# Dissertation on the Relationship between Global Peace Index and Poverty

## Imelda Ortiz Medina<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Zacatecas México

Abstract— The current economic structure has deepened the concentration of income, exacerbating exclusion, marginalization and poverty. People in these conditions may be more vulnerable to committing or suffering acts of violence, so the central assumption of this research is that; Those countries with the highest rates of poverty are those with the highest levels of violence and insecurity. In this way, the objective of this article is to reflect on the incidence that poverty could have on the absence of peace, for which, first, a brief description of the culture of peace and poverty is made, followed by some general statistics of poverty and global index of peace, which allowed to verify, inferentially, the relation of these two indicators.

Keywords— Cultural violence, direct violence, structural violence, human development, peace, global peace index.

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is not only monetary, but also a lack of services, access to health, education, food, clothing, decent housing, public services, etc. In addition, it is an absence of opportunities, capabilities and freedoms [1 and 2]. At a global level, with the pandemic, "it is estimated that this will push between 88 million and 115 million more people into extreme poverty, bringing the total to between 703 million and 729 million" [3].

On the other hand, the levels of violence and insecurity have increased in recent years and although there is no specific cause that indicates what the main determinant is, there have been indications of the propensity of people with scarce resources towards illicit activities, either looking for a crust or due to social rebellion, feeling excluded. Under this logic, the central question we ask ourselves is the following: Do the poorest regions show lower rates of a culture of peace? That is, are poor regions more likely to generate violence and insecurity?

When analyzing the phenomenon of organized crime and wanting to find a specific cause of its origin, it is common to refer to different factors, the most common being the socioeconomic level of people, that is, to explain that the problem of crime in general is due to poverty, lack of opportunities and the context in which this poverty occurs. The above seems to establish a syllogism in which, if you are poor, you are prone to be a criminal, therefore, those areas that experience high poverty rates are necessarily at risk of presenting high levels of violence and crime [4].

In this logic, poverty, even without being a determinant of violence, does generate a certain vulnerability in the people who suffer from it.

This is an exploratory, descriptive-correlational research in which it is intended to motivate a reflection on the importance of, also, if one truly wants to promote a culture of peace, designing public policies to reduce poverty.

### II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Culture of Peace.

The culture of peace implies non-violence, the absence or negotiation of conflict. Johan Galtung speaks of two types of peace, negative peace and positive peace, the first is defined as the absence of personal, physical, organized and direct violence, which implies the absence of war. While positive peace highlights the presence of attitudes, institutions and structures that build and sustain peaceful societies [5]. "The culture of peace corresponds to a set of values, attitudes and behaviors of human beings in society, which simultaneously create and cause social interrelations and interactions based on the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, which reject all violent action and prevent conflicts" [6].

To build a culture of peace, we must identify the conflicts that generate some type of violence and try to resolve them through peaceful means. "Violence can be seen as a deprivation of human rights, to life, the pursuit of happiness and prosperity, but it is also a decrease in the actual level of satisfaction of basic needs, below what is potentially possible" [7].

Johan Galtung [7] identifies three types of violence: cultural, direct and structural violence. Unfortunately, the first is internalized in society and normalized to such a degree that we do not realize it exists: we accept it. Direct violence is what is experienced day to day in certain regions of the world: wars, genocides, kidnappings, murders, mutilations, rapes, etc. And structural violence is associated with "exploitation, or as a reinforcement of the apparatus of domination of the political and economic system of the structure" [7]. It is closely related to the economic-political and social structure of a nation. Direct violence is an event; structural violence is a historically constructed process; and together with cultural violence they are usually persistent and slow to transform [7].

Galtung warns that, in the case of cultural violence, this is expressed in religion, language, art, cosmology, formal science, empirical science, among others. The latter, reinforced by neoclassical economic theory, and endorsed by economic policies around the world, which emphasize the marking and comparative advantages of international trade, which in fact means that:

Countries well-endowed with raw materials and unskilled labor must base their economy on their extraction, while those

that are well endowed with capital and technology, specialized labor and scientific personnel, oversee their processing. The consequences of this doctrine in the field of the division of labor are visible today, with widespread structural violence, both between countries and within them... And so it happens that the law of comparative advantage legitimizes a structural and intolerable status quo. In short, this doctrine, which has been converted into law by the dominant political and economic class, translates into a portion of the cultural violence buried in the very heart of the economy [7:165 and 166].

