

Chapter 1

Peace from the Perspective of Hannah Arendt's Political Philosophy: Tools for Understanding Its Implications for State Security*

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Abstract: Pacifism is presented as a political alternative oriented towards the positive transformation of conflict. This research, grounded in the frame of Hannah Arendt's political philosophy, aims to identify the principles that underpin peacebuilding and a culture of security. In the realm of political culture, this involves examining how conflict-resolution processes enhance thinking about peace by valuing citizen agreements, which are central to rebuilding the social fabric through recognizing diverse opinions and expressions in a democratic environment.

Keywords: Peace; plurality; politics; transformation; State; security

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Introduction

Peace scenarios built after periods of violence develop in political contexts marked by deep ideological divisions. These divisions directly affect the interpretation of the problems that impact state stability and the normalization of social life.

This panorama has been a constant across most states that have engaged in negotiations with belligerent actors. Such actors, after attempting to overthrow governments and establish a new *status quo* through prolonged military confrontations, eventually reintegrated into the sphere of political deliberation.

In several Latin American countries, negotiation processes between armed actors and the state have fostered the transition of belligerent groups into political participation coalitions, thereby promoting the construction of a culture of peace. Such is the case of Guatemala, which, after the escalation of violence in the 1980s, reached an agreement that allowed members of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) to enter the public arena as a political party. Likewise, in Uruguay, the National Liberation Movement—Tupamaros (MLN-T)—managed the release of political prisoners and their integration into political life, as in the case of its leader, Pepe Mujica (González-Moreira & Torres-Araque, 2019). These examples demonstrate the potential of Latin American societies to overcome violence and strengthen democracy.

However, in other peace processes in the region, the incorporation of former combatants into political life and their reintegration into the social fabric have had unexpected effects, especially in security-related areas. This has resulted in political and social instability, which, in turn, has given rise to new forms of violence and posed significant challenges to ensuring citizen tranquility. Such is the case of El Salvador, where, after the peace process with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the implementation of the peace agreements led to a

restructuring of the Armed Forces and a considerable reduction in personnel, which resulted in an increase in crime and violence rates in the country (Ribera, 1994).

In the case of Nicaragua, it can also be observed that, after a bloody insurrectional struggle that lasted nearly a decade, the implementation of peace was marked by "a counterrevolutionary process that continued deepening violence, polarization, and the loss of valuable human lives" (Gómez, 2011, pp. 6–7).

In this regard, achieving agreements and political will for the implementation of peace processes requires coherent coordination with each nation's political, economic, and social characteristics. Peacebuilding requires creating a context that ensures the coexistence of diverse identities and cultural representations. Otherwise, these processes could be hindered by the persistence and intensification of ideological boundaries, leading to new social fractures and, consequently, the emergence of conflicts marked by the violent dynamics of the past.

These conditions can undermine peacebuilding processes, diverting political action toward domination as a form of power at certain moments. This, in turn, turns violence into an expedient means to resolve differences. Historically, numerous and significant efforts for peace, both in international and local contexts, have failed. Far from solving problems, these initiatives have given rise to new forms of conflict and violence, with a profound impact on societies and on the states responsible for their control.

Hannah Arendt's philosophy offers a valuable way to understand positive peace: a process grounded in the recognition of difference and the defense of human rights. This conception promotes the construction of spaces characterized by diverse and plural identities and arguments, with the potential to reorient conflict toward a constructive path, thereby rescuing the essence of politics.

This chapter aims to identify the essential elements of this Arendtian conception of politics and to establish a framework that guides deliberation and the formulation of peace strategies in Latin America.

Latin American history forces us to question how deep our understanding of warlike acts really is. Fully comprehending these events is essential to prevent their repetition. In this regard, Stolcke (2010) notes that "Hannah Arendt's pacifism differed from postwar pacifism in that it arose from her own experience of war, rather than from a general fear of war" (p. 174).

It is not only a matter of addressing the war–peace binary. Arendt's philosophy explores possibilities that transcend this dichotomy, proposing a deeper and more active understanding of peace. Within this framework, peace is conceived as a

sustained process of building focused on the true meaning of living in peace, which implies generating the conditions and developing the capacities necessary for pacification. Far from focusing exclusively on the role of the state or on the problem of domination, Arendt's philosophy emphasizes the importance of creating environments in which one can live without violence, thereby allowing freedom and political spontaneity to flourish as genuine expressions of the human.

