro's favelas or police brutality in Kenya, citizens devise strategies to avoid gangs and the police.[9]

In some cases, citizens have sought to disrupt the violence that has impinged on their lives. Often this conflict disruption takes very subtle forms. It might occur behind the closed doors of the family apartment, and take the form of a big sister cautioning a younger brother against gang membership. This may not sound significant, but the quiet counselling might be transgressive to the prevailing logic in the community in which joining a gang is an accepted (and possibly expected) route for young men. By not joining a gang, the young man disrupts a social narrative and shows that alternative pathways are possible (and quite possibly lead a safer life and cause less social harm). Micro-sociological interventions like that of the big sister are under-studied and under-appreciated. They have value in illustrating that gangs, paramilitary actors, authoritarian states, or political leaders who claim to speak for an entire identity group are not monolithic or hegemonic actors. Instead, these minor acts of conflict disruption puncture the logic, stance and narrative of conflict actors who seek to dominate a social space.

"The actions by people and communities to face violence require bravery, but also an ability to read the social temperature. There are certain times when pro-social or pro-peace initiatives are simply inadvisable"

It is understandable that many acts of conflict disruption occur 'below the radar'. To take a stand against the prevailing logic or narrative in a community, or to openly reject the 'protection' of a gang or a police force may incur wrath. In some cases, however, individuals, families and communities have engaged in overt conflict disruption activities by openly rejecting the widely-accepted narratives, stances, actions and memberships associated with the conflict. Much like market disruption, whereby a market is disrupted by a new product or company, a 'conflict market' can be disrupted by new actors, initiatives, narratives and stances. These actions require bravery, but also an ability to read the social temperature and make a judgement on what is possible and not possible. There are certain times when pro-social or pro-peace initiatives are simply inadvisable.

Despite the risks, there are multiple examples of individuals and communities engaging in conflict disruption. Former gang members in many contexts have been involved in disengagement or dissuasion activities.[10] Informal community leaders have established 'No Shoot Zones' in US cities – both as a way of chiding the authorities for their ineffectiveness and as a challenge to gangs to respect the rights of citizens. [11] In a number of conflict-affected contexts, communities have established "Zones of Peace" as statements that they want to step outside of the conflict and forge alternative and more peaceful ways of getting on with life.[12] These transgressive activities, that go against the prevailing societal norm, are not without their risks. The appalling death toll among community leaders and activists in post-accord Colombia is testament – among other things – to the intolerance of many actors in conflict areas towards alternative narratives, stances, actions and types of leaders.

"Much conflict disruption relies on individuals who use initiative, decide to extend tolerance, and rely on their personal judgment rather than what a gang, militant group or government mandates"

In the best-case scenario, conflict disruption can factor up and out. Highly localised actions may inspire others to follow suit. The imaginary that violent political leaders have complete community support might be punctured by the actions or stances of a few brave individuals. In a number of cases, it has become clear that communities have 'moved on', yet political or militant leaders have not. Tensions may develop between the political or militant leaders, and a number of community members who question their legitimacy or strategy may grow. In an optimum scenario, political and militant leaders would follow community sentiment and adjust their behaviour.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, it is worth asking what – if anything – external actors can do to support conflict disruption. It is understandable that peacebuilding actors might want to support local actions that seem to be working or give some sort of hope. Yet, many conflict disruption actions are very localised and occur behind closed doors. They take the form of micro-sociological actions and stances that occur in the workplace, in the immediate vicinity of the home, or in the neighbourhood. Moreover, many of those involved in conflict disruption want to keep their actions 'under the radar' lest they incur criticism, or worse, from their in-group. These forms of conflict disruption take shape through quiet, patient actions and stances. They are not the types of actions that can somehow be 'projectised' by international peace-support organisations. A more feasible supportive approach would be to invest in education – a route that can individuals and communities find alternatives to violence and militancy.

Some conflict disruption activities do lend themselves to international support, and we have seen many examples of INGOs supporting local violence reduction measures. But it is worth noting that much conflict disruption relies on individuals who use initiative, decide to extend tolerance, and rely on their personal judgment rather than what a gang, militant group or government mandates. Often these are charismatic individuals who are social entrepreneurs and have the energy to take initiative and the strength to withstand criticisms and setbacks. They might, for example, set up a sports club that is open to all members of the community regardless of identity. Or they might choose not to show loyalty to a local strongman. Or they might simply get on with life – as best they can – and ignore the hubbub and divisive nature of an election campaign. It is difficult

for international peace-support actors to support such change-making individuals. Indeed, it is often difficult for outsiders to even see these highly localised actions – despite the very large peacebuilding infrastructure that has been established.

[1] Turner, M. *Peacebuilding as counterinsurgency in the occupied Palestinian territory', Review of International Studies,* 41(1), 2015, 73-98.

[2] See, for example, The Sentencing Project.

[3] Brigida, Anna-Catherine. 'El Salvador's homicide rate a historic low in 2020', Foreign Policy, 3 March, 2021.

[4] Reuters. 'Murders, killings by police in Brazil rose last year, report shows', Reuters, 15 July, 2021.

[5] Associated Press. 'Mexico's homicide stayed high in 2020 despite pandemic', AP, 20 January, 2021.

[6] See this link.

[7] I am grateful to Amanda Blewitt for this point.

[8] Brigada, op. cit.

[9] See, for example, Raphael Tsavkko Garcia. 'Is there no end to Rio de Janeiro's cycle of violence?', Al Jazeera, 27 May, 2021. See also, Human Rights Watch. 'Kenya: Police brutality during curfew', Human Rights Watch, 22 April, 2020.

[10] See, for example, Jonathan Blitzer. 'Former gang members offer advice on how to combat MS-13', New Yorker, 30 January, 2018.

[11] Dean Adams. 'How a rapper set up no shoot zones to stop Baltimore's bloodshed', Al Jazeera, 11 October, 2018.

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Photography

Photography by Ruido Photo for the exhibition 'Facing Violence: Stories of Resilience in Central America', produced by ICIP.

IN DEPTH

Mexico: a country at war?

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Mexico has been one of the most violent fronts of the global prohibitionist drug policy that is mainly promoted by the United States of America. The national authorities have been using the armed forces to destroy drug crops since the end of the 1960s, first in three northern states (Durango, Chihuahua, and Sinaloa) and later in the rest of the country.[1] Over the years, the measures taken to confront drug-trafficking organisations have toughened, using the full punitive power of the state by means of criminalisation of activities related with harvest, production, and marketing, the establishment of a regime of exception in criminal matters and a criminal law of the enemy, and the use of soldiers and marines to combat those engaged in these illegal activities.[2]

The most extreme manifestation of the drug policy came in December 2006 when the then president, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, deployed thousands of military personnel to confront and dismantle drug-trafficking organisations and thus to recover state control of the territories concerned. In order to preserve and expand their businesses, these criminal groups turned to arms.

Official data reveal that, between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2020, members of the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (SEDENA – Secretariat of National Defence) engaged in 4,995 armed clashes with "civilian aggressors".[3] Personnel from Secretaría de Marina (SEMAR – Mexican Navy) were involved in 389 confrontations[4] between 2008 and 2020, while members of the now disbanded Federal Police and its successor the National Guard (mainly consisting of military personnel) have reported 1,751 clashes and, from the time it became operational in July 2019 until 30 December 2020, the

National Guard reported 156 incidents.[5]

Not since the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917/1920) had there been a situation of prolonged armed violence—informally known in the period in question as the "war on drugs"—of such dimensions.

Human rights protection mechanisms have independently demonstrated human rights violations against the civilian population in this framework of the war on drugs. They have revealed, for example, the intolerable figures of extrajudicial executions,[6] forced disappearances,[7] and torture,[8] committed by both public servants and criminal organisations. They also found that the situation in Mexico went beyond that of a country dealing with high crime rates and that these were non-sporadic acts of victimisation. Accordingly, they concluded that this was a crisis of violence, security, violations of human rights, and impunity.[9] The present United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, in 2019,[10] and her predecessor Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein (2014-2018), in 2015,[11] both stated, although without acknowledging the existence of an armed conflict, that the figures of violent deaths were shocking and typical of a country at war. Both called on the authorities to tackle impunity to avoid repetition of the abuses.

"The current situation of violence in Mexico can only be described in terms of international law as a non-international armed conflict"

Official records report that 93,212 people are missing (in October 2021)[12] and more than 350,000 murders have been committed, at least 58% of them with firearms.[13] In this regard, SEDENA reports that 5,042 "alleged criminals" and 42 victims "unrelated to the events"[14] have died in the clashes. SEMAR reports the deaths of 510 alleged criminals.[15] Moreover, the National Guard states that, in conflicts in which it has participated, 68 people (identified as aggressors) have died.[16]

Atrocities are perpetrated by criminal organisations as a way of instilling fear and controlling regions to secure the running of their illegal businesses. They are also committed by authorities from the three levels of government (federal, state, and municipal) as part of their security strategy. Nevertheless, no national institution with the appropriate authority has been tasked with clarifying and investigating the alleged confrontations, or the deaths that have occurred in or related with them and, much less, have they established political, social, administrative, or prosecutorial responsibilities against the perpetrators of, or accomplices in atrocious crimes.

The authorities have claimed that they have the duty to conduct public safety functions and that armed violence is the result of criminal activities, thus denying the possibility of accurately describing the situation and exploring alternatives for ending it. Since then, and with ever increasing intensity, they have depended on the armed forces, as a result of which the conflicts continue.

The limited characterisation of violence by the incumbent presidential administration

President López Obrador won the 2018 elections with broad social support after his campaign promise that his security policy would differ from that of his predecessors. Now in office as president, he has referred to the fact that previous administrations generated violence by authorising the armed forces to confront criminal organisations and use lethal force to kill their leaders and members.

The federal government's policy document recognises that this was a war that privileged the use of force, with chief aim of eliminating the leaders of criminal organisations,[17] while the present administration has decided to change to focus in order to tackle "[…] the very roots of criminal lawlessness and loss of security with the immediate aim of reducing crime rates".[18] On more than one occasion, President López Obrador has personally acknowledged that the security strategy of earlier administrations was outright warfare,[19] an irresponsible approach[20] in which many lives were lost, both civilian and of members of the armed forces.[21]

"Atrocities are perpetrated by criminal organisations as a way of instilling fear and controlling regions to secure the running of their illegal businesses"

While the existence of armed conflict during previous administrations is acknowledged, present policy has not changed in practice. On the contrary, military measures to confront and crush criminal organisations are still being used.