Regarding structural violence, Galtung also adds that this is an indirect violence originating from injustice and inequality, because of the social structure itself, whether within the same society or between the set of nations (alliances, relations between States, etc.), and reinforced by other types of violence. "Social injustice would be structural violence" [8].

An example of the interlocking of the types of violence is when Africans were captured and transported across the Atlantic to work as slaves. "This direct violence filters in all directions, transforming into massive structural and cultural violence in the form of racist ideas. After a long journey, this type of physical violence is forgotten, slavery is prohibited, and two new types of violence are transformed: "discrimination" resulting from massive structural violence and "prejudice" resulting from incisive and deep cultural violence" [7:156].

Likewise, we can cite situations where violence can start from the structural sphere, such as the case of social differences, which generate unequal exchanges reinforced by public policies, "when a social group oppresses another to the point that they feel the need to provide a justification, which is accepted by the dominant elite with enthusiasm in the new cultural context, while they try to establish themselves permanently in the new formal structure" [7:156].

The three types of violence feedback on each other and generate a vicious circle that is difficult to break. Any social, political or economic structure that generates, encourages or reinforces power relations, subordination or discrimination, generates violence and becomes a conflict. Which must be resolved either by negative peace or positive peace, as already mentioned. "The three types of violence are closely related and each of them depends on the other two" [9:128].

To resolve these types of violence, it is necessary to move from a negative peace to a positive peace, which, according to Johan Galtung, is a process whose central objective is to satisfy the basic needs of man and create the optimal conditions that develop human potential, which leads us to the concepts of human development and poverty measurements studied by Sen, Nussbaum, the United Nations Organization, among others. "Negative peace is the main idea of peace in the Western world, which focuses on the lack of war, the lack of conflict, of direct violence (physical aggression). According to this conception, peace would simply be the absence of war; therefore, it would consist simply in avoiding armed conflicts" [6:153].

For Calderón [5], peace through peaceful means must be approached with a deep respect for man and his basic needs (well-being, freedom, identity and survival), having the human being as a starting point. For the author, positive peace is resolving conflicts without violence, in a context where basic human needs are met, with social justice, without abuse of political and economic power and with human relations based on respect, dialogue and cooperation. "If we use positive and timely means (empathy, creativity and non-violence) for the transformation of a conflict, then the end will be equally (or at least potentially) positive and constructive" [5:4] "For the social pact for peace and a more supportive economy, building the culture of peace is rebuilding the social fabric, expanding the well-being of the population and strengthening democracy, therefore, peace is a collective responsibility" [6:167]. For both authors, positive peace is associated with third-generation human rights, which prioritize the value of solidarity. Peace is part of universal human rights, which are permanently violated by the political, economic and social structure.

In the traditional conception of the Western world, peace means the absence of war, the absence of conflict, of direct violence (physical aggression). Under this vision, peace would be achieved by avoiding armed conflicts, but this vision leaves aside or forgets conflicts such as corruption, inequity, inequality, social injustice, among others. "Positive peace supposes a reduced level of direct violence and a high level of justice; it is through it that social harmony, equality, justice and, therefore, the radical transformation of society are pursued" [6:153].

In addition to negative peace and positive peace, we also have imperfect peace, which is defined by Hernandez [6:154)] as: those situations in which human needs are met, but violence is present in all or at least in one of the structures of human character. Experiences in which conflicts are regulated peacefully are grouped under this name, it is called imperfect because, despite being managed peacefully, it coexists with conflicts and some forms of violence.

For his part, Jimenez [10] speaks to us of neutral peace, warning that total and absolute peace does not exist, for him, it is impossible to eliminate all conflicts, so society must learn to live with them, internalizing in people a culture of dialogue, empathy and respect, even though some type of conflict exists. That is, to learn to establish agreements.

