
GP Comprehension SAQ – Crime and Punishment

Passage 1: The cost of violence

Paragraph 1

Why are some places prone to war? Iraq has deeply confused how people think about twenty-first-century war. The war in Iraq is not a guide to the future; it is a rerun of a phase in world history that is essentially over. Iraq started with an international invasion. So did the two world wars, Napoleon's wars, the Crimean War and the other great set pieces of military history. In the twenty-first century, international invasions are going to be infrequent. The wars that will fill our television screens this century will be civil wars, not international ones. Of course, there were civil wars in the nineteenth century as well as invasions, but even the civil wars of that era are a hopeless guide to what warfare will be like. The major civil war of the nineteenth century was the American Civil War where one alliance of states fought against another alliance of states, each with its own recognised territory, government and army. It's history.

Paragraph 2

Future civil wars will take the form of a government pitted against a private extra-legal military grouping. They will variously be called rebels, terrorists, freedom fighters or gangsters, but their essential characteristic will be the same. These wars will also be a throwback, but to a different period of history: the time before nation-states cohered.

Paragraph 3

To rephrase the question, why are some countries more at risk of civil war than others? If we could answer the question, we might be able to do something about it: some of the factors that elevate the risk of civil war might be things that could readily be put right.

Paragraph 4

The economy matters. Low-income countries are significantly more at risk: poor is dangerous. It is not just the level of income: it is also the rate of growth. Given the level of income, societies that are growing at a faster per capita are significantly less at risk of violent conflict than societies that are stagnant or in decline. Economic development is peace-promoting. The statistics of the world post-1960 are supported by the deep historical evidence of the societies of early history. Economic development is a key remedy to violence: jobs, education, hope, a sense of having something to lose, and more effective state security services, all of which contribute something.

Paragraph 5

Besides the economy, a country's history also increases risks. The aspect of a country's history that most commonly excites interest when it comes to explaining a civil war is its colonial experience. Understandably, many people in developed countries find it convenient to emphasise the guilt of their own societies, and equally, many people in developing countries want to avoid any impression that the violence of their societies is a consequence of characteristics within those societies. But blaming colonialism for civil war is a costly illusion because it detracts from the focus on its real causes, which are often things that can still be changed. It may make people feel better, but it inhibits action.

Paragraph 6

The cost of violence is enormous. Even if it is to lead to healthy change, we need to ask whether the eventual benefits are worth these massive costs. But the final tragedy of civil war is that it leads not to improvement but to deterioration.

Adapted from 'Wars, Guns and Votes' by Paul Collier

Passage 2: Non-violence in the 21st century

Paragraph 1

Everyone knows the central philosophical question which the human race has been unable to answer: “Why is there violence rather than non-violence?” When once asked if non-violent resistance was a form of “direct action”, Gandhi replied: “... It is the only form.” It was the “greatest force...” Gandhi believed non-violence could be put into practice at every level of human experience. Non-violence for him was not just a political tactic but an exercise in spirituality and a way of life.

Paragraph 2

It is revealing that in a world where there are calamities such as terrorism, poverty, illiteracy and fanaticism, history can still be made out of choices. The choice of non-violence is ours. We live in a world of “overlapping destinies” where the fates of cultures are heavily intertwined. It is no longer a world of closed communities where tyrannical orders or religious traditions represented the sole layers of historical legitimacy. Never in the history of the human race has non-violence been so crucial. Only the most barbaric and despotic regimes, however, have attempted to prevent their subjects to think and to practise non-violence.

Paragraph 3

Non-violence has recently evolved from a simple tactic of resistance to a cosmopolitical¹ aim based on international application of the principles of democracy. Over the past three decades, global terrorism, violation of human rights and environmental degradation have caused repercussions highlighting the concern for global politics of non-violence. These can best be dealt with at the global level. Global politics of non-violence, thus, is the task not only of governments but also of civil societies, and inter-governmental, non-governmental and transnational organisations. Most importantly, the international community has the moral obligation and duty to intervene in countries if they slide into lawlessness and can't protect citizens from violations of human rights. Only a non-violent society can work its way up to creating the institutions ripe for development and lead to inter-cultural and inter-religious harmony.

¹Cosmopolitical - a structure that encompasses a diversity of political systems

Paragraph 4

We are living today in an era where social, cultural and political spheres are void of spirituality. But Gandhi's non-violence still offers us an ideal that may be upheld. Gandhi remains the prophetic voice of the 21st century and his non-violence urges us to continue struggling on behalf of what we view as just and right. At a time when mankind is confronted with clashes of national interest, religious fundamentalism and ethnic and racial prejudice, non-violence can be a well-trusted means of laying the groundwork of new cosmopolitics. Though many continue to believe that non-violence is an ineffective instrument against dictatorship and genocide, in the last several decades many democratic initiatives, which were premised on non-violent militancy and an affirmation of human rights and helped build a global civil society on solid ethical foundations, could be associated with a kind of neo-Gandhian quest for peace and justice.

Paragraph 5

It would be folly to expect non-violence to become effective and durable, while the majority still thinks of politics in terms of the use of violence. It is true, as Karl Jaspers affirms: "In morality, moral conviction is decisive; in politics, it is success." But it is also true there is no long-term success in politics in the absence of morality. That is to say, political events bring moral responsibilities, and in turn ethical views place their imprint on political decisions. Politics without ethics is pure exercise of power. It is only in relation to ethics that politics can be elevated as a public virtue. Terrible crimes have been committed by political practice that tried to teach and impose moral behaviour. Spiritualising politics, as Gandhi understood, is not about moralising it, but an effort to redefine it in terms of civic responsibility in an explicit public sphere. Politics is the morally conscientious and socially responsible exercise of civic roles. Non-violence is the key to this. Violence is normally seen as a means to an end. Very few people desire a world with war, crime and terrorism. But in non-violent politics, non-violence is the means and non-violence is the goal.

