

EUROPE AND PEACE: HARD OR SOFT POWER, ARMED OR JUST PEACE?

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INTRO

On the third of May, in two weeks time, something unimaginable is going to take place in the United Kingdom, and no, it has nothing to do with Brexit. The Royal Navy has seduced – there is no other word for it- the deacon of Westminster Abbey to hold a ‘national service of thanksgiving to mark 50 years of the Continuous At Sea Deterrent (CASD) by the Trident nuclear-armed submarines on the 3rd of May forthcoming! This is not in keeping with the statement by the Anglican General Synod which declared nuclear weapons – because of their indiscriminate and destructive nature- weapons that ‘require Christians to work tirelessly for their elimination across the world’ (July 2018).

So outside on the grass across from the Abbey peace movements like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship and the European wide ecumenical peace movement Church and Peace will hold an alternative worship service to protest!

And this year NATO also ‘celebrates’ its 70 years. Ten years ago I wrote a paper for Kerk en Vrede, the Dutch branch of IFOR, where I argued that we missed a ‘window of opportunity’ -when the Warsaw Treaty dissolved itself- for NATO to retire also!¹

Meanwhile there has been a more than 400% increase of battle deaths and nearly 250% increase of deaths by terrorism during the last ten years²; there is growing militarization of space, there are military apps involving Artificial Intelligence which are coupled with robotization and drones; the number of refugees has doubled worldwide², whilst the EU new budget includes 21 billion Euros to strengthen border controls; on the economic front the 9 richest persons today have accumulated more wealth than the four billion poorest altogether³

As the General Secretary of the UN formulated it: *“We are a world in pieces. We need to be a world at peace.”*⁴ We still have a long way to go!

Humanity is now facing challenges unlike anything in its history. These issues are global in character, transcending national boundaries, calling for international cooperation on an unprecedented scale. Moreover the causes of these challenges are multidimensional and increasingly complex. For these reasons, finding solutions requires fundamentally new ways of thinking. Inclusive Security, Shared Peace is an essential prerequisite to answer these challenges.

All these developments should refocus our attention on *the dire need of security for all, rather than ourselves*, or in other words on the need for sustainable development for all and for all creation! As I am a proponent of inclusive security I will have to take the liberty to also consider these issues at the global level, although the seminar today is addressing ‘European militarism’....

The title of my contribution begs a lot of questions of course: *Which Europe, which power, what kind of peace?*

1 Kees Nieuwerth, ‘60 years NATO: Time to Transform Security Politics’, Kerk en Vrede brochure 14, 2010

2 Global Peace Index 2017

3 Oxfam 2018

4 UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres’ tweet before the 2017 UN General Assembly

WHICH EUROPE?

To start with Europe: do we mean the European Union of 28 – soon to be 27- , the Council of Europe of 47, or the 26 –soon to be 27- European member states of NATO?

From the perspective of *inclusive security* I would argue that a vision of a pan-European Europe is needed, a Europe which includes Russia and even some of the nations in the Caucasus, as I argued in earlier papers on this subject.

Whatever happened to the concept of *détente*? A concept which provides a precondition for *mutually assured existence* rather than that of *mutually assured destruction* associated with *deterrence*?

We can only really be secure if ALL are secure. That –in my considered opinion- certainly is the case in the Europe as I envisage it, but it is also applicable at the global level.

Since the so-called cold war ended cooperation between former adversaries, between Western- and Eastern European states was stimulated. Meanwhile however NATO quickly offered membership or partnership to Central- and Eastern European nations, thereby increasing its sphere of influence in Eurasia. This caused serious tensions between NATO and particularly Russia over NATO's strategy to grow, rather than become defunct like the former Warsaw Treaty Organization. Russia argued that NATO wanted to incorporate its neighboring states into its sphere of influence to such an extent that it felt encircled and even threatened. Although NATO promised not to station any troops close to the Russian borders this is now the case. Moreover the United States of America are planning to station part of their so-called Anti Missile Defense System quite close to the Russian borders, in Poland and the Czech Republic. Meanwhile regular consultations between NATO and Russia, as well as disarmament talks have all but broken down and the INF Treaty may soon even be history!

Instead of defusing the tension NATO is more often holding naval exercises in the Black Sea! Could this be why Russia invaded areas in the 'western' sphere of influence where Russian speaking minorities are concentrated, such as parts of Georgia, parts of Ukraine and the Crimea?

