

The War between Russia and Ukraine

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An Intercontinental Peace Ethical Conversation

Edited by
Nicole Kunkel and Torsten Meireis

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Nicole Kunkel & Torsten Meireis

Intercontinental Voices on the War between Ukraine and Russia: An Introduction

This book brings together several diverse perspectives from different continents, disciplines and worldviews. All of them share the concern that war is a problematic means to address matters of political conflict. They differ, however, on how they evaluate war and violence in general, and on how they assess the war in Ukraine in particular. How the Russian-Ukrainian war is discussed, and how it is reacted to, is not independent of the regional and historical background that is at the center of one's life and academic experience – and those positionalities need to be negotiated especially when descriptive or prescriptive relativism is seen as problematic.

One such a regional background is Germany: When Russia started an all-out war (having waged hybrid war at least since 2014 and the annexation of the Crimea) in 2022, the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke of a “turning point” [Zeitenwende] (Scholz 2022), and immediately a fund of 100 billion Euros was launched to empower the German army, to make it “warlike” [kriegstüchtig] (Pistorius 2023). The narrative was that Germany had slept and entrusted its protection to the US. The fact that Russia had launched an aggressive war against one of its sovereign neighbors and thus grossly breached international law became immediately connected to the idea of German rearmament – and of course the idea that all the world should rise and condemn Russia.

In German mainline churches, the course of action is strongly debated: while some call for an instantaneous cease fire and a stop of weapons delivery to Ukraine in the name of peace (Kramer et al. 2022), others vote for a theological re-endorsement of nuclear armament (Körtner 2024).

However, when the UN resolution ES 11/1 was passed with a sweeping majority of 141 votes and only five votes against (by Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, Russia, and Syria) on March 2, 2022, it was not often noted in Europe that the 35 abstainers (among them Algeria, Bolivia, China, India, South Africa) represented roughly half of the world's population. And looking at the map of armed conflicts going on in the world in the last decades, one could argue that neither the breach of international law nor armed conflict was great news to the Global South.

Despite the official German talk of a turning point, which is at least to a large degree politically programmatic if analytic at all, war had not been absent from Europe since the collapse of the Soviet Union – and of course, war has been a common occurrence on other continents, too. The idea of a turning point, then,

is deeply contextual, and it may make sense to ponder that contextuality – a step necessary to decenter Europe (Chakrabarty 2007): it marks the end of the delusion that Germany is somehow automatically exempt from dealing with the immediate threat of armed conflict on its territory, and Western Europe is a basically peaceful place. It is not and has never been. There is the involvement of European states in armed conflicts on other continents – be it the Afghanistan war, the Iraq war, the Falklands, on the one hand. But there is also a very self-interested policy in Global legal and economic questions, highlighted by authors like Mutua Makau (2016), Anthony Anghie (2005) and Thomas Pogge (2008), on the other hand. All of these authors mark Europe, and also Germany, as anything but not involved in Global conflict, where all-out violence is often an imminent threat.

The articles in this book revolve exactly around these topics, from different angles. One main intent – and the reason why Europeans need to be interested in international perspectives on that topic – is to discuss the role of peace ethics in political and Christian thinking worldwide. To put it more pointedly, we wanted to ask what role a European-Christian peace ethics deeply embedded in contextual perspectives can play and how it intersects with theories and ideas from other disciplines and regions. The focus was on bringing together theorists from the Global South and the Global North, with different disciplinary backgrounds within theology and beyond, all of them internationally experienced in many ways and aware of the necessity of intercontextual dialogue and discourse, to discuss their take on the subject. The objective was neither to immediately draft one universally valid peace ethical approach, nor to give in to some sort of normative or epistemic relativism, but to commence an intercontinental conversation on this controversial topic exactly in the interest of exploring the possibility of universal moral principles and the merging of descriptive perspectives. More concretely, we wanted to ask: Are there normative reasons for those different perspectives? And if so, what are they, and is there a way of reconciling them? How is this conflict conceptualized politically, normatively, and, of course, theologically, especially by those who are not immediately involved? And how do we deal with the fact that those waging an aggressive war – as well as those defending national sovereignty – are in the majority Christians?

The results of the intense debates during the conference that served as a precursor to this book are gathered in this volume. The arrangement mainly follows the regional context from which the authors argue and is framed by the geopolitical situation in which the Russian-Ukrainian war is situated and peace ethical perspectives from different angles on that topic. We have arranged the conference and carefully read and revised the articles. The articles, however, express the opinion of the authors, which are sometimes in agreement with each other, sometimes at variance. In their entirety however, they illustrate some slices of

the variety of approaches worldwide and the necessity of engaging a conversation that brings those perspectives into contact in order to foster peace.

1 Part I: European Takes on the Geopolitical Situation

The first part takes the geopolitical situation into account from the viewpoints of European-based political scientists and philosophers. First, international relations scholar Jonas J. Driedger describes and assesses the Russo-Ukrainian war in his article *No Ought Without an Is: Prospects for Peace in the Russo-Ukrainian War From a Peace and Conflict Research Perspective*. In this context he addresses the nature of the conflict, the reason why there has been no peace agreement so far and the question of what the prospects for such an agreement are. He argues that the Russian-Ukrainian war is an interstate war over territory, continuing since 2014. Driedger establishes a threefold reason why the war is still going on. First, he maintains that there is still uncertainty that non-war options might turn out to be better than the war itself. Second, he indicates that the struggle for territory is an essential part of the conflict for both of the parties, leading to a situation where neither of them would want to make concessions in that regard. Third, there is a fear that concessions made in an agreement would not be honored by one side afterward, leaving the situation worse than before. With regard to peace prospects, Driedger hints at a possible change in leadership – which might, however, also turn out to worsen the situation. Moreover, he ponders the chance of military victory, which he perceives to be unlikely in the given situation. Finally, he explains that a situation might be reached where both parties find the continuation of open hostilities unbearable given the costs, so that they continue violence beneath the threshold of open war, which, however, would not mean that there is an outright situation of peace.

The philosophers Alexander Leveringhaus and Margaryta Khvastova, both based in Great Britain but with German and Ukrainian backgrounds, respectively, discuss that topic further and from a more philosophical angle in their contribution *Jus Post Bellum and the Russian-Ukrainian War: Ethical and Practical Challenges* by applying *jus post bellum* on that war. They point out that there are two major differences in that war in contrast to other wars, which are territorial restriction, as well as regime stability on the Russian side. For that matter, the classical tripartite distinction in beginning, fighting, and ending a war is contested, just as the idea that there is a clear winner and a loser in violent conflicts. They then apply these theoretical findings to four potential outcomes of the war, rang-

ing from a situation where Russia defeats Ukraine to a situation where Ukraine defeats Russia. As the authors argue, both of these extreme outcomes are unlikely. What is to be expected, in their view, is some sort of *modus vivendi*, where the conflict either freezes or a cease-fire treaty is negotiated. In any case, the authors apply and analyze the main intentions of *jus post bellum*, namely transitional justice, reparations, and reconstruction. With regard to *jus post bellum*, Leveringhaus and Khvostova argue that it is necessary to revise that theory or to develop a changed *jus*-paradigm informed by the Russian-Ukrainian war integrating scenarios that lack the clear structures presupposed so far. This addresses especially the issue of securing peace as a *modus vivendi*, as well as the crucial role of reparations and reconstruction.

2 Part II: Ethical Perspectives from a German Context

After outlining the situation of the Russian-Ukrainian war, three steps serve to conceptualize the war from different angles. In the beginning, German Christian views are represented from two Protestant perspectives and a Catholic one. In her contribution, *Just Peace and Revisionist Just War Approaches: Striking a Balance between Contingent Pacifist Conceptions*, Berlin-based theologian and ethicist Nicole Kunkel discusses the substantial commonalities between the mainly German and Christian approach of just peace and the concept of revisionist just war based on Anglo-Saxon discourse. She interprets both concepts to aim for a contingent pacifism. In her view, they do so by intertwining *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* closely. Against that backdrop she argues that both theories can enrich each other. On the one hand, the just peace approach puts the focus on the devastating ramifications of war in emphasizing that war and violence are always and inherently entangled with guilt. On the other hand, the transformation revisions of just war theory bring about lies in underlining the responsibility and the liability for belligerent undertakings of every person, be it civilian or soldier. With respect to the Russian-Ukrainian war, she maintains that, from a just peace perspective, peace cannot be achieved by unjust means. However, violent undertakings might sustain legal structures that in turn form the foundation for a process of growing justice and peace. In any case, because of the great difference in perspectives worldwide, it is necessary to discuss these topics internationally and intercontinentally.

A more politically oriented approach can be found in the article *Protestant Peace Ethics under Scrutiny: Does the War in Ukraine refute the Doctrine of Just*

Peace? by Hans-Richard Reuter. Reuter elaborates on how the war in Ukraine changes the idea of just peace, brought forward in the memorandum *Live from God's Peace – Care for Just Peace* published in 2007 by the Protestant Church in Germany. After outlining the main ideas of just peace, its focus on establishing peace through law, and explaining the concept of law-sustaining force, he turns to the changed political context. In doing so, he clarifies that Russia's attack on Ukraine needs to be understood against the background of a competition of values and Putin's radicalization of hegemonic attempts based on the fear of an ongoing democratization in Russia that could endanger his position. Reuter draws the conclusion that peace ethics needs to face these new developments by adjusting some of its ideas. In that respect he argues that, firstly, the concept of just peace must not be identified with an unconditional pacifism. Secondly, he holds that the essential paradigm of peace through law is a moral concept, meaning that it is neither a juridical nor a cultural term, but aims at establishing a legitimate legal framework, embodied in basic human rights. The current war, however, shows that there is indeed a major gap between the normative idea and the possibility to enforce that norm. Finally, Reuter turns to the possibility of assistance in self-defense, which he infers to be included in the ethics of law-sustaining force, as long as it is orientated towards establishing just peace in the aftermath of the conflict.

Andreas Trampota's essay *Non-violence and the Legitimate Use of Force: Recent Developments in the Peace Ethics of the Catholic Church in Germany* adds a Catholic viewpoint when reflecting the current peace ethical developments within the Catholic Church in Germany. To do so, Trampota zeros in on the Peace Statements by the German bishops, whose latest publication "*Peace to this household*" from February 2024 is in line with former statements. For elaborating on that topic, the author introduces the understanding of just peace as it is laid out by the German bishops, before he turns to the virtue-ethical foundation of that concept. In this view, the matter of peace ethics, virtue-ethics and deontology are combined, forming the foundation of a renunciation of violence that is not absolute but preferential. Against that backdrop, Trampota turns to just war thinking in order to show the necessity of the questions and criteria this theory invokes. He argues, consequently, that just war and just peace need to be seen as complementary, giving shape to a theory of law-preserving and law-restoring coercion.

3 Part III: Insights from a South African Perspective

Two authors, then, represent a South African perspective on the Russian-Ukrainian war. Taking into account a passage of 2 Kings, *Funlola Olojede* questions in her essay: “*What Have You to Do with Peace?*” (2 Kings 9:17–22): *Complexities of War and Peace in the Russia-Ukraine War and South Africa’s Position* the stance South Africa takes towards the war in Ukraine. To do so, she contextualizes the war from a South-African perspective, displaying the close ties South Africa and Russia have, not mainly because of their common BRICS membership, but because of the USSR standing alongside the African National Congress (ANC) in times of apartheid. However, she criticizes that still today Russian money flows towards the ANC, thereby compromising South African democracy. Against that backdrop, she reads 2 Kgs 9, asking under what circumstances peace can thrive, thereby bringing forward the issue that superficial peace is unable to erase the wrongdoings done in the past. As for assessing the issue of war and peace throughout time, Olojede demands to consider the sufferings of the victims and to regard the current war between Russia and Ukraine as a war of siblings that can be resolved only from within.

In his article *Balancing an Act: South Africa’s Non-Alignment Conundrum amidst the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict*, *Demaine Solomons* addresses South Africa’s non-alignment approach to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. He maintains that this stance has garnered significant domestic and international criticism, highlighting the contentiousness of this strategy, because it underscores the difficulties of navigating a deeply divided Global and political environment. Drawing from the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, Solomons delves into the historical and ideological foundations of South Africa’s position while assessing its practical contradictions. He investigates how *realpolitik*, historical ties, and current Global issues intersect to influence South Africa’s foreign policy regarding the conflict. His examination provides a framework for evaluating the efficacy of South Africa’s non-alignment as a diplomatic approach amid evolving power dynamics. In this setting South Africa’s stance on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict poses important questions about the interplay between ethical considerations and pragmatic decision-making in international diplomacy.

4 Part IV: Brazilian Views

The final location-specific viewpoint comes from Latin America. It is first Curitiba-based theologian *Rudolf von Sinner*, who discusses three issues in his article *Ecumenical Lessons from the War Against Ukraine: Passionate Protest and Loving Patience*. These are, first, the political and academic positions in Brazil on Russia's invasion of Ukraine; second, the role churches and theology play therein; and third, what might help to strengthen agency and voices within the ecumenical movement that stem and speak from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus. He finds that Brazil as well as other states in "active non-alignment" could be an asset with regard to their diplomatic status and means, as they are not in such a polarized situation as the (North-)West. Moreover, he demands peace ethical reflections in politics and theology. One way to endorse such an undertaking is to support voices from within Russia and Ukraine that are critical of the war. Each encounter, discussion, and critique, however, should be uttered in humility, because good and evil are intertwined so closely in this world.

In his essay, *Erico Hammes* asks, *Does Peace Ethics Make Sense, Even in Times of War?*, pondering the commandment to "love your enemies" (Matt 5:44). To address that question, he initially presents some exegetical thoughts regarding the commandment to love your enemy in both its variants, namely in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Against that clear-cut pacifist groundwork, he questions just war thinking, arguing for God to be understood as a triune God of peace. He exemplifies his thoughts with reference to the ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr. and finds that the biblical and pacifist logics of Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King challenge established political considerations. He concludes that only peaceful means can help to establish peace and that, to achieve that goal, the main emphasis needs to be on peace education.

5 Part V: Peace Ethical Perspectives

In the final part of the book, five authors from different contexts and theological disciplines illustrate the abundance of theological perspectives and approaches. This part commences with a piece by US-based theologian *Nancy Bedford* who argues in her essay *Resistance, Otherwise: Considerations on Nonviolence in the Context of the Russian War on Ukraine* for nonviolent ways to resist violent undertakings. This includes perspectives that go beyond anthropocentric perspectives such as environmental issues. Resisting in a nonviolent way, however, is not the same as doing nothing, but it means rather to react to violence in a

way that is guided by God's love, even if that involves painful steps for the individual. For that matter, Bedford focuses mainly on three points, which are, first, the crucial question of where the money goes, namely who profits monetarily from war and violence. Second, she turns to imaginations and hidden scripts that guide our societal behavior, which she contrasts with the biblical example of Jeremiah. Third, she calls on the historical case of Michael Sattler, who, like Jeremiah, stood up against the violence of his time with nonviolent means. Finally, she points to several possibilities to react nonviolently that are far from being meaningless and passive.

Bedford's article is followed by the essay *Waging Peace and the Pragmatics of Force: On Being Christian in a Time of War* written by South African public theologian Dion Forster. Forster asks whether we can imagine a world without war. He discusses this topic through the lens of John Hauerwas, arguing that Christians do not only wait for God's peaceable kingdom to come, but already now live with the reality that war has been abolished in Christ. Nevertheless, while Christians live in a world of war, they cannot shy away from pondering the issue of violence and need to consider whether there are indeed circumstances in which choosing between two evils, violence might be the lesser one, even though it is never free of guilt. To navigate this difficult topic, Forster advises the reader to keep in mind four rationales, namely that, first, war and violence can never be desirable options for solving conflicts; second, that we should always position ourselves on the side of the victims; third, that every peaceful solution should be preferred; and, fourth, that everything we do should strive for justice, equity and peace.

Amsterdam-based theologian Matthias Smalbrugge, then, moves beyond the topic of the book in his article *Memory Structures and the Choices in War and Peace: South-African and European Stances in the Ukrainian War*, extending the perspective to the future, thereby elaborating on the crucial role of morality. He explains that the West has been reluctant to address its memory of colonization and slavery, in contrast to its memory culture regarding the Shoa and its principle "Never again," asking why certain incidents are remembered, while others are not. This, however, does not mean that forgotten incidents do no longer shape our present. On the contrary, also repressed events shape our current epistemological concepts. Against that backdrop, Smalbrugge questions the sense of the adage "never again" because at least in cases of oblivion one cannot comply with this standard. In any case, the cultural context of memories also influences which incidents are remembered – and which are not. Being aware of these connections, the political significance of memory is highlighted. With regard to Christianity, Smalbrugge emphasizes that Christianity itself is a mnemonic structure from its outset. It structures the way things are remembered, as well as forgotten. This en-

tails that internalized mnemonic structures also deeply affect the way we deal with our past – and integrate our present, even if we are not aware of it.

With a focus on the concept of law, German theologian and ethicist *Lukas Johrendt* asks in his essay *Between Justice and Law: The Concept of jus within the Doctrine of jus ad bellum, jus in bello and jus post bellum*, what exactly is meant by law (*jus*) in each category, whether it refers to concrete legal norms or rather moral obligations. After clarifying what legal norms and moral obligations are, he discusses the respective theories in turn, finding that concerning *jus ad bellum*, there is only a negative juridical sense of this norm, while the question whether it is *just* to begin wars is discussed morally in great detail. With regard to *jus ad bellum*, the reverse is the case, because here the legal norms form the foundation of the debate, be it in legal or ethical terms. *Jus post bellum*, however, is solely discussed ethically, while it has no legal implication. Consequently, in each line of discourse there are different gaps in the ethical and juridical discussion, while the article clearly shows that law and morality are intertwined closely and both needed for assessing the use of force.

Finally, *Torsten Meireis*, based in Berlin, explores the question of Christian realism in peace ethics in his chapter “*Justice and Peace will Kiss*” (*Ps 85:111*). *Christian Peace Ethics: Delusional in a Multipolar World?* Since Christian peace ethics is theologically rooted in divine promise, and thus, faith, its plausibility in the arena of current political thought is at stake. As the Psalmist’s stance lies at the core of contemporary Christian peace ethics especially in Germany, the essay starts by discussing controversial interpretations rooted in differing hermeneutics and argues for a perspective that stresses the significance of the biblical text for the current situation especially in view of its historical context. Going on to the different contextual takes in the ethics of war and peace, Meireis relates the just war–language predominant in Anglo-Saxon discourse to the concept of just peace developed in different European contexts, epistemically prioritizing conflict resolution over battlefield ethics and resulting in a concept of conditional peace. In a final section of the paper, he contends that self-attributed *realistic* approaches in international relations are not all that realistic after all and that the just peace–approach aligns with liberal approaches in international relations that stress cooperation while not ignoring the threat of violence. In that view, a support of Ukrainian defense needs to be combined with a perspective for conflict resolution even after the end of outright violence.

By the time we are finishing the draft of this book, the war in Ukraine has by no means ended. In international attention, it has been overshadowed by the armed conflicts and atrocities in the Middle East, where attempts at regional military hegemony by different agents, civil war, terrorism and war crimes mingle, multi-faceted trauma abounds, and all of those factors render peace only a remote hope. However, in a Christian perspective, clinging to hope with faith in God’s promise of peace may well be the basis for politically sober and realistic efforts at a lasting, just peace.

The making of a book like this is always a joint effort. Many people have given their time and energy to make this possible. We thank first of all the contributors, who have taken travel and work upon themselves and bridged inter-contextual differences to make this conversation possible. No less thanks go to the members of the ethics chair who have tirelessly done the strenuous work of revising and editing, namely Bettina Schön, Wiebke Schulz, Julius Kost and the team of de Gruyter publishing house, Albrecht Döhnert, Antonia Pohl and Berenice Brüggemann, to name just a few. The book's current form would not have been possible without the meticulous editing work of Gabriele Faßbeck, for which we extend our profound gratitude. We are also grateful to the Open Access Funds at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin for a generous publishing subsidy and the European Association for Religion and Society for their support. We hope that all of those efforts will contribute to foster conversations paving the way to peace in our time.¹

Christmas 2024

Nicole Kunkel, Torsten Meireis

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¹ Unless otherwise stated, the year of publication of a web article corresponds to the year after which it was cited. The year is not listed again separately. The exact information can be found under "last modified".

Part I: **European Takes on the Geopolitical Situation**

Jonas J. Driedger

No Ought without an Is: Prospects for Peace in the Russian-Ukrainian War from a Peace and Conflict Research Perspective

Some normative views do not need to consider empirical scholarship on peace and conflict.¹ Deontological positions of extreme pacifism would fall under this rubric, as would stances positing that normative thought is only applicable outside of war (Lazar 2020). If exerting violence is wrong no matter the circumstances, the circumstances do not matter. And if war-related actions cannot be right or wrong, the exact features of war are normatively irrelevant.

However, even under a strictly Humean distinction of Is and Ought, the empirical study of peace and conflict is important for most ethicists that try to evaluate normative questions relating to specific wars. Indeed, most philosophical thought about the morality of war explores the complex questions of when, why, and how certain kinds of war involvement can be considered morally good or at least not condemnable (for an overview, see Lazar 2020).

When applied to a specific war, ethics needs to consider existing knowledge about the war, as well knowledge of the nature, causes, and consequences of similar kinds of war. Such scholarship is the domain of peace and conflict studies (sometimes termed war studies in the Anglo-American sphere) and related scholarly areas such as area studies, international relations, and strategic studies.

This chapter illustrates the argument of “no ought without an is” by applying core findings of these disciplines to the conflict. This provides a baseline and background for ethical and theological considerations on peace perspectives between Ukraine and Russia.

The chapter frames this undertaking through three questions. It also outlines answers for these questions for the specific case of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Section 1 establishes what existing research tells us about the kind of conflict that Ukraine and Russia are fighting out. By asking, “What kind of war is this?”, the diversity of wars and war parties is acknowledged, and the stage is set for norma-

¹ I would like to thank the participants of the workshop “Ukraine and Russia: An Intercontinental Peace Ethical Conversation (EARS/BIPT)” on 19 and 20 February 2024 in Berlin, particularly the organizers Torsten Meireis and Nicole Kunkel for the extensive feedback, fruitful conversations, and helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank Benjamin Isaak-Krauß and Jule v. Köhlerwald for giving feedback, Sam Forsythe for language editing and feedback, and Marie-Christine Roth for research assistance.

tive and empirical evaluation. Section 2 asks, “Why are they still fighting?”, laying out major contentious issues that have shaped and maintained warfare until September 2024 (the main time of writing). This provides insights into the dynamics and motivations at play. Section 3 asks, “What are the prospects for peace?”, utilizing insights from systematic peace and conflict research as well as known tendencies and trends in and between Ukraine and Russia to assess likely and unlikely paths to war termination, followed by a short reflection on the wider implications of this chapter.

Wars are complex social phenomena with little homogeneity or universals shared between them, rendering the results of peace and conflict studies tentative, nominalistic, and conditional when compared to many other fields of research. Nonetheless, there exists vast scholarship on the identification, measurement, and explanation of the causes, nature, and consequences of specific wars and war in general. This is probably in large part due to the immediately obvious political and ethical significance of the issues at hand. Predicting, anticipating, and managing interstate wars in the future remains a key focus in academia and politics (Cederman and Weidmann 2017; R. A. Johnson 2015; Driedger and Polianskii 2023). As such, however, a key task of peace and conflict research often consists in critically exploring widely spread heuristics on wars to instill Socratic humility and ensure that any political, empirical, or ethical assessment is grounded in the most robust concepts, theoretical framework, and evidence that is available.

1 What Kind of War Is This?

War is usually defined as organized, mutual, and extensive violence between political groups (Daase et al. 2022). The concept is hence used much more restrictively than is often the case in public discourse, where the term *war* is often applied to denote interstate sanctions or economic constrictions (“trade war”), non-political violence between criminal groups (“gang wars”), mass hacking (“cyber war”) or contests for discursive hegemony (“information war”).

Most classifications in peace and conflict research distinguish different categories of conflict by their magnitude and by the main kind of actors involved. Consequently, war is usually conceptualized as part of a wider category of military conflict. For example, in the frequently used “Correlates of War” project, this wider category encapsulates all “militarized interstate disputes”, reserving the label of *war* only for cases involving 1,000 or more battle-related deaths.

While some have criticized the distinction (Pfeifer and Schwab 2023), scholars usually distinguish between wars in which the principal antagonists are states

(interstate war) and wars that involve at least one state and one non-state actor as the main actors (civil war, intrastate war, extra-state war).

Most scholars continue to distinguish interstate wars from others for various reasons. Interstate wars tend to kill more people than civil wars (Clauzet and Gleditsch 2018, 230–31). Arguably a key cause for the continued relevance of interstate war lies in the nature of its constituent components. War represents the most lethal and extensive form of organized inter group fighting. When it is fought between states, war's destructive potential is amplified, as states continue to be the most consequential, integrated, and sophisticated form of political organization (Kalyvas 2019, 6; Lake 2008). As has often been stated, this gives states uniquely potent capabilities when it comes to inflicting violence on people and other states (Daase et al. 2022, 8; Lake 2008; Waltz 1979, 93–94). Consequently, various strands of research have explored the interconnections of statehood and warfare (e.g., Carter, Bernhard, and Palmer 2012; Desch 1996; Tilly 1992). Others have focused on the territoriality of modern states and explored its interconnections with war over territorial disputes (e.g., D. D. P. Johnson and Toft 2014).

