

Book Review

The Global Making of Policing: Postcolonial Perspectives

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Hönke, Jana and Markus-Michael Müller. 2016.
The Global Making of Policing: Postcolonial Perspectives. New York: Routledge. 182pp.

Policing executed by one State in another's territory and the international training of police and military forces of foreign countries are not a new phenomenon in history. Since the first decades of the twentieth century, the USA and other great powers have resorted to these practices as part of their foreign policy, especially in the US relation with the rest of the Western hemisphere. Besides these outstanding transnational characteristics of the way that policing practices are developed and executed around the world, there is still a significant gap in the literature about police and policing, which is restricted to the fields of disciplinary studies such as criminology or public security. In a general way, these perspectives see policing practices as something that do not cross borders: they are understood as particular or 'national' forms, circumscribed to a given locality in which their global or transnational dimensions are often ignored.

However, more recently, some publications have emerged with the aim to point to an understanding of policing practices that takes in account a broader international reality. Situated among these is the compilation of articles organised by Jana Hönke (University of Edinburgh) and Markus-Michael Müller (Freie Universität Berlin) that comprise *The Global Making of Policing*.

The book is the result of a series of panels and discussions in different international congresses since 2010. In it, the main challenge and novelty is both methodological and in terms of 'phenomenon circumscription', which means that it intends to shed light on the constitutive global nature of contemporary policing. In other words, the aim of the researchers is to grasp not only the relations between States regarding the police, but the transnational exchange of knowledges and policing practices that cross-cut a given foreign policy. That is because its main line is the search to expose the paths of what came to be understood as the *global making* of policing, using interdisciplinary conceptual tools that

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try to overcome established knowledge frontiers such as Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, International Relations, History and Geography.

According to Hönke and Müller, this *making* is characterised as a historical process that doesn't only have generalities that go beyond the local specificities of each State and region but also is constituted in the encounter among these various patterns of policing. Thus, the focus is no longer the nation-state understood as a closed unity belonging to an international system and is instead directed to the flows and mutual influences among the diverse stages that different social actors that execute policing practices *in loco* exercise on each other.

This approach intends to move away from *mainstream* studies about the *international* making of policing, according to the authors. To them, the dominant bibliography has hidden the fact that policing is *globally* co-constituted, suggesting the existence of a 'diffusional center' of practices and a periphery (or post-colony, to use their vocabulary) composed of 'passive receivers'. In this mainstream literature, powers such as the United States and Europe are seen as a core center from where main policing practices and knowledges are created and then exported to the rest of the world. Thereby, the book intends to evidence the opposite. Its focus is the way in which the actors and stages such as Gaza or Rio de Janeiro, taken at first glance as subaltern and passive, are instead inserted in the global making of policing. Thus, the works in the book highlight the experiments, improvements and learning processes that occur in the periphery, contrasting with the established mainstream texts about policing and international relations.

It doesn't mean, however, that the definition of policing used by Hönke and Müller is not controversial. To the authors, it is the institutions, practices, technologies and ways of knowledge that have the objective to establish a power of regulation and to take coercive measures to guarantee the security and well-being of a community. So, the concept used here prioritises different aspects of the one appointed by thinkers such as Michel Foucault or, more recently, Mark Neocleous (cited by Bilgin, chapter 10). While Foucault (2008) or Neocleous (2000) in general focus on the fabrication of the bourgeois social order and the productive function that policing exercises by disciplining and creating a behaviour that is useful for capitalist accumulation, Hönke and Müller understand policing only as an exclusive, repressive force.

On the other hand, one of the main merits of the work is the attempt to use a multi-disciplinary approach, present in three analytical perspectives suggested by the authors to study the policing in a transnational or global scale. The first, called 'laboratory', prioritises the situations in which new policing technologies are developed and tested. These occur in contexts where 'common sense' supposes that policing needs to be made different than that within the central States. According to Hönke e Müller, these methods would be transferred through a 'national security economy': a circuit of consumers and producers of policing practices, knowledges, and products. A second perspective assumes that the global making of policing is not based only in a 'North-South' or 'center-periphery' axis, but is also 'South-South', among the very same States that constitute the global periphery, such as Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The last

perspective compounds a way to analyse the policing that resembles the ethnographic method developed in anthropological studies. Here, the priority is to know how policing is made, performed, acted and formatted by multiples actors and their day-to-day practices that pass through State frontiers, such as the role played by specialists and academics in the negotiation and construction of 'patterns practices' of policing.

It's by this prism composed of multiple perspectives that the different analyses are constructed throughout the work. They are as apparently diverse as the function exercised by the US occupation of the Philippines in the consolidation of the internal surveillance of the USA (Alfred McCoy, chapter 2); the fundamental role played by Gaza and Israel in the global making of policing, as a testing laboratory (Stephen Graham and Alexander Baker, chapter 3) as much as a 'transmission belt' of social control technologies (Leila Stockmaar, chapter 4); the relations between the pacification efforts exercised at the same time in the slums of Rio de Janeiro and Port-au-Prince (Markus-Michael Müller, chapter 5); the alignment between the Colombian State and the US government's interests in a repressive way to deal with illicit drugs and the construction of a expertise between security forces (Arlene Tickner, chapter 6); the policing of the Tamil diaspora in the UK (Mark Laffey and Suthaharan Nadarajah, chapter 7); the global exchange and flows among British officers (Georgina Sinclair, chapter 8); the international construction and training of the Afghan police (Lars Ostermeier, chapter 9); and the epistemological challenges in grasping the global making of policing (Pinar Bilgin, chapter 10).

Although the book has the potential to deepen the knowledge about the theme and to allow new ways to approach it by overlapping fragmented perspectives that intertwine, the reader many times will find some difficulties in advancing her or his readings, as she or he encounters some terms and concepts that don't receive due treatment before an advance is made in the reflection. Important words such as 'post-colony', 'liberalism', or its opposite 'illiberalism', may appear and be used sometimes without an objective meaning that facilitates its correct apprehension. This means that, if, on one hand, the mosaic made by many references allows the multiplication of the understanding about the theme, then on the other hand this *bricolage* shows some incoherence and contradictions that tend to impair the full logical direction of the arguments.

Once these barriers are passed, however, there is no doubt that this work is an important reference to think about a phenomenon of increasing relevance, not only because of the vast quantity of data and empirical material, but also because it shows alternative analytical keys and tools that produce a richer picture, and therefore more complete, of the global making of policing.

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