The increasing militarisation of security and of the public administration

Paradoxically, the current federal government condemns past practices on the one hand while, on the other, deploys thousands of soldiers to combat criminal organisations as well as militarising the federal police force. At the end of 2018, President López Obrador pushed for, and a few months later achieved, approval of a constitutional amendment to abolish the federal police and to establish a civilian national guard. This change temporarily authorised the possibility of deploying the armed forces to carry out public security functions for five years (2019-2024), on condition that such engagement was exceptional, regulated, supervised, subordinate, and complementary.[22]

In undisguised non-compliance with these conditions, the president named an active military officer as head of the national guard and filled it with military personnel. At the same time, he increased military deployment in security tasks, to such an extent that the Ministry of National Defence recently reported that 300,000 military personnel are engaged in such work over a large part of the country.[23]

Moreover, in contravention of what the Constitution itself stipulates,[24] the president has extended the powers of the armed forces to carry out tasks in areas that should correspond to civilian authorities, for example immigration control, public works, health, education, and social policy. A recently published study reveals that, in

recent years, the armed forces have taken on 246 tasks that are the responsibility of civilian authorities.[25]

Armed conflict in Mexico

The current situation of violence in Mexico can only be described in terms of international law as a non-international (or internal) armed conflict, which is to say that the levels of armed violence and organisation of the opposing groups satisfy the criteria laid down by international humanitarian law (IHL), the law of war. As shown above, the federal government has recognised that, during previous administrations (2006-2018), Mexico was in a situation of war, thus falsely trying to convince the population that the present reality is different. In fact, both the armed forces and the national guard continue to engage in armed clashes with criminal organisations.

> **"Mexican armed forces as well as a considerable number of criminal organisations represent the degree of organisation that is necessary for them to be deemed armed groups in accordance with IHL"**

In this regard, expert studies in the field[26] have found that the Mexican armed forces as well as a considerable number of criminal organisations represent the degree of organisation that is necessary for them to be deemed armed groups in accordance with IHL, in terms of their command structure, internal discipline, control of territory, access to equipment and recruits, ability to sustain military operations, *inter alia.*

Not only this, but the clashes between the Mexican armed forces and the armed groups, or among the latter, is also of sufficient intensity to be categorised of sufficient intensity in accordance with IHL because of their widespread presence in the country, their durability, the type of high calibre weapons used, the death toll, the numbers of those wounded and of internally displaced persons,[27] destruction of civilian

property, etcetera.

Given all the above, it can be stated that the Mexican armed conflict that began in December 2006 is ongoing. However, the official narrative ascertains that Mexico is going through a complex security situation, that the armed forces are working to enforce the law, and that they are no longer being ordered to kill and eliminate members of organised crime even while the killing of leaders of criminal organisations continues to be celebrated as the successful outcome of military operations.[28] Hence, responses to challenges issued by government actors with regard to reducing violence focus on the efficacy of security policies. These responses lead to reinforced military participation in these tasks, without addressing either the causes of the conflict or its effects on the human rights of people who do not directly take part in the hostilities, including the civilian population, the wounded, the sick, combatants who have laid down their arms, journalists, human rights defenders, health workers and others.

Acknowledgement that the situation of armed combat between criminal organisations and security forces since 2006 is in fact armed conflict could entail at least three advantages. First, such recognition would submit armed personnel to the rule of law as they would be obliged to apply the rules of use of force as stipulated in IHL. This would mean that soldiers and marines would apply the principle of distinction of civilians and civilian objects of military targets, which they do not do at present. Furthermore, the upper echelons would be obliged to prevent the troops under their command from targeting in their attacks the civilian population and others who are participating directly in hostilities, which also means complying with the obligation to treat humanely, at all times, the civilian population, detainees, health workers, journalists, human rights defenders, those who have laid down arms, the sick and the wounded.

"Recognising the situation as armed conflict would allow more effective action by international humanitarian organisations and

war crimes could be investigated"

Second, recognising the situation as armed conflict would allow more effective action by international humanitarian organisations whereby they can provide adequate assistance to the victims of the conflict, including the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons who are, at present, totally defenceless. More specifically, the mandate of the International Committee of the Red Cross for situations of armed conflict, and those of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees could be more effectively and smoothly applied.

Third, war crimes committed by parties to the conflict, and especially by agents of the state, in which the victims are civilians or persons protected by IHL, could be investigated, prosecuted, and punished by national jurisdictions of third countries and by international courts with the authority to do so, for example the International Criminal Court (ICC). It should not be forgotten that, as the Security Council has noted on several occasions, impunity for atrocious crimes is a threat to national peace and security.

The armed conflict presently occurring in Mexico is of a highly singular nature when compared with armed conflicts from the past, when the armed forces traditionally combatted left-wing armed groups with politically explicit aims, for example to bring about regime change or what was called national liberation.[29] Nowadays, the situation is that armed groups seek to control territory in order to continue or expand their businesses without aspiring, or not openly at least, to hold government office. This is relevant because, contrary to what some people may believe, IHL does not stipulate that, in order for a situation of armed violence to be classified as conflict, the organised groups clashing with the authorities must be politically motivated.

Final considerations

I am convinced that, if peace is to be achieved in Mexico, the existence of an armed conflict must first of all be recognised, not only because of the advantages described

above, but also because this would entail changing the military security paradigm, demilitarising police institutions, and purging law enforcement agencies of officials responsible for committing atrocities. All this would be reinforced by bringing to trial, together with their accomplices, the perpetrators of human rights abuses, crimes against humanity, and serious breaches of IHL It would also help to prevent repetition of such crimes.

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of studies suggesting that international prohibitionism has failed, that its stated goals have not been achieved, and that they cannot be achieved if the present punitivist and security-based approach is maintained. It has been demonstrated that democracies that have regulated the harvest, production, commerce, and consumption of drugs, with an emphasis on preventing risks and damages to the health of consumers, have reduced violence related with the drug market, and have generated tax revenues so that problematic substance consumption can be dealt with from the health sector.

"Mexicans have been unable to end armed violence but the international community must accept their responsibility. There is still time to construct a just peace process"

In this regard, Mexico would have to reform its drug policy to incorporate a regime for regulating harvest, production, distribution, and commercce of all the substances that are produced, processed, and consumed in Mexico, and also for establishing a health protection system with a view to avoiding risks and damage for consumers, as well as providing proper attention for those affected by problematic drug use.

At the same time, a national disarmament programme should be established, especially for criminal individuals and groups. In order to weaken them, priority should be given to tackling the financial structures of illegal operations and bringing their members to trial for crimes against human rights (for example, murders, kidnappings, human trafficking, disappearances, and forced displacement of populations).

Demilitarisation of security is a legitimate demand of Mexican society, which has organised around a social movement called Seguridad Sin Guerra (Security without War),[30] calling for the return of military personal and marines to their constitutionally defined peacetime duties, consolidation of civilian police, purging from the security forces officials who have been involved in human rights abuses, and the establishment of a transitional justice policy that would bring to trial all those responsible for abuse, including those at the highest levels.

Mexicans have been unable to end armed violence that began almost fifteen years ago. Given the enormity of the atrocities committed in a situation of armed conflict of a non-international nature, and especially given the unwillingness of the authorities to protect the civilian population, the international community must accept their responsibility. There is still time to construct a just peace process before Mexico's fledgling democracy deteriorates further.

[Article translated from the original in Spanish]

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[1] See Amaya Ordorika Imaz, José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez, and Olga Guzmán Vergara. *El costo social de la guerra contra las drogas en México: militarización y vulneración sistemática de los derechos humanos,*Ed. Ubijus, Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos and Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala, Mexico City, 2018, p. 38 and ff.

[2] In this regard, see Eugenio Raúl Zaffaroni, *El enemigo en el derecho penal,* Ed. Coyoacán, Mexico City, 2011.

[3] SEDENA, answer to a request for information with folio 0000700078821, 17 February 2021.

[4] SEMAR, answer to a request for information with folio 0001300032021, 17 February 2021.

[5] Guardia Nacional (National Guard), answer to a request for information with folio 2800100021321, 17 February 2021.

[6] A/HRC/26/36/Add.1.

[7] A/HRC/19/58/Add.2, parags. 16, 17 and 76; CED/C/MEX/CO/1, parags. 10 and 27.

[8] A/HRC/28/68/Add.3, parags. 23 and 32.

[9] OEA/Ser.L/V/II, 31 December 2015, parags. 27, 11, 61, 63, 66, 105, 160, 192 to 214; CCPR/C/MEX/CO/6, parag. 22.

[10] Statement of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, on the occasion of her visit to Mexico, 9 Abril 2019.

[11] Statement of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, on the occasion of his visit to Mexico.

[12] Figures from the Registro Nacional de Personas Desaparecidas y No Localizadas (National Register of Disappeared and Missing Persons) on 18 October 2021.

[13] 2006 to 2019

[14] SEDENA, answer to a request for information with folio 0000700078821, 17 February 2021.

[15] SEMAR, answer to a request for information with folio 0001300032021, 17 February 2021.

[16] Guardia Nacional, answer to a request for information with folio 2800100021321, 17 February 2021.

[17] Programa Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Human Rights Programme), published in the Diario Oficial de la Federación (Official Federal Gazette) on 10 December 2020.

[18] Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (Official Development Plan) 2019-2024, published in the Diario Oficial de la Federación (Official Federal Gazette), 12 July 2019.

[19] Stenographic version of the morning press conference given by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on 23 October 2019.

[20] Stenographic version of the morning press conference given by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on 11 December 2019.

[21] Stenographic version of the morning press conference given by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on 23 October 2019.

[22] Decree amending, supplementing and derogating various provisions of the Political Constitution of the 22 United Mexican States concerning the National Guard). Published in the Diario Oficial de la Federación (Official Federal Gazette) on 26 March 2019.

[23] See this link.

[24] Article 129 of the Constitution stipulates that, in times of peace, the armed forces can only engage in activities pertaining to the military professional domain.

[25] CIDE. *Inventario Nacional de lo Militarizado,* in Plataforma de Proyección de Datos Abiertos.