Scholars have disagreed about the proper classification of the 2014–2022 stage of the conflict, where groups loyal to Kyiv fought groups loyal to Russia and/or the various separatist polities on Ukraine's legal territory. Consequently, this conflict had been variously classified as an interstate war, a hybrid war, a semi-covert war, and as a civil war (Hauter 2021). Early on in the conflict, area experts had quickly established Russia's direct and crucial involvement with conventional troops (Czuperski et al. 2015) and its direct control over the supposedly independent "People's Republics" of Donbas and Luhansk (Hosaka 2019). Nonetheless, Russia's continued insistence that it was not involved in the conflict yielded various political successes – including that it was not named as a conflict party in the Minsk agreements (Åtland 2020).

Since Russia's full invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, the conflict has been widely considered an all-out interstate war, situated within a larger constellation of international rivalry that includes the Global north-west (including unoccupied Ukraine) on the one hand and Russia on the other.

While some scholars argue that increasingly close ties between Russia and China render China a *de facto* part of this larger rivalry (Ikenberry 2024), others note that China's support remains limited and measured (Chang-Liao 2023).

Interstate wars like the Russian-Ukrainian conflict have become less frequent since the end of the Second World War. This is often explained by the rise of the United Nations with its emphasis on territorial integrity and the advent of nuclear weapons with their deterrent effects on interstate relations. Some, however, question whether the relative rarity of interstate war since 1945 signifies a causal

trend, citing conceptual, methodological, and measurement problems of studies that made this claim (Braumoeller 2024).

Aside from the hard-to-classify Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan in 1999 (Gill 2019), there have not been direct interstate wars between nuclear armed powers. However, there have been intense rivalries between nuclear states, as well as intense involvement by great powers with opposing forces in wars (e.g., the Korean War, the Iran-Iraq War, the Vietnam wars, and the Soviet-Afghan War). These conflicts gave rise to concerns about nuclear escalation similar to those seen in the current Russian-Ukrainian war.

The Russian-Ukrainian war is also a clear-cut example of a territorial war. Wars fought over territory remain frequent. Between 1918 and 2018, 56 interstate wars took place, with 28 (50 percent) starting out as wars of territorial conquest, 17 others (30 percent) were territorial in nature without starting as wars of conquest, and 11 (20 percent) not territorial in nature (Altman 2020). While Altman notes a possible decline in the frequency of territorial wars, he finds that the rate of territorial wars is still 72 percent between 1976 and 2018 (Altman 2020). Armed conflicts tend to be much more frequent, bloody, longer, and more difficult to resolve when they are about territory that groups on both sides attach significant meaning to (Toft 2014). However, unlike in previous periods, the strategic use of conquering, pacifying, and economically exploiting territory through military occupation has decreased (Lieberman 1998; Brooks 2013; Altman 2020).

In sum, peace and conflict research clearly identifies the Russian-Ukrainian war – at least since the start of its full-scale escalation in 2022 – as a clear-cut case of interstate war in which territory is a key issue of dispute. Like other similar conflicts, it involves one nuclear power and one non-nuclear power.

2 Why Are They Still Fighting?

When and how wars end depends in large part on incentives. Most models of war termination presume a simple rational² model (Lutmar and Terris 2017) in which decision-makers on both sides are faced with risks and opportunities when it comes to their war-related decisions. Choices are made depending on how the perceived net-utility of a decision (the conceptual balance of advantages and disadvantages) measures up against the decisionmakers' conception of the available options.

² The rationality assumption of the model is an undemanding one, as it only stipulates that decision-makers weigh between alternatives without demanding that their goals and perceptions are themselves “rational” (Zagare 1990).

Of course, such choices are particularly difficult in an all-out, interstate war. Due to its destructive and volatile nature, war always entails significant costs and risks for all parties involved (Fearon 1995). As they nonetheless both chose war, actors on both sides must have figured that not attacking or not defending would have left them even worse off than attacking or defending. In other words, the stakes were high even before the war began.

In such a model, war parties will agree on war termination if: a) they believe that there is a non-war option available, b) if they believe that non-war option promises a higher net-utility if the other side were to also adhere to this choice, and c) if they believe the other side can be trusted to adhere to options other than war.³ For the Russian-Ukrainian war, available evidence indicates that at least three major factors have thus far prevented a settled war termination.

2.1 The Balance of Power and Hopes for Victory

A major cause for continued fighting lies in uncertainty about the outcomes of future fights. If either side believes it might be able to achieve most or all its goals by doubling down on military efforts, then it is incentivized to do so because suing for peace would certainly entail concessions on these war goals.

However, war parties are often not certain about the goals, power, and resolve of their adversaries. To avoid making needless concessions or provoking preemptive aggression, both sides are incentivized to be secretive about their own military capabilities, their strategic intent, and their political resolve. They will also likely suspect that the other side might be overstating their resolve and capabilities to attain better results. Consequently, war parties can decide to continue fighting in the hope that they either acquire more information about the power and resolve of the opponent or, ideally, achieve most of their goals through victory (Fearon 1995; Reiter 2009).

From the beginning of the full-scale invasion in February 2022 until September 2024, both Russia and Ukraine undertook repeated massed offensives without any major diplomatic breakthroughs being achieved. This evinced optimism on both sides that they would likely achieve more favorable results by attempting these operations rather than conceding (for information on these military actions, see: Institute for the Study of War 2024).

³ This is a modified version of Zartman's argument on ripeness and war termination (Zartman 2022; cf. also Fearon 1995; Reiter 2009). In Zartman's original argument in 2001, he argued that a mutually hurtful stalemate combined with a way out would be the precondition for war termination.

The invasion began on February 24, 2022, when Russian forces launched military action by crossing into unoccupied part of Ukraine from Belarus in the north, from Russia in the east, and Crimea in the south. In total, Russia invaded Ukraine from seven different directions. Right away, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy introduced martial law and decreed full military mobilization. Despite widespread expectations, Russian forces proved unable to capture Kyiv. However, Russian forces managed to eventually capture Mariupol after a three-month siege on May 20, 2022, taking over a strategically vital city that served as a connector between hitherto separate Russian-controlled territories in Crimea and Donbas. As it became clearer that Ukraine had foiled Russia's immediate plan of capturing Ukraine's two major cities, Kyiv and Kharkiv, Russian-Ukrainian peace negotiations were abandoned in May 2022 (Charap and Radchenko 2024).

Having halted Russia's advances, Ukraine conducted several counteroffensives, pushing back Russian forces around Kyiv. Aided by Western intelligence and weapons deliveries, Ukrainian forces liberated occupied territory in the northeast and east (Kharkiv Oblast). This was considered a major shift of battlefield momentum. Kherson had been the only Ukrainian regional capital Russian forces had captured in the duration of the war. However, Ukraine retook Kherson in November 2022, pushing Russian forces back to the east bank of the Dnipro river. During this period, Ukraine managed to regain about half of the territory that Russia had just seized. Additionally, the Moskva, the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet, was sunk on April 14, 2022, showcasing Ukraine's increased ability to contest the naval dominance of Russia at its shores.

In 2023, both Ukraine and Russia sought to conquer territory but did not achieve major breakthroughs due to the respective defender's use of well-fortified defensive positions, land mines, and loitering munitions. On May 20, Russia managed to take control of the city of Bakhmut, which was mostly seen a symbolic rather than strategic victory that came at a huge cost for Russia.

Launching a major counteroffensive in early June 2023, the Ukrainian forces encountered deeply entrenched Russian positions south of the Dnipro river in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, slowing progress. By winter 2023, the counteroffensive had not delivered on hopes of many, leaving Russia in control of 18 percent of Ukrainian territory (see Figure 1). Simultaneously, Ukraine conducted increasingly successful military campaigns against Russia in and around Crimea, including the establishment of a maritime corridor in the western Black Sea.

Since late 2023, Russian forces took the city of Avdiivka after a months-long battle and made other territorial gains. In August 2024, Ukraine launched an offensive, taking control of legal Russian territory in Kursk oblast.

A major source of uncertainty between the two parties has consisted in the mixed signals of Ukraine's Western allies when it comes to weapons deliveries.

From the first signs of the upcoming invasion well into fall 2024, major Western states like the United States and Germany, while delivering significant volumes of military and economic aid to Ukraine, have repeatedly denied or delayed deliveries and restricted their use against Russia.

Both war parties evidently care a lot about these deliveries, presuming that their realization would strongly impact the balance of power between the war parties. Ukraine has persistently lobbied for more and more timely support from the West, whereas Russia has repeatedly issued threats and warnings to deter continued or increased Western aid.

Because Ukraine's long-term ability to resist Russian advances, inflict pain on the regime, and even threaten further reconquest relies on Western support, uncertainty about the future of Western supports instills uncertainty between the war parties on the future balance of power, hindering a bargained settlement of the conflict.

2.2 International Territorial Disputes and Domestic Politics

Another major factor inhibiting an end to the fighting is usually named “issue indivisibilities” (Fearon 1995). In such a situation, the issue that the war parties are disputing is of a kind that renders it practically impossible for either side to compromise on it.

A key issue involving issue indivisibility problems is that of territory, stemming from Russian annexations of Ukrainian territory. Russia forcefully and illegally occupied the Ukrainian peninsula Crimea in 2014. Through the covert action of its intelligence services and the unacknowledged use of its military forces, Russia was also a de facto occupier of further Ukrainian territory through the so-called People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk (Åtland 2020; Czuperski et al. 2015; Hosaka 2019). In violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and the Minsk accords, Russia declared these two polities sovereign just before it unleashed the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. On September 30, 2022, Russia formally annexed Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia as parts of the Russian Federation, even though Russian forces did not fully control these Ukrainian oblasts.

Interstate disputes about territory, especially when they are undergirded by strong sentiments in the respective societies, are particularly war-prone, tend to breed interstate rivalries, and are hard to dissolve (Toft 2014).

Various data points suggest that this exact situation applies to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, as territory is strongly disputed, with its meaning creating stakes in the respective polities, bringing forth issue indivisibilities that hinder a negotiated settlement to the war. Zelenskyy had signaled early on that he would

not compromise on issues of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity (Ukrinform 2022). His since proposed 10-point plan for peace prominently features the demand of complete Russian withdrawal and Ukrainian territorial integrity (Reuters 2022).

By fall 2024, Ukrainian majority opinion was still firmly opposed to making any territorial concessions, having experienced constant Russian aggression and violations of agreements for ten years.

Polls found that only about 10 percent of respondents were open to territorial concessions to achieve peace up until May 2023, with well over 80 percent opposing them. One year later, the gap had narrowed, but remained wide, with 32 percent being open and 55 percent opposed (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2024a). The correlation of war policy and popular sentiment is in line with research that indicates leaders of democracies to be particularly receptive to highly salient majority opinions such as the one on territory (Gibler and Hutchison 2013).

Ever since seizing Crimea in 2014, the Russian regime has shown no willingness to ever return the illegally annexed territory. Rather than scaling down its war goals, the Russian regime extended them by annexing large swaths of additional Ukrainian territory seven months into the full war. In the summer of 2024, Putin again remained steadfast on these war goals and demanded Ukraine cede even more territory as a precondition for an armistice (Russian Federation 2024). The Russian regime has tied its reputation closely to its territorial claims over the territories in question, rendering it unlikely that it will easily move on this key topic.

2.3 Distrust and the Shadow of Betrayal

Another major factor consists of what is usually named “commitment problems”, situations in which the war parties cannot agree on a negotiated settlement because at least one side fears that by agreeing, it would make irrevocable concessions and would be left worse off, should the other side renege on the deal (Fearon 1995; Reiter 2009).

In the Russian-Ukrainian war, this problem has mostly manifested around demands on Ukraine to make concessions toward Russia in return for a ceasefire or a peace settlement. One major issue here, dovetailing with issue indivisibilities, is the question of Ukraine’s future relations with the West, specifically regarding NATO.

Historically, and especially under Putin, Russia has consistently sought both to prevent Ukrainian accession to NATO and to gain significant and long-term leverage over Ukrainian decision-making (Driedger 2023). With the start of the inva-

sion specifically, Russia has demanded a “demilitarization” of Ukraine as well as robust assurances that Ukraine never join NATO. In his February 2022 address, President Putin stated:

“The purpose of this operation is to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime. To this end, we will seek to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation.” (Putin 2022)

In February 2024, Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin spokesperson, described Russian war goals as unchanged and reiterated the goals of demilitarization, denazification, and insurance for safety in the “regions that have already become Russian”. He also mentioned the security of the Russian Federation against NATO’s attempt to destroy Ukraine’s neutral status (Reuters 2024).

In Ukraine, however, Western support is seen as crucial as to not fall prey to another Russian aggression if Russia were to renege on its promises. This is a particularly salient point, as Russia has done so in the past. With its past aggressions against Ukraine (2014, 2014–2022, 2022), Russia had violated international laws and norms as well as various agreements with Ukraine that Russia had voluntarily entered prior to the attacks (Driedger 2023, 206–10). These agreements include the 1994 Budapest Memorandum as well as the various Minsk agreements and basic mechanisms of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that Ukraine has consistently pushed for security assurances from states other than Russia to not make itself vulnerable to renewed Russian aggression and breaking of agreements in the future. Indeed, since 2014 and particularly since 2022, Ukraine has pushed for NATO accession to gain protection from Russian attack (Driedger 2024). Western security assurances were a key Ukrainian demand of the 2022 Istanbul negotiations (Charap and Radchenko 2024) and of Zelenskyy’s 10-point plan (Reuters 2022).

The vast majority of Ukrainian society supports and demands these policies. Polled Ukrainians have strongly supported Ukrainian NATO accession. In 2023, over 75 percent of respondents even stated that they would find it unacceptable if Ukraine were refused entry into NATO and a majority viewed only NATO membership (as opposed to other security agreements) as a guarantor of Ukrainian security (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2024b).

3 What are the Prospects for Peace?

While the abovementioned factors prolong the war and work against a stable negotiated settlement, no war lasts forever. They ultimately end, be it through military victory, major changes in one side's domestic policies, or simply because both sides have fought each other to a point where they both prefer an end of the war to prolonging it (Deitelhoff et al. 2024).

War termination, the end of large-scale armed hostilities between political groups, should stand front and center of considerations about the prospects of peace. There are various ways of conceptualizing war termination. One of the most frequent classifications is one according to whether the war was terminated by a military victory, by a peace agreement, by a negotiated ceasefire, or by neither of those (Kreutz 2010). The latter category typically involves fighting at a lower intensity or non-violent forms of continued rivalries. In one prominent study, less than half of wars were found to have ended via negotiated settlement and peace agreements (Kreutz 2010, 246).

3.1 Change in Leadership

Studies indicate that a change in the leadership of a war party can facilitate war termination (Lutmar and Terris 2017, 6–8). A new leader might perceive the conflict differently, might face other incentives, and might be viewed differently by the other side. Of course, a new leader could also turn out to be worse for the prospects of peace than the old one.

However, available evidence indicates that the Russian regime remains stable. The attempt by Sergey Prigozhin in 2023 to march on Moscow and coerce concessions from the regime failed (Driedger and Adrián del Río Rodríguez 2023). The opposition in Russia is fragmented and its most prominent leaders have been killed. Meanwhile, both Putin and the war reportedly continue to be popular among most Russians.

Of course, Putin might soon die or have to step back. As the Russian regime is a highly personalistic one (Burkhardt 2021), changes in Russian policy might well occur. But again, there are reasons to assume that Russia's policy toward Ukraine might remain unaffected or even escalate in such a situation. Similarly to the case of the transition of power between Putin and his predecessor Yeltsin, any change in leadership might reflect political arrangements in which regime insiders are protected against post-transition backlash. The seemingly wide support for the war could factor into this, just as well as the various security, defense, and political interests that are currently interwoven with Putin and the war. Any pres-

ident would probably find it politically difficult to alter Russia's position on annexed territory and compromise on war goals, due to decade-long propaganda and the immense economic and human costs that the pursuit of these war goals has entailed.

Similarly, any new government in Ukraine will be in a tough spot when it comes to striking an agreement with Russia. As, currently, elections have been postponed due to the war, governmental legitimacy is closely tied to what is widely perceived as a national war of defense and liberation. Most Ukrainians hold an understandably hostile view toward Russia, a strong preference for regaining lost territory, and joining NATO. Any new government would likely face a more volatile power base than the previous one, incentivizing an uncompromising stance on the war.

In Russia as in Ukraine, new leaders would face incentives to adopt unchanged or more hardline approaches toward the war. On the one hand to ensure domestic support through “rally around the flag” effects (Seitz and Zazzaro 2019), while on the other hand preventing potential domestic challengers from presenting a united front (Belkin and Schofer 2005).

3.2 Military Victory

Of course, various future developments might cause one side to gain such a military advantage that it can start to dictate war termination on its own terms. From the start of the full invasion to September 2024, no such victory has occurred and some factors indicate that it will not be forthcoming. Indeed, despite repeated offensives and intense efforts from both sides, the overall balance of territorial control has barely shifted throughout the war (Figure 1).

Due to its population size, wealth, industrial base, natural resources, and technological-scientific infrastructure, Russia holds significant advantages in self-generated material power over Ukraine. Consequently, Russia has been considered by many to be the most likely victor in the war.

However, various factors prevented Russia from achieving victory (also Dalsjö, Jonsson, and Norberg 2022). For one thing, in the past, military victories have been more likely for conflicts that ended within much shorter periods of time (Kreutz 2010). Moreover, even when there is a decisive victory in asymmetric conflicts, the stronger side is not always the victor. One study found that the stronger side only won about 71 percent of the conflicts between 1800 and 1998. Surprisingly, between 1950 and 1998 stronger parties lost more often (55 percent) than they won (45 percent) (Arreguín-Toft 2001, 97). One reason for this might be the effect – and efficacy – of asymmetric strategies in conflict (Arreguín-Toft 2001).

Ukrainian territory controlled by Russia, %

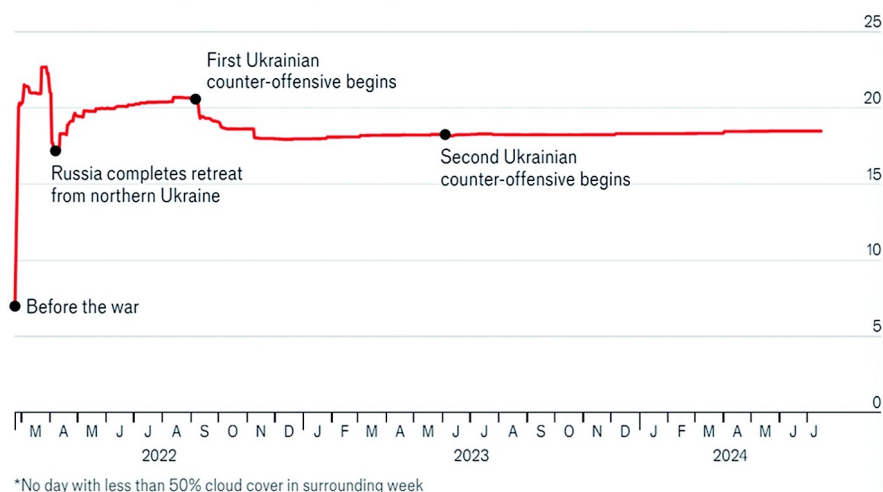


Figure 1: The Economist. *Mapping the Ukraine war: Where is the latest fighting?* Continuously Updated (Accessed July 17, 2024) <https://www.economist.com/interactive/graphic-detail/ukraine-fires>.

Furthermore, a widespread, albeit difficult to systematically corroborate proposition in Strategic Studies has been that, all else being equal, it takes much more resources and troops to successfully conquer and hold territory than it is to defend it (Biddle 2010). Lastly, it has been argued that, especially at high levels of investment, defensive land fighting strategies are more cost-effective than offensive ones (Garfinkel and Dafoe 2021).

Another factor working against military victory is that serious advances from one side tend to cause contravening developments on the other. This includes strategic considerations wherein the losing side doubles down on its efforts, accepting even higher risks and costs to avert the devastating consequences of an all-out loss. Enemy advancement on what is perceived to be a society's own homeland will also likely increase "rally around the flag" effects and patriotic sentiments, likely invigorating the fighting spirit of any side that sees itself on the losing end of this territorial conflict.

Indeed, following the Ukrainian counter-offensive in 2023, the Russian regime doubled down on its long-term war efforts to maintain and increase pressure on Ukraine in 2024 (Massicot 2024). Furthermore, in the past Western support for Ukraine has usually increased when Ukraine was seen as particularly threatened by Russia (Driedger 2021a; Driedger and Krotz 2024), suggesting that this might happen again should Ukraine find itself on the backfoot against Russia.

3.3 Peace as a Lesser Evil

If not by a leader change or a military victory, the war will likely end in a situation wherein one or both parties find its continuation so politically painful that they opt for alternatives. The result could then be a fully negotiated peace agreement, a ceasefire, or an uncoordinated winding down of hostilities below the war-threshold (Lutmar and Terris 2017). Two of the most lethal interstate wars since 1945, the Korean War 1950–1953 and the Iraq-Iran War 1980–1988, ended in armistices but without peace agreements that settled the disputes underlying the wars.

The humanitarian, economic, and political fallout of the Russian-Ukrainian war has already been immense for both sides and will increase the longer the war goes on. Ukraine is hit harder by the war due to it being the attacked and partially occupied war party, while the Russian regime has more resources at its disposal and can use autocratic measures to minimize societal backlash.

Hence, the Ukrainian government might face increasing societal pressure to bring the fighting to an end and might find society to be more receptive to war termination, as, up until September 2024, Ukrainian society is strained under mobilization (Shashkova 2024) and a growing minority would be willing to consider major concessions to Russia to facilitate an end to the fighting (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2024a).

However, available evidence also suggests that the Russian regime might eventually face a situation in which it finds the continuation of the war so damaging to itself that it would consider compromising on its goals. Under Putin, the regime has shown a consistent and long-term tendency to try and minimize threats to its own stability (Frye 2021; Driedger 2023). Its use of “volunteers” and mercenaries, and the denial of use of conscripts showcases concerns within the regime that popular opinion in Russia might turn against the war. While the exact number of war casualties is hard to assess with certainty, at least 70,000 Russian combatants have been killed by September 2024 (BBC 2024). The combined economic damage of the war efforts and Western sanctions is also significant. Experts forecast that the regime could sustain the costs of war for at least a few years, but that it would have to accept significant damage to the economy and the standard of living if it were to do so (Shatz and Reach 2023). While thriving on the image of protecting against foreign threats and NATO, the regime also seeks to convey to the population the impression that it is not needlessly escalating the conflict or taking disproportional risks. The Putin regime does this through an imagery of prudence and proportionality (Hale and Lenton 2024), which it will likely try to maintain in the future. There is also some evidence that

societal perceptions of continued economic strain decrease support for assertive foreign policies in Russia (Snegovaya 2020).

If either or both sides were to face a situation of increasing pressure, they might be more receptive to consider alternatives to continued warfare – provided these alternatives promise to be a lesser evil. In such a situation, various factors could aid the war parties to come to a formal or informal understanding and wind down hostilities. This includes preparations of contact groups and negotiation agendas, communications and facilitation of shared understandings between the allies and supporters of the war parties, the provision of security guarantees (specifically to Ukraine) and economic aid in post-war reconstruction, and the identification of mutually trusted mediators (Deitelhoff et al. 2024).

4 Conclusion: Pushing for Positive Peace

Considering the balance of power and resolve between the parties, the domestic and international dynamics of territorial ownership, and the problems of trust and commitment that a negotiated settlement would likely entail, available evidence and findings from the study of other conflicts suggest that the Russian-Ukrainian war might well continue long beyond the time of writing (September 2024). War termination might come about because of leadership changes on either side, but the balance of available evidence suggests that such changes could leave the state of the war unchanged. Similarly, war termination by military victory remains a distinct possibility, but seems unlikely given observable trends. A likely outcome is that neither side will wish to concede nor start new major offensives, resulting in a more or less coordinated winding down of hostilities over time.

A decrease or stoppage of fighting would not by itself bring about full peace. Peace is a richer and more demanding concept than war termination. A useful distinction can be made between negative and positive peace. Negative peace entails the absence of armed violence and is therefore roughly synonymous with war termination. Positive peace, on the other hand, denotes a situation wherein neither side is worried about armed conflict with the other in the conceivable future (Diehl 2019). As negative peace is a precondition for positive peace, the focus in this chapter was on the former.

However, because negative peace does not necessarily entail positive peace, former war parties often remain locked in a persistent rivalry where mutual threat perceptions and zero-sum policies make future outbreaks of war more likely (Dreyer 2017). Territorial disputes, such as the current one between Ukraine

and Russia, are a key driver of ongoing rivalries even in the absence of active military conflict (Owsiak and Rider 2013). Thus, an end to active warfighting will most likely not entail an end to analytical, moral, and political problems associated with the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Preparing for peace entails preparing for such problems.

Adequate consideration of political and moral judgments in any given war (excepting radically deontological positions) requires knowledge about war parties, actors' motivations, strategic choices, conflict dynamics, and inter-party bargaining problems. For example, those arguing that Ukraine ought to have sued for "peace at any price" must demonstrate the likely cost of peace, the durability of such a peace, as well as the actual value of peace compared with continued fighting. On the other side, those claiming that the war ought to be fought until Ukraine regains full control of its legal territory must provide a plausible evaluation of the likelihood of a Ukrainian victory and the costs and risks its pursuit would entail. As sections 2.1 to 2.3 show, the grounds for these two positions are much shakier than their prominence in recent Western discourse would suggest. War is certainly an abyss that gazes back, but shutting our eyes to it can only result in poor moral and political judgments.