The capacities for peace enable conflict resolution within a normative framework whose main objective is to prevent the perpetuation of violence. However, how is the desire to live in peace incorporated into a society? Conflict resolution processes contribute to the construction of a culture of peace by promoting civic agreement, the reconstruction of the social fabric, and the recognition of the diversity of thought and expression in a democratic environment. In this regard, pacifism, understood as a political proposal, is oriented toward the positive transformation of conflict.

Arendt's perspective suggests that it is possible to establish relationships that are not determined by the negativity of conflict, but that are founded on mutual recognition and solidarity. Adopting this frame, research could focus on identifying and analyzing these principles in peacebuilding processes and on developing a culture of security across various nations on the continent, such as Central American countries and Colombia.

Methodologically, an approach to the selected cases centered on narratives and the recognition of interactions among diverse social groups will allow a deeper understanding of the culture of violence and its systemic impact on security and state stability. Thus, key research scenarios include the dynamics between armed groups and civilian populations, civil–military relations, and the coordination between society and the state.

The Analytical Dimensions of Peace

H. Arendt's philosophical approach to the theme of peace, as presented in seminal works such as *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and *On Violence* (1970), provides a basis for identifying interpretative guidelines. In general terms, the author offers a renewed stance that contrasts with the treatises of traditional political philosophy on this subject. In this sense, a marked divergence stands out in her thought from conventional notions of politics, power, and violence, among other substantive issues intrinsically linked to the conception of peace.

Regarding violence, Arendt (2006) argues that the authentic substance lies in a *telos* intrinsic to the human being: the capacity to be subsumed by the very means that justify it. Hence, the overcoming of violence becomes the cardinal north of political action.

Arendt departs from traditional references and seeks categories grounded in experience, adopting an attitude akin to existentialist philosophy, emphasizing common sense and the value of difference. Consequently, politics, conceived within the framework of peace, is configured as an alternative for the positive transformation of conflict, prioritizing the protection of individuals who forge agreements within the singular political framework they have established.

Singularity arises from the confluence of diversities that establish agreement as the fundamental pillar of power, a fact that materializes in the consolidation of the state. In this fabric, collective political power serves as a guarantor of the recognition and respect for the multiple identities that make up community life, thereby fostering the affirmation of freedom. However, the decline of political pacifism can lead to the violation of identities and, subsequently, to the instrumentalization of violence. This underscores the urgent need to preserve a culture of peace within the spectrum of political expressions.

Political Culture and Peace

The transformations inherent to Western modernity, both in the social and political spheres, rest on the consolidation of identities. These become a reference for other vital spheres, such as politics. The bases of classical liberalism hold that identity enables the recognition of a collectivity that manifests its freedom and autonomy in a specific territory. This scenario, in turn, fosters understanding and the achievement of peace.

The characterization of political culture has evolved substantially, grounded in seminal notions from classical and contemporary sociology. Its development has been nourished by Weber's distinction between traditional and modern society, Parsons' analysis of the transition from modernity to postmodernity, and Luhmann's proposal regarding globalized society. The aim has been to build an autonomous sphere of knowledge, establishing bridges with the categories proper to political theory.

However, twentieth-century conflicts brought these pillars of peace into question. The two world wars were characterized by the vindication of identities threatened by aspirations for political participation.

The above tested the viability of achieving a stable and lasting peace within the liberal model. In this context, the following question arises: how can contemporary democracies guarantee the protection of freedom and identity autonomy, ensuring their political participation in a pacifism that contributes to the consolidation of a common culture?

To answer this question, the contribution of Will Kymlicka is fundamental; he maintains that contemporary violence maintains substantive links with the formulation of the cultural foundations of the liberal state, which have privileged the perspective of majorities. As a result of this dynamic, the omission in defending minority rights has perpetuated violence and the disarticulation of collectives.

However, according to Kymlicka (2003), the possibility of achieving an equilibrium and a state of communal peace lies in building cultural pluralism from the foundations of the liberal state. This perspective, in line with other contemporary currents of political philosophy, holds that a culture of peace is the true guarantor of coexistence, transcending mere aspiration to an abstract ideal.

Although the classical modernity approach requires reform, alternative proposals have emerged that criticize the liberal roots. These start from the premise that identity is intrinsically diverse and must be understood and appreciated from multiple spheres and levels of cultural life, thereby inscribing itself in a postmodern perspective.