[26] Leiden University-Grotius Centre for International Legal Studies. *La situación de la violencia relacionada con las drogas en México del 2006 al2017: ¿Es un conflicto armado no internacional?,* Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios de Occidente (ITESO – Jesuit University of Guadalajara) and Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (CMDPDH – Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights), Mexico 2019. See also Chiara Radaelli. "Engaging with Drug Lords: Protecting Civilians in Colombia, Mexico and Honduras", in *The War Report. Armed Conflict in 2014,* Oxford University Press, Oxford; Julie Lambin. "Mexico: Armed Gang Violence Sliding into Armed Conflict?", in *The War Report. Armed Conflicts in 2017,* Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights a Joint Center of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies and the Faculty of Law of the Geneva University, pp. 83-91. AlsoAndreas Schedler. *En la niebla de la guerra. Los ciudadanos ante la violencia criminal organizada,* Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, Mexico 2015.

[27] On forced internal displacement in Mexico as a result of widespread violence, armed conflict, and/or violation of human rights, see several studies by the CMDPDH (Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights): Report 2017,

Report 2018, *Entre la invisibilidad y el abandono*. See alsoMaría Cristina Díaz Pérez and Raúl Romo Viramontes. *La violencia como causa de desplazamiento interno forzado. Aproximaciones a su análisis en México*, Secretaría de Gobernación-Consejo Nacional de Población-Fondo de Población de las Naciones Unidas, Mexico 2019.

[28] The Mexican Army strikes at the structure of the criminal organisations of the "Golfo" and "Pacífico" cartels. Communique of the Ministry of National Defence, on 24 October 2021:

[29] This happened with the clashes between the Mexican army and the 1970s guerrillas, and also the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) in the state of Chiapas in 1994.

[30] See, in English.

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Photography

Mexico City, Mexico; September 26, 2020: Mothers of missing students during a demonstration to commemorate the sixth anniversary of the disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa students. By GuillermoGphoto (Shutterstock).

IN DEPTH

Militarisation of public security

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Although assessing militarisation on a global scale is not easy, efforts have been made in this direction by means of defining indicators collected in several countries. Notable here is the work carried out in the Global Peace Index (GPI) which compares 163 countries with the aim of ascertaining the level of peace in each one. It is produced every year by the Institute for Economics and Peace whose headquarters are in Sydney, Australia. The GPI is a complex index bringing together three dimensions: 1) ongoing internal and international conflicts; 2) public and social security; and 3) militarisation. It aims to promote broader understanding of the level of peace in the countries by classifying peace in a way that goes beyond the mere presence or absence of wars.

The first dimension includes indicators like the number and duration of internal conflicts, the number of people killed in external conflicts, and the involvement of the country in these international conflicts. The second, broader and more complex dimension includes such indicators as the number of refugees, the scale of political terror (authoritarian practices), the figures for violent crime, the homicide rate, the prison population and police, political instability (measured, for example, by the probability of violent public demonstrations), and individual access to firearms. The third dimension is concerned with indicators like the percentage of military expenditure in relation with GDP, the total number of military personnel, and the volume of arms exports and imports per 100,000 inhabitants. The methodology is complex and very well described in the Report[1] itself, which also provides an account of the sources for each indicator comprising the Index. The GPI is, without a doubt, a bold and innovative way of evaluating peace.

"Conflicts and crises that appeared in the last decade have started to recede and that, in their stead, is a new surge of tension and uncertainty deriving from the pandemic"

The most recent edition of the GPI, from 2021, shows that the average level of peace fell by 0.07%, the ninth worsening of the indicator in the last thirteen years, with eighty-seven countries showing improvement and seventy-three deterioration. Nevertheless, this percentage increase is the second smallest in the history of the Index. Hence, the GPI 2021 reveals a world in which the conflicts and crises that appeared in the last decade have started to recede and that, in their stead, is a new surge of tension and uncertainty deriving from the Covid-19 pandemic and rising tensions among several of the major powers.

The 2021 Report also notes that the dimension of militarisation was the only one that has improved, with a slight increase of 4.2% since 2008. The figure for military personnel per 100,000 inhabitants fell in 111 countries, while military expenditure in relation with GDP dropped in eighty-seven countries. However, this is a slow, heterogeneous trend, even including backsliding in many countries, especially with revived tensions among the powers that are stronger in economic and military terms. The Middle East and North Africa were the regions that showed the greatest deterioration in the indicator for military expenditure.

Militarisation of public security in Brazil and other countries of Latin America

Militarisation of public security has several characteristics. The presence of military personnel in strategic government posts, and subordination of the police to the armed forces are two examples. However, the most striking feature is use of the armed forces for activities related with citizen security.

This displacement of the functions of the armed forces is a problem for several reasons, first and foremost because the mission of the armed forces is to guarantee national defence and territorial integrity, mainly by protecting the nation-state from an external enemy. Public security, on the other hand, seeks to protect citizens and safeguard their life and freedom, with a focus on the individual and guaranteeing order so that everyday life in cities and rural areas will be possible. These are quite different missions, and they require distinct and even opposite forms of action. The logic of national defence is much closer to the logic of war and fighting an enemy. The logic of public security should be keeping order, managing conflicts, preventing crime and violence, and enforcing the law. Training, procedures, command structure, and decision making are very different in each case.

"Trivialisation of the exceptional use of the armed forces in public security brings the logic of war, resulting in serious human rights violations"

Accordingly, although the laws of different countries allow exceptional use of the armed forces in public security, trivialisation of this use brings the logic of war into routine public security, resulting in serious human rights violations and inefficiency in public security activities, while also causing damage in the armed forces themselves since they are being used for activities for which they are not properly prepared.

Brazil is an interesting case of this undue participation of military forces in public security. National legislation permits the use of the armed forces in the domain of public security when the local security forces are not sufficient in certain situations that require exceptional intervention for a specified time. These military operations to guarantee public order are known as *Garantia da Lei e da Ordem* (GLO). "Ministry of Defence (MD) data reveal that, between 1992 and 2019, the armed forces were used on twenty-five occasions of military police strikes; in twenty-two missions established to "guarantee voting and counting" in electoral processes; in thirty-eight events requiring security support; and in twenty-eight missions that included public security, protection

of public goods, strikes in other sectors, escorts, etcetera (Ministry of Defence, 2019). It is also important to highlight the role of the armed forces in security at mass events, such as those held in Brazil between 2013 and 2016, namely the FIFA Confederations Cup (2013), World Youth Day (2013), the FIFA World Cup (2014), and the Olympic Games (2016). However, internal use of the armed forces does not occur only in such evidently exceptional situations as the above. Since 1992, the Brazilian armed forces have been called out on at least twenty-three GLO missions to act against urban violence, especially in Rio de Janeiro, where eleven such deployments were sent to combat crime waves arising from the high rates of violence that chronically plague these regions" (Salvadori[2], 2020, p. 16). These figures reveal an excessive use of the armed forces for dealing with challenges in the domain of public security, in particular in zones known for their chronic violence.

The negative consequences of the use of armed forces in these circumstances can be illustrated by the case of the musician Evaldo and the tin can collector Luciano who were murdered in Rio de Janeiro in April 2019. They died riddled with bullets from more than 200 shots fired by an army convoy at the car in which the musician and his family were travelling because, it was claimed, the vehicle had ignored a roadblock.[3]

"In Latin America, the use of the armed forces has intensified in public security. The expansion and complexity of organised crime has been a major argument in favour of this use"

It is not only in Brazil that use of the armed forces has intensified in public security. It is happening in Latin America in general. The expansion and complexity of organised crime has been a major argument in favour of this use. "The result is that police capabilities are not enough for keeping order since criminal groups are using military techniques and resources in a long-term economic—and, increasingly, also political—context (Ramalho, Diamint, Sánchez, 2020, p. 5).[4]

Although many countries of Latin America are experiencing this process of militarisation of public security, every place has its own dynamics and particularities. The involvement of the military in the Cold War, the idea of fighting the enemy and, after the war, against drugs, and the subsequent war on terror (influenced by the United States) have contributed to the fact that each of the countries of Latin America has set the bounds between the armed forces and security forces in its own way. In Colombia and Venezuela, for example, there is greater "symbiosis" between the military and the public security forces, which presents the more operative challenge as to how they should work together and in respect for the law. At the other extreme are Uruguay and Argentina, where society does not accept the risk that the military will once again resort to human rights violations. Between these two poles are countries like Brazil, Mexico, Peru, and Ecuador where the relationship between the armed and security forces has been used, in ways that are not always exceptional and controlled, in the struggle against transnational crime and in the pursuit of internal order, which has had serious repercussions with regard to human rights. Besides complaints against the military, there are constant cases of forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture, and violations of due process.

Another important dimension of this phenomenon is militarisation of the police. Even civilian police forces end up repeating aspects of military-style behaviour that are detrimental for human rights and for public security itself. Intensification of violence through police lethality, the practice of torture, other kinds of violence in stop and frisk operations, and the idea of "taking the law into one's own hands" to finish off the enemy has been a significant dimension characterising this militarisation of security forces. It also frequently happens that, within the police forces themselves, the most highly valued departments are those of specialised troops that are deployed to act in specific situations, which requires special training and procedures, usually linked to the warrior ethos, including uniforms that evoke a heightened militarism. These police forces enjoy much greater prestige that the ordinary patrol officer, who interacts with citizens and usually does not bear arms. To a large extent, this excessive esteem for the "warrior" accounts for the militarisation of the security forces.

One example that provides a useful illustration of this militarisation in the reality of Brazil is the so-called *Operación Policial Exceptis*, carried out in Rio de Janeiro in May 2020. Some two hundred police, armed for "a war",[5] killed twenty-eight people in a raid on the Jacarezinho favela. The police raid took place in spite of the fact that the Federal Supreme Court had suspended such police operations in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro during the pandemic.

"The real increase in violence and criminality, as well as growing fear and feelings of insecurity, have fuelled legitimisation of entirely repressive public security policies"

It is necessary to emphasise that "militarisation is not always desirable, necessary or inevitable. Neither does its intensification always mean greater state ability to confront common or organised crime. [...] Although there is a strong incentive for the military to develop police-style capacities, this does not mean that it drives the process. Indeed, some see it as a diversion from their key missions, while others understand it as a means to obtain equipment and secure their participation in political decision-making. Moreover, the process of militarising the police to endow it with army-like capacities, for example shooting down the enemy, use of large-calibre weapons, and resort to military jurisdiction, *inter alia*, is quite complex and dysfunctional" (Ramalho, Diamint, Sánchez[6], 2020, p. 5).