### B. Poverty

Poverty is a concept associated with lack or deprivation, fundamentally of the satisfaction of basic human needs: food, clothing, a roof over one's head, education, access to health services, etc. In the 1980s, poverty was approached based on two types: absolute poverty and relative poverty, focused mainly on the acquisition or lack of goods and services to live in a healthy way. At first, it was only associated with a lack of income (monetary poverty, one-dimensional) and basic needs. The best-known methods are the Poverty Line method, which emphasizes the insufficiency of a household to satisfy its basic needs, drawing a "poverty line" and establishing household income in relation to the minimum expenditure on goods, services or food. If the minimum cost cannot be paid, we would speak of extreme poverty, while if the cost doubles



income, we would speak of critical poverty. Another method is the Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index, which focuses on calculating poverty by the insufficiency of basic physical and social infrastructure for living: schooling, basic services, housing and employment of family members.

Observing that many people, despite having a daily income higher than that defined by the World Bank (1.9 dollars), continued to have various deprivations in the aspects indicated and others, is why multidimensional indexes were created. That is, poverty is not only monetary but transcends other dimensions. A pioneer in analyzing poverty from a more holistic perspective was the economist and philosopher Amartva Sen, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998, for whom poverty is also associated with the freedom and capabilities that everyone must be, do and choose [1]. Nussbaum [2] American philosopher, agrees with the importance of human capabilities, stating that these, along with opportunities, are a factor that many people can also be deprived of, which leads them to be born, remain and die in poverty. Understood in this way, in addition to material deprivation, as the absence of freedom, capacity and opportunity, which leads the poor to be excluded.

These visions led, in the early nineties, to the construction of various multidimensional poverty indices, some of the best known are the Human Poverty Index (HPI) and the Human Development Index (HDI), both created by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the latter being one of the most widely disseminated worldwide. Another index that has gained much importance in recent years is the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) based on the Alkire-Foster method [11], which adds other dimensions and analyzes the intensity and persistence of poverty.

Following the logic and analysis of this type of approach, it is clear that poverty is not only economic, but also social, cultural, political, etc., and becomes, as already mentioned, a violent element of Universal Human Rights, both in its first, second, third and fourth generation, in which it is established, in its article 25 that: "Every person has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services... [12:52]. This becomes a structural violence, which is historically constructed and invisible to society, since the latter ends up seeing poverty as something natural, normal, endorsed and accepted, within a given configuration of political and economic domination.

# III. MATERIALS AND METHOD: POVERTY AND VIOLENCE IN THE WORLD

The United Nations Development Program produces an annual report on the Human Development Index, which measures life expectancy at birth, literacy rate and GDP per capita. In the report published in 2019, the poorest countries were, in this order: Niger, Central African Republic, Chad, South Sudan, Burundi, Mali, Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the ten poorest countries are African [13].

According to the 2018 Multidimensional Poverty Index, prepared by UNDP, there are 1.3 billion people worldwide

who suffer from poverty in different ways beyond money: they do not have access to education, suffer from malnutrition, do not have access to drinking water or live in unhealthy housing, for example. Of these, nearly 1.1 billion (83%) are concentrated in two areas: sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. These two regions are considered the poorest on the planet. An estimated 560 million people live in extreme poverty in Africa, which represents more than 40% of the population. Africa is a continent rich in natural resources: some countries are very rich in oil, minerals or diamonds. However, this wealth is distributed unequally due to war and dictatorial regimes [14].

Half of all people living in poverty are under 18 years of age, according to estimates from the 2018 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index, published by the United Nations Development Program and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). The figures indicate that in 104 countries, mainly low- and middle-income countries, 662 million children are considered multidimensionally poor. In 35 countries, half of all children live in poverty. The MPI goes beyond income to comprehend individuals experience poverty in various simultaneous ways. It identifies how individuals are falling behind in three key dimensions: health, education and standard of living, lacking clean water, sanitation, adequate nutrition or primary education. Those who are lacking at least one third of the MPI components are defined as multidimensionally poor

The following table shows the level of poverty by income (\$1.9 per day) by continental area, knowing that this goes beyond the monetary aspect, but, even so, this data is a great reference to identify and reaffirm what was mentioned above, about the location of the poorest population.

