

Europe's Peace Vocation and the Role of Security and Peace
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1.

“The effect of righteousness will be peace and the result of righteousness quietness and trust for ever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet and resting places.”(Is. 32, 17.18)

In the times when the Hebrew Bible was written, war seemed to be a basic fact of human existence – as it seems to be today. But - the prophet Isaiah opposes in the name of God: shalom for the land, shalom for the cities, protection of refugees, compassion for widows and orphans – justice, righteousness are the source of peace and secure dwellings.

2.

Security is the magic term. In 2000 the Norwegian Church published a study on ‘VULNERABILITY AND SECURITY. It says: ‘It is human to be vulnerable. This basic realisation is vital to theologically and ethically grounded work on security policy in the broad sense...

Recognition of one's own vulnerability and that of others is a prerequisite for a deeper understanding of security...The challenge is to allow this perspective to influence the formulation of security policy.”¹

In the words of the CEC Assembly at Novi Sad: “And they shall live secure” (Micah 5:4). Security is a basic human need. Everyone longs for and needs security, personally, socially and politically. The international community has developed an understanding of security that embraces both individual and common, local and global security as they are dependent on one another. This includes recognizing and understanding one's vulnerability and that of others as a prerequisite for an ever-deepening understanding of security.”² And I add: as a precondition of reconciliation.

3. We want to be secure - and it costs! As SIPRI said, the ratio of military expenditure to the expenditure for conflict prevention is 50,000:1. Global arms expenditure is higher than at any time since WWII, and consumes 35 times the total cost of the entire United Nations system.³

Everyone who reflects deeper than populist propaganda knows that there are links between unjust economic relations, exploitation worldwide, corruption, dictatorship, arms production and export, increasing climate change, fundamentalism – and migration.

In this context the European Union has an ambivalent role: Having a longstanding profile as peace actor the EU now more and more concentrates on security.

In July 2016 the European commission published the new Foreign and Security Policy. She called for a “stronger Europe” in the face of current crises. “As Europeans we must take greater responsibility for our security. We must be ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect ourselves against external threats,” the document⁴ states. In June 2017 the European Council published conclusions on security and defence, concentrating on three aspects challenging the security of European citizens:

- Internal security and the fight against terrorism
- External security and defence – which means protecting borders against refugees
- and strong military capacities against Russia

¹ VULNERABILITY AND SECURITY Current challenges in security policy from an ethical and theological perspective. Prepared by the Commission on International Affairs in Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations

² [http://www.ceceurope.org/wp-](http://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/GEN_PUB_01_Public_Committee_Draft_Report_APPROVED_EN.pdf)

[content/uploads/2018/07/GEN_PUB_01_Public_Committee_Draft_Report_APPROVED_EN.pdf](http://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/GEN_PUB_01_Public_Committee_Draft_Report_APPROVED_EN.pdf)

³ <https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/yb17-summary-eng.pdf>

⁴ Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe - A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy. www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/EUGS.pdf

The Commission with support of the EP started a new European Defence Fund to give financial support to the European arms industry.

CEC as well as other church related and civil society organizations opposed. Such paradigm shift in funding military means by the EU-budget has adverse effects on security, CEC said in a press release. Instead of coordinating member state armament plans, and consequently saving considerable sums of money, funds will be taken from the current – civilian – EU budget for military purposes. Moreover, similar levels of investments in other sectors in fact helps increase reconciliation, stability, and prosperity—the very basis of security, said CEC.⁵

In the months before the European elections a Europe wide public campaign was started with the telling name ‘Save the Peace project Europe’. It states: “The new European defence fund has a proposed budget of €13 bn. for armaments research and the development of new arms systems. In addition, €6.5 bn. are intended for military mobility, especially for the quick redeployment of troops within Europe...The future Community budget would invest ten times as much in armaments than in peacebuilding. There is reason to fear that the fund’s multi-billion euro subsidisation of the arms industry will result in even more arms exports from Europe.”⁶ The thousands of individual and more than hundred of institutional signatures will be given to the new elected MEPs in November at Brussels, hoping that they might revise the decisions of the former parliament.

4. And the alternatives? The World Council of Churches adopted the concept of Just Peace. It is defined as “A collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want, overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respect the integrity of creation.”⁷ And of course first and foremost of overcoming war, since it is meant to transcend the ‘unholy’ concept of Just War!