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Alex Leveringhaus & Margaryta Khvostova

***Jus Post Bellum* and the Russian-Ukrainian War: Ethical and Practical Challenges**

1 Introduction

Since the anti-Vietnam War movement in the 1960s and early 70s, just war theory has seen a remarkable revival in contemporary political philosophy and ethics, especially in the English-speaking world.¹ A key feature of this debate has been what one may call the proliferation of *jus* frameworks. Traditionally, just war theory has operated with two main regulatory frameworks, governing the initiation of armed conflict (*jus ad bellum*) and its conduct (*jus in bello*), respectively. Since the early 2000s, at least three more frameworks have been added. These are *jus ad vim* (a framework that regulates uses of military force that fall below the threshold for war), *jus ex bello* (a framework that regulates exit from war), and *jus post bellum*. It would be impossible to survey all three in this chapter. Instead, we concentrate on *jus post bellum*, which, as the name implies, is concerned with the establishment of a just peace or, more generally, just postwar relations.

Our concerns in this chapter are theoretical and practical at the same time. From a theoretical perspective, we explore some of the underlying assumptions of *jus post bellum*. While much of contemporary political philosophy in the analytical tradition aspires to timeless universality, we show that prominent accounts of *jus post bellum* are often based on highly contingent historical assumptions and experiences, mostly relating to a US-dominated international order post-WW2. This, we hasten to add, does not necessarily invalidate the ideas behind *jus post bellum*. However, it does raise important questions about the framework's ethical and practical limitations. From a practical perspective, the (at the time of writing) ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine (abbreviated as RUW hereinafter) illustrates how *jus post bellum* is embedded within specific historical experiences that are not always fully transferrable into other contexts. Hence, RUW provides useful impulses for the debate on *jus post bellum*.

To explore the theoretical and practical interplay between *jus post bellum* and RUW, this chapter proceeds as follows. In the second part of the chapter, drawing on the influential work of Brian Orend (2000) and Gary J. Bass (2004), we

¹ The authors would like to thank all the participants in the workshop 'Ukraine and Russia: An Intercontinental Peace Ethical Conversation' for their comments. Special thanks go to the organizers, Torsten Meireis and Nicole Kunkel, for their hospitality, patience, and support.

outline some key features of the theoretical debate on *jus post bellum* and demonstrate how these are partly based on contingent historical experiences that do not necessarily obtain in RUW. In the third part, we speculate about potential outcomes for RUW and examine how these relate to *jus post bellum* and *vice versa*. In the fourth and final part of the chapter, we use the insights from the previous parts to offer a brief sketch for a future research agenda for *jus post bellum*.

Before we begin, two caveats are in order. First, by way of clarification, when we use the term Russian-Ukrainian War (RUW), we mean the period of warfare that commenced with the Russian invasion of Ukrainian state territory in February 2022. Of course, this neither exhausts territorial, political, and military disputes between Russia and Ukraine nor Russian direct and indirect action to undermine Ukrainian territorial integrity. In the 21st century, Russian efforts in this area culminated in the annexation of Crimea, as well as the creation of the so-called People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in 2014. Important though these events are, they are not the main subject of this chapter. Nonetheless, as we shall show later, they may provide hints as to why peace in RUW may be hard to achieve.

Second, we are, regrettably, no clairvoyants. No one knows how RUW or any other war is going to end. Almost two hundred years ago in his seminal *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz observed that wars are unpredictable (Beyerchen 1993). He had a point. Wars are messy, complex, and often involve sheer luck. Even so, in many conflicts, there are several outcomes that *could* occur. It is neither intellectually indulgent nor futile to reflect on them. Which outcome really *does* occur, of course, is another question. In this chapter, we remain agnostic on this issue. Admittedly, though, Clausewitz's point about unpredictability affects a key assumption about RUW that was central to an earlier draft of this chapter. If, as the saying (attributed to British PM Harold Wilson) goes, 'a week is a long time in politics', a couple of months can be an eternity in war (or not). Below, we indicate how we adapted our argument to reflect developments in RUW since the summer of 2024.

2 The philosophical debate on *Jus Post Bellum* and the Russia-Ukraine War

Wars, just war theorists have tended to assume, have a beginning (governed by *jus ad bellum*), a middle (governed by *jus in bello*), and an end (governed by *jus post bellum*). Two critical issues emerge from this tripartite sequencing of conflict. First, in the literature, this tripartite structure has mostly (and often implicitly) been applied to what is taken to be the paradigm case of a just war, namely, a

war of self-defense against an aggressor. Naturally, this raises questions over non-self-defensive wars, as well as techniques of warfare not necessarily classifiable as traditional instances of aggression, such as the Russian technique of hybrid warfare (which is a concentrated effort to undermine another state's domestic order and international standing).

Second, it is not unreasonable to argue that the famous just cause requirement contained in *jus ad bellum* already specifies the aims of a war and thus sets out its endpoint. Whichever outcome reflects these aims, therefore, constitutes a just postwar order – or at least contains its normative seeds. That said, there are, we believe, good reasons to insist on a separate framework to govern postwar relations. There could be cases where both parties to a conflict have morally legitimate aims, even if these fall slightly below the threshold for a just cause. Or the reverse can also be true: neither belligerent pursues just aims. Moreover, there can be instances where belligerents sue for peace before a just cause has been fulfilled. Further, it is not entirely inconceivable that just wars could sometimes give rise to bad outcomes, especially if a just belligerent overreaches in their pursuit of their cause. Conversely, and controversially, there could theoretically be cases where a normatively sound order arises from a war that was either unjust or whose conduct featured serious violations of *jus in bello*.

But arguably, the most compelling reason for adding *jus post bellum* to the established frameworks of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* is the simple and intuitive observation that, in Brian Orend's words, 'might is not right' (Orend 2000, 217). In other words, the material fact of victory – even if it realizes a just cause – does not mean that the individual rights of the citizens of the vanquished belligerent simply melt into the air (ibid., 225). Rather, rights constrain what a victorious party may permissibly do to its vanquished opponent. Note that, in addition to individual rights, there is another important consideration. *Jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* each feature a proportionality criterion. This means that the harms caused by, respectively, the initiation and conduct of war must not outweigh or exceed the potential good achieved via the resort to arms. Similarly, *jus post bellum* rightly demands that the construction of just postwar relations must not cause more harm than good, either. What this means in practice, of course, remains to be seen.

The above arguments regarding the importance of individual rights and proportionality are reflected in Orend's influential treatment of *jus post bellum*, underpinning three important claims. First, reflecting the centrality of the paradigm case of self-defensive war against aggression for *jus post bellum*, once the victim of aggression has defended its rights against the aggressor, the continuation of war is impermissible (ibid., 225). The point is to reestablish the territorial and political integrity of the victim of aggression, not to inflict excessive punishment for

the crime of aggression (ibid., 226). Second, it is impermissible for the victorious party to undermine the aggressor's ability to guarantee basic human rights of its members and uphold the rule of law (ibid., 228). Because of this, Orend rightly argues, demands for reparation must not be excessive or otherwise disproportionate to the damage caused by war (ibid., 227). Third, Orend stresses that the aggressor's political regime and constitution should be remodeled so as to be more 'peaceable, orderly, and pro-human rights'. This may also include the prosecution of those responsible for the crime of aggression or war crimes. Noting that this places significant burdens on the victorious party, Orend describes such restructuring efforts as a form of 'political therapy' (ibid., 229). Not surprisingly, he cites the reconstruction of (West) Germany post-WW2 as the main – and perhaps also most successful – example in this regard.

Similar ideas can be found in Gary J. Bass' important work on *jus post bellum*, in which the reconstruction of Nazi Germany plays a key role, too (Bass 2004). Bass, it is fair to point out, appears more hesitant than Orend in defending the political reconstruction of aggressors. In the case of the Gulf War, for instance, the US was justified, Bass opines, to leave Saddam Hussein's Baath Party regime in power. Hussein's aggression against Kuwait had been 'rolled back', hence the aims of the war had been fulfilled and no 'regime change' was needed, notwithstanding Hussein's atrocious human rights record and repeated campaigns against the Kurdish minority located in Northern Iraq (ibid., 394). Nevertheless, Bass concedes that victorious states are justified to shape their adversaries' internal constitution so as to prevent the outbreak of another unjust war in the future (ibid., 396). He describes this as a minimalist account of reconstruction. That being said, it is not quite clear what such minimalist reconstruction entails. It seems, on the one hand, to fall short of Orend's political therapy. On the other hand, even minimal reconstruction can be quite demanding. This is because it can take sustained and far-reaching efforts to make a regime less prone to engage aggression in the future.

A somewhat clearer exception to Bass' initial hesitancy regarding political reconstruction pertains to genocidal regimes. In such cases, Bass not only argues for a permission to reconstruct the target state but a duty to do so (ibid., 400). Nevertheless, there are limits to this duty in the sense that the reconstruction must not destroy the political community it engages with. For example, at the end of WW2, the Allies, in Bass' view (echoing Churchill), were right to reject the Morgenthau Plan and accept the continued existence of a German nation, though its political institutions had to be fundamentally changed (ibid., 395–396).

Clearly, there is more to be said about *jus post bellum*. However, the above sketch of core ideas in the debate is revealing, for three reasons. First, as we indicated earlier, the paradigm case of self-defense against aggression remains cen-

tral to Orend and Bass' respective theories, though, from the 1990s onward, interventionist wars, including the War on Terror, also gain in prominence. More generally, *jus post bellum* makes assumptions about the underlying type of war as well as its character. If either the type of war or its character changes, it will affect how one theorizes *jus post bellum*. Second, it is evident that the debate on *jus post bellum* has been shaped by particular historical events and experiences, most notably WW2 and the reconstruction of (West) Germany in its aftermath, as well as the challenges posed by the stabilization of post-atrocity societies in the 1990s and those societies affected by the War on Terror post 9/11. But the insights from these conflicts are not necessarily easily transferable to conflicts that do not fit the same mold. Third, and directly related to the preceding point, *jus post bellum* explicitly and implicitly relies on assumptions about order in the international sphere. Bass and Orend, for instance, tend to cite historical cases involving the United States. The implicit assumption seems to be that the United States – sometimes in alliance with other states – is capable of reshaping post-conflict societies. Or to put it more neutrally, the assumption is that there is a strong hegemon capable of engaging in reconstruction. As a result, either a decline in American power or the absence of a strong hegemon in an increasingly multipolar world will affect the kind of prescription that can be dished out for 'political therapy'.

This takes us to the main topic of the chapter, RUW. This conflict, we contend, illustrates some of the challenges faced by *jus post bellum* in a changing world order. At first sight, RUW seems a promising candidate for existing theories of *jus post bellum*. This is because it largely falls into the paradigm case of a war of self-defense against an aggressor. Russia is the aggressor; Ukraine is the victim of aggression. Other states have elected to either provide military support to the aggressor or victim. But this is not the whole story. There is clear evidence of massacres of Ukrainian civilians (for example, in Bucha), the deliberate infliction of harm on Ukrainian civilians, the forcible abduction and transfer of Ukrainian children from Ukrainian territory into Russian state territory, and the routine mistreatment of prisoners of war (POW). This has prompted, in 2023, the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant for the Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as, in 2024, other members of Russia's military elite. From an ideational perspective, atrocities and criminal behavior come as no surprise. This is because the Russian worldview underlying and motivating RUW denies that Ukraine constitutes a politically and culturally distinct political community with rights to territorial integrity and self-determination (Düben 2020).

In *Just and Unjust Wars*, Michael Walzer famously entertains the idea that wars that are unjust at the *ad bellum* level can still be fought justly within *in bello* restraints (Walzer 2015, 34–50). Whatever one may think about this claim (and many philosophers disagree with it), it is clear that the Russians are pursuing

their military objectives with scant attention to *in bello* restrictions on the use of force. RUW, therefore, is an *unjust* war (of aggression) fought with *unjust* means. Consequently, there is a strong case for some interference in Russia's domestic order in order to prevent aggression and mass atrocities in the future – not only against Ukraine but also other post-Soviet Republics. It is debatable whether Russia is classifiable, on Bass' account of *jus post bellum*, as a genocidal state. We do not want to enter into this debate here. However, the charges brought by the International Criminal Court are sufficiently serious to lend succor to the case for (some) political therapy. And not only that: there is also a strong case, as we are sure Orend and Bass would agree, for reparations to be paid from Russia to Ukraine, as well as the prosecution of Russian officials, via the International Criminal Court or some other mechanism, for atrocities carried out during the war.

Even so, we argue that RUW has two main features that pose problems for existing accounts of *jus post bellum*, revealing their historical contingency. The first feature is that, for the majority of the war, fighting and other military activity has been restricted to the territory of the victim, Ukraine. Unlike in WW2, where Allied Forces directly attacked German and Japanese state territory, respectively, Ukrainian forces have primarily sought to confront Russian forces on the battlefield in Ukraine. The reason for this idiosyncrasy has primarily to do with the role of nuclear deterrence. Since the beginning of the war in February 2022, President Putin has repeatedly engaged in 'nuclear saber rattling'. In other words, President Putin has made several nuclear threats. Notwithstanding the end of the Cold War more than thirty years ago, Russia remains the world's largest Nuclear Weapons State. Direct attacks on Russian territory, Ukraine's allies have feared, would poke the Russian nuclear bear, leading to a potentially catastrophic escalation of the conflict. As a result of this territorial restriction, the destructive consequences of RUW and their associated economic and human costs are predominantly borne by Ukrainians, rather than Russians.

Such a restrictive territorial demarcation of armed conflict does not feature in the main accounts of *jus post bellum*, thus raising questions over their applicability to RUW. Ultimately, in order to reconfigure the aggressor as a more peaceful political unit, another party – be it the victim or an allied hegemon – will need to access to the aggressor's territory. Unlike in Germany post-WW2, where (West) German territory was occupied by the Allies, such access does not exist in the case of Russia.

But admittedly, the territorial dynamics of RUW, central to our initial presentation of the material at a workshop in Berlin in February 2024, appear to have changed. Serving as an illustration of Clausewitz's aforementioned observation on the unpredictability of war, President Putin's nuclear threats seem to have lost some of their potency. In August 2024, Ukraine launched its invasion of the Russian region of Kursk. Shortly thereafter, the US administration under out-

going President Joe Biden, together with some allied states, such as the United Kingdom, gave Ukraine permission to use US-supplied long-range weaponry against targets deep inside Russian state territory. This policy seems to apply to targets that either serve as launch sites for Russian missile attacks against Ukraine or are otherwise vital for Russian military supplies. The question, then, is whether these developments undermine our claim that the territorial dynamics of RUW challenge existing theories of *jus post bellum*. We do not think so. At the time of writing, the purpose of the Kursk offensive is to force President Putin to divert military resources from Ukraine to Russia, thereby enabling Ukrainian forces to regain Ukrainian territory previously held by Russian forces. It is unlikely that Ukraine is militarily capable of and politically interested in a permanent occupation of the Kursk region. Similarly, Ukraine's targeting of Russian assets located in Russian territory is likely to remain fairly limited. It pales in comparison to the levels of destruction President Putin has unleashed on Ukraine. Hence, for the foreseeable future, the majority of military activity and fighting will occur in Ukrainian state territory.

The second feature of RUW that challenges existing accounts of *jus post bellum* is that (again) for the foreseeable future, Russia's internal political arrangements, as well as the wider worldview of its elites, are likely to remain stable. That is to say, regardless of any termination of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine, the aggressor, Russia, is likely to retain its internal constitution as well as international status *ante bellum*. Russia is going to remain an authoritarian (and arguably kleptocratic) state. Whether or not President Putin is removed from power is a matter for Russian elites, with the Russian people serving, as so often in their long and brutal history, as bystanders. Moreover, the Russian view a) that Ukraine (like other post-Soviet Republics) does not constitute an independent national entity, and b) that Moscow has the prerogative to impose its preferred order on what it considers to be its neighborhood, is also likely to go unchallenged. From a more international perspective, Russia will remain a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, retaining its veto powers. Russia's status as a powerful Nuclear Weapons State is also assured. Also, there will remain several states allied to Russia, willing to support the Russian state materially.

It goes without saying, then, that the above seems to rule out Bass' cautious and restrictive case for political rehabilitation, not to mention Orend's political therapy. The above factors also limit the capacity to extract reparations from Russia for the damage its forces caused in Ukraine, as well as legal efforts to hold those behind RUW and the atrocities committed in its course to account.

Taken together, the related features of territorial constraint, regime stability, and international status lead to a wider point about possible outcomes for RUW. As we saw above, reflecting the paradigm case of just war, existing accounts of

jus post bellum appear to assume that the victim (and their allies) prevails over the aggressor, or is at least able to decisively secure their territorial integrity and independence; otherwise, many of the above considerations about reparations, reconstruction, and political rehabilitation become redundant. The potential outcomes for RUW, however, look less straightforward. In particular, there can be outcomes in which neither side decisively wins or loses. Such outcomes not only challenge the winner-loser binary that appears baked into *jus post bellum*; they also raise questions over the tripartite temporal sequencing of war into beginning, middle, and end. In order to show what is at stake, we outline some potential scenarios for the end of RUW in the next part of this chapter.

3 The Russia-Ukraine War: Four Potential Outcomes

In this part of the chapter, we outline four potential outcomes for RUW in its current stage. In doing so, we use three criteria from *jus post bellum* to assess each of the scenarios (bar one): 1) transitional justice; 2) reparations; and 3) reconstruction. Before that, however, we want to raise a general concern. There is a deep and fundamental material asymmetry between the two belligerents. Russia is a nuclear weapons state with P5 status that commands the second largest army in the world. Despite heavy US-backed sanctions, Russia has access to parts of the international community that is willing to support its efforts. In addition to our aforementioned observations about territorial demarcation and regime stability, this not only positively impacts Russia's ability to negotiate an exit from the conflict but also shape a *post-bellum* scenario in its favor. Because of this, it is already apparent that a simple loser (aggressor) – winner (victim) dynamic does not apply here.

3.1 Scenario 1: Russia occupies all of Ukrainian territory and installs a new government in Kyiv

From a Russian perspective, this is the preferred scenario, closely corresponding to Russian war aims. The government under Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky would be removed and replaced with a pro-Russian puppet government. There might be a sham referendum process similar to the referendums held in the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. But it almost goes without saying that such a government would not rest on the consent of the governed, the Ukrai-

nian people. Further, as we indicated earlier, any surrender in war needs to be normatively restricted via an appeal to individual rights, as well as proportionality. Such normative restrictions do not apply in Scenario 1 due to the Kremlin's denial that Ukraine exists as a culturally and politically independent and distinctive entity. Given Russia's track record, a Russian victory would be accompanied by an extensive cleansing of the Ukrainian state apparatus, with more atrocities to follow. As a result, considerations of *jus post bellum* are irrelevant to Scenario 1. Regardless of one's underpinning theory of the ethics of war, Ukrainians would be morally justified in resisting the occupier and overthrowing the new government. Contrary to Hobbes' claim that the vanquished should bend their knee to their new ruler, they would have, in Lockean terms, a right to revolution. That is, a right to overthrow a government that neither rests on their consent nor is likely to respect their moral rights.

3.2 Scenario 2: The frontline does not change, and Ukraine has to sign a 'cease-fire treaty', losing the currently occupied territories

Compared to Scenario 1, Scenario 2 is less extreme but remains highly disadvantageous to the victim of aggression, Ukraine. It does not represent an outright defeat for Ukraine. Rather, it represents an outcome that falls slightly below the threshold for defeat. Conversely, it does not cross the threshold for outright victory, either. For Russia neither manages to control all of Ukrainian territory nor replace the government in Kyiv. Still, Russian troops manage to permanently occupy territory gained since the invasion of 2022. In Scenario 1, we argued that the Ukrainians would retain a right to resist the occupier. Therefore, considerations of *jus post bellum* do not apply. On the one hand, the same might apply to Scenario 2. If so, the Ukrainians would retain the right to use military force to retake any territory lost since 2022. On the other hand, it is likely that Scenario 2 could only come about via some kind of ceasefire treaty. In such a treaty, a resurgent Russia is likely to demand of Ukraine not to engage in any military attempt to recover territories lost as a result of the invasion in 2022.

If Scenario 2 neither represents outright victory for Russia nor an outcome to which one could apply *jus post bellum*, how should it be conceptualized? We argue that Scenario 2 is best thought of as an uneasy *modus vivendi*, that is, a practical agreement that enables the two parties to coexist. The *modus vivendi* has instrumental value only. Its purpose is to prevent a renewed outbreak of hostilities, not to secure postwar relations that could be described as just. That said, the standard critique of *modus vivendi* also applies here. Inevitably, the stronger

party is able to shape the *modus vivendi* in its favor. In Scenario 2, then, it is to be feared that Russia will not only gain new territories but also get a military and economic breathing space to regain strength before the next attack. This happened after the occupation of Crimea and Donbas, and if Russian aggression remains unpunished, its government is likely to continue its policy of annexation and territorial conquest, taking the territory of Ukraine piece by piece. After all, as we have stressed throughout this chapter, Russia has never fully accepted that Ukraine is an independent sovereign state. As one can see, there are worrisome questions about the stability and longevity of a *modus vivendi*. After the war is before the war – or so one might argue.

Despite this grim outlook, it is not entirely impossible to apply the *jus post bellum*-related criteria pertaining to transitional justice, reparations, and reconstruction to Scenario 2.

Transitional justice

The Russian occupation of new Ukrainian territories will add to the domestic popularity of the Russian regime, thus reinforcing our hypothesis of regime stability. This will leave almost no chances for the prosecution of war crimes. As a result, the process of transitional justice will be substantially limited to the prosecution of the Russian POWs and Ukrainian collaborators located in the remaining Ukrainian territory. Rather worryingly, these individuals are likely to face particularly strict sentences in the absence of an opportunity to prosecute Russian elites. Moreover, the Ukrainian security system will become overwhelmed by the threat of renewed Russian aggression, which might create a witch-hunt for alleged agents of the Kremlin. Any reconciliation process with Russia will be obstructed by growing antagonism towards Russia.

In Scenario 2, the Ukrainian judicial system will have to bring justice to its citizens on its own, perhaps with some limited assistance from international institutions. In particular, compensation for the loss of life, health, or property will have to be handled domestically. The Ukrainian parliament, for example, has already passed a law on compensation for damage and destruction of property as a result of hostilities (Shulyak 2022). It has determined that the State Agency for Reconstruction and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine, as well as some international financial assistance, is the main source for compensation. However, due to economic and financial constraints, this will only partially address demands for compensation.

Finally, Ukrainian citizens abandoned in the occupied territories will not have access to justice and will be subjected to the will of the occupying forces. Hence, it will be impossible to bring judicial redress for grave violations of human rights in the lost territories.

Reparations

The question of Russian reparations for damage in Ukraine will be determined based on the cease-fire treaty. But one should not hold one's breath. In Scenario 2, Ukraine will have little bargaining space to hold Russia liable for reparations, due to the factors outlined above.

Reconstruction

In Scenario 2, the political reconstruction process in Ukraine will heavily depend on international support. But rather depressingly, the capacities of Ukraine's allies might be constrained due to the rise of new security threats in Europe and other regions, requiring European governments, in particular, to invest more in their own military capacities than in Ukrainian reconstruction. Moreover, the chance of confrontation with Russia will prevent NATO from inviting Ukraine to join the Alliance, while integration into the European Union is also less likely. Considering the possibility of political instability among the member states as a result of the rise of Russian (and other) security threats, the process risks being halted for the foreseeable future. Without or with a limited prospect of EU integration and with an unstable political situation due to the loss of significant amounts of territory, democratic reform processes in Ukraine are also threatened.

3.3 Scenario 3: Ukrainian victory with de-occupation of all the territories within 1991 borders

Scenario 3 is the exact opposite of Scenario 1. Hence, it is most closely aligned with the classic dynamics of a victorious victim and a vanquished aggressor found in the literature on *jus post bellum*. Note that, in Scenario 3, Russia's actions in (and possibly before) 2014 also become relevant, as the outcome will not just see withdrawal from Ukrainian territory held by Russian forces since the invasion in 2022; it will also see withdrawal from Ukrainian territory captured before that. It goes without saying that, from the perspective of *jus post bellum*, this is the most normatively attractive outcome.

Transitional Justice

In Scenario 3, the issue of transitional justice has two main components. The first component has to do with the conduct of Russian forces in the course of RUW. As we already indicated above, committing atrocities is central to Russian military tactics. These are predominantly aimed at breaking the local population's will to fight by destroying the infrastructure of the opponent, thereby paralyzing the

state. As is well known, these tactics were used not only in Ukraine but also in Chechnya and Syria, demonstrating that they reflect an intentionally designed pattern that must not be left unprosecuted. If Ukraine succeeds in regaining control over its territories, it is highly likely to encourage international institutions to prosecute senior Russian officials responsible for war crimes.

As we indicated above, the process of prosecuting those responsible for *in bello* violations, as well as the crime of aggression itself, has already been initiated by the International Criminal Court. But it is also noteworthy that Ukraine has been working on addressing the legal challenges posed by Russian actions since 2014. Ukraine has also coordinated its response with the International Court of Justice (Marchuk 2019), the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Marchuk et al. 2021), the European Court of Human Rights (Milanovic 2022), and the Arbitral Tribunal of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Schatz 2018). In 2019, Ukraine established a specialized War Crimes Unit to develop the capacities of Ukrainian courts to prosecute war crimes (Jordash 2020).