Recommendations

In addition to the historical background and military legacy in the various contexts described above, especially in Brazil and other Latin American countries, there are aspects of public security policies that help to explain this close relationship between the armed forces and public security. It is important to understand them in order to think of ways to surmount them.[7]

As a general rule, security policies are focused almost exclusively on the application of criminal law, "dealing with crime after it happens", and giving priority to repression of crime and the punitive paradigm. The real increase in violence and criminality, as well as growing fear and feelings of insecurity, have fuelled legitimisation of entirely repressive public security policies, frequently in direct opposition to human rights and democracy. In this situation, discourse calling for harsher penalties, the creation of new crimes, police violence and tougher treatment of criminals is repeated in society and ends up being heeded by governments. This creates a vicious circle of demand and response in the field of public security, which is unable to deal with the factors that generate and structure violence. Accordingly, use of the armed forces and excessive militarisation of policies is even more rife.

"It is particularly important to adhere to a more coherent understanding of public security, combining repression of crimes and violence with a dimension of prevention, and working on medium and long-term policies"

Even in cases where repression is necessary, as would be the case of organised crime, lack of rationality, technical skills, and even the political will to deal properly with such situations, means that this option ends up being highly inefficient as well as causing major human rights violations. The view that the criminal must be punished, whatever the price, is used to justify many of these violations.

In these circumstances, it is particularly important that political leaders should be able to adhere to a more coherent understanding of public security, combining repression of crimes and violence with a dimension of prevention, focusing on factors of risk and protection, and working on medium and long-term policies at the local level to address them.

It is important, too, that these political leaders should be capable of publicly stating that the effectiveness of public security policies depends on due respect for laws and

human rights, strengthening data-driven policing, together with ongoing planning and accountability. Punishment, per se, should not be the core response to crime. Priority needs to be given to investigating and solving the most serious crimes like homicide, for example.

Finally, active involvement by society is necessary for security policies, as is the establishment of clear regulations on the use of violence that will protect all citizens as well as the security forces themselves.

With prevention policies, the police working with intelligence, planning, and respecting the law, and with the active participation of society in these policies, the population will see much more tangible results, and the eventual need for the armed forces to act in the domain of public security will tend to diminish.

[Article translated from the original in Spanish]

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[1] For access to a more detailed account of the indicator, see page 75 of the Report.

[2] Salvadori, Mariana Paula. *O uso de Forças Armadas em Segurança Pública: o caso do Rio de Janeiro*, Master's degree thesis, Brasilia, DF, March 2020.

[3] This case is telling for many reasons. The most recent is that, for the first time, the military personnel involved were tried and convicted in the first instance by the military justice system.

[4] Ramalho, Antonio Jorge; Diamint, Rut; Sánchez, Lisa. *La militarización de la seguridad y el retorno de los militares a la política en América Latina*, Fundación Friedrich Ebert, March 2020.

[5] See this link.

[6] Ramalho, Antonio Jorge; Diamint, Rut; Sánchez, Lisa. *La militarización de la seguridad y el retorno de los militares a la política en América Latina*, Fundación Friedrich Ebert, March 2020.

[7] An interesting set of recommendations on the matter for Latin America as a whole may be found at: Cano, Ignácio; Arévalo, Bernardo. *Violencia, Estado y Sociedad en América Latina*, Fundación Friedrich Ebert, March 2020.

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Photography

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil October 26th, 2017- Special Force Battalion search for druglords after a spanish tourist be killed during a visit to the Rocinha slum. By Antonio Scorza (Shutterstock).

IN DEPTH

Chronic violence and peacebuilding in Eastern African's Pastoralists Lands

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Pastoralism is practised on 43% of the land surface area of Africa[1]. It is estimated that pastoralism – the act of keeping livestock for personal and commercial purposes- contributed up to 44% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of African countries[2] with an increasing trade value of US$ 1 billion per annum.[3]

Pastoralists occupy the drylands of East and Horn of Africa – Eastern Africa. These are large spatial enclaves, and in Kenya alone, these areas account for 89% of the total land occupied by about 16 million people.[4] The value of the livestock trade alone from pastoral lands in Kenya is US$ 1.13 billion, contributing to 28% of all meat consumed in the country.

While pastoralist lands are not affected by armed conflict, they do suffer sporadic outburst of violence, often confronting communities. The cross-border nature of these confrontations, and the fact that many go underreported, adds complexity to the challenge of addressing them. The arid regions of Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya have actually been the theatres of instability and violence for a solid five decades or so, driven by the following main factors: transnational organised crime, climate change, and marginalisation. Consequently, building peace requires addressing these key issues.

Pastoralist lands are often cross border points between countries, for example, the Ilemi triangle or the Karamoja cluster between Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya.

These are disputed areas with porous borders that are used as entry and exit points for transnational criminal activities of trafficking and smuggling of persons and goods. To fully understand the presence of transnational organised crime[5] in Eastern Africa, the ENACT Programme[6] developed an organised crime index, an interactive tool that assesses the level of transnational organised crime in each county, regionally and continentally along three key pillars – criminal markets, criminal actors and resilience. [7]

"While pastoralist lands are not affected by armed conflict, they do suffer sporadic outburst of violence; the proliferation of small arms and light weapons have made these areas a haven of criminal activities"

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons have made these areas a haven of criminal activities by transforming traditional cultural practices like cattle raiding to transnational organised crime of cattle rustling. An illustration of it are the many violent incidents of cattle theft that took place in 2021 alone in Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya and left scores of people dead and property damaged.[8] In 2019, firearms, both licitly and illicitly acquired by civilians in East and Horn Africa, are estimated to be close to 8 million.[9] Most of these firearms are trafficked by criminal actors to pastoralist areas and used to steal cattle. Cattle theft used to take days, sometimes weeks. With massive circulation of illicit firearms in pastoralist areas, criminals steal, transport and sell livestock as far as to overseas markets in less than 24 hours.

Climate change has intensified natural calamities like drought and famine to excessive levels. Arid areas already receive less rainfall, and when it successively fails over some time, vegetation does not grow. This puts pressure on pastoralists to seek their food sources and that of their livestock in other areas, which often results in conflict with other communities. Erratic and prolonged rainfall also results in disasters such as

flooding and outbreak of diseases such as epidemic typhoid and malaria.

And last, continuous marginalisation and lack of affirmative interventions by successive governments have neglected these areas leaving communities to fend for themselves. Lack of decentralisation of state resources such as allocating adequate budget for socio-economic programmes and developing civil infrastructures such as roads and water dams have turned pastoralist lands into 'ungoverned spaces'. In these large spaces, anything can happen, and the governments may not even be aware or rather may not have the capacity to respond.

"There is a need to re-think strategies that can address the chronic violence caused by organised crime, climate change and marginalisation"

These dynamics have seen these areas continue to witness chronic violence. Transnational organised crime, climate change and marginalisation are complex to solve, especially when there is interplay between them. When this complexity is left unaddressed, especially by the duty bearer, which is the nation-state, communities are left in limbo and peacebuilding efforts are jeopardised.

As aforementioned above, successive peacebuilding initiatives by State and non-state actors have often been haphazard and challenges of violence have continued to intensify. There is a need to re-think strategies that can address the structural violence in these areas.

The socio-economic potential of these areas is unquestionable, but sustainable peace must first prevail.

In pastoral lands there is an intersection of cultural, direct and structural violence as conceptualized by Johan Galtung.[10] Cultural violence are societal beliefs and prevalent stereotypes within ethnic groups that are used to legitimise violence among

them. Pastoral groups are a formation of many different ethnic groups with different cultures such as the Pokot and Samburu in Kenya, the Toposa and Nuer in South Sudan, the Daasanach and Nyangatom in Ethiopia and tens of others in different countries in the region. The difference in their customary practices and belief attitudes are often a source of conflict among themselves.

Direct or physical violence manifests itself in forms of crimes such as robbery, fighting and even death. Physical violence in pastoral lands cannot be overemphasised, as it has resulted to the loss of many lives and livestock, and damage to property.

The intersection of direct and cultural violence have resulted to the escalation of structural violence in these regions. Structural violence is embedded in the societal structures and often hidden. Structural violence directly leads to social injustices and a prolonged lack of access to the very basic of needs of a people such as food, shelter, and education. Over decades of violence, these areas have been left in a vicious cycle of conflict and poverty and building peace has been one of the hardest endeavours.

"How can infrastructures for peace be established in pastoralist lands that are areas not in war but constant violent conflict?"

Infrastructures for peace

As developed below, different actors have tried over and again to build peace but with little success. The question then is how can infrastructures for peace be established in pastoralist lands that are areas not in war but constant violent conflict?

Infrastructures for peace is the 'dynamic network of interdependent structures, mechanisms, resources, values, and skills which, through dialogue and consultation, contribute to conflict prevention and peace-building in a society.'[11] The 2002 World Health Organization report on violence and health affirm that violence can be prevented, just as the way public health prevents diseases and illnesses.[12] Infrastructures for

peace alludes to the *raison d'être* that just as health provision requires institutional structures to support it, so does peace.

Thus building peace in areas that are prone to sporadic conflict and complex violence of direct, cultural and structural would require robust planning of peace. This planning by both state and non-state actors, should be multipronged, involving different stakeholders at local, national and regional levels and be flexible to mixed methods of both hard and soft approaches.

Provision of peoples' security and affirmation of peaceful coexistence is a primary function of the State. However, the States' approach to conflict mitigation in these areas has been one-sided and that of a hard militaristic stance. These approaches include cordoning the areas, instilling curfews, enhancing police patrol, and initiating disarmament programmes. While peace prevails instantly due to the use of force, often excessive, these hard militaristic approaches have not worked in the long term.

"The States' approach to conflict mitigation in these areas has been one-sided and that of a hard militaristic stance which have not worked in the long term"

The States continue to under look traditional customary institutions headed by elders that exert authority and insist on strengthening its local administrative structures of government officers to oversee dispute resolutions. Softer approaches such as communal dispute mitigation mechanisms and dialogue programmes have been given less emphasis, resources and needed capacity. Thus sustainable peace in these areas has remained a mirage.