More recently we may observe that both the European Union and NATO declare openly to be prepared to defend Europe's need for resources, energy and raw materials as well as the supply routes, if need be by military means. Thus the global challenges of right sharing of world resources and even combating climate change are also being militarized....

Like Russia, also China is being encircled by a ring of Unites States naval bases capable of hosting nuclear armed submarines. On a ring of islands surrounding the Chinese Sea in a number of South East Asian countries these have been constructed. I have seen the brave protest by villagers against one of these on Jeju Island in South Korea with my own eyes. Add to this 'ring of firepower' the recent economic sanctions against China and there we have – yet again- an exclusive instead of an inclusive policy! So which is the chicken and which is the egg when observing that the defence budgets in South East Asia have risen with about 150% since 2017?

But the USA is still spending more than 3 times as much on its military than China!

However, since China spends as much on its military as its neighbours altogether, for example India has already availed itself of a nuclear armed submarine and is building several more! Japan is now capable to hit China with cruise missiles carried by F 35 fighter planes. There are conflicts between several nations over the control and sovereignty of small islands in the Chinese Sea.

And –last but not least- there is increasing concern about the growing influence of China in many parts of the world via its investments in the context of the Great Belt and Road Initiative (the New Silk route). Even in Europe where it controls a harbor in Greece, invests in Italian ports and in some of the Balkan countries aspiring to be members of the European Union. And now the United States are urging Europe to follow suit and introduce economic sanctions on China (Huawei, ASML)...

WHICH POWER?

But let us return to the theme of European Peace and Security/ European militarization. At the level of the European Union in recent years there is a worrying tendency to militarize its policies which is a cause for major concern. I will not discuss these in great detail since this has been done by other speakers at this seminar already.

Examples are: creating a European Defence Fund supporting arms industry financially and amending the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). The latter resulted in diverting funds to enable third countries in Africa in order to stop migration (!) to Europe.

A further example in case is the adoption of the defence ministers of the Permanent Structured Cooperation instrument (PESCO), involving an increase to defence expenditures of the member states.

The USA is urging European NATO partners to increase their defence budgets to at least 2% of the GNP arguing that the growing tensions with Russia (as indicated earlier - see above!) are sufficient reason. This while even now the European member states of NATO altogether are already spending 4 times more than Russia!

At the same time the EU is proposing to set up a European Defence fund: 21 billion Euros for research into new weaponry and the development and procurement of arms. And - last but not least - the institution of a European Army is urged for.

The Quaker Council for European Affairs and the European ecumenical peace movement Church and Peace have regularly and consistently protested these proposals publicly by issuing press statements. Together with other partners (e.g. Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst) a public campaign was started protesting the shifting away from peace building towards militarizing the Unions policies with the telling name 'Save the Peaceproject Europe'. A similar campaign was started in the Netherlands by Stop de Wapenhandel.

And just a few days ago the European Network Against Arms Trade (ENAAAT) published an open letter to members of the European Parliament calling upon them to vote against the institution of a European Defence Fund. So we consider it high time to actually revise European security strategy **of both NATO and the EU**.

In the past few years a number of interesting developments in terms of the thinking about what I would call *True Security* have taken place in a several European countries, quite independently from one another. There was the Ammerdown Initiative in the United Kingdom (2014) ⁵, the working group on Inclusive Security in the Netherlands (2016)⁶ and Rethinking Security in Germany (2018) ⁷.

5 Ammerdown Invitation: security for the future – in search of an new vision.

www.ammerdown.org/Rethinking_Security

6 See: www.samenveilig.earth

7 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

Interestingly all of these were basically started by churches: Quakers and the Evangelical Church of Baden.

A related concept called Positive Peace was developed by the worldwide movement Religions for Peace. Its definition includes good government, soft power and equal access to essential resources for ALL. The World Council of Churches elaborated 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.*”⁸ And of course **first and foremost of overcoming war**, since it is meant to transcend the ‘unholy’ concept of Just War!

As for the question *which power* - in view of the renewed tensions between the United States of America, Russia -but also the United States and China - the European Union should maintain an emphasis on ‘soft power’ (diplomacy, negotiation, dialogue, mediation, conflict prevention and reconciliation) rather than ‘hard power’. To stimulate this the Quaker Council for European Affairs even issued a guide called ‘Building Peace together – a practical resource’ giving examples of lots of peace building tools.⁹

In order to lobby for his effectively it would be immensely important to bring the above mentioned initiatives (UK, Netherlands, Germany) together and develop a European focus next to their basic focus on the national security policies of the countries concerned. Something for the next seminar?