Still, even in light of Ukrainian victory, one wonders how likely such prosecutions are going to be. If those to be prosecuted are located in Ukrainian state territory (that is, within 1991 borders), they are likely to be either tried in Ukrainian courts or extradited to the International Criminal Court so justice can be served. If, by contrast, perpetrators are located in Russian state territory, the situation becomes more complicated. In such cases, the main question is how Scenario 3 relates to the thesis of Russian regime stability that we developed in the previous part of the chapter. It is possible to argue that a Russian defeat giving rise to Scenario 3 would be so comprehensive that neither President Putin nor the military and administrative elites around him can survive. The system collapses. Perhaps Russia's new rulers either prosecute those responsible for RUW via domestic courts or cooperate with international efforts to do so. But if the regime proves more resilient and remains in place, there will be no legal reckoning. To be sure, there might be a political reckoning in the sense that those responsible for defeat are, in Stalinist fashion, 'cleansed' from the Russian military and state apparatus. But a regime that routinely uses scorched earth tactics to break civilians will not prosecute those responsible for implementing said tactics. Hence, even on the most normatively favorable outcome for Ukraine, there are clear limits to existing accounts of *jus post bellum*, at least insofar as criminal prosecutions are concerned.

In addition to the established issue of war crimes trials, transitional justice, in Scenario 3, has a second component that does not (to our knowledge) feature at all in the literature on *jus post bellum*: During the transition process, Ukraine will need to determine who should be considered a legal resident of the de-occupied territories. Following the USSR's practice of forced relocations, Russia started transferring citizens to the occupied territories of Ukraine (Peter 2022). The change in the demographic composition of Crimea and Donbas after the occu-

pation in 2014 demonstrates the effects of that policy (Peter 2022). Almost 50,000 Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars had to leave the Crimean Peninsula, while the estimates of the number of Russians who moved to Crimea vary from 200,000 to 1 million (Hurska 2021). In the Donbas, 1.6 million residents had to move to other regions of Ukraine, and another million found refuge abroad (United Nations 2016). As part of establishing a just postwar order, it will be necessary to create the conditions for residents who were forced to leave their homes to return while determining the status of individuals who immigrated after the occupation. For example, the permanent representative of the President of Ukraine in Crimea, Tamila Tasheva, stated that Russian citizens who moved to relevant territories without officially crossing the Ukrainian border control would face forced deportation since they violated the Ukrainian migration policies (Amasov 2022). Whatever one may make of this policy proposal, it indicates just how complex the territorial reintegration of Ukraine will be, even under the most favorable conditions.

Reparations

Existing accounts of *jus post bellum* assume that the vanquished aggressor pays reparations to the victorious victim, subject to proportionality conditions. The latter, as we said earlier, are deemed necessary in order not to bankrupt the aggressor. In the context of RUW, UN Resolution ES-11/5, which obliges Russia to pay war reparations to Ukraine and establish the mechanisms for its implementation, was adopted in November 2022 (United Nations 2022). Quite tellingly, though, it does not detail *how* to enforce the resolution. Part of the reparations sum, estimated to reach \$700 billion, can be covered by redirecting frozen Russian assets towards Ukraine, amounting to around \$300 billion (Fratsyvir 2023). However, enforcement of other common reparation mechanisms, such as financial payments and infrastructure rebuilding, will require finding persuasive bargaining leverage. Ukraine and the international community will need to find ways to exert diplomatic pressure on Russia – for example, by promising the lifting of sanctions in exchange for Russian payments to Ukraine. Alternatively, members of the international community will need to top up the fund for reparations themselves.

Ukraine and its partners are developing mechanisms that will facilitate the reparations process. The Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (RD4U) was established in accordance with the UN General Assembly Resolution ES-11/5. The Council of Europe will collect records on the damage and losses caused by the war that will later serve as evidence for future claims for reparation.

Despite this positive outlook, even Scenario 3 defies normative expectations of traditional accounts of *jus post bellum*. As we saw above, an ‘aggressor pays’ princi-

ple (subject to proportionality) remains hard to realize, notwithstanding its normative appropriateness and attractiveness. To be blunt, this means that someone other than the aggressor will have to foot considerable parts of the bill for the reconstruction of Ukraine. This is not as unprecedented as it might seem. The US rebuilt West Germany (as well as other parts of Western Europe) via the Marshall Fund. Nonetheless, this raises questions about the obligations of third parties.

Political Reconstruction

As we said above, in the case of RUW, there is unlikely to be any political reconstruction of Russia. This is a matter for Russian elites. The prospect of a comprehensive political reconstruction of Ukraine not just as a territorially integrated political unit but also as a strong democratic regime is most likely in Scenario 3. Still, Ukraine will need to be vigilant over the potential for new attacks from Russia. To prevent renewed aggression and retain Ukraine's character as a democratic state, alliances become crucial. In June 2022, the EU granted Ukraine the status of the candidate state as proof of its support (European Council 2022). Then, in December 2023, the EU agreed to open potential membership negotiations with Ukraine, which brings the country closer to the possibility of full integration into an already existing alliance – indeed union – of democratic states (Dickinson 2023).

3.4 Scenario 4: Freezing the conflict

Scenario 4, Ukraine regains control only over the territories temporarily occupied during the full-scale invasion, but the war returns to the frozen stage.

While not a comprehensive win for Ukraine compared to Scenario 3, Scenario 4 rolls back Russian territorial gains since February 2022. But the wider conflict between Russia and Ukraine returns to its frozen stage. This means that territories annexed or occupied before February 2022 will remain under direct Russian control or that of pro-Kremlin forces. This would require Ukraine to continue to protect the frontline of the refrozen conflict. Under such circumstances, polarization in Ukrainian society and antagonism to Russia are likely to remain strong. Nonetheless, we argue that some elements of *jus post bellum* can be applied to Scenario 4.

Transitional justice

With only a partial defeat, Russia's political leaders will be very likely to remain in power. As a result, the scope for prosecutions of war criminals in international courts will be limited, though, as in Scenario 3, some prosecutions may take place in Ukrainian courts. But rather worryingly, in order to compensate for this lack

of justice, there could be overreach from Ukrainian courts in other respects. The reintegration process of the Kharkiv and Kherson regions into Ukraine after the successful counteroffensive operations in the Fall of 2022 serves as a cautionary tale. The process involved the criminal prosecutions of collaborators who helped the Russian military during the occupation of the two regions. Some cases tried by Ukrainian courts lacked a proper investigation due to the overwhelming number of filed cases (Schlegel 2023). The fact of ‘rough justice’ is likely to be further amplified by the continuing security threat posed by the frozen frontline.

In March 2022, Ukraine adopted the law defining criminal liability for collaboration (Ukraine 2022). However, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission recommended to review that law based on the practice of its implementation (United Nations 2023). It argued that some prosecutions were not in line with international humanitarian law and the realities of living under the occupation. During the occupation of Crimea and Donbas, Ukraine defined collaboration in a way so the residents of the occupied territories would not be alienated from the Ukrainian government (Dettmer 2023). That said, after the start of the full-scale occupation, those concerns were overshadowed by the brutality of Russian aggression. In Scenario 4, a return to a more balanced judicial redress of collaboration when Russia still remains in control of parts of Ukrainian territory will require substantial political will and acceptance from Ukrainian society. The chances for such a process look much slimmer than in Scenario 3: people who have remained in the territories temporarily occupied by Russia might face a higher degree of animosity in a polarized society.

Reparations

The issue of reparations will depend on the peace agreement and the provisions negotiated by the Ukrainian side in the document. Since, in Scenario 4, Russia does not lose the war completely, its political elites are even more likely than in other scenarios to oppose *any* reparations whatsoever. The issue of frozen Russian assets will probably become an important negotiation topic, as relatively stable Russian elites will strive to retain those funds.

Political Reconstruction

The reconstruction of Ukraine in Scenario 4 will also substantially depend on the provisions of a peace treaty between Russia and Ukraine. However, with parts of Ukrainian territory remaining occupied, and without further Euro-Atlantic integration, reconstruction is unlikely to be as successful as in Scenario 3. Ukrainian membership of NATO will remain out of the question. EU integration may con-

tinue together with the required democratic reforms in Ukraine but will not extend to Crimea and Donbas.

This concludes our survey of potential outcome scenarios for RUW. There are four takeaway points. First, it is not useful to think of potential outcomes for RUW – or many other wars – in entirely binary terms, that is, as either a loss for the aggressor and a victory for the victim (and their Allies) or *vice versa*. Hence, the historical example of Nazi Germany and the end of WW2 is a poor guide to RUW and potentially many other conflicts. Second, quite strikingly, even according to the most favorable scenario for Ukraine, Scenario 3, there remain considerable obstacles to the application of *jus post bellum* to RUW, as currently envisaged in the philosophical literature. This is because Russia remains a powerful Nuclear Weapons State and a P5 UN Security Council member, capable of building and maintaining international alliances. Whether, in Scenario 3, Russia's domestic constitution would change in the aftermath of a defeat in Ukraine also remains doubtful. Third, even in the most normatively attractive scenarios, Scenarios 3 and 4, Ukraine's allies will play a major role in the reconstruction of Ukraine, as financial assistance from the aggressor will remain limited, not to mention reparations. Fourth and finally, with the exception of Scenario 3, all remaining scenarios raise questions about the tripartite temporal sequencing of conflict into a beginning, a middle, and an end. A frozen conflict, as envisaged in Scenarios 2 and 4, may be a precursor to a new conflict. As we said above, after the war is before the war.

Notwithstanding the challenges RUW poses for *jus post bellum*, an engagement with this conflict also has the potential to give the somewhat stagnant debate surrounding *jus post bellum* new impulses. In particular, it has the capacity to separate *jus ad bellum* from some of its historical reference points and make it more suitable for the conflicts of the 21st century. We briefly discuss future directions for the debate on *jus post bellum* in the next and final part of this chapter.

4 *Jus Post Bellum* in a Changing World Order

RUW has provided interesting insights into the challenges facing *jus post bellum*. The first of these concerns is the scope of *jus post bellum*. What constitutes a *post-war* order? The historical precedent of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender is attractive, precisely because it provides a definitive endpoint for war and the beginning of a new order. In this sense, it is quite telling that some Germans refer to this as the *Stunde Null* (literally: hour zero), indicating a complete reset of (West) German politics after the moral catastrophe and political horrors of the Third Reich. (There are issues with this description of events, of course – for in-

stance, people with careers in the Nazi regime were granted positions in the new administrative apparatus of the West German state.) Further, the United States' entry into WW2 established a new superpower and strong hegemon, capable of imposing and maintaining its preferred vision of postwar order. But there are many conflicts, including RUW, whose ending is messier. It is not clear whether there is an endpoint, even if some type of peace agreement is signed. Nor is there necessarily a hegemon to enforce such an agreement. For example, even if, as per Scenario 3, there was a *formal* peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine that rolled back some of Russia's territorial gains since 2022, it is likely that Russia would continue to undermine Ukraine's domestic political order by staging (hybrid) attacks from territories annexed in 2014.

The messy endings of many wars, as well as the possibility of frozen conflicts, might mean that the scope of *jus post bellum* is fairly limited. One response to this problem is to reconfigure *jus post bellum* so it can deal with these ambiguities. Another option is to explore, as we have done above, the conceptual and normative relationship between a *modus vivendi* and *jus post bellum*. As we said in relation to Scenario 2, a *modus vivendi* is normatively less demanding than *jus post bellum*. Its main purpose is to put in place arrangements that prevent the 'un-freezing' of a frozen conflict, rather than bring about a thawing of relations between enemies. Perhaps, in an imperfect world, this is all one can sometimes hope for. But as we also indicated above, the problem with a *modus vivendi* is that it can be shaped by powerful parties in their favor, which is especially problematic if the powerful party is, like Russia, the aggressor. Being slightly more normatively ambitious than a *modus vivendi*, one could also envisage a new *jus* framework that deals with political orders that fall outside the scope of *jus post bellum*. We leave it open here whether yet another *jus* framework is needed. Either way, it is clear that demarcating the scope of *jus post bellum* is challenging.

In addition to the issue of scope, RUW raises wider questions about the mechanisms for a stable postwar order. On the one hand, it is likely that in most of the scenarios outlined in the previous part of the chapter (but especially Scenario 3), Russia will demand that Ukraine remains neutral. From a philosophical perspective, there are not many treatments of neutrality in conflict. The best known is Michael Walzer's in *Just and Unjust Wars*. In a nutshell, though he recognizes certain circumstances where neutrality becomes morally untenable, Walzer's point is that a state's neutrality is morally justified via an appeal to its need to protect the rights of its members (Walzer 2015, 233–249). This does not quite apply in the same way to RUW. Here, the point is that Russia thinks that Ukrainian neutrality would be necessary to meet Russian security concerns, not Ukrainian ones. Whether this position is an honest one or merely a smokescreen for further attacks on Ukraine is debatable.

On the other hand, in the most favorable scenario for Ukraine, Scenario 3, the lasting reconstitution of Ukraine as a territorially demarcated unit will involve the country's integration into an alliance. Certainly, from a Ukrainian perspective, this is preferable to a form of bogus neutrality. The topic of alliances is complex, so some brief thoughts need to suffice. Alliances can have a restraining function, as well as a protective one. Here, the case of West Germany really does illustrate the point. The integration of West Germany into NATO in 1955 (after it had officially ceased to be an occupied country) and the European Economic Community (EEC), the precursor of today's European Union, in 1957 served as a method to restrain German nationalism and militarism, preventing renewed German aggression against neighboring European states. At the same time, it also provided security assurances to West Germany in case the Cold War would have turned into a hot war. In RUW, it is not necessary to restrain Ukraine. Rather, membership in an alliance would be used to bolster its security just as ex-members of the Warsaw Pact and post-Soviet Republics joined the European Union as well as NATO.

For *jus post bellum*, the general takeaway point from the tension between Ukrainian neutrality or alliance membership is that postwar relations, even in paradigm cases of self-defense against aggression, are rarely restricted to the actual belligerents. They also have repercussions for third parties and their relationship with the victim and aggressor, respectively. In RUW, the case for integrating Ukraine into an alliance of friendly states is already strong, given the support the country has received from Western states. Likewise, there may be other conflicts where alliances become crucial to securing a lasting peace. That said, under some circumstances, neutrality may not be an unattractive option, either. When neutrality would be normatively preferable to alliance membership (and *vice versa*) requires further clarification.

Our final observation follows directly from the previous point about alliances. Alliances not only restrain or protect their members; they also allow for burden-sharing. Insofar as the reconstruction of Ukraine is concerned these burdens are immense. If our above scenarios are correct, reparations from Russia are unlikely to be forthcoming. Put bluntly, someone else has to pick up the tab. As we indicated above, the Marshall Plan provides a precedent. From a philosophical perspective, there is an interesting synergy between the ethics of reconstruction as part of *jus post bellum* and the debate on Global justice. Those in favor of moral cosmopolitanism would argue that there are extensive (individual) duties to assist Ukrainians in rebuilding their country, regardless of membership in specific political associations. But in reality, there are likely to be a variety of morally relevant reasons for supporting reconstruction. Some reflect universal duties to assist the vulnerable in protecting their basic rights; others will reflect hard-

nosed security concerns. How these are to be balanced against each other remains to be seen.

To sum up, there remains quite some scope for philosophical contributions to the debate on *jus post bellum*. As the old adage goes, it is easy to get into war, it is far harder to get out of it. And if the above is anything to go by, it is even harder to establish a lasting peace. Interestingly, there is plenty of opportunity to connect the debate on *jus post bellum* with other relevant debates in political philosophy as well as international relations. This should hopefully generate accounts of *jus post bellum* that respond to the demands of a changing world order, with new historical reference points, including RUW.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we engaged with the debate on *jus post bellum* by applying it to the Russian-Ukrainian War. The latter war falls into the paradigm category of a just war against an aggressor, which informs the dominant accounts of *jus post bellum*, as well as contemporary just war theory more broadly. However, unlike some prominent paradigm cases, the Russia-Ukraine War, we contended, has two main idiosyncrasies, namely, territorial restriction and regime stability in the aggressor state, Russia. This challenges some of the key assumptions in the rather Anglo-centric accounts of *jus post bellum* found in the philosophical literature. Importantly, it undermines the related ideas, commonly found in the literature, of a clear temporal sequencing of war into three distinct phases (beginning–middle–end), as well as a clear binary outcome involving a winner (victim) and a loser (aggressor). We then explored our more theoretical observations in greater detail by developing several potential outcome scenarios for the Russia-Ukraine War. These scenarios revealed crucial conceptual and normative issues that those with an interest in *jus post bellum* need to tackle. Three stand out: 1) the scope of *jus post bellum*, 2) the ethical case for (or against) alliances in securing peace, and 3) the fair distribution of the burdens of reconstruction. All three issues illustrate that an engagement with the conflicts of our current era can provide crucial impulses for the debate on *jus post bellum*. Conversely, our engagement with *jus post bellum* has also thrown the normative and practical challenges posed by the Russia-Ukraine War into sharper relief.

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Part II: **Ethical Perspectives from a German Context**

Nicole Kunkel

Just Peace and Revisionist Just War Approaches: Striking a Balance between Contingent Pacifist Conceptions

Since February 24, 2022, discussions whether to deliver weapons to Ukraine erupted and continue ever since, not only but also within the Protestant Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, EKD). Arguments range from a specific German responsibility never to resort to weapons anymore and therefore to abstain from any delivery thereof (Kramer 2022) to the idea that such deliveries are a “reasonable”, even “necessary” means in the given situation (Felmberg 2022). With respect to the peace ethical approach of the EKD, called *Just Peace* (in German: *Gerechter Friede*), the call for actualization of the concept has been issued (Felmberg 2022; Becker 2022) and there have been proposals to apply it to the current situation (Ackermann et al. 2023). Contrary to the intense debates within the church, the concept of just peace has a rather dormant theoretical existence within the English-speaking and philosophical world, as it is an inherently German and “churchy” concept that beyond the German Christian bubble no one has ever heard of, made methodological use of, even less.¹ This article, however, aims at bringing the concept of just peace into discussion with wider known concepts, namely contingent pacifism and approaches of *jus post bellum*. It serves to show the structural and substantial commonalities and also to demonstrate the benefits that result from bringing these concepts into contact, thereby proposing to update both of them. Yet this must not remain a purely scholarly endeavor, but should, on the contrary, result in sketching some consequences for the current war in Ukraine from a contingent pacifist perspective. In order to reach that goal, I will at first take a look at the ongoing philosophical discussion of the concept of just war and its revision as well as elaborate on the idea of contingent pacifism. Secondly, I will turn to the contextual circumstances within which the

¹ This is true at least for the contingent pacifist concept of the Protestant Church as it is laid out in the Peace Memorandum from 2007 (EKD 2007a) and has been adapted in various articles and anthologies ever since, mainly in the book series *Gerechter Frieden*, which has been published by the Springer publishing house. Other contributions stemming from the English-speaking world normally understand the concept differently, as can be seen at the absolute pacifist approach in *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World* (2020), edited by Rose Marie Berger, Ken Butigan, Judy Coode and Marie Dennis; or Fernando Enns’ and Annette Mosher’s *Just Peace: Ecumenical, intercultural, and interdisciplinary perspectives* (2013).

concept of just peace originates and sketch the historical background against which it developed. In a third section, I will delve deeper into the concept of just peace, elaborating on its implications and main ideas, until I finally draw a conclusion.

1 From Just War to Contingent Pacifist Thinking

When it comes to pondering questions of war and peace ethically, there is a huge spectrum of different ways to evaluate belligerent undertakings: While on the one side there is an absolute pacifist stance, rejecting the use of violence whatsoever and categorially, opposite this view lies the valorization of war, where there are no moral issues at all and war is thought to be morally good in itself. In between these extreme positions, there are – beginning with pacifism – some middle positions, ranging from moderate pacifist views that consider some wars justified, to traditional just war thinking that considers war to be the last resort, to a realist view that accepts war as a political option, even though not a favored one (Fox 2014, 107).

The theory I want to focus on here is a kind of moderate, or contingent pacifism. Such a form of pacifism is located between just war reasoning and absolute pacifism, which means that even though peace is seen to be the only way to achieve peace, the use of force is not ruled out categorially; it remains contingent on the situation: There might be circumstances permitting, or even necessitating the use of force (Fiala 2018). Depending on the contingency that the respective theory focuses on, there are different forms of contingent pacifism such as prudential pacifism, which maintains that it is unwise to go into war because the costs are too high, or political pacifism, entailing the rejection of a particular military system or a set of military policies (Fiala 2018). In most of the cases, just war theory informs these kinds of pacifisms, because the criteria of just war still play a role in contingent pacifist reasoning, which is why it makes sense to outline the main ideas and discussions of just war thinking at the beginning.

It is not my aim to unpack the whole history of just war thinking, but only to hint to its roots in Latin and Christian antiquity, generating throughout history some main criteria for going to war (*jus ad bellum*) and fighting it (*jus in bello*). The seminal work on that topic in the last century is *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977), written by the American philosopher Michael Walzer with reference to the Vietnam war. It was not the first but became the most prominent book in that time, discussing the morality of war. Walzer's main interest is to confine war and to make clear that war is not the end of legal rules, but that there are indeed princi-

ples that need to be applied. For his claim, he draws a sharp line between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, making clear that: “The two sorts of judgment are logically independent. It is perfectly possible for a just war to be fought unjustly and for an unjust war to be fought in strict accordance with the rules” (Walzer 1977, 21). What Walzer means is that even though *jus ad bellum* can be violated, for instance by an aggressive attack, this does not mean that the way soldiers fight necessarily contradicts given rules such as the discrimination of combatants and noncombatants or the proportionality of means, as it is laid out in International Humanitarian Law (concerning the principle of distinction: Protocol I additional to the Geneva conventions, 52[2]; concerning proportionality: Protocol I additional to the Geneva conventions, 51 [5][b] and [2] [iii]). This is true also the other way around: Not every war that is fought for just reasons, such as defense against an aggressor, is fought justly, for instance when soldiers are not distinguished from civilians or unproportional means are used. From that Walzer infers that it is inherently important for combatants to fight according to the given ruling, because it is their assignment to do so, while it is the responsibility of policymakers to decide over the beginning and the end of a certain war (Walzer 1997, 304). Only if that distinction can be upheld, all parties involved benefit from juridical war regulations.

These general assumptions have been criticized by thinkers demanding a revision of just war thinking, such as the American philosopher Jeff McMahan in his book *The Ethics of Killing* (2009). To his mind, the sharp distinction between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* cannot be upheld because soldiers fighting in an unjust war cannot be justified by simply fighting according to the rules. He writes: “[W]e must stop reassuring soldiers that they act permissibly when they fight in an unjust war, provided that they conduct themselves honorably on the battlefield by fighting in accordance with the rules of engagement” (McMahan 2009, 95). For McMahan this kind of reasoning does not only pertain to soldiers but also to civilians because, according to his mind, also civilians supporting a war need to be held responsible for that. For that matter, he introduces four categories of persons according to their involvement in a war, making two main distinctions: innocent and non-innocent, morally and materially. The category of (non-)innocence refers to support of a war by whatever means, the category of materiality refers to the use of force and morality refers to ideological endorsement. Along those lines, persons who neither use force nor support a specific war ideologically are morally and materially innocent, while persons who do support that war ideologically and use force are morally and materially non-innocent. Persons who do support war ideologically but abstain from using force, such as politicians, are morally non-innocent, but materially innocent, and persons that do not support a war ideologically, but use force are morally innocent, but mate-

rially non-innocent (McMahan 1994, 200–205). An example for the latter is the conscripted soldier, who is bound to fight but does not necessarily support the violent endeavor (McMahan 1994, 200).

What is important here is that it is no longer exactly clear who needs to be seen as a combatant – and therefore poses a legitimate target – and who not. It is rather important to know who is supporting a war ideologically and individually, which is not always easy to find out (Meireis 2017, 336).

On that ground, the American philosopher Larry May argues for his concept of *Contingent Pacifism* (2015). To his mind the main moral problem that comes with such a revision of just war thinking is that it is impossible to find out who is fighting for just reasons, because not every person using force might be morally non-innocent, therefore not posing a legitimate target. Especially the risk of harming a morally innocent person in war is high because you never know whether the person fighting has been forced or deceived by their government. The main debates here revolve around the legitimacy of killing soldiers who fight in war. While this poses no problem according to Walzer, since he distinguishes *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, this distinction is no longer upheld in revisionist just war thinking, and it is not so easy to tell who exactly counts as a legitimate target. Larry May takes this exact thought as his starting point when he writes: “Contingent pacifism begins with the idea that there is a presumption against going off to war and against using violence during war because of the risk that a soldier takes given how difficult it is in any given war to tell whether soldiers will be justified in serving in that war” (May 2015, 44). May infers that, under the given circumstances, the moral risk to participate in a certain war is too high, because the soldiers can never know whether they are killing morally innocent persons. Furthermore, they cannot know whether they themselves have been deceived, actually fighting an unjust war (May 2015, 82–83, 105). In the contingent pacifist thought of May, this idea is combined with the concept of *jus post bellum*, which is the reflection on how to end situations of war (May 2012, 6). Such a perspective turns the idea of just war upside down by keeping in mind that the way wars are begun and conducted influences whether and under which circumstances they end. For May, the main goal is achieving a form of sustained peace by six normative principles, which are “rebuilding, retribution, reconciliation, restitution, and reparation, as well as proportionality” (May 2012, 1). This, however, cannot be obtained when a war is fought for unjust reasons or unjustly, because that prevents the achievement of peace in the aftermath of the conflict from the get-go. Accordingly, considerations such as who is a legitimate target under which circumstances are inherently important for the eventual outcome.