The CEC Assembly stated: “In ecumenical fellowship with the WCC we deepen our understanding of the challenging dimensions of ‘just peace’ for every aspect of our personal and political life.⁸...We are aware, that even if violent means are held only in reserve for use as a last resort, this influences the planning of civil action during the earlier phases of conflict. Even in situations where no solution seems possible and where violence is so endemic that a call to counter it with further violence rises amongst victims and within us too, we persist in recommending the use of nonviolent means towards every human being, means which we as disciples of Christ have in abundance.”⁹

5. Rethinking Security

Does non-violence work? Fortunately there are some studies about the broad effectiveness of nonviolent actions, unfortunately not at all communicated.

⁵ <https://www.ceceurope.org/prioritise-peacebuilding-and-reconciliation-instead-of-the-militarisation-of-the-eu/>

⁶ <https://www.forumzfd.de/en/savethepeaceprojecteu>

We urge the European Union to build on its strengths as a mediator in conflicts and as an alliance for peace through cooperation and collaboration. We oppose the European defence fund to finance the development of armament projects. The Treaty of Lisbon prohibits the financing of armament projects and military operations through the Community budget of the European Union. Delegates of the European Parliament should defend and strengthen these principles.

We call on the European Union and its Member States not to use funds for the armament of armies and militias of non-member countries. The European Parliament must ensure the strict adherence to and further tightening of the European criteria for arms exports vis-à-vis the governments of the European Union Member States.

⁷ Just Peace Companion, second edition, WCC, Geneva, 2012, page 4

⁸ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/the-way-of-just-peace>

⁹ http://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/GEN_PUB_01_Public_Committee_Draft_Report_APPROVED_EN.pdf

And in the past few years a number of interesting developments have taken place in several European countries, quite independently from one another: the Ammerdown Initiative in the United Kingdom (2014)¹⁰, the working group on Inclusive Security in the Netherlands (2016)¹¹ and Rethinking Security in Germany (2018). Interestingly these were basically started by churches: Quakers and the Evangelical Church of Baden.

The resolution of the synod of the Protestant Church in Baden, that the church becomes a just peace church, includes the following aspects:

“The conventional wisdom still seems to be that violence can get rid of “evil” and thereby banish any threat to security. This thinking is fundamental to the so-called “logic of security”. But it leads neither to security nor to peace...Peace-logic approach represents an alternative way of doing things, which frames a problem in terms of the task of “building peace, which means facilitating relationships in which violence is unlikely because cooperation is successful.”...

“What follows is intended to describe this idea and how the problems and threats can be tackled at a practical level in a different, i.e. non-military, way - in the course of a process similar to the transition from nuclear power to alternative sources of energy...

This scenario entails the diversion of all financial resources from military security to civilian prevention and management of conflicts by 2040. In this scenario, Germany works together with other countries as civil (as opposed to military) actors within the EU, the OSCE, the UN, and NATO.”¹²

There is a concrete timeline now established to find out if the project has a realistic chance - as a contribution of the church to make a difference, in thinking – and acting.

I close with Church and Peace fellow Neal Blough, a Mennonite theologian here at Paris, challenging the church to be a peace community:

The Church is called to be a school of peace, pardon and reconciliation. She is also the place where we are trained in the spirituality of peace, nonviolence and trust... We need places and practices where we can learn to leave worry behind, so that we will not be afraid when our security is threatened. We cannot do this ourselves. For this, we need peace communities...By the way of nonviolence Christ vanquished evil. He invites us to follow the same way and promises us that his Spirit will accompany us, giving us the needed strength to know where true security comes from. Faced with anxiety and a lack of security, let's encourage our roots to grow deeply in order to produce the fruits of the Spirit.”¹³

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Church and Peace is the ecumenical network of Christian communities, churches and organisations in Europe committed to the peace church vision

¹⁰ Ammerdown Invitation: security for the future – in search of a new vision. www.ammerdown.org/Rethinking_Security

¹¹ See: www.samenveilig.earth

¹² Stephan Maass and Christoph Schneider-Harpprecht, ‘Sicherheit neu denken: von der militärischen zur zivilen Sicherheitspolitik- Ein Szenario bis zum Jahr 2040 /Rethinking Security – from military to civil security – towards a 2040 scenario’, Evangelische Landeskirche Baden, 2018

¹³ https://www.church-and-peace.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Sermon_Neal_Blough.pdf