

What is Pacification?

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The logic of progress, development and improvement have long been categories through which the ruling class justified its acts in the name of accumulation. The horizon of today's contemporary struggles is dominated by struggles over modes of subsistence, uses of land and forms of life, yet at the heart of these struggles there still exists a demand on the part of ruling powers that progress, development and improvement must happen.

Examples range from the North Dakota Pipeline to the high speed train line across the Alps between Lyon and Turin (NO-TAV), from fracking in the UK to the local struggles taking place in this very region.

I want to argue that we might think about these things through the lens of pacification.

What this means, in effect, is that I want to argue:

i) for 'pacification' as a key concept for thinking critically about state and capital; and

ii) that 'pacification' allows us to think through the productive nature of violence for capital, even where today's struggles seem different from past struggles – in effect, the link between pacification and accumulation might now be pacification, accumulation and extraction.

Since time is short and the idea is to generate discussion, I'm going to present this in the form of ten points - deliberately polemical points; as in psychoanalysis, any truths in this paper lie in the exaggerations.

First point: pacification is war, but not a war that would be called 'war' by those specialising in 'war studies'. Rather, it is a war for the systematic colonisation of the world by capital. With its war cry 'Let there be accumulation!', capital sets about trying to dominate and shape the world, engaging in violent enclosure to privatize common lands.

In other words, pacification is war, but it is a social war of accumulation; class war.

Let me add as a passing observation here that this might be one way to think about pacification in conjunction with the idea of shrinking spaces discussed in the earlier panel, in the sense that the wars of enclosure connote the idea of pacification *through* spatial control, but also *as* spatial control. Pacification involves the shrinking of the spaces that are not controlled and dominated by capital. The submission of the world's resources to capital once took the form of attempts to enclose the land, and this struggle continues in the attempt to further speed up capital's movement: trains, planes, automobiles and energy supplies in general, imposing a new form of enclosure.

Pacification has its roots in the idea of peace. This is why the term is still sometimes used openly by some states, as in Brazil's Police Pacification Units to

clear the favelas for the Olympics and the World Cup, and Mexico's recent national reconciliation programme called 'pacification'.

But 'peace' derives from the Roman *pax*, and in that tradition it has as much affinity with the word 'dominance' as it does 'peace'. Hence when the Romans spoke of pacifying a province, they meant it had been conquered. What is connoted by 'peace' and pacification is the imposition of domination achieved through violence.

The second point, then, is that pacification is a conjunction of war and peace in a way that makes it impossible to disentangle them.

What this also implies is that from a critical perspective, 'peace' is a deeply problematic concept. Phrases such as 'peaceful protest' are therefore not especially useful to describe our struggles. 'Peaceful protest' means nothing, because from the point of view of state and capital when one engages in protest one is by definition no longer at peace: the act of protest is a refusal.

It is a refusal of the obedience expected in pacification, a refusal of one's pacified status, a refusal of the demand that we accept everything done in the name of progress, development or improvement. When expropriation is countered by the refusal of the subject, the subject becomes the enemy. Hence, and my third point, in the act of protest we declare ourselves to be the enemy.

This enemy status is reinforced by the fact that the state's complicity in helping capital realise its fantasy of greater and greater and faster and faster accumulation implies that just as the state declares itself on the side of progress so whoever opposes this is the enemy of progress. For state and capital, the matter of solving a problem (of energy supplies, of developing high-speed trains, and so on) in fact becomes a matter of defeating an enemy.

A key aim of pacification is to win, retain or regain the complicity of the pacified. So, fourth point: pacification means *shaping* the population and *building* the people around the regime of accumulation being imposed on them. The people must accept their obedience to capital's colonisation of the world. To achieve this, pacification requires a series of interlocking measures, of the war and police powers, most obviously, but also of the economic, cultural and technological powers.

So, looked at another way, a fifth point: pacification is at its most successful when it is least obvious, and it is least obvious when the people come to accept everything done in the name of peace, security and progress.

This requires mobilizing the population in support of its own pacification, for example through an ideological battle in which people come to believe things such as the idea that capitalism and peace go hand in hand, that liberalism is a philosophy of peace, and that the police power exists for the good of the people.

For pacification to be successful, the state commits itself to knowing the people.

Hence, sixth point, pacification requires the state to be an intelligence agency.

This intelligence is required because the state knows that it is at war and that the enemy lives among the people or even that the enemy *is* the people. To understand pacification means to understand that for the police power, we are the enemy.

As you will have noticed, I began with war and am now talking about police, and so I want to repeat a point made about war but this time in relation to police, my seventh point: pacification is an expression of the police power as much as it is an act of war. It is through the police power that the *productive nature* of pacification emerges. The series of interlocking measures just mentioned needs to be understood as part of the policing process.

So we can now develop some of these points together: pacification *is a war* of accumulation conducted through the *police power*. Yet what this means is that the police power is engaged in a permanent war.

This explains why police discourse is so full of the language of warfare: police treatises, texts in police science, media statements made by senior officers and ethnographic work among rank and file officers inform us time and again of the constant police wars being fought - against the disorderly, unruly, criminal, indecent, disobedient, disloyal and lawless, interlinked and permanent campaigns which go some way to explaining why so many different oppressed groups refer to the police institution as an occupying army.

Hence as you will see, what I am trying to do is to use the concept of pacification to grasp the conjoined powers of war and police. In pacification, the war power is a police power and the police power is a war power.

My eighth point is to stress that the conjoined powers of war and police is a way of avoiding what is a very banal argument about the militarization of policing or the rise of paramilitary policing. There is absolutely no use in complaining that the police are becoming militarized. The police has been at war since its invention, which is why police discourse is so full of the language of war.

To think about the war power and the police powers as conjoined in pacification is to focus our minds on what binds them: the logic of security. Ninth point: security *is* pacification. We find this everywhere we look in the pacification literature: when Brazil launched its first Police Pacification Unit in 2008, it was through Rio de Janeiro's *Security Department* and they claimed to be introducing a *new model of public security*. What this means in turn is that at the heart of pacification theory lies a critique of security and, in effect, a refusal of the imposition of the logic of security on our lives. Again: this means declaring oneself an enemy.

Let me finish with a final point about an issue that I think will be part of our discussions. Many people have pointed out that in fighting the most significant police war of all, namely the war of accumulation, the police often act illegally, especially when using violence. That the police *do* act illegally is beyond doubt. But when police act illegally they are doing so because it is the police view that to act solely within the law would render them ineffective.

The police act in ways that to the citizen appear illegal and often are illegal because *that is what the police do*. For police, it matters little if the police action is legal so long as it is regarded as an *efficient exercise of discretionary power for achieving order*, and this is almost always accepted by the state. In the UK between 1990 and the end of 2017 there were over 1,600 deaths in police custody or through contact with police. The number of these that resulted in murder or manslaughter charges? Zero.

This pattern is repeated across the whole world.

The point here is complex, but what I'm trying to suggest is that we need to recognise that 'police' does *not* equal 'law' and that justice has never been the primary value to which police is devoted.

Now, this implies that any account of policing which focuses on police illegality is as sterile as the approach that focuses on police militarisation. My point here, the tenth and final point, is that the main operational criteria of pacification is the same as the main operational criteria of the police power: order rather than law, accumulation rather than justice.