A look into peacebuilding programming indicates that there may be close to a hundred initiatives in the pastoralist areas supported by other actors than the State from the local, regional and international levels. These actors include the African Union and regional economic communities such as the East African Community and the

Intergovernmental Authority on Development. They also include other sectoral development partners working on livelihoods programmes such as agriculture, trade, water, sanitation and hygiene. Perhaps the bulk of the other actors are from the civil society, including non-governmental organisations and faith-based institutions.

All these actors have programmatic interventions that are community-centric involving women, youth, herders association (predominantly men) and traditional leaders. Innovative peacebuilding programming such as the use of sports[13] between communities as a tool for peacebuilding have also been adopted and women have been at the forefront as peace brokers urging their men not to engage in violence.[14]

While there has been notable success in some of these innovative approaches, however, these programmatic interventions are often not integrated, short term and thus not sustainable. Peace cannot be quickly fixed, and many actors' presence is not an affirmation that it can be built.

"Sustainable developmental processes will usher in new approaches in peacebuilding in pastoralist areas"

Actors should play a critical role in bridging the divide between the State and the pastoralists – the duty bearer and the right holder. This is a space partially unoccupied, and this is where the genuine peacebuilding dialogue can be found. Peacebuilding should go beyond dialogue and reconciliation between communities to addressing drivers and enablers of conflict. For example, cushioning communities from the glares of climate change by ensuring water and vegetation to pastoralists livelihoods is present even during periods of less rains is a form of peacebuilding.

Conflicts in non-war settings go beyond policy and legislative frameworks to rather development and restorative frameworks. A shift in focus from pacification through conventional securitisation approaches to sustainable developmental processes will usher in new approaches in peacebuilding in pastoralist areas. But these approaches

should be long-term, sustainable, and have both the State and the pastoralists involved.

For this to happen, States must have the political will. Communities should be the primary focus and other actors should work together in supporting this 'peacebuilding dialogue' and work in concert. Pastoralism is a cross border phenomenon and each State has its own approach. More often, these approaches are divergent and do not provide for practical cooperation between and among States.

The 2010[15] African Union policy framework for pastoralism in Africa is a principal reference document on how the pastoral economy can be enhanced to unprecedented levels. But the inherent challenges of chronic violence and embedded complexities of poverty and climate change are hindering factors. Unlike the United Nations Security Council 1325 (2000) which is a localised instrument used by women peacemakers around the world, the 15 year-old African Union Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development policy framework remains a high-level instrument with no pulse in women peacemaking efforts.[16] The AU, thus, needs to implement such frameworks that can speak directly to the realities of peacebuilding – especially in pastoralist areas.

The recently adopted Intergovernmental Authority on Development protocol[17] on Free Movement of Persons and Transhumance ushered in a new regional framework where Eastern African countries can cooperate and harmonise safer passages of pastoralists in the region. It remains to be seen if Member States may develop an implementation action plan that would have components of violence reduction, peacebuilding and climate change mitigation approaches.

Last, organised crime, conflict and violence are increasingly becoming intertwined and this nexus thrives when there is lack of security, access to justice and social services. [18] There is thus a greater need of including the crime, conflict and violence as part of the peacebuilding agenda and not as separate as it currently is in law enforcement strategies. Again, the responsibility lies upon the principal duty bearer that is the State.

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[1] *Pastoralism in Africa's Drylands*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018, pp13.

[2] *Making visible the 'invisible benefits' of African pastoralism will spur national and pastoral economies both*, International Livestock Research Institute, 2013.

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[4] *Unlocking the Potential of Arid and Semi Arid Lands of Kenya*, United Nations Development Programme, 2018.

[5] The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime defines organised crime as a structured group of three or more persons, existing over time with the intention of committing one or more serious crimes for financial or other material benefit.

[6] ENACT is a European Union Funded programme that enhances Africa's response to transnational organised crime. It is implemented by the Institute for Security Studies, INTERPOL and the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

[7] For more information on the ENACT organised crime index, please visit this interactive website.

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Photography

African Pokot girls leave the market in Amudat, Karamoja, carrying bags with food. Uganda, Africa. By Arjen de Ruiter (Shutterstock).

IN DEPTH

Civil resistance: collective, peaceful and transformative power

Esperanza Hernández Delgado
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Throughout history, peoples, social sectors, and majority populations have faced the multiple impact of various forms of violence. These have been manifested in powers which, at each point in history, have been perceived as absolute and invincible and, in any case, asymmetrical for those who are subjected to them. Their provenance has been diverse: monarchic, oligarchic, colonial, invasive, dictatorial, military or armed, state and/or private, national or transnational economic power, among others. In any of these situations, such powers have been dominant, exclusive, abusive, and threatening. They have frequently capitalised on political and/or economic interests, have imposed repression and exploitation and, along the way, snuffed out many lives or placed them at high risk. Moreover, they have disregarded the ethnic status of peoples and, in general, the humanity of all the sectors mentioned above, and have also devastated such essentials of life as culture, territory, and the autonomy of different groups.

Additionally, at different points in history and in a variety of places, these abused sectors have, by means of peaceful methods, managed to stop, transform, or attenuate the impact of such violence. How can such an unimaginable achievement be explained? How did they do this? The answer can be summed up in two words and is repeated in its analogous names: civil resistance, and/or "nonviolent resistance", "civilised resistance", "unarmed rebellions", "war without weapons", and others.

This civil resistance, its meanings and characteristics, the challenges it faces, and present and future alternatives, represents the core concern of the reflections that follow. Emphasis is also given to the fact that it is essential today as a strategy of

resilience, overcoming and disrupting violence in situations where it is inflicted by state actors and such non-state actors as organised crime.

What makes civil resistance a recurrent mechanism through history?

The practice of civil resistance involves aspects of considerable interest, as reflected in the ways this kind of resistance, its potentialities, and its scope are understood. Accordingly, it has come to the attention of several disciplines in the social sciences, a range of artistic expressions, and peacebuilders wherever they may be, and with greater emphasis since the 1990s.

"The civil resistance is essential today as a strategy of resilience, overcoming and disrupting violence in situations where is inflicted by state actors and such non-state actors as organised crime"

One interesting aspect is the recurrence of civil resistance throughout history. This being the case, it is worth asking what the following groups have in common: the Egyptian craftsmen of Waset who in 1166 BCE, during the reign of Ramses III, decided to stop working on the royal tombs in order to be paid their wages; the Roman plebeians who, in 494 BCE, withdrew to the Aventine Hill until the nobles recognised their political rights; the Yaqui tribe of Mexico who, in 2010, embarked on a nonviolent struggle against businessmen and the state of Sonora and their "Independence Aqueduct" megaproject, which disregarded their rights over their river and territory; the winners of the Right Livelihood Award, the Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare (ATCC – Association of Peasant Workers of the Carare) which, in 1987 and in the midst of crossfire, organised to declare to all those involved in the country's armed conflict that, thenceforth, peasants would not lose their lives because of this conflict, and that they were not enemies but they did not want to be caught up in their armed clashes; and the Black communities of the Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Asociación Campesina

Integral del Atrato (COCOMACIA – Greater Community Council of the Integral Peasants' Association of the Atrato River), in the Middle Atrato wetlands of Chocó, Colombia, which organised in 1982 to prevent the state from conceding their territory to private logging companies, and to achieve recognition of their ethnic condition and their rights.

The answer to this question is the same in all cases: an inspiring, intelligent, collective opposition, and a dignifying challenge to orders established by various kinds of violence and their actors, and a strategy based on nonviolent methods and deployment of peaceful transformative power.

In the twentieth century, campaigns of civil resistance were more common than is generally imagined, and their achievements were greater than those of armed resistance. Nevertheless, this does not mean that attempts at civil resistance always achieve the goals they have set and that they are successful. In general, the most effective civil resistance campaigns are partially successful, and some of them accept that one possible result can be the frustration of not achieving any of their aims because they are crushed and defeated. There are several reasons for this. The powers faced by nonviolent resistance are enormous and, consequently, the asymmetries in the power relations are also huge. Moreover, conflicts are dynamic, as are the contexts in which the various forms of resistance appear and are conducted. Finally, several circumstances can change. The experience of the Black COCOMACIA communities in Colombia was that, in the first five years of the 1980s, they managed to get the state to revoke its concession of their land to the logging companies, and also to recognise their existence as a people, as well as their special relationship with the land in the middle Atrato wetlands of Chocó. Yet, it was only considerably later, in 1993, that the Law 70 In Recognition of the Right of Black Colombians to Collectively Own and Occupy Their Ancestral Lands was passed. Something similar happened with the Guarijío people in Mexico who achieved recognition as an Indigenous people and of their territory in the mid-1970s but later, in 2011, when they started their campaign of resistance against the Los Pilares dam, they did not achieve much.

"In general, the most effective civil resistance campaigns are partially successful, and some of them accept that one possible result can be the frustration of not achieving any of their aims because they are crushed and defeated"

The meanings of civil resistance

Civil resistance has several meanings. Generally speaking, it has been understood as collective opposition and nonviolent struggle. From the standpoint of peace studies, it is seen as a mechanism for the management and positive transformation of conflicts, with attention to the peaceful methods it employs, its potential for bringing about change, and constructive social and/or political transformations, depending on its nature. Also notable is the fact that this form of resistance reveals the power of collective action and the scope of nonviolent methods. Furthermore, it brings some balance to the asymmetrical power relations between those who are resisting and the actors who are being resisted, and it very often represents the gateway to such peacebuilding mechanisms as mediation and negotiation. Likewise, these aspects constitute pacifist empowerment as they develop peace-making potentialities and skills among those who generate and drive this resistance.

What characteristics give scope to civil resistance and endure over time?

Experiences of civil resistance recorded and documented, especially since the 1990s, have led to a significant accumulation of knowledge about the characteristics of this type of resistance. These are related with their origins, the actors who set the bounds and get them moving, the interests at the core of the exercise of resistance, their potential, their methods, and conditions for their effectiveness. These features of civil resistance are described below:

- **Its processual nature**. Civil resistance is a process and, in this sense, it develops over time, in stages that are not always sequential, and amid various vicissitudes. This characteristic is very important and distinguishes it from other expressions of collective action, for example short-lived mass mobilisations that fizzle out once partial goals are achieved, or intense, fleeting social eruptions. The fact that this resistance is a process offers a window of opportunity for strengthening unity, carrying out education for resistance within the resisting groups, and refining methods and strategies. In their long, tenacious resistance, the Indigenous people of Cauca, Colombia, first stood their ground against the state when claiming recognition of their status as a people and of their rights, and later added a new component to their struggle when they included their opposition to the country's armed conflict and all its actors. At this point, as part of their strategy and on the basis of community meetings, they collectively produced a resistance manual, after which they went from village to village, from house to house, educating people about the measures and strategies contained in the manual. In a third stage, they extended their strategy of resistance to national and international megaprojects and extractive enterprises.