TABLE I. POVERTY ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL POVERTY LINE OF USD 1.90 A DAY

(PPP 2011)

Region	Poverty headcount ratio (%)		Number of poor people (millions)	
	2013	2015	2013	2015
East Asia and the Pacific	3,6	2,3	73,1	47,2
Europe and Central Asia	1,6	1,5	7,7	7,1
Latin America and the Caribbean	4,6	4,1	28,0	25,9
Middle East and North Africa	2,6	5,0	9,5	18,6
South Asia	16,2	12,4	274,5	216,4
Sub-Saharan Africa	42,5	41,1	405,1	413,3
World total	11,2	10,0	804,2	735,9

Source of information: https://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/press-release/2018/09/19/decline-of-global-extreme-poverty-continues-but-has-slowed-world-bank [16].

We can see from the table that the largest percentage of poor people are in Africa, followed by South Asia, together accounting for almost 60% of global poverty.

According to World Bank data in 2018 [3], of every five people below the international poverty line, four lived in rural areas; half of the poor are children; women account for most of the poor in most regions and in some age groups. Of the world's poor aged 15 years and older, around 70% have no education or only basic education. Nearly half of the poor in sub-Saharan Africa live in just five countries: Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Madagascar. More than 40% of the world's poor live in economies affected by fragility, conflict and violence, and that figure is expected to rise to 67% in the next decade.

### A. Peace Index

To analyze the relationship between poverty and peace, with the understanding that: The greater the poverty, the less peace; the greater the violence and insecurity and therefore the lower the culture of peace. The poorest regions of the world were used as a reference, measured with the monetary poverty index (1.9 dollars per day) and the ten countries with the greatest violence and insecurity, the latter measured with the Global Peace Index, identifying in which regions these countries are located.

The Global Peace Index (GPI) is an indicator that measures the level of peace and the absence of violence in a country or region [17]. It has been developed and published since 2007 by the Institute for Economics and Peace together with several experts from peace institutes and think tanks and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, of the University of Sydney, with data processed by the Intelligence Unit of the British weekly The Economist. "Assessing peace on both global and national scales enables us to evaluate the social, political, and economic elements that foster peace. Each year, the Institute for Economics and Peace produces the Global Peace Index, the world's leading measure of national peace, which ranks 163 countries according to their levels of peace." [18:1] The Institute rates nations according to their level of peace. The index is made up of 23 quantitative and qualitative indicators, covering three central themes: the level of societal security, the degree of militarization of a country and the extent of domestic conflicts, ranking 163 independent states, covering almost 100% of the world's population.

Thus, the study includes internal variables such as violence and crime and external variables, such as military spending and the wars in which the country participates. The main indicators used are the following:

- Number of wars (internal and external) fought
- Estimated deaths in external wars
- Estimated deaths in internal wars
- Level of internal conflicts
- Relations with neighboring states
- Level of perceived crime in society
- Number of displaced persons per unit of population
- Political instability
- Level of respect for human rights (political terror scale)
- Possibility of terrorist acts
- Number of homicides

- Level of violent crime
- Probability of violent demonstrations
- Number of people imprisoned
- Number of police officers and security forces
- Military expenditure in relation to GDP
- Number of military personnel
- Imports of the main conventional weapons
- Exports of the main conventional weapons
- Financing of United Nations peacekeeping missions
- Number of heavy weapons
- Availability of light weapons
- Military capacity or sophistication

The indicators of internal peace account for 60% of the value of the Global Peace Index and those of external peace account for 40%. From the results of the Global Peace Index, the Institute for Economics and Peace concludes that:

- The peace of a region is correlated with the level of income, education and regional integration.
- Peaceful countries have high levels of transparency and low levels of corruption.
- Small, stable, democratic countries that are members of regional blocs tend to score well on this index.

Some critics of this index point out that it does not include indicators on violence against women and children and that it positively values those countries that enjoy peace because others (usually the US) take care of their defense. This index is useful above all to look at the evolution of the level of peace in a country over time.