To conclude, revisionist just war approaches, as well as contingent or moderate pacifist ideas, pose significant challenges for just war theory and with it to the com-

mon assumptions made in International Humanitarian Law: If it is no longer possible to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, it is also extremely hard to ponder proportionality. This is because, if the assumed combatants might pose legitimate targets, while the assumed noncombatants might not, one cannot make any reasonable decision on the use of force. Moreover, if it turns out in the aftermath of a conflict that the use of force has been illegitimate from the beginning, achieving peace might be forestalled. Here, the contingent pacifist perspective, in conjunction with *jus post bellum* reasoning might help to develop a different and more reasonable model of pacifist thought, reducing the use of force to a minimum and in doing so fostering nonviolent or even peaceful ways of solving conflicts.

With that in mind, I will elaborate now in greater detail on a Christian-rooted contingent pacifist approach, namely just peace. First of all, I will contextualize this theory in its historical and local background, so that the conditions of its formation become clear.

2 Contextualizing Just Peace

While the traditional roots of the concept of just peace are found in the Bible and will be discussed later in this article, the historical circumstances under which the term and the gist of just peace became important in Protestant and Christian history can be illustrated briefly with reference to two focal points in German history. This is important for understanding how and why this concept emerged in 20th century Germany, and what its main focus is, even though I cannot cover that development in detail here, due to restricted space.

The first stage is the controversy about Nazi-Germany and WW II. In a letter written in December 1939, addressed to France, namely the Pastor Westphal, the Swiss reformed theologian Karl Barth discusses Swiss neutrality towards the German situation and demands to speak up against it.² He writes: “It would be regrettable if the Christian churches [...] wanted to remain thoughtlessly neutral and pacifist in this war in particular. Today they should pray with all penitence and sobriety for a *just peace* and with the same penitence and sobriety testify to all people that it is necessary and worth the effort to fight and suffer for this *just peace*” (Barth 1945, 105; my translation and emphasis). Karl Barth, observing that Germany is in the middle of fighting an unjust war, appeals to the churches to react to the critical situation – not only by doing nothing or remaining neutral. His demand is rather to

² I am very thankful to Sabine Plonz, who directed me to this important theological source and gave me the opportunity to access her work on that topic.

stand up against this injustice by praying for a just peace, on the one hand, but also by confessing the importance of fighting and suffering, on the other. While praying, confessing and suffering might very well go hand in hand with the absolute renunciation of violence, fighting does imply violent means. This, however, does not suggest that Karl Barth joins in the cheering for war. Rather, it suggests that in his current and dire situation, absolute pacifism might not be an appropriate option. This coincides with other and earlier writings of Barth, for instance the second, 1922 edition of his commentary on the *Epistle to the Romans*, where he makes clear that the church can neither hail militarism nor follow pacifism blindly, but needs to find some middle ground depending on the given situation. For that matter, the biblical imperative for peace must not be seen to rule absolutely, but in “brokenness (‘insofar it is possible’)” (Barth 2010, 625; my translation). His main argument is that God can be used to legitimize war enthusiasm on either side of the conflict (Lienemann 2016, 117). Accordingly, even though Barth favors nonviolent and peaceful solutions, he does not deem pacifism to concur with God’s will directly (Lienemann 2016, 114) – the emphasis is put on the historical context.

A second important step is the conciliar process within the Ecumenical Council, which met three times in the years 1988 and 1989 in the GDR, discussing the well-known triad of justice, peace and integrity of creation (in German: *Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und Bewahrung der Schöpfung*). In the document resulting from these consultations, the following formula was coined: “Having through necessity overcome the institution of war, the doctrine of a just war intended by the Churches to humanize war is likewise becoming invalid. That is why we need to develop a doctrine of just peace now, grounded in theology and oriented by virtue of its openness towards universal human values” (Ecumenical Council of the GDR 1989; quoted after: German Bishops 2000, 1). This formula can be read as an outspoken milestone in turning away from the idea of just war to the concept of just peace. In doing so, it acknowledges the total failure of belligerent methods, even if there has been attempts to limit its methods with the help of just war throughout history. Even more importantly, it paves the way for a new idea, bringing together two of the main ideas of the conciliar process, namely justice and peace. This also entails that injustice needs to be seen as a source of violence worldwide (Werkner 2017, 244), so that the recognition and realization of universal human values are an integral part of peaceful thinking.

Especially in 1988/89 Germany, these ideas were important and cannot be separated from the historical context in which the people of the GDR were experiencing injustice. Here, the central ideas of the conciliar process have mentally paved the way for the peaceful revolution, especially with respect to its em-

phasis on non-violence (Ziemer 1995, 1443–1444). Accordingly, the conciliar process can be seen as an important step towards the peaceful revolution, leading to the reunification of Germany.

I have chosen these two examples, situated in WW II and on the eve of the peaceful 1989 revolution respectively, in order to demonstrate the historical and political background against which the idea of just peace developed. Both texts demonstrate the context of origin as well as the main intention of just peace. Both turn against a certain political injustice, deeming traditional ways of curbing violence insufficient and characterizing their standpoint as one of just peace, in direct opposition to the term *just war*. In that process, Karl Barth marks the beginning of a transformation, advocating some middle ground in between an outright pacifism and belligerence, while the ecumenical council has seen the advent of atomic bombs, situated in the times of Cold War, which clearly changed the viewpoint on the possibility of fighting wars justly. Turning away from just war doctrine is therefore rooted in the conviction that this kind of reasoning has come to an end, while it must not necessarily mean that absolute pacifism is the only solution. In that vein, just peace seeks to find some middle ground.

3 Just Peace – a (German) Contingent Pacifist Approach

As a concept,³ just peace has been developed mainly in the last three decades, commencing with the already quoted demand of the Ecumenical Council in 1989. For the EKD, currently, the most important work on that topic is the peace memorandum from 2007, which embodies the aspiration to find new basic and guiding peace ethical answers to contemporary severe political challenges (EKD 2007a, 12–13). Even though there have been several attempts to adapt the memorandum to the quickly changing political situation, it can still be seen as the seminal text on that topic.⁴ Due to the changing situation, however, there are some issues with this text, and I will point to some of them below. Yet, this does not make the general insight of the peace memorandum obsolete.

³ This approach is also described in great detail by Hans-Richard Reuter as well as by Torsten Meireis in this volume.

⁴ The book series *Gerechter Frieden* was meant to serve that purpose, for instance. Yet, it is very disparate and presents divergent opinions. There is another attempt to update the ideas of the peace memorandum to present problems, which is currently still in progress.

The general idea of just peace, as it is presented in the peace memorandum, is to supersede just war thinking by a pacifist approach that nevertheless leaves room for the possibility to use force. It does so, however, only with respect to certain preconditions and to the understanding that violence in whatever form always implies guilt and can thus never be called *just*. Accordingly, the name given to this theory can no longer be a collocation of justice and war, suggesting that warfare can be just, but rather points out that peace can only be achieved in concert with justice. This is mirrored in changing the Latin adage: *Si vis pacem, para bellum*, (if you want peace, prepare for war) to *si vis pacem, para pacem* (if you want peace, prepare for peace) (EKD 2007a, 51–52).

The close connection between justice and peace is laid out with respect to the Bibel: here, peace and justice qualify each other, for instance in Isaiah 32:17, which reads: “And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust/security forever” (ESV). The Hebrew word for righteousness, *זֶדָקָה* (zedakah), stems from the same root as justice, which is *זֶדֶק* (zedek), so that both terms are brought into line with each other: justice and peace go hand in hand and are closely intertwined. Another example is James 3:18, which treats peace as a direct consequence of acting peacefully: “And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (ESV). Here, too, justice⁵ and peace cannot be separated easily, but peace comes with just actions. Accordingly, peace and justice qualify each other, so that peace necessarily entails justice, while justice necessarily entails peace. This implies that peace is more than the absence of war (EKD 2077, 52): Not every situation in which the guns fall silent is a situation of peace. On the contrary, a forced peace might be violent when it does not promote justice. For that matter, justice and peace develop in unison with each other: the more justice is promoted, the more peace is achieved.

This whole process is an open development, which means that in an eschatological process there is always room for more justice and more peace. Such an eschatological – or, more philosophically spoken: utopian – surplus does not

5 In both English translations the original word, be it *זֶדָקָה* (zedakah) in the Hebrew original, or *δικαιοσύνη* (*dikaïosune*) in the Greek version, is translated with righteousness, while I interpret it as the more common word justice. As the English Oxford Dictionary maintains, justice can refer to the “observance of divine law; righteousness; the state of being righteous or justified in the eyes of God” (OED 2024a), while righteousness is explained with “the state or quality of being righteous or just” (OED 2024b). The ESV, as well as other English translations with that translation point to the divine quality of the biblical word. Since the translation to justice is possible as well – as the reference to the OED shows – and German translations do use the word justice (*Gerichtigkeit*) instead of righteousness (*Rechtschaffenheit*), I interpret the terms to refer to justice. In any case, the peace memorandum proceeds that way. For further information on that terms, see also the contribution of Torsten Meireis in this book.

mean that we can wait for an overall peace to come on its own. It rather indicates that we can and should do the best we can to achieve at least parts of it in our time and age. For making clearer what this requires, the peace memorandum designates four aims that constitute dimensions of peace, namely the rejection of violence, the promotion of freedom, the alleviation of the want and the promotion of cultural diversity. While the rejection of violence is a basic need within a pacifist theory, this also means that persons need to be protected from violence, be it privately, or on a greater scale, such as the prohibition to use force against any state, as it is laid out in the Charta of the United Nations. Furthermore, also civil conflict management and diplomacy are part of that demand (EKD 2007a, 54–55). As for the promotion of freedom, the peace memorandum refers mainly to just legal structures, preventing oppression and making room for political influence of the individual (EKD 2007a, 55). This paragraph especially reflects the change from a war- to a law-paradigm, where law (and justice underlying that law) is seen to lead to peace, instead of war. With the demand to alleviate the want, roots of injustice and envy are in focus. Here, preserving natural resources and the just distribution of material goods as well as access to them is the main focus, also making the case for just trade relations: Every person should be able to make their living (EKD 2007a, 55–56). Finally, cultural diversity refers to the peaceful social and cultural coexistence of different persons that hinders discrimination, because all human life is based on the same dignity (EKD 2007a, 56).

In sum, these dimensions rest on the possibility to implement and enforce law: be it the Charta of the UN, just legal structures, the just distribution of material resources, or the protection from discrimination – all of these demands need to be secured by law. Or, as the memorandum puts it: “Law must be enforceable” (EKD 2007a, 65). That is why within just peace, the concept of law-sustaining force is embedded.⁶ In contrast to other peace ethical theories, law-sustaining force does not make a difference between different kinds of violence, such as war, police, or its private use. This is because it follows an overall approach towards violence, where the criteria for resorting to violence in war might not be different from the criteria for using violence in other contexts. For that reason, the classical criteria of the just war tradition are invoked, but not divided into *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* because both approaches belong together. Right at the outset, it is made clear that the use of force is by no means natural and cannot be applied

⁶ In the peace memorandum this principle is called law-abiding force. Yet, Hans-Richard Reuter proposed to use the term law-sustaining force instead, because it expresses that law is not wrapped up in the thought of a positive given right, but merely refers to a very basic law that finds its expression in the human rights (Reuter 2014, 39).

lightheartedly. With respect to the *permissible cause* it reads: “[T]he use of force may be permitted to oppose the most severe forms of violent attack, where human rights and universally recognized justice are under threat, for the protection of life, and the strength of universal law must not be left defenceless against the ‘law of the strong’” (EKD 2007b, 37). This passage makes clear that only in extreme cases the use of force might be permissible – while permissible does not mean just. As for further criteria, an *authorization*, which means acting in the name of the universal interest of all those potentially concerned and by the rule of law, is mentioned, as well as the *right intention*, which can only be the defense against a present and evident attack. Even though the use of violence is the *ultimate resort*, it must not necessarily mean that it is chronologically the last, and pondering the *proportionality of consequences* entails that no greater harm is inflicted. Furthermore, *proportionality of means* requires the likelihood to achieve success, while the principle of *discrimination* demands to distinguish combatants and noncombatants (EKD 2007a, 68–69).

The concept of just peace places a principal emphasis on the existing political bodies and procedures. Especially international codices and bodies, such as the Charta of the UN and the Security Council, form the foundation of the political thoughts laid out in the theory. While this emphasis mirrors the important role the system had internationally and especially for Europe in the last century, it is understandable, in particular with respect to the history of Germany, namely the disastrous outcome of WW II, the Cold War and its termination, including the peaceful revolution. The importance of the historical background I sketched above cannot be overemphasized for the development of the form of the theory. This focus, however, is called into doubt (not only) since the Russian attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, so that this is the main point where the theory is called into question currently (Jäger 2022). I argue that the theory still is valid because it works very well also without emphasizing certain political bodies and puts forward demands and dimensions that are important also today and are not necessarily bound to the specific political framework they emerged in. To put it concretely: In order to achieve peace, poverty and lack of freedom need to be addressed by whatever institution. This, however, must not hide the fact that the trust in international political bodies can no longer be upheld in the naive way the peace memorandum does.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Intertwining Just Peace and Contingent Pacifism

Discussing just peace thinking and revisionist just war approaches side by side served the interest of showing the relevance of contingent pacifist approaches in general and just peace thinking in particular. This is because the challenges the revisionists theories present call into doubt the fixed premises of just war thinking, demanding a different approach (Meireis 2016, 336). In doing so, revisionist just war approaches no longer separate *jus in bello* and *jus ad bellum* but see them intertwined more closely. This means arguing that both civil and military persons need to ponder intentions and means of war all the time, questioning reasons, circumstances and resources used, asking whether given information holds true, or if circumstances have changed, so that the reason for using violence no longer prevails. If they answer these questions in the negative, they consequently need to stop fighting. This puts a much stronger moral emphasis on the individual, especially those individuals who are materially able to use force: They constantly need to question their own presumptions and decisions, never being sure whether they are right. Therefore, in associating *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* more closely with each other, the seriousness of the decisions taken in war is highlighted. To my mind, this concurs with emphasizing that belligerent undertakings are not natural but must aim at establishing a situation where justice and peace can flourish again. This goes well with the stance of a *jus post bellum*, as it is maintained by Larry May, for instance: The overall perspective of beginning and fighting in a war needs to be the termination of the conflict in a way that enables establishing just and sustaining peace. Fighting for unjust reasons or in an unjust manner forestalls that aim from the get-go so that, also from that perspective, *jus post bellum* and *jus ad bellum* cannot be separated easily. This again is substantially in line with just peace thinking, because here the separation between beginning and fighting wars is no longer upheld either, so that the emphasis is put on an overall perspective: Only if all the above-mentioned criteria are met all the time, violence might be used.

There are, however, some points where the different teachings set a different focus, and bringing them together might enrich them each other. With respect to just peace, this means that the responsibility for fighting does not stop at the barracks but involves civic persons as well and even a whole society. This involves that persons who are typically thought to be unconcerned might indeed be part of the undertaking, while persons who are thought to bear responsibility per se, such as every person in military service, might actually be excused. Here, the categories

McMahan brings into play offer an important improvement that just peace thinking should definitely take into account.

With respect to revisionist just war thinking and Larry May's contingent pacifism building on that, two points taken from just peace thinking might help to outline that theory even more. This is, first, the idea that pacifism does not only address war but violence in general. This is because other uses of violence, such as by police officers, can be viewed as well along the indicated lines. Secondly, it is the basic thought that violence in every form cannot be separated from guilt. To the extent that every decision we make is made under the condition of uncertain and limited knowledge, we can never be sure whether a decision we made has indeed been the right one: there can never be moral certainty, especially when it comes to decisions over life and death. Or, as the peace memorandum puts it: "In any situation where the responsibility for our own or others' lives forces us to take actions that will themselves endanger or destroy life, not even the most careful assessment of consequences will free us from the risk of incurring guilt" (EKD 2007b, 37). While this thought is in line with Larry May's argument that the moral risk of harming an innocent person is too high under the given circumstances, it underscores exactly that point even more, leaving persons morally injured. The booklet *Land der Steine* (Land of stones), published by the Protestant Church office for the German armed forces, illustrates that topic: people coming back from military missions, dealing with moral injuries and trauma resulting from what they saw and did. In that booklet there is a scene with a seesaw its one half suspended over an abyss and a person sitting on it, hugging an enormous stone. The text reads: "One question haunted me night and day and I couldn't think about anything else: How much does guilt weigh?" (Evangelisches Kirchenamt für die Bundeswehr 2022; my translation). This is the central question of the booklet and the one persons who support belligerent undertakings by whatever means need to ask themselves: whether they incur guilt by endorsing or hindering violent undertakings.

In sum, weaving these concepts together helps to enhance the profile of the pacifist approach by expanding the circle of the persons involved responsibly for the sake of limiting violence, and to emphasize the seriousness of the contingency it rests upon. Following a pacifist rationale consequently on the one hand, and highlighting the seriousness of the decisions taken on the other limits the use of force, because it unveils the consequences for the individuals involved, a point that might be concealed by the strict distinction between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*.

4.2 Framings

Secondly, I want to discuss some thoughts that originated in feminist thinking, focusing on and scrutinizing the underlying law-paradigm and the importance of political bodies maintained within just peace thinking.

In her book *Self-Defense: a Philosophy of Violence* (English edition 2022) the French philosopher Elsa Dorlin addresses the paradox of self-defense. This is a crucial topic in contingent pacifist (and just war) thinking because violence in the context of self-defense is generally understood to be legitimate. (EKD 2007a, 27; May 2015, 153.255; see also the article of Hans-Richard Reuter in this volume).⁷ Dorlin, however, argues that not every person is able to defend themselves. On the contrary, there are persons whose attempt to defend themselves will lead to even more violence against them, a thought she illustrates with reference to the case of Rodney King: The African American became the victim of police brutality in 1991. In the attempt to defend himself, he was beaten up even more, sustaining severe injuries. In the trial following the event, juridical procedures failed to sentence the four police officers involved, resulting in riots of racial minorities. In a second trial two of the formerly acquitted officers were sentenced (Dorlin 2022, XI–XVI). What becomes clear in that case is that Rodney King, an African American and therefore part of a minority, was not able to defend himself, neither physically nor juridically. This is because he is part of a system that does not deem him to be worthy of defending himself. To illustrate this observation, Dorlin refers to the verdict which was literally “whitewashing” (Dorlin 2022, XII) the officers: Their lawyers argued that they had been under threat by Rodney King, who in turn argued that he had only been trying to stay alive. Therefore, finally there were two contradicting interpretations, both claiming self-defense, either by Rodney King, or by the police-officers (Dorlin 2022, XII–XIII). Dorlin infers that the perspective, the framework somebody argues from, is decisive: “In the courtroom and in the eyes of the white jurors, Rodney King could be seen only as an ‘agent of violence’” (Dorlin 2022, XIV; emphasis by the author). Along similar lines, Dorlin illustrates her point with reference to numerous historical examples of people enslaved, colonized and oppressed, making clear that there are individuals who are not seen to be worthy of defending themselves. For such persons, self-defense becomes a “martial ethics of the self.” (Dorlin 2022), which means that there is no

⁷ It needs to be mentioned though that the peace memorandum makes clear that preemptive attacks, used for obscuring real reasons, do not fall under that concession (EKD 2007a, 72). Similarly, Larry May argues that even though the Charter of the UN allows for self-defense, it needs to be an exception only applicable in “very rare cases” (May 2015, 153).

self before violence is used, because the persons and their interests remain invisible. This kind of reasoning, separating between persons who are visible and others who are invisible, respectively worthy and unworthy of defending themselves, resembles the ideas that American philosopher Judith Butler has proposed. Butler's recent book, *The Force of Nonviolence* (2020), addresses a similar topic, suggesting that also forms of nonviolent resistance can be used as a pretense to address them violently. Similar to what Dorlin describes, the power and possibility to interpret a certain behavior are decisive for the ability to raise one's concerns in general, and to defend oneself in particular. While Butler emphasizes that nonviolent approaches are indeed forceful, Dorlin maintains that there are individuals that cannot do otherwise but resort to violence.

It is not my aim to take a stance in that matter, but I want to highlight the importance of that debate because it shows that the interpretative framework within which questions of the permissibility of violence are negotiated internationally is decisive for the outcome. To put it bluntly: Even though a law-focused approach seems far more plausible when it comes to sustaining peaceful solutions, some questions remain, such as: *Who speaks? Who is profiting?* And, especially when it comes to violent scenarios: *Who is permitted and who is denied the right to use violence for what reasons?*⁸ And here indeed the answers to specific problems might differ, depending on the position somebody takes. This is also why the historical background against which certain ideas – such as just peace thinking – are developed is inherently important for understanding the ramifications of these ideas.

4.3 Ukraine

Having scrutinized contingent pacifist thought with respect to revisionist just war theory, as well as just peace thinking, and having mentioned some general critical thoughts that need to be kept in mind regarding the overall frame of theories of violence, I will draw some conclusions with respect to the Ukraine war. As I pointed out in the beginning, the question that has been discussed in Germany intensely in recent years is the issue of whether it is legitimate to support Ukraine by means of weapons deliveries or not.

While classical pacifist thought, on the one hand, generally prohibits for moral reasons the delivery of weapons, contingent pacifism argues differently by

⁸ Especially this last question is an issue that is discussed also with respect to (revisionist) just war thinking (Fabre and Lazar 2014).

asking what outcome such deliveries, or the denial thereof, would have presumably on the development of just and sustaining peace, thereby preferencing non-violent means.

With respect to classical just war reasoning, on the other hand, the case is clear as well: Since the attack on Ukraine is evidently a violation of existing treaties and has offensive character (Daase et al. 2022), it is certainly a case of self-defense, which is legitimate in this framing. Accordingly, there is no impediment for delivering weapons. Also here, a contingent pacifist approach is expected to argue differently, taking into account the seriousness of the use of force and the harm that follows in its wake.

What becomes clear in that line of reasoning is that within contingent pacifist approaches such as just peace theory there is no general and once-and-for-all decision that can be made: how the situation and the use of force is evaluated ethically is contingent on the circumstances. With respect to the war in Ukraine this means that the overall situation needs to be taken into account all the time, time and again. According to the ideas I have presented so far, this means that the main focus rests on the issue of just and sustaining peace, which is more than the absence of war. Considering the capability of Ukraine to defend itself without foreign support, a forced peace might be a possible outcome of not delivering weapons. This, however, is not in line with just peace reasoning, so that delivering weapons does at least not stand against the concept. Yet, this does not absolve the countries that deliver weapons from endorsing nonviolent means to terminate that war. To the degree that nonviolent means are not reasonable in the given situation, delivering weapons is a plausible but inferior way of dealing with the situation (for a similar solution to that question, see the articles of Hans-Richard Reuter and Torsten Meireis in this volume).

Depending on the overall frame, however, assessments may differ considerably. In that regard, the importance of the war might be contested, compared to problems in one's own country, for instance. Or, if the legitimacy of the Russian claim to have prevented a genocide is taken for granted – a claim that is obviously a false pretense (Daase et al. 2022). Especially the question of who is allowed to defend themselves is contested and needs to be addressed from different angles. This is important, not only for dealing with the war in Ukraine but also for finding ethically sound solutions to issues of war and peace generally. With this in mind, different conflicts and wars come to the fore that do not find their way into the headlines of mainstream European newspapers, such as the civil war in Myanmar or the fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo. That is why an intercontinental and interdisciplinary discussion and approach toward this topic is crucial. Such an approach shows that monetary aspects might be much more important than ideological ones because countries and communities that are de-

pending on either Russia or Europe monetarily will hardly take an official stance opposing their positions (see the articles of Funlola Olojede and Nancy Bedford in this volume). Here the demand for the just distribution of resources is decisive in order to address such sharp political dependencies.

All in all, just peace thinking is very well suited to address the war in Ukraine by pointing out that just peace cannot be achieved by unjust means and that the aim of the belligerent undertaking can only be to sustain legal structures that in turn enhance the possibility of achieving just and sustaining peace. Demanding the resort to nonviolent means only, however, might rather hinder achieving just peace, just as the endorsement of violent means per se. With respect to the missing juridical framework, international and interdisciplinary debates as they take place in this book are of inherent importance in order to understand the various viewpoints and constraints.

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Hans-Richard Reuter

Protestant Peace Ethics under Scrutiny: Does the War in Ukraine Refute the Doctrine of Just Peace?

On February 24, 2022, for the first time since the end of the Second World War a great war returned to Europe. Russia's criminal aggression on the whole of Ukraine claims hundreds of thousands of human lives and causes immeasurable suffering; it destroys cities, civilian infrastructure, resources and cultural assets – not to mention the Global repercussions. German politics responded by proclaiming a “Zeitenwende” and increasing the quantity and quality of military support for the country under attack. In German Protestantism, this new situation has led to a controversial discussion about whether a paradigm shift is needed in the orientation of Protestant peace ethics towards the concept of just peace (e.g., Körtner 2023). It is not always clearly differentiated which reference texts the corresponding debates refer to. The following article focuses on the most recent elaboration of peace ethics by the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD): the 2007 memorandum *Aus Gottes Frieden leben – für gerechten Frieden sorgen* (Live from God's peace – Care for just peace; EKD 2007). Firstly, the most important principles formulated in this document will be summarized (1). Secondly, we will take a brief look at the changed political context caused by the war in Ukraine (2). Thirdly, it will be asked whether and to what extent the call for a “new”, different or revised peace ethics is justified against the described background (3).