WHICH PEACE?

A possible alternative still is the original model of the UN, EU and OSCE: cooperation to build ‘shared security’, sharing responsibility and sharing world resources. An alternative that seeks to build not only *peace on earth* but also *peace with earth*, as the World Council of Churches calls for in its statement on Just Peace!

In recent years yet another new security concept has emerged: ‘**energy security**’. In new security policies of NATO, the EU and the EU member states, the need to focus on the ‘protection’ of supply lines of (fossilized) energy and raw materials is openly stressed.

Several times now, particularly during winter periods, the dependence of several European nations on the delivery of natural gas by Russia had demonstrated their vulnerability. Right now most pipelines are running from Russia through the Ukraine (80% of Russian gas deliveries to Europe) and Belarus. Meanwhile however a new pipeline through the Baltic Sea is under construction which will deliver Russian gas to Germany. The USA is fiercely opposed to this project. It is argued that Europe should reduce its dependency upon Russia...But interdependence can also bring a peace dividend!

In Europe the need to transcend the old stereotypes associated with the antiquated military and political blocs may open up opportunities for a new agreement of cooperation between the European Union and Russia based on the example of the old Helsinki Agreements of 1975.

This could result in new forms of cooperation modeled on the precedent of the former European Coal and Steel Community in the 1950’s, which at the time helped to prevent these resources being

⁸ Just Peace Companion, second edition, WCC, Geneva, 2012, page 4; Also in: Building Peace on Earth, Report of the International Peace Convocation, WCC, Geneva, 2013, page 180.

Kees Nieuwerth, ‘Just Peace: a Quaker Perspective’, Lecture at Peace Theology Dept. - Free University of Amsterdam, 2013.

⁹ QCEA, ‘Building Peace Together- a practical resource’, Brussels, 2018, See website: www.qcea.org

monopolized and used as tools to create (armed) conflict. This could lead the European Union and Russia and its allies to create a modern version thereof : *the European Gas and Oil Community*, learning the lessons of recurrent conflicts over natural gas in the past decades. Actually, this in turn could pave the way for Russia and some of its allies to now join a modernized European Union! Towards this end the European Union and the Council of Europe and their two parliaments (!) -which operate side by side- could finally be merged. Closer cooperation with the still existing Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe could usher in the phasing out of NATO. In this new situation there would no longer be any place for it, nor for the former Warsaw Treaty Organization, since most Central and Eastern European States, **including Russia**, are now part of a new pan-European Union. I would see this new pan-European Union as a federation of free states cooperating in answering the great challenges of our time: climate change and the energy-transition!

After all, since I developed the above outlined vision of a rather different and much broader Europe some years ago important new developments have taken place. So yes, the dwindling fossil resources could be shared and controlled more equitably, but at the same time they also need to be phased out whilst combatting *climate change*. In other words this kind of cooperation in a pan-European region could also contribute to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda of the UN - although elsewhere I argued that this agenda should be made *truly sustainable* by including a **fundamental economic transition**. As an ecologist I can assure you: *there is no such thing as unlimited growth!* Therefore the SDG Agenda should involve a serious transformation of the dominant economic system if it is to really contribute to ‘leaving no-one behind’: ending poverty and building peace.¹⁰ Unless economy is *ethically grounded, ecologically bounded and circular* we will not achieve true sustainability and just sharing of resources!¹¹

In conclusion:

Let us continue to use our imagination to develop creative alternative visions and translate these into practical peacebuilding and powerful political strategies! And in case you are wondering: Yes, I am an unashamed idealist!

10 Kees Nieuwerth, ‘The UN Sustainable Development Goals, Peace and the Churches’, Karlsruhe, Thomashof, Autumn Conference of Mennonites, Quakers, Church and Peace and IFOR in Germany, November 2018. See website Church and Peace: www.church-and-peace.org

11 See “alternative economists” e.g. Rutger Bregman, ‘Utopia for Realists’, Kate Raworth ‘Doughnut Economics’ and Manfred Max-Neef and Philip B. Smith, ‘Economics Unmasked’