- **It is collective action**. This is undoubtedly one of its main features and that which holds much of its potential in terms of what it might achieve. This becomes broad-based participation in the exercise or campaign of civil resistance, cohesion, and joint action that hold out the possibility for attaining the goals of the resistance which, as noted above, are usually partial.

- **It is rooted in the social base**. This powerful component of civil resistance means that it can be appropriated by those who resist since it originates among people who share a common condition because they bear the burden of domination, exclusion, exploitation, repression, and more. For this very reason, it also favours cohesion, persistence, and strength among those who lead or participate in this exercise of resistance.

"Civil resistance is a process and it develops over time, it is collective action and it is rooted in the social base"

- **The use of nonviolent methods to resist**. The choice of these methods, regardless of whether they are rooted in pragmatic positions or ethical or religious principles, is very intelligent as it offers advantages in the exercise of resistance. First, it entails lower costs for those who are resisting, especially in terms of human losses, while it also makes it easier for other social sectors to support the campaign of resistance once it is underway. Second, it legitimates the exercise of resistance because of its peaceful nature, while also delegitimising the violent, repressive responses of states and other actors being resisted.

- **The power of the causes giving rise to the resistance**. The causes that lead to the processes and campaigns of civil resistance are an essential factor in their exercise and achievements. They constitute the force that calls for resistance, the factor that favours and maintains its unity, and the engine that drives it. This is reflected in both long-term experiences and those that have achieved consolidation in shorter periods of time, as is the case, in Colombia, of the following processes of resistance: the Colectivo de Objetores de Conciencia (Conscientious Objectors' Collective), the Asociación de Mujeres Tejedoras de Vida del Putumayo (Alliance of Women "Weavers of Life" of the province of Putomayo), the Red de Mujeres por la Paz (REMPAZ – Network of Women for Peace) in Montes de María, and the Movimiento de Víctimas (MOVICE – National Movement of Victims of State Crimes).

- **Organisation and planning**. This aspect is closely linked with the effectiveness of the exercise of civil resistance. It entails the development of organisational skills by those who are resisting: anticipating possible actions and reactions of the adversary, and planning and conducting resistance activities, leaving as little as possible to chance. This has become apparent in the experiences of civil resistance of the Indigenous people of Cauca, Colombia, and of the Yaqui tribe in

Mexico.

- **Creativity, flexibility, capacity to readjust, and persistence of those who are resisting**. This is a characteristic of those who plan and energise campaigns of resistance and is related with their efficacy. Creativity is related with strategies of protection, visibility, diffusion, non-collaboration, non-cooperation, intervention, and others. In contexts of extreme levels of violence, some experiences, for example the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó at the time of its appearance in 1996, resorted to such simple creative strategies as using whistles to warn of the presence of armed actors in the zone, going out in groups to harvest food crops, and doing a head count at the beginning and end of the day. Flexibility and capacity to readjust can help to overcome obstacles and vicissitudes by introducing necessary changes in the strategies of resistance. Finally, persistence is inherent to any exercise of resistance and much more so in those that succeed.

Each experience of civil resistance is unique and unrepeatable. As such, they have their own features that are related with the contexts in which they originate, the sectors of the population that produce them, the causes in which they are rooted, and the conditions that favour or hinder their achievements. Nevertheless, the aspects mentioned in this section are essential to this form of resistance and common to all of them, albeit with different developments and achievements. Moreover, seen as a whole, they represent the potential of this nonviolent resistance to achieve its goals.

> **"Each experience of civil resistance is unique and unrepeatable, with own features that are related with the contexts in which they originate, the sectors of the population that produce them, the causes and the conditions that favour or hinder their achievements"**

The challenges of civil resistance

There are no perfect experiences of civil resistance but only perfectible ones. Transitions from experiences of resistance using violence because of extreme needs of defence to civil or nonviolent resistance have sometimes been recorded, which is what happened with the Yaqui in Mexico and the Indigenous people of the Cauca region in Colombia. In other cases, in highly polarised societies, people who engage in nonviolent resistance can be opposed by other civil society groups which take the opposite position. Furthermore, each experience faces the challenges presented by the types of violence and their actors at each and every historic moment. This means that they cannot be considered in a lineal fashion, and neither can the conflicts that generate them. Some of these challenges are detailed below:

- The changing dynamics of the expression of violence that render ineffective strategies that have been used to some effect by experiences of civil resistance. Some processes of civil resistance develop methods and strategies that achieve significant levels of effectiveness in one stage of carrying out the resistance but, later, the logic and dynamics of the violence change, which means that the strategies employed by this resistance in the past are no longer effective in the present. This is perhaps the greatest challenge faced when engaging in resistance, and it is what happened in the experience of the ATCC peasant workers, whose very intelligent resistance against all actors in the armed conflict paved the way to an exercise of mediation with these actors. They had a method of mediating and, with it, their achievements were significant. However, after the process of demobilisation negotiated between the Uribe government and the United Self-Defence Forces, when many of the latter demobilised, strongholds of this armed group, now operating differently, appeared in the ATCC area of influence. They were small armed groups that did not depend on commanders and traditional structures. In these circumstances, it was not easy for the ATCC peasants to establish contact with the armed groups or to identify their leaders in order to engage in dialogue with these actors and peacefully resolve various conflicts.

"Notwithstanding the challenges faced by the processes of civil resistance, it will continue to be the most accessible, intelligent, and suitable mechanism for peoples, dominated majorities, and excluded minorities"

- Another challenge for civil resistance is the coordination of different forms of violence in various activities, for example, the link between drug traffickers working with those engaged in internal armed conflict, or between drug traffickers and complicit corrupt politicians. In these cases, the power of the actors being resisted and the asymmetry between this power and that of those who are resisting become even greater.

- A further challenge for civil resistance is presented by governments taking extreme right or extreme left ideological positions in purportedly democratic regimes because they see the exercise of resistance as a threat that must be put down by force. This reality entails greater costs for those who are resisting, especially in terms of irremediable human losses, aggravation of a context of polarisation that stigmatises resistance, creation of terror, encouragement of private groups that become involved in repressing those who resist, and the impunity of those who violate human rights in this situation.

- Increased poverty and extreme poverty pose greater challenges to civil resistance. This form of structural violence has the potential to generate other kinds of violence, favouring, for example, connections with armed and organised delinquent groups and internal armed conflicts, as well as those engaged in drug trafficking and small-scale trafficking. The spiral of violence therefore increases, the actors who generate violence grow stronger, and violent resolution of conflicts is favoured. These are adverse circumstances for engaging in civil resistance, even when the resistance results from opposition to structural violence expressed in poverty.

- National and international extractive economic projects, which are driven by corruption and frequently have armed groups working for them, become more powerful thus making any achievement of civil resistance against such enterprises even more difficult. This is a reality that has been faced in experiences of civil resistance by Indigenous tribes in Sonora, Mexico, and the Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras (COPINH – Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras).

- Corruption spreads its tentacles into every branch of the different levels of public power, a reality that prevents those exercising civil resistance from effectively seeking redress in legal or administrative measures. Since those concerned have been co-opted, such attempts will not prosper.

Alternatives for the present and future

Notwithstanding the challenges faced by the processes of civil resistance, it will continue to be the most accessible, intelligent, and suitable mechanism for peoples, dominated majorities, and excluded minorities. Turning to this form of resistance is the best or only alternative available for opposing the various forms of violence by peaceful means with the aims of protecting basic needs and transforming the reality.

Drawing on the learning accrued from earlier experiences, or lessons learned from similar processes, strengthens the processes of resistance. It will make it possible to detect actions taken to confront the great challenges of the past and, at the same time, offers elements for adapting to the challenges of the present.

"The experiences of civil resistance are the heritage of peace and, as such, should be recognised, supported, and reinforced by all relevant peacebuilding actors"

Discipline, training, creativity, and planning undoubtedly constitute important tools for honing the exercise of civil resistance and favouring progress in its methods and strategies.

The combination of civil resistance methods with others applied in peacebuilding endeavours, especially mediation and negotiation, continues to be very important.

Alliances with other experiences of civil resistance could come to be more significant in the face of current challenges. They enable joint, critical analysis of reality, while also nourishing repertoires of methods and strategies. Furthermore, this favours coordination in the project of attaining the elusive, longed-for aim of having a greater impact at the national level.

Education for peace should give emphasis to training in civil resistance, its meanings, and the windows of opportunity it offers in terms of consolidating democracies, peaceful conflict resolution, and peacebuilding.

The experiences of civil resistance are the heritage of peace and, as such, should be recognised, supported, and reinforced by all relevant peacebuilding actors.

[*Article translated from the original in Spanish*]

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Photography

Bogota, Colombia – December 01, 2017: A tribe from the north of Colombia. CXHAB WALA KIWE. Indigenous people of northern Cauca. By Nowaczyk (Shutterstock).

IN DEPTH

Social movements against the violence that we don't want to see

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I have spent half my life, all my academic life, talking about structural violence with people who, in most cases, have never heard of this concept and have never wondered either about what the term is trying to make visible, analyse, and divulge. Once explained, it seems to be understood, but shared or accepted is another matter. I first began explaining it in response to questions related to social mobilisation. The violence that appears in a social mobilisation tends to be very easy to identify and report. People who mobilise are all too often other men, other women, and it is always easier to label as violence what is done by other people, who are not like us, who are not us.

The mass media, governments, political representatives and society easily recognise physical violence against people or objects. If a recycling bin is burnt, if people throw things at the police, if the glass is broken, if there is looting, if there is physical fighting, if any of these things happen, there is considerable criticism swiftly attributed to the alleged violence of the people who are demonstrating. Sides are taken, and the mobilisation, in general, can be called into question, usually by people who disagree with its reasons. However, even people who agree and participate in it tend to be especially sensitive to these forms of violence while also finding it challenging to be aware of others.