1 The Peace Memorandum of 2007

The document responded to a specific political context: In the 1990s, ethno-nationalistically charged civil wars and the collapse of states dominated the agenda. Those led to the first combat deployment of Germany's armed forces as part of NATO in Kosovo in 1999. After September 11, 2001, the “war on terrorism” proclaimed by George W. Bush was added. In 2003 the USA intervened in Iraq, while in violation of international law, with a so-called coalition of the willing. Germany has been involved in the military actions of the Western world against the Taliban in Afghanistan since 2002 in what was initially described as a stabilization mission. The 2007 memorandum took events such as those as an occasion to reach a consensus on fundamental issues of peace ethics and their application

to the peace and security policy challenges of the time. Three key points should be emphasized from the abundance of considerations contained therein: the guiding concept of *just peace*, the maxim of *peace through law* and the concept of *law-preserving force*.

1.1 The Guiding Concept of *Just Peace*

The topos had become prominent in the ecumenical debate of the 1980s, when the churches of the South turned against the narrowing concerning security policy of the European and North American peace discourse by calling for Global distributive justice. The concept was systematically developed at the beginning of the new millennium (Reuter 2007). Inspired by the biblical image of an all including good order in which “justice and peace kiss” (Ps 85:11), the EKD memorandum also developed a concept of political peace based on respect for equal human dignity in the image of God and serving human security and human development. Peace is understood as an historical process of decreasing violence and increasing political and social justice, within and between states. The desired ideal of just peace therefore requires political and institutional problem-solving in four dimensions: protection from violence, promotion of freedom, reduction of poverty and recognition of cultural diversity (EKD 2007, no. 78–84). A close combination of peace, security, development and cultural policy measures is therefore essential.

The concept of just peace does not mean that the all including good order promised in the Bible should be taken over by human beings. A guiding concept does not directly standardize actions either. It has the function of a regulative idea: it is meant to mediate action in a non-ideal world with an orientation towards an ideal goal that transcends our experience. In addition to this, such an idea is necessary because in political reality there are inevitably tensions and conflicting goals between justice and peace. Peace means in the least the absence of violence; justice, on the other hand, is a normative standard that enables to distinguish between true and false peace. Such a standard is needed because of the everlasting presence of conflicts over competing claims. The memorandum resolves the tension as follows: “When demands for peace and for justice block each other [. . .] it must be sought how such blockages can be overcome through [. . .] confidence-building measures, so that steps on the path of peace and steps on the path of justice mutually enable, encourage and promote each other.” (EKD 2007, no. 80; trans. HRR)

1.2 The Maxim *Peace through Law*

The Peace Memorandum places a strong emphasis on law as a means of just peace (EKD 2007, no. 86–103). It considers the legalization of international relations to be one of the necessary, albeit not sufficient, conditions for achieving the vision of just peace. As a middle way between cosmopolitanism and nation-state sovereignty thinking, it favors a cooperatively structured world order – i.e., an order in which international organizations contribute to closer interdependence between states through reinforced coordination, increasingly also by involvement of civil society actors. Such a world order was ascribed the task of taking institutional account of the four material dimensions of just peace: the protection of freedom through the promotion of universal human rights (not to be interpreted as cosmopolitan civil rights); the reduction of poverty through the organization of a right to development; the recognition of cultural diversity through the protection of plural (but human rights-compatible) forms of life; and finally, protection against violence through the consolidation of a system of collective security provided for in the UN Charter.

With the maxim “peace through law”, the church’s peace ethics is part of a bigger tradition in the history of ideas. In a narrower sense, the idea of legal international peace goes back to the Enlightenment, in particular Immanuel Kant (Kant 1795/1968) and the civil pacifistic movement at the end of the 19th century. Martin Luther had also underlined the peace function of law: As individuals, i.e., for ourselves, we should follow the Sermon on the Mount and renounce violence, but for the protection of others and the society it is necessary to strengthen the monopolization of force within the respective superior legal authority (Luther 1523/1948, 254–255). And last but not least, in the postulate of international legal peace, one can hear the secular echo of the great prophetic promise: that a universal legal instruction from God will establish peace among nations (Isa 2, Mic 4).

1.3 The Concept of *Law-Preserving Force*

Part of the concept of law is that it can be enforced if necessary. For this reason, critical situations had to be considered in which the question arises as to whether the use of force is permitted or even required. Since ancient times, test criteria for the moral justifiability of military force have been formulated in the doctrine of *bellum iustum*. The memorandum argues that today the framing conditions that were constitutive for the doctrine of just war have disappeared: Medieval natural law in large parts of Europe could still understand war as an act of punishing justice because there was agreement on common standards of justice in an

ideologically homogeneous, Christian world. This premise was shattered through the Reformation: Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession from 1530 talks strictly speaking not of just war, but of lawful warfare (*iure bellare*). Modern international law has implemented this impulse towards legislation, but until the beginning of the 20th century it regarded the right to wage war as a characteristic of state sovereignty. This has at the latest also changed since 1945, as Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter contains a general prohibition on the use of force, which only allows two exceptions: Firstly, in the case of an authorization by the Security Council within the framework of a system of collective security as a kind of international police operation. And secondly, in the case of self-defense against an attack – as long as the Security Council itself does not take measures to restore peace.

Due to this changed conceptual framework, which tends to limit the classic *jus ad bellum* to a *jus contra bellum*, the EKD memorandum has abandoned the term “just war”. However, this did not render the moral test criteria that had been handed down by the *bellum iustum* doctrines obsolete. Such criteria remain indispensable for all those who do not take a radical pacifist stance. Even those who assume that non-violence is the first option will always ask (self-)critical questions like these when they are confronted with the necessity to ward off primary violence with (counter)violence: Is there sufficient cause (for example, in the form of the most serious threats to human life and common law)? Am I authorized to do so, i.e., am I acting in the name of interests that can be claimed as universal? Am I pursuing the goal of restoring a state of mutual non-violence? Is there no effective less violent means? Is it assured that the evil that has occurred is not answered with an even greater evil; is it within the scope of the proportionality of consequences? Is the proportionality of means also ensured? Are innocent bystanders spared? For Christian ethics, even if all these criteria on this list are met, the use of morally permitted or required (counter)violence is accompanied by the prospect of taking on guilt (cf. EKD 2007, no. 102–103).

The Peace Memorandum proposed to understand these test criteria as general criteria within the framework of an ethics of law-preserving force – “general” because they can be applied not only to the use of military force but also to police operations, the exercising of the right of resistance or a legitimate liberation struggle. With regard to the use of military force, limits were set for three groups of cases: for the right of self-defense in the war on terrorism and under the conditions of nuclear deterrence, for the international community’s responsibility to protect endangered groups of population, and for international armed peace missions below the threshold of combat operations (EKD 2007, no. 105–123). In each of these cases, the memorandum considered the authorization of military means of coercion in accordance with the rules of the UN Charter to be necessary (EKD 2007, no. 104, 133, 138, 140).

2 A Changed Political Context

The 2007 memorandum combined such case-specific concretizations with a critical look at the Global peace policy challenges since the mid-1990s. They were characterized by a unipolar constellation: under the hegemonic leadership of the United States, the claim was made to unilaterally enforce concepts of a world order oriented towards Western self-interest. It was a time of liberal interventionism, which in its own way destabilized international law and damaged trust in the international order. In its contextual background loomed asymmetric conflicts, prolonged Global anti-terrorist warfare, a disregard for political self-determination fueled by human rights-missionarism or the illusion of externally forced democratization in failed states.

None of the criticism leveled by the memorandum is wrong, but fewer points are relevant today. The structure of international relations established after 1990, with the United States as the only remaining hegemonic power and guardian of Western democratic values, is in a state of upheaval. Authoritarian powers such as China and Russia have long been striving for regional hegemony in their geopolitical environment: China wants to control the Indo-Pacific region, Russia wants to secure dominance over the post-Soviet space. Whether this will result in multipolarity or whether the Ukraine war will actually lead to a new bipolarity between the United States/Europe and China/Russia remains to be seen.

The war against Ukraine (cf. Sasse 2024) has a geopolitical and a normative-political dimension: In *geopolitical* terms, Putin has long been pursuing the goal of restoring the territory of the former Soviet Union as a political, economic and, if possible, military zone of influence. Ukraine is of particular importance in this context. In the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, Russia, the USA and the UK promised Ukraine full territorial integrity in exchange for the transfer of its nuclear weapons to Moscow. The Kremlin considered the fact that thirteen eastern and southeastern European states joined NATO between 1999 and 2017 as a threatening encirclement and a breach of the promise made in connection with the German reunification to refrain from expanding the alliance eastwards. This accusation cannot be traced back to legally binding documents such as the Two Plus Four Treaty of 1990 or the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997; it can only be based on very early informal statements by Foreign Ministers Baker and Genscher, which incidentally concerned the extension of NATO defense structures to East Germany (cf. Sarotte 2021). However, it remains a symbol of the feeling of disregard for Russian ambitions for geopolitical power. The fact that Ukraine and Georgia were offered the prospect of membership in the alliance at the NATO summit in 2008 at the insistence of the Bush administration may have reinforced Moscow's fears of being marginalized in the European security order. The timing

of Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008 was no coincidence. Since then, the Kremlin has endeavored to keep the number of Western-oriented states and governments in the neighboring countries as low as possible and to prevent further NATO accessions. The fact that the West largely ignored Russia's concerns, which were raised with particular vigor at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, when implementing the eastern expansion of the alliance, accelerated the trend towards increasing confrontation.

However, this is not enough to explain the major attack of February 24, 2022 (Zürn 2022a, 2022b). Putin invaded Ukraine when the country's NATO membership was no longer on the agenda. In view of Russia's nuclear potential, there could be no serious talk of a Western threat to Moscow's existential security interests. Something else is likely to have been decisive for the start of the great war: at its core, it is about a *normative system conflict* that has to do with the competition of ideas and value orientations within the country (cf. German Commission for Justice and Peace 2018): Putin feared a growing democratization movement that had the potential to become a role model for his own population. It was no coincidence that he hardened the domestic repression from 2011 further in response to the massive protests against electoral fraud. Following the "Orange Revolution", which opposed the rigged presidential election in Ukraine in 2004, the Euromaidan of 2013/14 with tens of thousands of demonstrators in Kyiv articulated the desire for further rapprochement with the European Union. Putin responded to this *Revolution of Dignity*, in which Ukrainians sought to free themselves from the tutelage of a kleptocratic authoritarian state and laid claim to individual and political self-determination, with the occupation of Crimea and military support for the separatists in Donbas – marking the beginning of the first phases of the war against Ukraine.

The Russian Federation's imperial power politics is no longer based on the ideological foundations of the defunct Soviet Union: its antagonism towards the West is not anti-capitalist, but religious and cultural in nature and is legitimized by the Russian Orthodox Church lead by the Moscow Patriarchate. Since 2021, Putin has attributed the inseparable unity of Russians, Belarusians and "Little Russians" (=Ukrainians) to the baptism of Kyivan Rus' in 988 (Putin 2021). According to Putin, today's Ukraine can only achieve true sovereignty and protection from the Western cesspit of hedonism, liberalism and secularism in partnership with Russia. In this perspective, the doctrine of the "Russian world" gives "Holy Russia" the status of a protective power over all "Russians and Russian-speaking people", justifying the annexation of Crimea and the intervention in Donbas. Patriarch Cyril I has now elevated the doctrine of the "Russian world" to a neo-imperial political program and explicitly interprets the "special operation" against Ukraine as a "holy war" (World Council of the Russian People 2024).

Putin's large-scale criminal attack on Ukraine is the preliminary culmination of a continuous radicalization driven by the hegemonic projection of power outwards and the autocratic preservation of power inwards. The threat to the Moscow regime that was decisive for the start of the war was the growing stability of the democratization process in Ukraine. In short, it was doubtful that the security of the Federal Republic of Germany had to be defended in the Hindu Kush in 2003 (for that reference see Struck 2002), but it is hard to deny that Europe's security and freedom is at stake in Ukraine today. Even if history does not repeat itself: It remains relevant what Swiss theologian Karl Barth, who was completely unsuspected of bellicosity, wrote to Josef Hromádka in Prague in 1938, ten days before the Munich Agreement, which surrendered the Sudetenland to Hitler's Germany: "Strange times, dear colleague, in which it is impossible in one's right mind to say anything other than that it is imperative for the sake of faith to resolutely put the fear of violence and the love of peace in second place and the fear of injustice, the love of freedom, just as resolutely in first place!" (Barth 2011, 114–115; trans. HRR).

3 Changing Continuity

What does this mean for the orientational power of the peace ethics concept presented in 2007 today? What remains valid, what needs to be clarified, supplemented or reconsidered? Important detailed questions such as new military technologies, the problems of hybrid warfare or the role of nuclear deterrence in a changed world situation cannot be dealt with in this article. The following considerations are based on the key points set out above under 1. and relate selected aspects to the current situation. It will become clear in the process: there is no need for a completely "new" peace ethics compared to the 2007 document, but a readjustment in the concretization of its still valid principles.

3.1 Orientation towards *Just Peace* Does Not Imply Unconditional Pacifism

Thinking in terms of just peace includes the primary option of non-violence. It was therefore right to emphasize the primacy of civil conflict resolution. However, it remains just as right that no unconditional pacifism was advocated. Rather, the memorandum was based on the well-understood categorization of the

different decisions of conscience that are possible for Christians with regard to the issue of peace.¹

“The Christian ethos is fundamentally determined by the willingness to renounce violence (Matt 5:38ff) and primarily by the option for non-violence. In a world still peaceless and unredeemed, however, service to others can also include the need to ensure the protection of justice and life through the use of counter-force (cf. Rom 13:1–7)”. (EKD 2007, no. 60, transl. HRR)

However, as the 2019 EKD Synod statement “Kirche auf dem Weg der Gerechtigkeit und des Friedens” showed, there has since been a growing tendency in the German Protestant church to dissolve this tension in favor of political recommendations for a consistent path of non-violence. I think this is the wrong turn (also critical Fischer 2022). Individuals and groups can decide in favor of consistent non-violence; a church whose work in society, in the good tradition of the Reformation, depends on Christians taking on political responsibility in their secular profession in public office, cannot.

The synodal rally stated that there are “tried and tested concepts and instruments” for “dealing with problems and conflicts in all [*sic*] areas of social and political life in a constructive and non-violent manner” (EKD 2019; trans. HRR). In view of the genocidal atrocities of murdered civilians in Bucha, Irpin and Mariupol, one wonders what such concepts could have looked like – against an aggressor who does not shy away from war crimes in any form? Hardly civil resistance! When the synod rally insinuates that “in times of peace as well as in crises and war situations” there are tried and tested effective non-violent instruments that could take the place of law-preserving military defense in a major interstate war, the possibilities in various phases of conflict are obviously being mixed up all too carelessly. The Peace Memorandum had differentiated much more precisely and emphasized: “Civil conflict management is of particular importance at the beginning of a crisis and in the phase after the end of hostilities” (EKD 2007, no. 174; trans. HRR).

However, in view of the current situation, more consideration should be given to some aspects of the just peace concept, which are present in the memorandum but do not characterize its systematic approach: after all, the concept developed at the time is primarily aimed at outlining a legitimate basic structure of the international *order* (as order of peace) and deriving the political institutions required within this framework. Something else is at issue when *practices* of a just peace are sought in or after an open conflict (cf. Strub 2007). On one hand, this concerns the tasks of peacebuilding already mentioned at that time, such as the (re)establishment of rule-of-law structures, respect for human rights, economic development and the legal and social reappraisal of the past (EKD 2007, no. 67–72). What is missing, however, are reflections on the (temporally preced-

ing) practice of peacemaking: here, requirements for negotiation processes that could enable a just peace agreement should be addressed (cf., e.g., Stassen 1992; Allen and Keller 2006).

3.2 The Point of Reference for the Maxim *Peace through Law* is the Moral Concept of Law

Despite the return of nation-state power politics and the changed system conflict, the model of a cooperative, rules-based world order cannot be abandoned. The assumption that this model has become obsolete since Putin's invasion of Ukraine fails to recognize its status as a counterfactual objective. It never did offer a description of the *status quo*, but provided a normative framework for criticizing asymmetric concepts of power orders that were based on Western claims to hegemony (Brock and Simon 2022, 19). Still, in practical terms, the implementation of multidimensional peace tasks – the protection against violence, the promotion of freedom, the reduction of poverty, the recognition of cultural diversity, and now also the implementation of sustainability goals or the control of the consequences of climate change and migration – is unthinkable without political coordination and international organizations, forums and agreements. To reject diplomacy, cooperation and confidence-building across the board would be just as misguided as canceling the project of increasing legalization of international relations.

However, the maxim of “peace through law” must neither be misunderstood in a legal positivist manner nor reduced in a culturalist manner (Reuter 2022). The concept of law claimed here is not of an empirical nature but refers to the moral concept of law, which is then concretized in basic human rights and a legitimate international legal order. If one favors a procedural reading of the idea of law or the concept of law in Kant's sense (for terminology cf. Dreier 1984), i.e., as the epitome of external laws that enable the coexistence of freedom for all, this demands no more (but also no less) than: rules of international law must be justifiable in egalitarian (respecting the sovereign equality of states), inclusive (involving all those affected) and fair (open to reciprocal balancing of interests) processes of communication. The concept of legal peace thus does not ignore the plurality of diverse legal traditions. It refers to a discursive space of contentious negotiation that remains open to competing interpretations but requires all participants to adopt a critical and reflective attitude towards their own legal tradition (Günther 2014, 52–53).

Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, breaching both the general prohibition of the use of force and all treaties that recognize state sovereignty and the integrity of territorial borders, violates both moral and positive

law. However, even a blatant violation of international law does not render its claim to validity null and void – on the contrary: If the violation of law is widely disapproved of, it can even help to reaffirm the norm. Although not legally binding but declaratory, Russia's actions were strongly condemned by an overwhelming majority of the 193 member states in two UN General Assembly resolutions: the Russian invasion by 141 states in March 2022 and the annexations of the partially occupied regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson by 143 states in October of the same year; in February 2023 again 141 states requested Russia to retrench from Ukraine. It is true that the states of the Global South do not support the sanctions imposed by the West – partly because they see Russia as a vital trading partner and do not want to be drawn into a conflict between the great powers (cf. Werkner 2023). However, this does not change the fact that there is great unity in the clear condemnation of Russia's breach of the international order.

Moreover, there is something like an obstinacy of the law: Even powerful states rarely refrain from invoking the law to justify their use of force. Not even Putin shirked the duty of reporting his “special operation” to the UN Security Council as an alleged self-defense measure and publicly justifying it with a *Responsibility to Protect* the allegedly threatened Russian minority in Ukraine. This cynical instrumentalization of international law shows: Anyone who uses the language of law recognizes it performatively and risks a self-binding commitment that exposes him *volens nolens* to the struggle for law. The good news is this. In this struggle for law, there is no longer a state monopoly on interpretation: today it includes the informal sanctioning of Global injustice, with which a mobilized civil society world public scandalizes flagrant violations of the prohibition of the use of force as well as evident crimes against humanity.

One relevant objection to the confidence in international law formulated in the EKD memorandum is, however, that although there is no lack of international peace law norms, there is a lack of means to enforce them. The main criticism is that the enforcement of law is too strictly tied to a mandate from the UN Security Council, which is composed according to power-political logic and all too often proves incapable of acting. The fact that there is indeed a painful gap between norm and norm enforcement can be clearly seen in the Ukraine war: as a result of the Russian aggressor's right of veto, the Security Council was unable to impose the coercive measures provided for in Chapter VII of the UN Charter in case of a breach of peace or an act of aggression. The concept of international military Responsibility to Protect in cases of genocide, war crimes, displacement and resettlement, which was accepted at the 2005 UN World Summit, also leads to nothing against a nuclear state. As a consequence of the war in Ukraine, a new, nuclear-armed bloc formation cannot be ruled out. This means that, for the time being, the mechanisms of the UN system of collective security can be relied on even less

than before to enforce international law. The reforms of the UN Security Council proposed in the peace memorandum – such as the possibility of subsequent review of decisions by an independent body, the obligation to give reasons for voting behavior in substantive decisions, the abolition of the right of veto in certain cases (EKD 2007, no. 131) – must remain present on the agenda right now. For the time being, however, it is indisputable that the responsibility borne by nation states for ensuring a functioning national and alliance defense has gained considerably in importance.

3.3 The Ethics of Law-Preserving Force Includes Assistance in Self-Defense

Almost 20 years ago, it was necessary to argue against the misuse of *the right of self-defense* to justify the United States' unlimited war on terror. The current issue is the legitimate exercise of this right in defense against interstate aggression as well as legitimate forms of assistance by third parties. The moral right of a state to defend itself follows from its duty to protect life and liberty of its citizens, which includes the protection of their political self-determination and cultural way of life within internationally recognized territorial borders (Walzer 2015, 53ff; different but not convincing, Rodin 2014). Under the UN Charter's system of collective security, the right of self-defense of a state under unprovoked attack can be lawfully exercised by the state itself ("individually") or in association with others ("collectively") as long as this is necessary to avert a present threat and no higher legal authority intervenes on behalf of the victim of the aggression or decides on other measures (Art. 51). Under international law, the right to self-defense entitles all other states to the support that is possible within the framework of their treaty obligations. Morally, it can even oblige them to do so – within the limits of their capabilities. This ranges from humanitarian initiatives and economic sanctions to emergency military aid, be it indirectly by supplying weapons to the attacked state or directly by participating in the war of defense. Germany's indirect military support for Ukraine has raised new normative questions; some of these will be discussed in conclusion in the context of an ethics of just peace.

There were various arguments against *weapon deliveries* at the beginning of the large-scale invasion: assuming that the Russian troop deployment staged at the end of 2021 was for maneuvering purposes, the initial intention was to keep Germany's privileged channels of communication with Moscow open. This argument was still acceptable until February 24, 2022, but was dropped the moment Putin's statements turned out to be brazen lies and all means of diplomatic conflict resolution had failed. Furthermore, reference was made to Germany's special

historical responsibility towards Russia. This was hardly convincing – after all, Hitler’s war against the Soviet Union had caused immeasurable suffering, not forgot in Ukraine. Finally, Germany’s voluntary commitment (which has not been consistently honored on other occasions either) not to export any weapons to crisis and tension zones outside of NATO was cited. On the one hand, the current restrictive principles of the German Federal Government should be followed more consistently and transparently, but on the other hand, the exception already provided for in the current rules should be taken seriously for cases in which an attacked state is required to exercise its right to self-defense in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter (BMWK 2019, III.7).

Every form of self-defense requires a consideration of the *proportionality of consequences*: What evil can be accepted without bringing about even greater evils? Accordingly, anything that could lead to a direct military confrontation between the nuclear powers beyond the NATO alliance’s duty to protect must be avoided. The enforcement of a no-fly zone over Ukraine is therefore out of the question, as is the deployment of ground troops – but not the delivery of heavy weapons, provided they are intended and suitable for territorial defense. With all due prudence: the West should not allow to deprive itself of the power to define when the line of war involvement has been crossed for fear of Russian threatening gestures. Under international law, a state providing military support would only become a party to the conflict if it intervened in the combat operations directly and in close coordination with the state receiving the aid (Wentker 2023; Wissenschaftlicher Dienst 2023). Gray areas between non-belligerency and conflict participation remain, but setting the threshold for conflict participation lower from the outset would blur the qualitative difference between breaking the law and enforcing it in a problematic way.

The *duration* of military assistance is also subject to the balance of objectives. There is no doubt that those who provide military assistance and thus contribute to the continuation of war assume a moral co-responsibility for the increasing number of its victims (Habermas 2023). However, the balancing of evils relevant here is complex; it must also consider the consequences that would have to be expected if Ukraine were to be subjugated. The question is: Does the assistance for Ukraine’s self-defense lead to a senseless prolongation of the war with even more destruction, deaths and injuries, so that not only the Ukrainian resistance but also its military support lose their legitimacy (Merkel 2022)? Or is the arming of the attacked country more appropriate and necessary in order to stop the aggressor and prevent the threat of the war spreading to the post-Soviet space (Masala 2025)? The dilemma cannot be resolved, and neither option offers the prospect of escaping without incurring guilt: No one can know whether the casualties associated with Ukrainian acts of defense outweigh the suffering and fore-

seeably never-ending repression that would be made possible by renouncing resistance. However, as long as the Ukrainians' will to assert themselves continues, it would be morally wrong to recommend a unilateral cessation of combat operations – especially as this would neither end the immense suffering of the civilian population nor satisfy Putin's imperial desires. How long the attacked country wants to hold out militarily and what compromises it would accept must be decided primarily by the affected population and its government.