Scenarios of violence and authoritarianism can be transformed if politics is approached through a culture of peace that encompasses the various spheres of life and democracy, always recognizing difference as a fundamental principle. In this context, political practice would seek to balance discourses, especially regarding hierarchies and hegemonies of participation, and to resolve conflict through understanding, respect, and recognition of the other. This would be the path toward building a deliberative democracy.

To understand how deliberative democracy materializes, it is necessary to address rational choice theory (RCT) and its contribution to political theory and science (Vidal, 2008). RCT enriches understanding of political culture by explaining how the political system and its actors interact and, based on their interests, construct the web of actions that guides public deliberation. Dimensions related to cultural and social values serve, in this sense, as a macro framework that influences more concrete decisions.

Political philosophy provides key notions—such as value, tradition, and ideology—that are crucial for analyzing contemporary realities and constructing a critical hermeneutics, particularly in the Latin American context. For its part, political

theory develops fundamental categories—such as the state, the political system, power, and deliberative democracy—in an effort to consolidate its autonomy from philosophy, sociology, and political economy.¹

However, at the intersection of these spheres of knowledge, a persistent tension is perceived between the limits of the social and the political, as well as in their points of convergence and divergence. In this respect, the viability of erecting new emancipatory models of deliberative democracy will inevitably depend on an interdisciplinary construction of knowledge that integrates both the social and the political. By conceiving the social and the political as two sides of the same coin, their unified understanding will enable a dialectical synthesis.

When addressing the distinction between political theory and political culture, a first tension arises: the social is perceived as a sphere encompassing the political. Despite this, various theorists have insisted on demonstrating the autonomy of the political sphere.

Although they often wish to preserve Arendt's vision of the political, contemporary theorists have largely abandoned the separation she established between the political and the social, as well as her nostalgic pessimism about the emergence of massive social movements by the oppressed and the unemancipated. The prevailing view today is that social justice constitutes a condition of freedom and equality; therefore, the social must be one of the great focuses of the political. (Bernstein, 1986, as cited in Young et al., 1998)

To support this idea, it is necessary to examine Young's proposed thematic differentiation and orientations in political theory. The author organizes contemporary political theory into six key subtopics, each of which illustrates a distinct way of politicizing the social.

The first subtopic, developed by Rawls in his theory on rights, social justice, and welfare, conceives the state as the entity responsible for mitigating social inequalities (Caballero, 2006). This objective is achieved by providing basic conditions that ensure the welfare of all individuals, thereby guaranteeing equal opportunities for competition.

From this perspective, Nozick opposes Rawls' interpretation, arguing that the supposed state intervention to guarantee equality is not aligned with the principles

¹ The transformation and delimitation of political theory are addressed in the document *Elementos para la reconstrucción del estatuto epistemológico de la cultura política*, prepared by Professor Oscar Mejía and published by the National University of Colombia.

that should underpin economic systems (Bader, 2010). Nozick emphasizes the importance of safeguarding the freedom inherent in democracy and capitalism, arguing that any attempt to constrain individuals or the system in the name of equality is harmful.

The second subtopic, democratic theory, sometimes focuses excessively on state intervention, thereby ignoring individuals' agency in decision-making. Nevertheless, from this perspective, it is argued that democratic participation not only guarantees but also promotes social equality, and vice versa. Therefore, it is imperative that such participation not be limited to state institutions but also extend to the workplace.

In this context, the reductionist conception of the human being, predominant in some models—which represent the person solely as a consumer with purchasing power or as an individual defined exclusively by their productive capacities—is called into question. However, distributive justice is conceived as a mechanism that enhances freedom, and it is precisely this freedom that, in turn, fosters the full development of human capabilities.

This discussion encompasses the problem of social inequality generated by class differences, as well as gender inequalities, especially in the workplace. A model based exclusively on the logic of competition may prove insufficient to face these challenges. In this regard, authors such as Mansbridge (2015) propose the idea of a *unitary democracy*, in which debate and deliberation are conceived as means to achieve the common good. However, the author also emphasizes that the soundness of the democratic system depends on the coexistence of unitary and competitive democracy, which implies preserving the plurality of individual interests within the political order.

The third subtopic, feminist political theory, delves into the public–private dichotomy to reveal how politics traverses all social relations. It also highlights the significance of gender in political representation.