Paragraph 6

The time has come for humanity to renew its commitment politically, economically and culturally to the wisdom of non-violence.

**Adapted from 'Non-violence in the 21st century: A matter of choice' by
Ramin Jahanbegloo**

Summary:

Question:

Summarise the writer's rationale for using non-violence as a strategy to achieve peace and justice.

Using material from paragraphs 4 to 5, write your summary in no more than 120 words, not counting the opening words which are printed below. **Use your own words as far as possible. [8]**

Non-violence is effective in building civil societies because

Answer:

Non violence is effective in building civil societies because it provides a noble goal (1) to people who have secularistic thinking(2). This encourages people to uphold their moral judgements(3). Due to tensions and conflicting beliefs(4), non-violence creates the foundation of a global structure(5). Many equality movements are non-aggressive strategies(6) that uphold universal principles(7) and ensure sustained political stability(8). With non-violence, political duties are accountable(9), political decisions have moral judgments(10) and the system is viewed as a public good(11). Violence can be misused to impose order (12) and violates the law(13). Non-violence is a crucial strategy(14) that obliges politicians to influence people to behave morally.(15). Also, many want social peace(16).

110 words

Application Question:

Question:

Both passages deal with the importance of promoting peace to help build a global civil society.

How far do you agree with the writers' views?

Using material from both passages, **discuss how far would you agree or disagree with the views of the writers and its applicability to your society?**

Requirements

- 1) Refer to points raised by both writers in passages 1 and 2 and identify key ideas which support the view that peace is crucial in helping to develop/create a civil society in the world.
- 2) Make your stand and evaluate the extent of how these points influence you to accept or reject the writers' views.
- 3) Go beyond the texts and substantiate your stand by giving examples in today's world which show the importance of promoting peace to help build a global civil society.

Structure for EOA:

A: Intro

B: Main body

1. Quote from the passage (1)
2. Explanation of the passage (1)
3. Apply to the requirement of the question (3 -4)
4. Provide example and link to the point of discussion
5. EOA
6. List another example or criticise the above example
7. Linking sentence

Answer:

For both passages, the writers discussed the importance of promoting peace and non-violence. I agree much with their views with certain disagreements.

The writer in Passage 1 mentions that “economic development is peace promoting.” He implies that investments in economic activities would forge a common agreement among vested parties, resulting in the will of these parties to cooperate, enforcing social and political stability. When observing the process of fostering harmony in my society via a robust economic agenda and implementation, I am inclined to agree with the writer’s view. In Singapore, the focus on economic prosperity since independence has raised standards of living of citizens and expanded wealth of businesses. In 2015, Singapore’s GDP per capita has risen to USD 56000 from USD 500 during independence. As such, there are vested interests from different stakeholders of society: the citizens, business, institutions to promote social harmony and stability. For citizens, this creates a safe haven for the conduct of daily activities. While for businesses, it creates a conducive environment for foreign investments where the World Bank ranked Singapore the second best place to do business in 2019. Therefore, it can be argued that economic development and progress unites factions of society to promote social peace.

However the above view holds a modicum of truth as economic development might lead to uneven distribution of wealth in society, resulting in social tensions and conflicts. The above view assumes that economic development is the panacea of conflict and unrest. In reality, inequitable distribution of wealth obtained from economic activities would result in class differences and social inequality. Individuals would resent the system and take things into their own hands if they felt that change within the system is impossible. As a result, there would be widespread protest and riots. Take for example the Occupy movement that was established in 2011. It was an international movement in several societies that expressed the opposition to social and economic inequality in the world. This resulted in widespread protests and riots in the United States, damaging the social fabric. Therefore, with unequal distribution from economic growth, it would lead to violence rather than peace.

The writer in Passage 2 states that “only a non-violent society can create the institutions ripe for development and lead to inter-cultural and inter-religious harmony”. The writer implies that a non-aggressive and civil society has the moral acumen and spiritual capacity to establish institutions and entities that promote the mutual coexistence among different factions of society. When observing how the national values and principles that govern my society influence the creation of government bodies to enforce social and religious harmony in society, I am inclined to agree with the above views of the writer. In Singapore, there is great emphasis on the rule of law. Under the Shared Values system, one of the values emphasise on consensus and not conflict. Consequently, this sacred cow forms the underlying ethos of non-violence in society.

The government has created grassroots organisations like the People's Association and community centres to cultivate social cohesion and a sense of community. This has resulted in minimal conflicts in Singapore since independence.

However, such a view is not entirely true as certain societies use institutional violence to foster social peace and stability. In some societies, the high level of violence and unrest require the use of brute force to quell unrest. This include draconian policing tactics and torture methods to silence protestors. Simply put, government uses the fear tactic that is the fear of repression and torture to enforce public discipline and social obedience. In 2014, China launched its Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism in Xinjiang in response to domestic violence and unrest that heavily destroyed public infrastructure. Individuals were held in retrial detention centres and prison and were subjected to torture and ill-treatments. In a way, the government justified domestic terrorism as a means to enforce Big Brother style policies in the institutions and silence individuals into civil obedience.