The following table presents the ten countries with the highest index and their position in the ranking of the same index; the least peaceful countries are shown: the most violent and conflictive, according to GPI data; The higher the value, the less peaceful the country is. That is, nations with a lower value are considered peaceful societies.

TABLE II. THE TEN COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST VALUE IN THE GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (LEAS PEACEFUL)

Country	Global Peace Index 2021	Ranking Index	
Afghanistan	3631	163	
Yamen	3407	162	
Syria	3371	161	
South Sudan	3363	160	
Iraq	3257	159	
Somalia	3211	158	
Democratic Republic of Congo	3196	157	
Libya	3166	156	
Central African Republic	3131	155	
Russia	2993	154	

# IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS: POVERTY, VIOLENCE AND CULTURE OF PEACE

Obviously, poverty is not the only triggering factor of violence and insecurity, but in this research, we focus on reflecting on the relationship between poverty and peace. Since one of the main currents on violence indicates that the cause of violence is inequality, unemployment rate, low levels of economic development, etc. [4]. What would mean according to Ortiz Medina (2024) a violation of third generation human rights [20]. For his part, Nateras and

Zaragoza warn that the problem is more complex, but they recognize the preponderant role that poverty plays in this issue. "Research published by the Federal Electoral Institute and the Center for Economic Research and Teaching in 2014 (Schedler, 2014) ... poverty is referenced as the first structural cause of violence\_ 21.4%\_; in second place, government corruption\_20.6%\_ and in third place the weakness of social values\_17.9%. This shows that citizens combine structural, institutional and cultural explanations." [4:224 and 225].

However, it is worth noting that in a study carried out by the authors [4], applied to a group of states of the Mexican Republic for the period 2009 to 2013, it was found that the entities with more well-being exceed the crime rates of the entities with the greatest poverty in the country, so they conclude that the paradigm that establishes the relationship between poverty and crime is limited and erroneous, for this reason they infer that poverty and socioeconomic factors are not determinants of the low rates of peace. However, they do have a significant weight in the culture of peace.

When observing both the poverty data and the global peace index, we realize that it is the poor countries that have the highest rate of global violence, since in both tables the groups of countries coincide; The poorest are in Africa and Asia, and they are also the least peaceful, which leads us to infer that poverty can be an important trigger of violence and therefore of conflict and therefore, it prevents the creation of a culture of peace and the construction of peaceful societies. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce, among other things, the poverty rates, if we really want to build a culture of peace. In this sense, Ortiz, Hernández and Martínez (2020) highlight that countries with less human development in general also show greater inequality [21]. Under this same logic, the same authors (2021) highlight that economic growth does not guarantee well-being [22].

On average, a child born in a country with a low development index has a life expectancy of just over 60 years, 19 years less than a child from a country in the very high human development group, where the average life expectancy is almost 80 years. Similarly, children from countries with very high human development will remain in school for seven years longer than those who live in countries with low human development, says Achim Steiner, Administrator of the UNDP [20].

### V. CONCLUSIONS

Poverty is not limited to the monetary factor; it has been necessary to build integrative measurement approaches that the methodologies previously unite two unidimensional and multidimensional; both complement each other. On the other hand, the tables indicated show us that; as long as there is insufficiency in covering basic human needs, poverty, marginalization and exclusion, we cannot speak of peace, because these (poverty table and global peace index table) give us indications that poverty and violence maintain a certain correlation, inferring that the first is the cause of the second, so that, if we wish to reduce violence and create peace, we must first reduce poverty.

As promoters of peace, our duty is: to work to reduce any type of violence, which, in the case of economic science, refers to structural violence. The challenge for peace workers is to build social justice (equitable distribution of resources and equal participation in decision-making about this distribution) and development in terms of integration and cooperation, so that all human beings can satisfy their most basic needs.

Thus, if there is poverty in the world, there will be no culture of peace. If a country wishes to encourage or promote a culture of peace, it must resolve the internal conflicts that generate violence; it must attack the problems at their roots. Poverty is a type of structural violence that people who find themselves in this condition experience daily.

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