The fourth subtopic is consolidated within the framework of postmodern thought. One of its fundamental contributions comes from feminism, which introduces the idea that power does not reside in a single center but flows through all social spaces. A second contribution suggests that political actors replicate social dynamics, though not always coherently.

In this direction, Foucault's contribution is crucial. The philosopher recognizes that, in contemporary democracies, the form and figure of power still retain traits of monarchical power and premodern experience. For Foucault, power tends to reproduce itself in the various institutions that structure social life.

From this Foucauldian conception of power, it is possible to develop an analysis that rethinks fundamental categories of political theory, such as the state, law, authority, obligation, liberty, and rights. Finally, it is argued that the Marxist category of the *proletariat* does not encompass the diversity of contemporary social groups' categories and interests.

The fifth subgroup, new social movements and civil society, constitutes the most significant contribution. Her proposal centers on the politicization of the social, driven by the heterogeneity of thought, identities, and collective representations. In this way, her critique and analysis transcend the traditional political sphere to encompass social interaction and cultural processes.

The reflections put forward by these subgroups do not fit within traditional categories of law or welfare understood solely in economic terms. Instead, their analysis is directly linked to a critical hermeneutics of political culture. This perspective, in turn, is incorporated into Claus Offe's conception of political culture, which demonstrates how bureaucratic practice has depoliticized state actions:

Claus Offe presents the modern Welfare State as processes of depoliticized social control and public spending. The state has become an arena in which officials carry out their real activities behind closed doors and experts administer sectoral policies with technical expertise, in which normative purposes barely have a place.

Habermas argues that state institutions, by developing their own rational logic, become decontextualized from everyday reality and, therefore, from cultural interaction. This poses the challenge of coordinating a vision of politics and democracy with an active commitment to promoting social justice.

The sixth subgroup, the debate on liberalism and communitarianism, understands the social as prior to and constitutive of the political. In this line, Sandel argues that "to formulate a robust political theory of social union, justice must be complemented by recognition of the peculiar ties and cultural commitments that constitute personal identities."

The main objection of communitarians toward liberalism lies in its inability to recognize the particularities of social groups. They hold that this political current privileges the individual to the detriment of the dimension of collectivity. Liberalism, understood as the universal and egalitarian application of laws and norms—as established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—comes into tension with the demand for political recognition and the preservation of certain cultures. From

this perspective, liberalism reveals itself as a limited framework for addressing cultural diversity and communal identities.

Considering the debate on the status of political culture, Iris Young's proposal regarding new social movements and civil society is particularly significant. Her perspective not only expands but also enriches the reflection on the political culture proposed by Offe and Schmitter in their article "Las paradojas y los dilemas de la democracia liberal":

If liberal democracy has become "the only game in town," why bother investigating its paradoxes and dilemmas? Is the absence of any plausible alternative not enough to guarantee the success of its consolidation in neodemocracies or its persistence in older democracies? (1995, p. 30)

Biopolitics: The Concepts of Bare Life and State of Exception

What living conditions would eradicate violence? How can we create spaces of coexistence that promote both freedom of expression and political spontaneity? The key lies in dismantling the politics of domination, which demands a radical transformation of political language, shifting from a logic centered on power to one based on recognition and solidarity.

The fragility of human affairs manifests itself in the vulnerability of the state, laws, and institutions. For this reason, it is imperative to peacefully reform the orders that govern coexistence, with the aim of building public spaces of communication that emulate the spirit of the Greek *polis*.

The universal recognition of human dignity and fundamental rights marked a milestone in transforming social structures. This evolution, driven by the affirmation of equality, has enabled dismantling the historical bases of discrimination and supremacy that legitimized relations of domination (Peces-Barba, 2007). Thus, inequality on grounds of sex, ethnicity, or religion has been questioned and rejected, consolidating a new international paradigm based on equity, inclusion, and respect for the human condition.

However, this achievement at the level of declarations did not materialize in most places around the world. This led to a reappraisal of its origins, diverting attention from a cultural identity dimension to a fundamental question: who defines them?

In this regard, dignity stands as a pillar of moral, political, and legal thought; that is, it functions as a value or a cardinal principle. Likewise, solidarity emerges as

a key constitutional principle for the conceptualization of human rights. So crucial is Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that it states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (United Nations, 2012, p. 2).

Solidarity is a fundamental principle of human rights, rooted in the moral dimension of the human being, who recognizes himself in others. This awareness of similarity fosters coexistence grounded in reason and empathy, implying recognition of equality in dignity and rights.