Nevertheless, this article does not seek to analyse violence in social mobilisations, which is an important matter. It aims to study another manifestation of violence, namely that which demonstrations identify and try to reduce or eliminate. The paradox is of substantial dimensions. Social movements arise to denounce existing forms of

violence, diminish and eradicate them, and yet they are criticised for resorting to violence. This is a constant. A few years ago, a journalist from Spanish public television interviewed me for a report on protests that use nonviolent civil disobedience. After repeated questions seeking to identify as violence actions like dismantling a toll barrier and other attempts in a similar vein, he tried again. "But isn't breaking the law an act of violence?"

The hegemonic construction of violence

If we define violence like as an act that breaks the law, we are extending the concept of violence to incorporate any action outside the law regardless of how it is carried out. There is a tendency in many societies to identify violence with anything seen as improper. It is not easy to think that the legal framework, the public administration and businesses can exercise violence. There are very few occasions when this reality is accepted from the standpoint of political, institutional, or economic power. Yet, some movements arise to denounce this fact and to change it.

It is always more challenging to see the other kinds of violence, for example, those against which social movements might be mobilising. This is not about challenging some types of violence with others or justifying one sort with another, but about being aware of how easy it is to see and condemn some types of violence and how difficult it is to see and condemn other types of violence. In our society, violence is usually rejected. The problem is what we do and do not understand as violence.

In how many countries, including those that claim to be democracies, do people and groups that mobilise to call for rights and justice risk their lives? How many societies that claim to be and are internationally considered democracies live with high rates of various types of violence? How much everyday racism (exclusion, discrimination, inequalities) is suffered even in societies that claim to have no problems with racism? How much social exclusion is suffered by less privileged groups (even in societies that are considered to be "advanced" and prosperous") when it comes to access to health, education, housing, etc.? How long have we taken, and how long will it take us to become aware and act responsibly in opposing all forms of violence against nature,

against life, which have brought us to a situation of climate catastrophe? How long have we taken, and how long will it take us to become aware that social mobilisation builds peace by denouncing violence that is made invisible or about which there is still little social awareness?

"This is not about challenging some types of violence with others or justifying one sort with another, but about being aware of how easy it is to see and condemn some types of violence and how difficult it is to see and condemn others"

There is a hegemonic construction of what we consider to be violence. I mean that there is a set of prevailing, majority ideas that establish what violence is and what sort of violence is more or less decried or not at all decried. They have become established and dominant through a process by which, apart from possible impositions, a large part of the population comes to accept them as common sense. This common sense is simply the result of what has been thought and talked about, what appears in the media, what is said in political speeches, conversations at the workplace, educational centres, family members, friends, etc. Although it seems sensible, coherent, and rational, it is common sense that it is always a construction representing dominant ideas that ignore other ways of understanding, thinking, and acting.

I could analyse many social movements to show this, and they could also be studied at different times and in other places. Still, I shall now focus on two that present different characteristics: the feminist movement and the housing rights movement. They are movements we can find in the past and in the present. They tend to start on the fringes of society and eventually become mainstream. Movements that, as tends to be the case with all those seeking cultural and political transformation of society, try to convince people and are primarily nonviolent. Movements have arisen in societies with significant levels of various kinds of violence and also in societies that see themselves as nonviolent and democratic. Societies with such high levels of self-esteem that they

believe they have eradicated violence.

Like other movements, the feminist and housing rights movements have arisen to denounce the violence in our societies, various kinds of violence that are not acknowledged as such in many cases, violence that is denied, hidden, and justified.

Social movements denouncing violence

Social movements tend not to share mainstream ways of seeing, thinking and acting. Most social movements appear as minority initiatives in response to some prevailing or majority situation they want to change. However, social movements can become mass-based and even enjoy majority support for their ideas and demands. They can change society, politics, powers, beliefs, values, culture, etc. They can challenge hegemony in society and even change it.

For example, why do most people think that breaking a shop window is violent while women do not have the same rights as men and are constantly subjected to patriarchal power is not seen as violence? In the nineteenth-century feminist suffragette movement, some people considered breaking shop windows an option of social mobilisation. People did not start criticising feminists and suffragettes for these actions as they were already being criticised for their ideas and initiatives. They were a minority confronting the power elite. They were dangerous, counter-hegemonic. And this behaviour meant that they were presented as violent. But very little or nothing was said about physical and sexual violence against women, which is part and parcel of patriarchal control over women. When did people start talking about physical and sexual violence against women? When did they start talking about patriarchal violence? A violence that was socially accepted and justified for centuries, and still is today in too many heads and places.

"The feminist and housing rights movements have arisen to denounce the violence in our societies, various kinds of violence that are not

acknowledged as such in many cases. Violence that are denied, hidden, and justified"

A violence that was accepted and justified as was violence suffered by other sectors of society. A violence that has even been deemed "necessary" because of the way women are.

Feminism is a social movement with a long history that can be studied in terms of its emergence in different waves. We could refer to that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and how it toppled the power structures and made visible and unacceptable certain kinds of violence. We could also talk about the present wave. We could think about how feminism has become involved in overcoming other types of violence and in peacebuilding in times of armed conflict and societies with too many kinds of silenced and hidden violence. There is violence, too much and in too many forms. And it is still present in all types of society. There is still much work to be done, which is why the struggle continues.[1]

The housing rights movement also has a long history but without such a marked identity as feminism. In its present phase, it has forcefully appeared as a result of twenty-first-century crises related with the economy and debt. In terms of size, duration, and impact, one of the most significant mobilisations has taken place in Spain. In this society, there was no awareness of structural violence related to access to housing. The Spanish Constitution recognises the right to housing, but the law guaranteeing this right has never been enacted.[2]

The economic crisis that began in 2008 had different consequences and ramifications. One of them concerned and still concerns people who had taken out a mortgage to buy a home during the economic boom in Spain (1997-2007). From 2009 onwards, they began to have significant problems paying off these loans. The crisis worsened and also affected people in rented accommodation. It has not ended, either. Now it has combined with the pandemic crisis. Many people are suffering because they are unable to pay for their homes, must leave them, or are being evicted.

In 2009, the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH – Platform for People Affected by Mortgages) was founded in Barcelona. After a few years, it had spread to more than two hundred towns around Spain. It aimed to guarantee the right to housing, and its good practice and the mobilisations of the 15M anti-austerity movement after 2011 led to its remarkable expansion. The PAH has permanently opted for a repertoire of nonviolent social mobilisation, pursuing innovation to avoid engaging in actions its members consider to be ineffective. For example, in its thirteen years of existence, it has organised very few demonstrations, mostly deciding in favour of protests in bank branch offices to call for debt cancellation and social rent, or bodily blockades to prevent evictions, and activities denouncing members of parliament who are not willing to vote for the draft laws they propose. They have not engaged in violence against people or objects, although there have been police charges against some of their attempts to stop evictions. Some commentators have tried to portray the PAH as a violent organisation, even equating it with Nazism because it denunciated parliamentarians who are unwilling to support a law that would seek to change a mortgage law which is very harmful to people who are having difficulties in paying off bank loans after losing their homes and being left with the debt.

"Social movements even make a decisive contribution in creating awareness of violence that has gone unnoticed, even when caused or suffered"

On the other hand, in the political-institutional and media discussion, very little has been said about the violence of not guaranteeing the right to housing and evicting people who have not been offered alternative accommodation. Added to this is the fact of living in a society in which, after the economic and real-estate crisis, many unoccupied homes have come to be administered with the participation of the public sphere since the financial institutions that owned them have been rescued with public money.[3]

Apart from their successes and failures, the feminist and right to housing movements have managed to get people talking about forms of violence that were never mentioned in the past and also about the fact that people are working to counteract them. Like others working in different areas, these social movements are engaged in peacebuilding in all kinds of societies since they are working to stop the various types of violence, including those that are accepted, hidden, and unacknowledged. In *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics,* bell hooks, who recently left us, wrote (p. 61):

Nowadays the problem of domestic violence is talked about in so many circles, from mass media to grade schools, that it is often forgotten that the contemporary feminist movement was the force that dramatically uncovered and exposed the ongoing reality of domestic violence. Initially feminist focus on domestic violence highlighted male violence against women, but as the movement progressed evidence showed that there was also domestic violence present in same-sex relations, that women in relationships with women were and are oftentimes the victims of abuse, that children were also victims of adult patriarchal violence enacted by women and men.[4]

Social movements building peace

Being involved in social movements often means being called upon to act in times of conflict, turmoil, and even violent episodes. It is pretty common to identify social mobilisation with violence, and there have been attempts to explain some of the reasons for this. It is about time that the dominant view of social movements changes, and some crucial steps have been taken, partly because of more incredible social support. The feminist and right to housing movements have moved from the fringes to the centre. This has many implications, which are also visible in other movements that have taken a similar course.

When analysing the impact of social movements, we can study them in different areas. If we think about their impact on the existing violence in our societies, we can identify their power to denounce it, stop it, counteract it. But we must also keep thinking about their ability to create awareness. Awareness in different sectors. Awareness among the very people who are leaders of social mobilisation must have become conscious of this

violence at some point in the past. Awareness in society as a whole. Attention in institutional politics, political parties, the media… Social movements even make a decisive contribution in creating awareness of violence that has gone unnoticed, even when caused or suffered. In other words, they contribute to creating awareness about violence that is endured and inflicted. What might be necessary to shift from raising awareness to making fundamental changes to eradicate this violence is another matter.

"How long have we taken, and how long will it take us to become aware that social mobilisation builds peace by denouncing violence that is made invisible or about which there is still little social awareness?"

Thinking, too, about the history of the peace movement, it would be helpful to think about and rethink the relationship among campaigns supporting different causes, the links they have and have not had, what unites them and separates them, about double militancy, movements for more than one cause, and the kinds of violence that have appeared in movements that might be for peace and against violence. Let us not forget, for example, the rejection of the environmentalist movement by significant sectors of the antinuclear movement of the 1980s or the patriarchal violence that has existed and can exist in movements that claim to liberate people from various types of oppression. There are some very pertinent contributions in the work of bell hooks concerning ending violence from the standpoint of feminism, but this should be extended to other movements. Like peace, violence has many faces, and people have not always been aware of this. In the words of bell hooks, "It is essential for continued feminist struggle to end violence against women that this struggle be viewed as a component of an overall movement to end violence." [5]

Some kinds of violence are visible, and others are not. Some types of violence are seen and considered unacceptable, and others are seen and considered acceptable and even

deemed necessary. The catalogue of "necessary" kinds of violence is too long, and it shows us, throughout history and in the present, what our societies have been and what they are like. Some kinds of violence are not seen, and some people try to make us see them. In all eras, people have challenged the violence that exists in society. In all eras, people have managed to make some kinds of violence visible and to reduce or eliminate them. Many organisations, groups, and individuals have mobilised to achieve this, although they were criticised, criminalised, and persecuted for it. If our societies today have less violence and more peace than those of the past, it is because of their commitment. This should be studied, analysed, recognised, publicised and remembered.

