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Conditions for Peace: Lessons from an Intercontinental Interdisciplinary Peace Ethical Conversation

The contributions and perspectives presented in this volume reflect an abundance of approaches and positions. Still, some central points can be highlighted, summing up the main lines of discussions.

Even though the ethics of war and peace aspires to discuss war and peace in general, violence is always situated in a specific context and must be assessed against that backdrop. To put it differently: A peace ethical approach must succeed in addressing questions of an actual conflict and in giving some ethical orientation. To that end, however, it needs to take into account political findings. In a similar vein, also historical findings and memory culture play a part in conceptualizing not only historical but also present and future conflicts, as Matthias Smalbrugge points out.

In drawing conclusions, we also want to emphasize that ethical perspectives on the matter of war and peace within Christian thinking cannot do without political assessments contextualizing the reasons for a conflict, its course and the potential outcomes – and vice versa. Thus, the political and philosophical accounts of Jonas J. Driedger and also Alex Leveringhaus and Margaryta Khvostova serve as a starting point for the reflections presented in this volume, and ethical scrutiny in turn reflects on the normative presuppositions implied in those situation analyses. In that vein, Torsten Meireis and Hans-Richard Reuter discuss the ‘liberal’ and ‘realist’ approaches currently debated in the study of international relations.

Another major point concerns the economic dimension always present in the questions of armed conflict. “Follow the money!”, as Nancy Bedford emphasizes in accordance with Funlola Olojede, Erico Hammes and Dion Forster: These approaches maintain that the central role economic factors play in armed conflicts must not be underestimated. Accordingly, the question of financial and economic dependencies and advantages is one, or perhaps the, central question when discussing matters of war and military conflict. It is mainly the perspectives of the Global South that point to the economic dependencies between different countries that then also influence the international political stance of a respective country.

An issue coming to the fore time and again is the importance of absolute pacifist concepts, which are reflected mainly in the contributions of Nancy Bedford, Erico Hammes and Dion Forster. Here it becomes clear that such ideas are insepa-

rable from Christian tradition, unfolding lasting persuasive power. While such positions plausibly point to the problem that bellicist or even just-war-positions may be too quick to neglect non-violent and civil ways of conflict resolution, they are in turn vulnerable to a different type of criticism. If an absolute pacifist perspective is applied it is not clear how victims can be protected from violence in cases of doubt – an issue that is particularly relevant in the interpretation of the commandment to love one's enemy. A possible middle way, i.e., a conditional pacifism, could perhaps offer a way out as it is argued mainly by Nicole Kunkel, Hans-Richard Reuter, Andreas Trampota and Torsten Meireis.

As this volume is bringing together opinions from divergent geopolitical backgrounds, it also serves to broaden the perspective and thus may help to adjust the course of the peace ethical considerations within a given context. In the case of Germany, where the editors of this book are located, the discourse has revealed a number of blind spots possibly due to a certain self-centered Western European perspective. This concerns, for instance, the political agency and possible impact of countries such as Brazil and South Africa as a part of the BRICS network. Rudolf von Sinner and Demaine Solomons point to the political potential of these countries in bringing a morally plausible peace-building influence to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. However, in a self-critical stance they also mark the ambivalence within the respective political systems in dealing with the Russian government.

Finally, this volume makes clear that the different international and interdisciplinary perspectives facilitate the drawing of a multifaceted picture. Even though mapping a complex field does not result in settling conflicts immediately, it is our firm conviction that intercontinental peace ethical conversations are a precondition of a multilayered conflict resolution. Political considerations and proposed solutions, for example, envisage significantly different paths than the theological and philosophical ones, and for that reason all of those perspectives need to be in conversation. The connection between justice and peace, however, can be emphasized across disciplinary and national borders. Not every silencing of weapons automatically leads to a living together of people as equals in reasonable freedom from want, but both of those issues are conditional for any silencing of weapons, namely for a just and sustaining peace. Even if it is unclear whether and to what extent this connection goes hand in hand with absolute pacifism and the unconditional renunciation of violence, the connection between just legal, social and political structures and peaceful ways of life must be emphasized. In this sense, a key phrase accompanied the joint reflection, which in its conciseness and unambiguousness summarizes peace ethics efforts in a meaningful way: *Si vis pacem, para pacem*; if you want peace, prepare for peace.