Although the liberal project—as opposed to monarchical and medieval structures of social organization—began with the conquest of the principle of equality, this perspective has not been without its critics. It is contested that values such as dignity and solidarity have been relegated to mere minimum normative requirements within a state whose main function is to guarantee individuals *identical* conditions that allow the free functioning of markets.

This perspective marginalizes human intersubjectivity and, therefore, the possibility of moral realization. Often, principles are instrumentalized, becoming mere mechanisms of punitive social control. This causes *real solidarity*, according to Durkheim (1987), to acquire a negative character:

Thus we see what this real solidarity consists of; it directly links things to persons, but not persons among themselves. In a strict sense, one can exercise a real right by thinking one is alone in the world, without reference to other men. Consequently, since it is only through the medium of persons that things are integrated in society, the solidarity resulting from this integration is wholly negative. It does not lead wills to move toward common ends, but merely makes things gravitate around wills in orderly fashion. Because real rights are thus limited, they do not cause conflicts; hostility is precluded, but there is no active coming together, no consensus. Suppose an agreement of this kind were as perfect as possible; the society in which it exists—if it exists alone—will resemble an immense constellation where each star moves in its orbit without concern for the movements of neighboring stars. Such solidarity does not make the elements that it relates at all capable of acting together; it contributes nothing to the unity of the social body. (p. 85)

Thus, solidarity has been dissociated from the recognition of societies' roots and history. This is because it has been reduced to a principle of justice applied by the state and sustained exclusively by norms. This denial of its profound moral

dimension makes it a crucial challenge for contemporary thought on human rights: the urgency of reconnecting with those origins, fostering both pluralism and solidarity:

The great question is, then, how to think and how to introduce in practice, even into positive law, notions of *pluralism* and *solidarity* that do not sanctify differences among men, yet that preserve precisely those factors without which the relation between individuals and social groups is no more than a new version of the cunning of power advancing upon what it has not yet taken by force. The essential words in the philosophical discussion of this enormous topic are responsibility and identity. (García-Baró, 2004, p. 26)

In this regard, the history of societies is not only relevant to the social group to which one belongs—by normatively regulating interactions—but is also a constitutive part of individuals. By engaging with it, they acquire responsibilities and commitments, and through it, they build and express their identity.

Over the course of history, solidarity can be recognized in the sense proposed by H. Arendt (1998), who maintains that its foundation lies in human charity, understood as the capacity to generate identity within a social group, differentiating its members from others and strengthening bonds of unity. However, in historical moments when power acquires authoritarian traits, a progressive deterioration of the human condition is observed, leading to the weakening—and even abandonment—of this valuable quality.

Conclusion

The construction of a culture of peace that guarantees stability and citizen security is a viable project. To achieve this, states must be able to integrate diverse identities into a common framework of interaction that recognizes and dignifies them. In this context, contributions from contemporary political philosophy are crucial to link theoretical reflection with the realities and conflicts that currently affect societies, especially regarding the multiple manifestations of violence.

Contemporary democracy has also been challenged by changes in the social, economic, and cultural institutions that configure it, as well as by the interests and expectations of the individuals who actively participate in it. In this context, the exercise of citizenship falls directly on the subjects, who assume it from the

particularity of the social groups that shape their identity and, at the same time, connect with issues of global scope.

This is the case with Latin American democracies, which must be analyzed through the lens of neodemocracies. These are due to an ambivalent characteristic: they oscillate between premodernity—marked by intolerance and exclusion—and postmodernity—defined by indifference and skepticism. This tension has facilitated the emergence of authoritarianism as a solution to the crisis (Mejía, 2008).

The fact that democracies across Europe, Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America face similar dilemmas underscores the urgency of incorporating insights from other social science disciplines into argumentation and research in political theory and political culture. Just as the social and the political form a dichotomous unity capable of generating synthesis, the disciplinary and the interdisciplinary can also be integrated. This will substantially enrich the analysis, methods, and knowledge of democracies in a broad sense, which in turn will contribute to the formulation and orientation of current political systems.

The situations currently affecting Latin America have provoked legitimate concern among various social and political sectors. These revolve around peace processes and the integration and political participation of former combatants. The experiences of Latin American nations with these state projects have left a perception of their benefits and risks that is ambiguous. Nevertheless, peace and its culture cannot cease to be a prime objective for the future of societies.

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