[Article translated from the original in Spanish]

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[1] For further information about the contributions of feminism to peacebuilding, see ICIPs *Peace in Progress* magazine, No 39, January 2021, at http://www.icip-perlapau.cat/numero39/es (in English, http://www.icip-perlapau.cat/numero39/en).

[2] For cases of mobilisation outside of Spain see Amanda Tattersall and Kurt Iveson (2021), People power strategies in contemporary housing movements, *International Journal of Housing Policy* at https://doi.org/10.1080/19491247.2021.1893120, and La resistencia a los desahucios en Europa (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2016) at https://www.rosalux.eu/es/article/1065.la-resistencia-a-los-desahucios-en-europa.html (in English, https://www.rosalux.eu/es/article/1065.la-resistencia-a-los-desahucios-en-europa.html).

[3] For further information about the PAH see two recently published works of great interest: *La PAH, manual de uso* (Rosa Luxemburg 2021) by João França (available online at https://www.rosalux.eu/es/article/2025.la-pah.html) and *La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*

Una década de lucha por la vivienda digna 2009-2019 (Bellaterra Edicions 2022)

[4] bell hooks, *El feminismo es para todo el mundo*, Traficantes de sueños, Madrid, 2017, p.87. (The book is available in English at

https://excoradfeminisms.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/bell_hooks-feminism_is_for_everybody.pdf).

[5] bell hooks, *El feminismo es para todo el mundo*, Traficantes de sueños, Madrid, 2017, pp. 89-90. (In English, https://excoradfeminisms.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/bell_hooks-feminism_is_for_everybody.pdf, p.63.)

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Photography

Members of the Stop Foreclosures movement protest to avoid the eviction of a family in Valencia on July 21, 2011. Placards read Stop Evictions. By Heino Kalis.

INTERVIEW

Interview with Mary Kaldor, an expert in war, peace and security studies

Sabina Puig and Eugènia Riera
International Catalan Institute for Peace

Mary Kaldor is a Professor of Global Governance at the London School of Economics, where she directs the Civil Society and Human Security program. Author of numerous publications, Kaldor is a reference in the study of war, peace and security. She pioneered the development of the concept of "new wars", a type of persistent violence that goes beyond armed confrontation between two sides. In this interview, we address the challenges for peacebuilding of these "new wars" and situations of extreme violence outside of classical armed conflicts in countries such as Mexico or Colombia.

In your opinion, what are the main issues of concern in terms of global peace and security? What are the challenges and regions that deserve special attention now?

That is a very big question. But I would argue that there are three types of wars going on, although I feel they are merging. One is what I call "new wars", a kind of persistent violence. We tend to think of wars as deep-seated political contests between two sides, which end with one side winning and the other side losing. But in these "new wars", what you see is that the various armed groups, criminal gangs, are more interested in the gains they make from violence than they are in winning or losing. I would take the view that Mexico and Venezuela are very typical of a new war. And Colombia, which started as a classic civil war, the conflict also turned into a new war. In the Mexican case, the armed groups make gains primarily economically. But in other places, they also gain politically because the fear they create is a way of constructing extremist ideologies- ethnic or religious exclusive identities. In other words, it is a type of violence

that reproduces itself and is very difficult to end. This kind of war is a big problem. It is very dangerous. And we see it in large parts of Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. It is more like a kind of social condition that is spreading.

And the other two types?

On the one hand, we still have the old geopolitical conflict between the great powers (US, Russia, China). Those are, in a way, I would say, imaginary conflicts. They don't want to come to blows because any war would be fatal for humanity. But they require constant tension, which I think is very dangerous, as we're seeing now in the case of Ukraine. And then, thirdly, there is this horrible drone campaign by the United States. They are continuing the war on terror, which involves a long-distance campaign of assassination worldwide against individuals, contributing to the violent chaos. And I think the trouble is that all three types, three phenomena, really feed into each other.

These "new wars", including chronicles acts of violence in non-war contexts, are still underrepresented in the global peace and security agenda. Why do you think this is so?

I think it is because of what I would call "old views" of what war is about. For many people, war is a legitimate phenomenon between two political groups that cannot resolve their differences peacefully. And in international law, there are ways in which you can say the war is legal because it is a war in self-defence, for example. So we have this idea of war, and the things that don't fit that idea are excluded. In places like Syria or the Balkans, what is happening is extremely similar to what is happening in Mexico or Venezuela, but it's framed in political terms. And because of that, it is considered a war, whereas it is not in Mexico and Venezuela. I think this is quite problematic in terms of peacebuilding. Because if you believe that most people inflicting violence are criminalised groups, negotiations -while they might be necessary sometimes- can help strengthen those groups. Traditional peacebuilding does focus on mediation and negotiation, but we need other approaches. Sometimes you have to negotiate even with criminal gangs. Still, you have to think very hard about what this negotiation is about and how it is linked to other types of approaches to peacebuilding.

"Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia are the scene of the "new wars." Violence reproduces itself and is very difficult to eradicate"

Which strategies or practices of peacebuilding could be transformative to deal with this kind of violence?

The key is always the establishment of legitimate political authority: municipalities, regional authorities, states that people trust. So the question is: what is the way in which you construct political legitimacy? There are various elements to this. First of all, I think the role of civil society is incredibly important. And again, in most of the peacebuilding literature, people do not see civil society as a political force. Yet, those citizens who reject violence and criminality are absolutely central to building political legitimacy. In my research, we talk about civicness because civil society tends to be equated with NGOs. Civicness can include committed citizens, honest civil servants, teachers, judges and police officers even local authorities who provide public services. When we talk about civil society, we include those types of people. We have a very interesting example of the role of civil society in the formal talks on Syria. The United Nations created a women's advisory board and a civil society room, where civil society came together. This has not affected the talks at a political level. But it has been really important in bringing civil society together from different parts of Syria, and it has helped to increase the legitimacy of civic activists on the ground.

The second point is mediation. It shouldn't necessarily deal with the political future. It needs to be about very concrete issues, like the security of a neighbourhood or lifting a siege, and it should be at all levels and very inclusive. The classical peacebuilding approach focusing on top-down political mediation is inadequate and sometimes even counter-productive.

"The classical approach to peace-building focused on top-down political mediation is inadequate and sometimes counterproductive"

Third, the rule of law and justice mechanisms are hugely important. Justice is often very much neglected by peacebuilders. They often think that you have to forgive the various violent actors because that is the only way to agree to peace if they know they will not be put in prison or tried. But unless you deal with their violations of human rights, and their criminal behaviour, you will never be able to solve the problem. And finally, the economic issues. If we look at the economic origins of these kinds of conflicts, they are very much linked to neoliberal economic policies. They occur in extreme unemployment and inequality situations and in the sort of contracting-out culture where people make money from being part of the government. To deal with all of this, it is necessary to create legitimate livelihoods for people so that they do not need to engage in crime.

You talked about the importance of justice. The international law mechanisms established to maintain security and peace have not evolved in the last years. Which are the challenges to overcome in this sense to face this kind of violence?

We now have competing bodies of international law, and different groups have stretched international law in different ways. If you take the United States, they have hugely weakened the meaning of self-defence to justify the war on terror as a legal war. When the 9/11 events happened, many people -including me- said it was a crime, not a war. And if you define it as a crime, you deal with it through intelligence and policing rather than military operations. But the Americans chose to deal with it as it was an attack by a foreign state, and they intervened in Afghanistan on the grounds of self-defence. After that, they expanded this to Iraq and against non-state actors (Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram). So that enabled them to define targeted assassination as a war. Equally, Putin had stretched international law when he talked about the right to intervene to defend Russians in places like Abkhazia or Eastern Ukraine. There is a huge weakening of international law, and there is no global consensus about international

law. At the same time, there have been significant new developments.

"There is no global consensus on international law, and it is significantly weakening"

One area is human rights. Human rights challenge the legality of war itself because war is a violation of human rights, and it is crucial to strengthen international human rights law. We also have the law of peace: it has involved literally hundreds of peace agreements, which constitute international law. And, of course, there is the responsibility to protect the development of a humanitarian intervention.

In terms of language, some scholars qualify the violence in Mexico as an armed conflict of a non-international character. Do you agree with this definition? Do we need to broader our understanding of armed conflicts?

This is a really difficult point. If you start defining armed violence as a war, criminals can claim they are soldiers rather than criminals and legitimate actors. On the other hand, the advantage would be that with international humanitarian law, if they declare themselves as soldiers, they would have to abide by rules, according to which they should not kill civilians, not kill women and children, and not engage in rape.

"War in both Syria and Mexico is a social condition; its structural factors need to be modified and human security must be a starting point"

There is a tendency amongst many governments to respond to severe criminal violence with highly militarised measures that put human rights at risk. To which circumstances would you limit the use of the military?

I have been arguing very strongly for the military to operate within the framework of human security. Whereas the military might be needed to defend people or uphold a peace agreement, their aim should always be protective, rather than to kill enemies, because its primary task is to protect ordinary people. In this sense, there are certain circumstances in which the military might need to protect people: in cases of genocide or massive human rights violations. You need the military to defend Ukraine against an armed invasion, but defending is very different from attacking. There is still a role for the military, basically in defensive roles and protective roles.

Is there enough political will to transform conflicts and end chronic violence?

Whether the kind we see in Syria or Mexico, the war is what I would call a social condition. It reproduces itself, and the answer is to try to shift the structural factors. There are possibilities for doing that, and a starting point is a human security, which is focused on the security of individuals and communities rather than states and borders. Its main objective is always to reduce violence rather than defeat the enemy. The challenge is global because global networks -for example, the arms market or oil and gas revenues- sustain governments but is also local. So we need reforms at different levels, which is very difficult, and we also need external multilateral actors (UN, EU) to recognise the importance of addressing structural violence.

[This interview took place in February, before the Russian invasion of Ukraine]