Last but not least, all military emergency aid must be orientated towards the *goal of a just peace*. This means three things: firstly, that within the framework of an overall political-strategic concept, there must be clarity about the end state that is to be sought (except through economic sanctions also) by military means. The binary logic of victory and defeat is not expedient here. In negotiations, Ukraine has every right to assert its claim to the restoration of its territorial integrity – which was violated by the annexations of Crimea and the Donbas – within the borders of 1991. However, external military support should focus on strengthening the invaded country to such an extent that the aggressor changes its cost/benefit calculation and is prepared to negotiate a serious solution. Secondly, military force alone can never create a just peace. What it can do at best is prepare the ground for its negotiation. Therefore any military aid, no matter how decisive, must be flanked by unrelenting diplomatic efforts towards peaceful dispute resolution. However, to this date (as of July 2024) such attempts have not been successful. As conflict research teaches us, negotiations require the achievement of a “ripe moment” in the form of a “mutually hurting stalemate,” that means a situation that can no longer be improved for both sides (Zartmann 2001). The circulating rumor that an agreement ready for signature was blocked by the West during the ceasefire talks in Belarus and Istanbul in spring 2022 does not stand up to detailed scrutiny (Schäfer 2023; Charap and Radchenko 2024). In addition to the favorable course of war for Ukraine at the time, the discovery of the Russian massacre in Bucha and the surrounding area contributed to the failure of the talks. The guns would certainly fall silent if Putin offered to withdraw his troops to the *status quo ante* of February 23, 2022. Thirdly, after all that has been said, there can be no just peace without a reappraisal of the war crimes and without an affirmation of the rules-based international order that has been violated by Russian aggression. As long as it is this order that provides the normative framework for any peace solution, negotiations based on it are not conceivable without any preconditions: Recognizing the basic principles of international law is not at issue; face-saving compromises must be sought elsewhere.

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Andreas Trampota

Non-violence and the Legitimate Use of Force: A Critical Appreciation of Recent Developments in the Peace Ethics of the Catholic Church in Germany

1 Introductory Remarks

In my reflections in this essay, I would like to shed light on recent developments in the peace ethics of the Catholic Church in Germany. The official pastoral writings of the German bishops' Conference on this topic are important texts of reference in this respect. They are referred to as *Peace Statements by the German Bishops* (in German: *Friedensworte der deutschen Bischöfe*). The most recent of these writings was published just a few months ago, on February 21, 2024. It bears the biblical title "*Peace to this household*" (Luke 10,5). Although in comparison to smaller pastoral writings on specific issues¹ such as terrorism (The German Bishops 2011) it claims to be "a new elaboration with a *comprehensive* orientation" (The German Bishops 2024, 8; italics mine), it is emphasized that its intention is not to "supersede" the preceding Peace Statement entitled *A Just Peace* from the year 2000, but rather to build on the insights gained therein and to continue its reflections in the light of more recent developments. It therefore invites us to read the new Peace Statement in the tradition of the preceding one (The German Bishops 2024, 12).

To avoid misunderstandings, it should be added: The fact that the Peace Statements of the German bishops are important sources does not mean that they have arisen exclusively from their reflection. As far as the nature of such pastoral letters is concerned, at least in recent times, the latest is very clear: "It is not an instructional text laying claim to infallibility, but a statement of reflection in straitened times, a search for paths on which the Church wishes to embark, along with Her critical contemporaries, and a reminder of the values and the hope which Christianity has to proclaim at all times." (The German Bishops 2024, 8)

Regarding the process of its creation, it is pointed out that it "was preceded by a consultation process incorporating not only the expertise and experience of

¹ One of them is the declaration *Resisting Aggression, Winning Peace, Supporting the Victims* of March 10, 2024, on the war in Ukraine: The German Bishops 2022.

many church facilities and organisations, but also that of other experts.” (The German Bishops 2024, 11)

In my reflections I will focus on what is at the heart of recent developments in Catholic peace ethics, on the guiding principle of *just peace*. However, since this term stands for a wide variety of issues (and, accordingly, a wide variety of academic approaches play a role), I will take a closer look at what is said in the writings that follow the aforementioned guiding principle about the relationship between two fundamental principles that are *prima facie* in tension with each other, since these principles have the greatest impact on peace ethical considerations on the war in Ukraine:

- i. non-violence
- and
- ii. the legitimate use of force.

2 The Guiding Principle of Just Peace

The title of the bishops’ Peace Statement from the year 2000 *A Just Peace* was programmatic. It was intended to suggest a “re-orientation of peace policies based on ethical considerations” (The German Bishops 2000, 5). In their opinion, this was due to the fact that the political situation in Europe and worldwide had changed dramatically (The German Bishops 2000, 7). By way of explanation, the following statement from *The Ecumenical Council of the GDR* from the year 1989 is quoted: “Having through necessity overcome the institution of war, the doctrine of a just war intended by the Churches to humanize war is likewise becoming invalid. That is why we need to develop a doctrine of just peace now, grounded in theology and oriented by virtue of its openness towards universal human values” (The German Bishops 2000, 5).

After that, the concept of *just war*, which has a long tradition in Christian thinking, no longer appears in this text. In the latest Peace Statement by the bishops, it is also no longer to be found. The corresponding teaching, *the doctrine of just war*, has largely been abandoned as an independent piece of ethical theory, although there has been something of a renaissance of this tradition of thinking in secular ethics, making use of the corresponding resources in Christian thinking. Consider, for example, the important books *Killing in War*, written by Jeff McMahan, and *Just and Unjust Wars*, written by Michael Walzer (McMahan 2009; Walzer 2015). Even events such as Russia’s attack on Ukraine have not changed the guiding concept of just peace in Catholic peace ethics. It is explicitly affirmed in the latest Peace Statement of the German bishops – knowing well that some

might expect a change of course in the light of the completely changed geopolitical situation. The fact that they have a realistic idea of it is expressed, for example, in the following statement: “Despite all the hopes, there has not been less violence committed against people the world over in the first two decades of the 21st century, but in fact more” (The German Bishops 2024, 15).

How did the concept of just peace come to be at the center of the Catholic Church’s peace ethical thinking in Germany?² This development is based on a very simple insight: “[. . .] a world that does not provide the majority of people with the basic needs of a humane life is not viable. Even when there are no wars, such a world is still full of violence. A situation dominated by long-term and severe injustice is inherently violent. It follows that justice creates peace” (The German Bishops 2000, 24).

I will only outline the features of this concept that are relevant to my further considerations:

- i. The term has a *bridging function*: It wants to explicate where the biblical message of the kingdom of God and political reason meet (The German Bishops 2000, 23).
- ii. With the “socio-ethical objective” of a just peace a social ideal designed to be a standard is provided to guide concrete political decisions and actions (The German Bishops 2000, II–1).
- iii. The concept is intended to free the doctrine of peace from the fixation on *negative peace* understood as the absence of war, so that the concept of peace gradually approaches the fullness of its meaning in the Old Testament’s promise of peace, which is proclaimed as being tentatively fulfilled in Jesus Christ (The German Bishops 2024, 27; Allan and Keller 2006).
- iv. The development of this vision of the goal involves a wide variety of topics such as responsibility for conditions that do justice to human dignity, democratization and the rule of law, orientation towards the common good in accordance with the guiding principles of justice and solidarity, fairer Global economic relations, preservation of the natural foundations of life, etc.

As already mentioned, the concept of just war is nowhere to be found in this context. As one commentator rightly put it, the corresponding doctrine only appears in a “transformed” way (Stobbe 2023, 6). In a few places there is still talk of *ius in bello* (right conduct in war). In principle, however, the aim is to move away from

² It is also the guiding concept of the Protestant Church’s peace ethics in Germany (Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland ²2007).

the static opposition between war and peace towards a process-based model of peace policy (Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland ²2007, No. 80).

3 A Virtue-Ethical Foundation: The Common Teleological Vision and Its Foundation in a Virtuous Character

There are a number of reasons why it makes sense for Christian peace ethics to focus on a *teleological guiding concept*, which means to start from a vision of a goal:

- i. One was already mentioned in passing, which is probably the most important one from the Christian perspective: the biblical vision of peace. The central importance of it for the proclamation of the Good News is expressed, among other things, in the Bible verse from which the title of the latest Peace Statement by the German bishops is taken. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells his disciples: “Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household’” (Luke 10:5).
- ii. Another reason could be that peace ethical thinking in the Western tradition began with a teleological concept of peace. Cicero and Augustine are often cited as the founders of peace ethics. However, the concept of peace plays a central role even earlier in the virtue ethics of Plato and Aristotle (Plato: *Laws* I; Aristoteles: *Politics* VII; Ricken 2017; Trampota 2024, 238–240). The two most important representatives of virtue-ethical thinking among the Greeks held the view that the goal the legislator has in mind when passing and establishing laws is *peace* and the *leisure* closely linked to it. These terms – along with the even more central concept of *happiness* (*eudaimonia*) – denote the *ultimate goal* towards which the entire normative order of the state is designed. War has its final goal in peace and work in leisure. From this teleological order the value system is derived with its distinction between what is *good in itself* (= intrinsically good; what is striven for or desired *for its own sake*) and what is only *good for the sake of another* (what is only *a means to an end*, i.e., only *instrumentally good*). Ethically speaking, the ultimate goal of individual human and state action can only be something that is *good in itself*. From this, an order of goals is derived with the distinction between lower and higher goals. From a secular perspective, this virtue-ethical approach could be used to argue for the guiding concept of just peace (Trampota 2024, 238–241).

- iii. In the case of *Christian peace ethics*, which appeals not only to the authority of *reason* but also to the authority of *revelation* (the biblical scriptures), another decisive reason for starting with the teleological guiding concept of just peace is that it represents *the joint vision of the two major currents in the tradition of peace ethics*, namely
 - a. the older *pacifist current* and
 - b. the somewhat later *current* (Augustine etc.), *which considers certain forms of the use of force to be legitimate* in a few, narrowly defined exceptional situations (Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* XXII, 74–75).

Hence, as far as the goal is concerned, there is a broad consensus among Christians: The goal must be a just peace in a positive and comprehensive sense. Regarding the *action-guiding teleological vision*, which arises on the basis of *virtuous dispositions of character including active non-violence*, there is no dissent between the representatives of the two currents of tradition. This is probably one reason why *active non-violence* is a key concept in the most recent Peace Statement of the Catholic bishops. At a central point in this text there is talk of “[a]ctive non-violence as a form of struggle for a just peace” (The German Bishops 2024, 49).

Active non-violence is considered to be a virtue since it is more than a *mere renunciation of violence* and a *passive toleration of violence*. Non-violence and renunciation of violence are therefore not signs of weakness, but an expression of inner strength (The German Bishops 2024, 49–50).

4 Virtue-Ethics-cum-Deontology: The Disagreement over the Deontological Principles Associated with Virtue

In the context of my reflections, the term “virtue ethics” and concepts derived from it do not stand for an independent paradigm of ethics alongside the consequentialist and deontological approaches. There are a number of thinkers who hold this view (Hursthouse 1999; Hursthouse and Pettigrove 2023). In my opinion, virtue ethics cannot be separated from deontological principles or from the weighing of the consequences of actions. But the virtue-ethical perspective is crucially important in many areas of ethics because it places the agent and his or her character dispositions at the center of ethical reflection – it is *agent-centered*, not *action-centered*. The focus of ethical reflection is on persons and their character qualities. The other ethical dimensions – *the quality of the actions* and *the conse-*

quences of actions – do not become insignificant as a result. This is also the point of view that has characterized the broad stream of ethical thought in the Christian tradition.

The above mentioned two major peace ethical traditions are united by their shared vision of the goal and its foundation in virtuous character. Disagreement arises when it comes to the question of *the deontological principles*³ that go along with this and are *action-centered*, not *agent-centered*. This is evident when one asks the inevitable question of

- i. whether non-violence is a “preferential option” that allows for *exceptions under certain, narrowly defined conditions of action*, or
- ii. whether it implies *an exceptionless moral norm*⁴ (Finnis 1991, 2; Curran 1998, 72ff.) stating that no form of violent force is legitimate, even if it represents a lesser evil.

The criteria for determining the permissible exceptions are roughly as follows:

- i. In principle, (violent) force is only legitimate in the form of counterforce, namely (a) in situations of self-defense, (b) when it comes to emergency protective measures or (c) to protect defenseless victims of the most serious and systematic human rights violations.
- ii. Even in these cases, the use of force is only legitimate as a last resort and on the basis of international legal regulations and procedures.
- iii. Furthermore, the use of force must be proportionate, target-oriented, and based on the rules of *ius in bello*.

In short: There are legitimate forms of the use of force. But they nevertheless constitute an evil that must always be limited to the lowest possible level (The German bishops 2024, 2.3.2, 2.4.2). The criteria listed can be applied in an analogous way to other forms of the use of force, e.g., by the police.

At this point, which is marked by the question of whether there are legitimate forms of force from a Christian perspective, there is an unbridgeable gap. This is reflected in the massive accusations made in this context, including the accusation of betraying the gospel of Jesus. For Christians, the key question in this context is whether the Christian commandment of love, which also includes love of one’s enemies, *excludes* these forms of a use of force that many consider to be

³ Deontology, deontological – derived from the Greek *to deon*: what we ought to do, the duty, obligation.

⁴ Similar formulations: an absolute moral norm / an unconditionally valid principle / a universally valid negative precept, immutable and unconditional / universally binding moral norms . . .

legitimate and necessary. The official Catholic position – following Thomas Aquinas – makes the distinction between the love of the enemy *as an enemy* and the love of the enemy *as a human being* and argues that the love of the enemy does not require us to love the enemy *on the basis of his enmity*, but *on the basis of our common humanity*. The love of the enemy is not about loving *the enmity of the other*. Hence, one is allowed to defend oneself against the enemy (The German Bishops 2024, 48).

5 Preferential Option for Non-Violence, but Not an Absolute Renunciation of Violent Force

What I have just said also indicates what the bishops' common position is in the aforementioned disagreement. Despite their advocacy of a constructive dialog between the two major traditions, they argue for the (deontological) norm: Primary option for non-violence, but not an absolute renunciation of the use of violent force (The German Bishops 2024, 51).

This ethical norm is also the background for their position on the war in Ukraine. It is based on the following political assessment: “We deplore the invasion of an internationally recognised country, a war of aggression that violates the ban on the use of force enshrined in the United Nations Charter – and was therefore rightly condemned by a large majority of the UN General Assembly” (The German Bishops 2022, 1). Building on this, they “consider arms deliveries to Ukraine, which serve to enable the country under attack to exercise its right to self-defense, guaranteed under international law and also affirmed by the Church’s peace ethic, to be legitimate in principle” (The German Bishops 2022, 2).

The virtue of active non-violence goes hand in hand with a strict and absolute commitment to a continuous action-guiding orientation towards peace. *The corresponding deontological principle* has exceptions. It is not an unrestrictedly valid negative precept, a moral norm that applies without exceptions. However, the exceptions are – as already mentioned – narrowly limited.

Analogous to this, with reference to the commandment to love one’s enemies, one can argue that the radical nature of the Beatitudes in Matthew’s Gospel, which portray the radical nature of Jesus, concern *the virtues and the goals given with them*, and that they must not be directly translated into *universally valid principles of political ethics*. The correct hermeneutical approach to the impact of the biblical writings on Christian ethics is: “[T]he Bible’s most effective contribution to Christian ethics is *to form the character of the ethical decision maker*” (Deidun 1998, 26–27; italics mine).

6 Does it Follow from the Thesis “War is Contrary to the Will of God” That War Can No Longer Be an Act of Justice Today?

Important theological and anthropological convictions flow into the Catholic bishops’ considerations on peace ethics. This becomes clear, for example, when in *Just Peace* the following passage from Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World entitled *Gaudium et Spes* is quoted, which states that a peace without the threat of war is theologically only conceivable as an eschatological reality: “Insofar as men are sinful, the threat of war hangs over them, and hang over them it will until the return of Christ” (Second Vatican Council: *Gaudium et Spes* 1965, chp. V, no. 78; quoted in The German Bishops 2024, 109).

The reference to the much-quoted thesis of the First Assembly of the *World Council of Churches* (WCC) in Amsterdam in 1948 “War is contrary to the will of God” (World Council of Churches 1949, 89) therefore does not help to overcome the controversy over the question of which deontological principle corresponds to the virtue of active non-violence. Even within the radically pacifist movement of the Catholic Church *Pax Christi*, which today is a strongly ecumenical movement, there have been increasing differences of opinion in this regard since the beginning of the war in Ukraine (Pax Christi 2022).

It is indeed right to say “War is contrary to the will of God”. But the ecumenical World Council of Churches (WCC) also stated that there is certainly no unanimous answer to the inescapable question of whether war can still be an act of justice today (World Council of Churches 1949, 89–90).

There are good reasons for abandoning *the concept of just war*, such as the fact that it can be so easily misunderstood. But we cannot get rid of the question of *the legitimate use of force*, which is what the tradition of just war thinking has essentially been about (Mayer 2005; Rudolf 2014). The theory of just war will only be truly overcome once an international legal order has been established in which (a) international law applies *and* (b) can be enforced. When this is the case, the distinction between *just* and *unjust* wars will be replaced by that between *legal* and *illegal* wars (Habermas 2004, 102). This is the Kantian program – a program that is currently highly endangered (Kant [1796] 2006; Habermas 1995)! As long as there is a lack of the capacity to enforce the law by means of the lawful use of force in many places, we will continue to think about whether a war is just.

7 The Specific Nature of the Peace Ethical Approach of the Catholic Social Doctrine

It makes sense to conclude the preceding reflections on the relationship between non-violence and the legitimate use of force with thoughts on the specific nature of peace ethical thinking within the framework of Catholic social teaching. The aim is to sharpen its profile from a methodological perspective and illuminate its possibilities and limitations.

First of all, it is important to emphasize that it is not a *secular, philosophically conceived* peace ethics, but a *theological-ethical* one! Despite the frequent use of the word “ethics” and related terms, which are generally associated with a specific type of *philosophical* thinking, the method of ethical reflection in the context of Catholic social and peace teaching is strongly influenced by *theological* principles from the beginning.

Immanuel Kant famously argued that ethics⁵ essentially has two major tasks, which should be clearly distinguished. The primary task is to explain and justify the criteria we can use to distinguish between “morally right” and “morally wrong” (or “good” and “evil”), and in this way to provide us with standards by which we can convincingly explain the binding nature of certain moral principles such as “It is morally wrong to kill innocent people!” This narrow core area of moral thinking is primarily concerned with the question of which actions are morally *prohibited*, which are morally *permissible* and which are morally *required*.

However, this is only one of the two key questions in ethics: the question of the criterion for distinguishing between morally right and morally wrong. The principle at issue here is called *principium diiudicationis*: the principle of adjudication or judgment; that is the principle by which we judge the quality of a course of action from a moral perspective. The other is the question of moral motivation which asks about the moving force that leads to ethical action. The principle at issue here is called *principium executionis*: the principle of execution or motivation; that is the principle which explains how what has been recognized as morally right comes about (Trampota 2010, 139ff.).

If one approaches the Catholic social teaching of the last two Peace Statements with these questions in mind, it is evident that both questions are answered in a distinctly *theological-ethical* way. Is this clear from the outset anyway? Not at all, since the Church’s peace doctrine addresses the faithful on the one hand, but also – as we read again and again in official church documents –

⁵ He speaks of moral philosophy.

“all people of good will,” especially in ethical matters. In *“Peace to this household”*, for example, we read: “In following Jesus, we are [. . .] called upon to seek an exchange with all people of good will” (The German Bishops 2024, 150). Hence, the peace ethical considerations in the Peace Statements operate on different levels, as the following Statement from *A Just Peace* makes clear: “If the Church expresses opinions on political issues, she does so on the basis of a faith that is obviously not shared by everyone. Her arguments, however, are founded in common reason” (The German Bishops 2000, 23). In specific contexts it is not always easy to distinguish on which basis she operates, that of faith or that of common reason.

7.1 *Principium Executionis*

As far as the *principium executionis* is concerned, i.e., the question of execution and the motivation required for this, it is clear that the potential motivating force that springs from faith goes far beyond what might be considered reasonable from a secular point of view. The source of this motivation is *the anticipation of the messianic peace* that characterizes the kingdom of God, which has already dawned for the believer but is not yet complete. Only believers have access to this *expectation of God’s just peace*. For it presupposes – I am paraphrasing a thought from *A Just Peace* – that people trust God and each other *without reservation* and, hence, can renounce violence. To the extent that they are able to do so, it is possible for Christians to transcend the order secured by the threat of force. Here is what the German bishops’ Conference says:

[. . .] faith can help reason to surpass itself without abdicating reasonableness. Faith encourages and propels reason to take the initial steps towards a messianic peace within the existing system in order to create a more reasonable and humane world. Christians can partake of this experiment, secure in and strengthened by the experience that faith, the unconditional trust in the power of God’s love, has made possible. Such experiences sharpen our awareness of the negative aspects of a peace protected by the threat of violence. Such an awareness can lead to dissatisfaction with the status quo and keep alive the desire for messianic peace. (The German Bishops 2000, 23)

This is the special faith-based motivation for the anticipation of a just peace (Trampota 2024, 241ff.). The theologian Moltmann describes the heart of the Christian *messianic ethics* as follows: “[It] celebrates and *anticipates the presence of God in history*. It wants to *practice the unconditioned within the conditioned and the last things in the next to last*” (Moltmann 2006, 47; italics mine).

7.2 *Principium Diiudicationis*

The reference to specific *theological* principles in the peace ethical thinking of the Catholic Church is not limited to the *principium executionis*. It also shapes the *principium diiudicationis*. This becomes evident, for example, in the following passage, which emphasizes *the special epistemic access to reality* that is opened up by faith: “The Christian faith *inspires a new way of seeing by opening our eyes*. It is with this new perspective that we offer the fundamental principles of the Catholic social doctrine to all as a framework for ethical orientation” (The German Bishops 2024, 24; italics mine). The statement can be found in the context of reflections on the Second Vatican Council’s description of the mission and constant duty of the Church as “scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* 1965, 4).

In this context, it is explained what is meant by “the new way of seeing, which is inspired by the Christian faith”. It is emphasized that it “is not a matter of another reality, or of ‘alternative facts’” (The German Bishops 2024, 22). However, although for the Church “the description and analysis of a specific historical situation in social science terms” (The German Bishops 2024, 22) is important, her interpretation of the signs of the times – it is emphasized – “does not [. . .] merely reiterate in religious language” (The German Bishops 2024, 22) this description and analysis because it sees this reality with different eyes. A little later, the light in which the altered view of reality is possible, is described as *the light of divine prophecy*:

The News of the Kingdom of God draws a promising contrast which corrects any ideological blurring of the violence as it really occurs, and provides a motivation to resist because it feeds hope for change. It is on this hope that criticism of the Old Testament prophets is based, and following on from this tradition, the Church assumes Her responsibility vis-à-vis policy-makers and society by endeavouring to ‘see human reality in the light of divine prophecy’.⁶ (The German Bishops 2024, 22–23)

If Catholic social teaching – as we have heard – is also offered to non-believers as an ethical framework for orientation, the question naturally arises as to whether and how this is possible independent of the special epistemic access to reality based on faith.

⁶ The German Bishops 2000, 8.

7.3 “Moments of Continuity” but also “Learning and Realization Processes” (The German Bishops 2024, 11)

As has already become apparent, the most recent history of Catholic peace teaching stands in a certain continuity with what has been taught over the centuries, but on the other hand also claims a path of development and speaks of “reorientations” (The German Bishops 2024, 27). On the one hand, the conviction is expressed “that the fundamental insights which [. . .] [the] Church [. . .] [has] gained over the centuries are right” (The German Bishops 2024, 12). On the other hand, her social teaching is described as a constant learning process: “The Catholic social doctrine is [. . .] executed as a constant process of learning in which knowledge flows together from a variety of sources” (The German Bishops 2024, 22). An important example of continuity is the conviction that the norm of a primary option for non-violence does not include refraining absolutely from the use of violent force (The German Bishops 2024, 51). Examples of reorientations in Catholic social teaching include the entrenchment of the idea of human rights and the realization of the importance of development and ecology for peace (The German Bishops 2024, 27).

7.4 Ethics or Philosophy Respectively Theology of History?

Much of what is discussed in the context of the Catholic peace and social doctrine under the headings “ethics” and “peace ethics” is reminiscent of an *ethically formed philosophy resp. theology of history* as we know it for example from Hegel’s philosophy with its dialectical analysis of development processes (Henrici 2009; Angehrn 2014). A good example of this is – as previously mentioned – that in the most recent Peace Statements the concept of just war only appears *in a transformed way* in the context of the concept of just peace. This reminds us of the Hegelian concept of sublation (*Aufhebung*) with its three dimensions:

- i. sublation as destruction (*negatio*),
- ii. sublation as preservation (*conservatio*), and
- iii. sublation as elevation to a higher level (*elevatio*) (Hegel [1812/13] 1978, 57).

Against this background, one could say that the concept of just war is “sublated” in this threefold sense into the concept of just peace. But regardless of this specific example, the peace ethical thinking of Catholic social teaching in general has many similarities to this kind of thinking because ethics is so closely intertwined with the “analysis of society and societal change” (The German Bishops 2024, 2.2.).

From a secular ethical perspective, however, it is crucial to distinguish between the theory of just war and the theory of just peace *in terms of action theory*.⁷ Then one realizes that the theory of just war, if it is understood positively as *a theory of the legitimate use of force* (Rudolf 2014, 6), is essentially a *reactive* doctrine which is based on the concept of *negative freedom*: freedom *from something*. From an ethical perspective it is a contribution to the establishment of a *negative peace* understood as the absence of violence, conflict and war by *limiting* and *overcoming* these negative forces! In contrast to this the doctrine of just peace focuses on the *positive concept of freedom*: freedom *to something*. It is a contribution to *preventing* violence, conflict and war by establishing everything that is needed (protection against violence, promotion of freedom, reduction of poverty, promotion of Global justice . . .) to bring about a *positive, lasting peace* which is more than the absence of violence, conflict and war. Seen in this light, it is highly questionable whether one theory can be replaced by the other or “sublated” into the other.

It might be better to think of them as complementary (Bormann 2023, These 4; Trampota 2024, 243–244), unless of course one starts with the firm conviction that history must be imagined as a constant upward movement and that the next phase will be a more positive replacement for the preceding – as the above quoted passage from the Ecumenical Council of the GDR might suggest: “*Having through necessity overcome the institution of war, the doctrine of a just war intended by the Churches to humanize war is likewise becoming invalid*” (Italics mine). But then the question would arise what the foundation for such a conviction is: faith or common reason or neither of the two?

The decisive reason why the theories of just war and just peace are (a) *different* and (b) *complementary* from an ethical point of view is that human flourishing in the ethical sense has an *active-reflective* and a *passive-receptive* dimension, both for the individual as well as for the (state) community – two dimensions which were clearly distinguished in the early days of Western ethics. On the one hand, human flourishing is about *doing the right thing* by first and foremost *refraining from doing wrong*; but on the other hand, it is also about making oneself strong enough to protect oneself against *suffering injustice from others*, for example by *becoming a victim of violence*. “[N]either to do wrong oneself nor to suffer wrong from others” (Plato, *Laws* VIII, 829a) is a formula often used in antiquity

⁷ Action theory is an area of philosophy that understands human actions as intentional bodily movements, drawing on concepts such as desire, purpose, deliberation, decision, intention, trying and free will.

that combines these two fundamental ethical aspects and emphasizes their complementarity.

A distinction is thus made between two action-theoretical perspectives, which are *different* from an ethical point of view. Neither can be reduced to the other because one represents the *active-reflective* side, whereas the other represents the *passive-receptive* side of the agent. Both are equally constitutive for the flourishing of *rational beings with mind and body* such as humans. Hence, the two sides are complementary. And that is why both the theory of just peace and the theory of just war are indispensable.

The two theories are complementary because human life is as much about *containing and limiting violence, conflict and war* as it is about *permanently overcoming them*. Anyone who attempts to “sublate” this duality and complementarity of action theory and ethics, which has anthropological roots, into philosophy of history or theology of history, must ask themselves whether they are not undermining the ethical perspective by means of a myth of progress. They must confront sociological theses such as that of Hans Joas, who claims: “Anyone who takes the history of violence of the 20th century seriously can hardly believe in myths of progress” (Joas 2000, 11).

As we have seen, there are good reasons that speak in favor of the teleological guiding principle of just peace. But those who draw the conclusion from this that theories that pursue more limited and modest objectives are “sublated” into this comprehensive vision of the goal should take seriously what peace researchers such as Ernst-Otto Czempiel have said about the concept of peace: “Peace research has no clear concept of peace. Its guiding cognitive interest is distinct but diffuse” (Czempiel 2002, 43; my translation). From this he concludes that peace research should outline its object of knowledge more precisely to be able to work on it successfully in a scientific way, and he argues that this object can only be the elimination of war (Czempiel 2002, 45) – or as one could perhaps add: the elimination of violence, conflict and war. Johan Galtung (1975, 48) has already expressed the view that, just as medicine deals with human health but focuses on disease and its elimination, so peace research must work on bringing about the indefinable peace – *per negationem* – through the elimination of violence, conflict and war.

8 Conclusion

As indicated above, there are good reasons for adhering to *the teleological guiding principle of just peace*. But it by no means follows from this that *the deontological*

principle “Si vis pacem, para bellum” (If you want peace, prepare for war!),⁸ which in connection with this teleological guiding principle has played a central role since antiquity, is therefore *replaced* by the principle “Si vis pacem, para pacem” (If you want peace, prepare for peace!) or that the former is *sublated* into the latter. In any case, this is not possible if the topic is not only social teaching and philosophy resp. theology of history, but also ethics, law, and a rule- and law-based international political order. If one does not see the traditional theory of just war (Brunstetter and O’Driscoll 2017) as a pragmatic instrument for legitimizing violence (a theory which helps us find reasons for going to war), but as a normative theory that provides us with the categories that give structure to a public discourse on justifiable forms of the use of force *from an ethical point of view*, then it is of great importance, not least in the assessment of *military force*, but also for the evaluation of *the law-preserving and law-restoring coercion* that is an integral part of our concept of law (Rudolf 2014, 5–6; Trampota 2024, 244; Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland ²2007, 3.2). In the world in which we live, such a theory is indispensable.

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8 The basic idea behind this principle can already be found in Plato: *Nomoi* VIII, 829a.

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Part III: **Insights from a South African Perspective**

Funlola O. Olojede

“What Have You to Do with Peace?” (2 Kings 9:17–22): Complexities of War and Peace in the Russian-Ukrainian War and South Africa’s Position

1 Introduction

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a military action against Ukraine because, according to Russia’s president Putin, Russia has a historic claim and the right to rule Ukraine, and because Russia’s national security is threatened by Ukraine’s desire to join NATO, which is expanding westward, and by the support Ukraine is receiving from the United States and Western Europe. But this is not a proxy war between NATO and Russia; it is a Russia-versus-Ukraine war. The invasion sent shock waves throughout the world, as it was anticipated that the impact of a Russian-Ukrainian war on the globe would be very severe. Russia is the world’s third-largest producer of crude oil, a major supplier of gas and is responsible for 14 percent of Global fertilizer exports, while Ukraine is one of the world’s largest exporters of wheat and sunflower (Lim et al. 2022, 23–26). A full-blown war between Russia and Ukraine would cause much hardship around the world especially in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic. Two and a half years down the line, the effects of the war on both Russia and Ukraine, the rest of Europe and the world at large remain unquantifiable. The impact of the war is multidimensional, ranging from economy and environment to society and health. On the side of Ukraine, forced migrations and internal displacement of the citizenry became the order of the day, while the two territories are characterized by intense unrest, death and deprivation.

This essay examines the position of South Africa in the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. In light of the perennial human quest for peace, it employs Jehu’s question “What peace?” in 2 Kings 9:14–26 as a hermeneutical lens to reflect on the meaning of peace in this war.

2 South Africa and the Russian-Ukrainian War

In wars between nations, it is typical that governments of other nations would take sides with either of the warring nations based on existing political and economic alliances, among other factors. However, in the Russian-Ukrainian case, it

appears Ukraine has garnered more sympathy from the international community than its aggressor, especially among their neighbors. In relation to the fighting itself,

“A crucial asymmetry is found in the international setting [. . .] Moscow fights solo, with its only comrades in arms two unrecognized satellites (“people’s republics”) in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. Belarus allows Russia to use bases there to attack Ukraine but has not contributed troops. On the other hand, Kyiv’s burden is shared by G7, more than 30 other countries including the US and the EU. Aid and military assistance poured in for Ukraine whilst sanctions have been meted against Russia.” (Colton 2022, 21)

Whereas the ties between Ukraine and the rest of the Western world became stronger due to the war, Russia’s relations with other Western nations seemed to deteriorate (Colton 2022, 30). Further afield, even though several non-Western nations have thrown their political and/or military weight behind Ukraine, the South African government has taken what it calls a “non-alignment” or neutral stance in the Russian-Ukrainian war. But critics consider South Africa’s claim that it is “actively non-aligned” (Reuters 2023)¹ a facade and a tactical support of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. They argue that South Africa’s actions suggest that the Ramaphosa-led ANC government is actually taking sides with Putin’s government against Ukraine.

For instance, in May 2023, South Africa was accused openly of supplying arms to Russia. According to the US ambassador to South Africa, intelligence report showed that in December 2022, a US sanctioned Russian cargo ship was sighted in Cape Town, loading up and shipping weapons and ammunition to Moscow. The South African government denied the allegation and promised to launch an investigation into the matter, but it never issued any update on the outcome of the investigation. Earlier, South Africa (along with some other African countries) had abstained from voting on United Nations resolutions that condemn the war (Reuters 2023) and later also from a UN Human Rights Council vote to assist Ukraine with a human rights initiative. Furthermore, in January 2023, South Africa engaged in joint naval training drills with Russia and China and played host to Sergei Lavrov, Russia’s foreign minister who also attended this event (Gramer 2023).² The event is perceived by observers as South Africa strengthening its military ties with Russia. Later in July, President Cyril Ramaphosa and some of his

1 A news report confirms that “South Africa’s presidential security advisor said [. . .] the country was ‘actively non-aligned’ in Russia’s war against Ukraine, after U.S. allegations it had supplied weapons to Moscow led to a diplomatic crisis this week” (Reuters 2023).

2 Liubov Abravitova, Ukraine’s ambassador to South Africa, criticized the military drills, saying, “And on South Africa, Russia, China military exercises, let me just ask you, what the army that is

key ministers attended a Russian-African summit in St. Petersburg, from which many African leaders withdrew. Consequently, in what turned out to be a diplomatic spat, the South African government openly and repeatedly criticized the United States, which in turn accused South Africa of not respecting its professed non-alignment policy.

South Africa’s leading opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, also decried the government’s stance on Russia, noting that the arms deal fiasco “proves not only that South Africa is not non-aligned in Russia’s war on Ukraine, but that President Ramaphosa and his government have already lied to South Africa and the world as to our country’s involvement in this devastating conflict,” and that the South African government is in fact on the side of Russia (Steenhuisen 2023).

However, President Ramaphosa defended the non-alignment stance of his government. He called for an end to the war, saying, “As South Africa we continue to maintain our position that this conflict should be settled through negotiation and by diplomatic means, in line with founding principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, and that it is in the collective interest of everyone that it come to an end soon.” We should recall that South Africa joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) following its independence in 1994. The president therefore claimed that his non-alignment stance, which a foreign policy report refers to as “nonsensical” (Gramer 2023), is in line with the principles of the NAM that promote dialogue and peaceful negotiation.

As if to save face in the face of mounting US pressure, President Ramaphosa led what was dubbed a “peace mission” or an African Peace Initiative to Ukraine and Russia in June 2023. The delegation comprised of Senegal’s President Macky Sall, Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema and Comoros President Azali Assoumani, who also holds the rotating chair of the AU along with two other emissaries from the DRC and Uganda. The group called for a deescalation of fighting and a resolution of the war through dialogue. It also called for the release of prisoners of war and return of children, among other things. These leaders noted that the war was hurting Africa, as the food security of a number of African nations is being threatened, for example, because of a shortage of about 30 million tonnes of the grains that used to come from Ukraine as well as the disruptions in the supply chain which have caused a shortage of fertilizers in Africa, leading to a sharp rise in food prices.

Putin’s response to most of their peace proposals was that of dismissal. He insisted that Ukraine must recognize the Crimean Peninsula which he annexed in

killing innocent people, the army of rapists and murderers, what can they bring to [the] South African army as added value?” (Bartlett 2023a).

2014, as *bona fide* Russian territory. Ukraine's position on the other hand is that fighting would continue and unless Russia withdraws its troops from the areas it is occupying, there can be no peace talks. The African peace delegation therefore did not seem to accomplish much. In the broader African context, there appears to be some sort of apathy towards the war in a number of countries despite its economic impact on the continent. Africans are no strangers to conflict and the thinking in some quarters is, "It is their war, not ours," and that the weakness of the African mission to Kyiv and Moscow lies in the fact that Africa has not been able to resolve its own conflicts. Why should it then be bothered about the Russian-Ukrainian situation or why should the West expect African leaders to side automatically with it against Russia? The voting pattern in the UN General Assembly in which several developing countries adopted a "non-aligned" stance in respect to Russia reflects this line of thinking.

What then could cause President Ramaphosa to take sides openly with Putin and Moscow despite sharp condemnation of the war by the Western world and the United States, and knowing that such a stance could jeopardize South Africa's economic relations with the West and in particular with the United States? South Africa's membership of the BRICS group of leading, emerging economies, which includes Brazil, India and China as well as Russia, paints it as an ally of and being in solidarity with Russia. However, analysts also argue that geopolitically speaking, the BRICS membership plays a very minimal role in South Africa's support of Russia against Ukraine, that South Africa's trade with Russia is negligible and that the economic ties between the two countries are not that strong. Rather, they point to the historical ties with Moscow that date back to the time of apartheid when the USSR unflinchingly supported the African National Congress (ANC) movement against the apartheid state.

Thus, the backdrop of South Africa's latent empathy for Russia is Moscow's long-standing historical relationship with the ANC leadership. The members of uMkhonto we Sizwe (Xhosa, Zulu and Ndebele meaning "Spear of the Nation"; abbreviated MK), which was the paramilitary arm of the ANC founded by Nelson Mandela in December 1961 after the Sharpsville Massacre, were communist allies. The resistant movement at that time sought refuge under the wings of the Soviet Union, which then became its most powerful ally and benefactor. Thus, the ANC leadership entered into an agreement with Moscow to help with the military training of the uMkhonto we Sizwe based on a request by Oliver Tambo. From 1963 onwards, several ANC leaders including Thabo Mbeki, Oliver Tambo, Chris Hani,³ Moses Ko-

³ Chris Hani, who later became the MK Chief of Staff and the General-Secretary of the SACP, was assassinated in April 1993 by the radical right-wing Polish immigrant Janusz Waluś in collabora-

tane, Duma Nokwe, Joe Slovo and Ambrose Makiwane, and many others, therefore received military and tactical training, and training in guerrilla warfare, military strategy and tactics, topography, drilling and the use of firearms in the USSR, which also supplied the ANC with hardware (South African History Online 2019).

Subsequently, more than 2000 cadres of the MK were trained in the USSR. Ironically, some of the training took place in the Ukrainian city of Odessa, where 328 cadres were trained between 1963 and 1965. Clearly, South Africa considers Russia an old friend and seems to subscribe to the principle of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend and the enemy of my friend is my enemy” (Galam 2023). However, it forgets that Ukraine also used to be a friend or unless of course South Africa has become to Ukraine a fair-weather friend. The argument that South Africa is pandering to Moscow due to historical ties between the two therefore appears insufficient since comparably it has the same ties with Ukraine as well. As part of the former Soviet Union, Ukraine had supported South Africans’ struggle against apartheid (Bartlett 2023a).

What more then could be responsible for South Africa’s stance in this war? Are there more powerful forces behind the ANC government’s position than what historical ties portend? Nancy Bedford mentions in her article that we should follow the money.⁴ Interestingly, that is what journalists are trained to do. When complex news breaks – they are trained to follow the money. In the case of the ANC-Russia relationship, a trail of money has revealed that the powerful force behind the ANC government’s position in this war is corruption and not some ideological or historical affinity with Russia.⁵

It is reported that the ruling party ANC has been struggling financially for some time, so much so that it even struggles at times to pay staff at its headquarters. Critics however uncover a Russian trail involving the highly lucrative United Manganese of Kalahari (UMK) mines, with close financial links to sanctioned Russian oligarch Viktor Vekselberg, who is a key ally of President Vladimir Putin. Another major shareholder in the UMK mines is Chancellor House Holdings (CHH), a holding company linked to the ANC, which has secretly made huge donations to the party in recent years, becoming, as a matter of fact, the ANC’s biggest funder. The leader of South Africa’s main opposition party and a Member of Parliament,

tion with Clive Derby-Lewis, a shadow minister in the apartheid government. The aim was to pre-empt and disrupt the proposed democratic elections slated for 1994.

⁴ For further details, see the article of Nancy Bedford in this volume.

⁵ Special thanks to Pulitzer award-winning journalist Dele Olojede for pointing out this dimension in a personal discussion in December 2023.

John Steenhuisen, confirms that, “The ANC is siding with Russia for one reason alone: because the Russian Federation is funding the ANC, and thus infiltrating and destabilizing South African democracy” (Steenhuisen 2023). If behind the South Africa’s government’s profession of non-alignment is Russian money, then, the country’s nascent democracy is already in jeopardy.

In the next section therefore, I use the question by Jehu in 2 Kgs 19, “What peace?,” as a hermeneutical lens perfunctorily to view the Russian-Ukrainian situation.

3 Jehu: What Peace?

In 2 Kings 9:14–26,⁶ we read the story of Jehu who earlier had been anointed privately by Elisha’s aide as king of Israel in vv. 1–10. He immediately swings into ac-

⁶ The text of 2 Kings 9:14–26 reads: ¹⁴So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram. (Now Joram had been defending Ramoth Gilead, he and all Israel, against Hazael king of Syria. ¹⁵But King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which the Syrians had inflicted on him when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, “If you are so minded, let no one leave or escape from the city to go and tell it in Jezreel.” ¹⁶So Jehu rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel, for Joram was laid up there; and Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to see Joram. ¹⁷Now a watchman stood on the tower in Jezreel, and he saw the company of Jehu as he came, and said, “I see a company of men.” And Joram said, “Get a horseman and send him to meet them, and let him say, ‘*Is it peace?*’” ¹⁸So the horseman went to meet him, and said, “Thus says the king: ‘*Is it peace?*’” And Jehu said, “What have you to do with peace? Turn around and follow me.” So the watchman reported, saying, “The messenger went to them, but is not coming back.” ¹⁹Then he sent out a second horseman who came to them, and said, “Thus says the king: ‘*Is it peace?*’” And Jehu answered, “*What have you to do with peace?* Turn around and follow me.” ²⁰So the watchman reported, saying, “He went up to them and is not coming back; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously!” ²¹Then Joram said, “Make ready.” And his chariot was made ready. Then Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot; and they went out to meet Jehu, and met him on the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. ²²Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, “*Is it peace, Jehu?*” So he answered, “*What peace,* as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?” ²³Then Joram turned around and fled, and said to Ahaziah, “Treachery, Ahaziah!” ²⁴Now Jehu drew his bow with full strength and shot Jehoram between his arms; and the arrow came out at his heart, and he sank down in his chariot. ²⁵Then Jehu said to Bidkar his captain, “Pick him up, and throw him into the tract of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember, when you and I were riding together behind Ahab his father, that the Lord laid this burden upon him: ²⁶‘Surely I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,’ says the Lord, ‘and I will repay you in this plot,’ says the Lord. Now therefore, take and throw him on the plot of ground, according to the word of the Lord.” (Translation: New King James Version. Emphasis by the author)

tion by plotting to overthrow and kill Joram, the reigning king of Israel. Joram sends messengers to Jehu to ask him, “Is it peace?” Four times, this question is asked in the passage (vv. 17, 18, 19, 20),⁷ and Jehu’s answer is, “What have you to do with peace?” (vv. 18, 19) and, “What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?” (v. 22). Brueggemann remarks that, “For all of the use of the term in the account, there is here not a hint of *shalom* in the events narrated” (Brueggeman 2000, 386). But Olyan notes the literary significance of the repetition of the term *shalom* in the passage, which he claims is a binding motif in the narrative (Olyan 1984, 652–668).

The question Jehu is asked and his answers point to the reality of the quest for peace across ages that is ironically often accompanied by the resistance to peace. Jehu’s questions (What peace? What have you to do with peace?) underscore the elusiveness of peace as a concept and a reality. Peace is perspectival, that is what the question draws our attention to. However, for Jehu, peace is not even on the cards. As Sweeney points out, “Jehu sarcastically responds with a rhetorical question that asserts that peace is impossible” (Sweeney 2007, 334). Often-times, the actions of some rulers in situations of conflict indicate that they are not interested in peace or settlement, but in war. In the biblical world also, it was not uncommon to send emissaries of peace when one party perceived that the other was displaying hostility or simply wanted to prevent hostility. Toi, king of Hamath, sent envoys to David with a message of peace after David defeated Haddadzer (2 Sam 8:10). It was also not uncommon that such peace moves were rebuffed, as Nabal did when David sent him a message of peace (1 Sam 25:4–13).

King Joram sent his envoys to Jehu to ask, “Is it peace?” In other words, the king is ready to negotiate peace with Jehu. For Jehu, however, bloodshed is non-negotiable. There is no room for peace. The kings (Joram and Ahaziah of Judah) also therefore go out to entreat him peacefully but Jehu refuses to back down. Wiseman notes that, “Jehu rejected any possibility of covenant-agreement on the grounds that he would not be associated with them so long as Jezebel’s pagan influence was allowed to continue” (v. 22) (Wiseman 1993, 222). In order to show that he means business when he says there is no room for peace, Jehu becomes the aggressor and proceeds to overthrow the house of Omri, as he exterminates the two royal families of Israel and Judah – the two kings, the seventy sons of Ahab, Queen Jezebel and forty-two relatives of Ahaziah – as well as all the worshippers of Baal in the land (10:1–30). Interestingly, Jezebel’s sarcastic question to

⁷ Earlier and following the anointing of Jehu by a servant of Elisha, one of Jehu’s aides had also asked him the question, “Is it peace?” (2 Kgs 9:11). He sought to know whether Elisha’s servant had come peaceably.

Jehu, just before he asks that she be assassinated, also has to do with peace: “Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?”

To Jehu, therefore, peace is a revolutionary act of getting rid of evil, of sanitizing the throne of Israel through violence, of regicide and of seizing the throne. Jehu then questions what he sees as the superficial peace espoused by Joram, the king of Israel, and published by his servants. Joram’s idea of peace thrives in wrongdoing and Jehu tries to show that even though there may be no war in the land, it does not imply that there is peace. He answers Joram, “How can there be peace when the whoredoms and witchcrafts of your mother Jezebel are so many?” In other words, the superficial peace that you are offering now cannot erase the violent acts of your parents against Naboth whose vineyard they took and whose blood they shed.

Can superficial peace erase the generational violence against Ukraine? Joram seeks “peace” but ultimately pays with his own blood. Jehu seeks to define peace on his own, not Joram’s, terms. Oddly, Jehu tries to legitimize bloodshed by insisting that he is acting according to YHWH’s command (Sweeney 2007, 25–26). Remarkably, Jehu appears to use religion to legitimize his action only when it suits him. In 2 Kings 9:26, he quoted Elisha’s pronouncement against Ahab that the Lord would avenge the blood of Naboth that was shed by Ahab (1 Kgs 21:19). Jehu however did not wait for the Lord to take vengeance; he did so himself!

This of course prompts us to ask, What role does religion or religious leaders play in ongoing wars around the globe? Without attempting to answer the question in this discussion, we do concur with Hobb’s assertion that

“Because of the predominant character of warfare, it is important to understand the nature and technical character of the activity and its social impact. Since religion provided motivation for warfare and then sustained warriors and kings at war, it is equally important to understand the role of religious thought and ideology in this activity and the way in which this activity and its remembrance shape the character of the host society, its – ideals and its values.” (Hobbs 2005, 975)

A theological definition of peace therefore needs to consider peace in its various dimensions – peace with God (Rom 5:1), peace with fellow human beings (Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14), peace with the environment or the rest of creation (Num 35:33–34), and peace with oneself (Php 4:7). In respect of the last dimension, peace with oneself, it is important to also ask, What does peace mean to the collective and what does peace mean to the individual?

On a group or collective level, if, as Joram would, we define peace as cease-fire, as the surrendering of weapons, as the suspension of violence, as restoration of socioeconomic activity, or for instance as a warm handshake between Putin and Zelenskyy, what would peace mean to the woman who has been gang raped

in the war? Would her question be like that of Jehu – What peace? What would peace mean to families living in the occupied territories when the war ends? What would peace mean to the child who lost both parents in the war? Would their answer be, What peace? As I wrote this essay, a beleaguered congregant in my local church said to me in a private conversation, “I am at war.” She was unaware that I was writing on war! Individual sufferings cannot and should not be overlooked in this war. And questions of just peace will need to take into account the plights of individuals, especially women, children and other vulnerable persons who may not be present or represented at the negotiation table.

4 Unavoidability of War?

War has been an integral part of human history and relations, and history across the ages has shown that war may be unavoidable in some situations. The biblical world had more than its own share of war as the text and several archaeological and historical studies attest. Hobbs notes that not only was Israel’s early political history shaped by war, its subsequent history was also characterized by “conflict, death and battle” (Hobbs 2005, 974). But war was not uniquely a feature of Israel’s history but of the hostile, competitive milieu of the ancient Near East as a whole:

“War was a common feature of life in the ancient Near East and in the world of the OT. Pillaging raids (2 Kings 13:20), intertribal conflict (Judg 19–20) and full-scale invasions (2 Kings 15:29) were expectations of life lived in a context of limited resources of unpredictable supply. States of war were without formal declaration and consisted of prolonged periods of conflict, raiding, skirmishing, besieging, pillaging and fighting.” (Hobbs 2005, 975)

Above, Hobbs shows that Israel engaged in wars in the “context of limited resources of unpredictable supply.” It is uncertain though that scarcity of resources was the motivation behind Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, given that Russia’s economic strength and human resources by far outweigh Ukraine’s. Could greed and desire to exercise hard power be contributing factors behind Russia’s aggression and imperial injustice being meted out to Ukraine?

If war is not completely unavoidable as the classical dictum in Ecclesiastes 3:8b that there is “a time of war, and a time of peace” also suggests, then, seeking and ensuring peace should also be non-negotiable. “*Si vis pacem, para bellum*” is a Latin adage translated as ‘If you want peace, prepare for war,’ which we are told could also be turned on its head to become, ‘If you want peace, prepare for peace.’ But what if some war-thirsty fellow affirms the corollary, ‘If you want war, prepare for war,’ then, the journey toward peace may indeed be a long one. As Hobbs affirms, in the ancient world, “The means of achieving ‘rest’ from ene-

mies or war [. . .] is not always peaceful. Often it is predicated on warfare, siege and conquest” (Hobbs 2005, 979). It seems not much has changed since the time of our ancestors, though. Today, there are rulers who like Jehu reject entreaties of peace and settle for war.

5 Danger of Neutrality and an Ethics of Compromise

For Jehu the question is, How can there be peace if we engage in wrongdoing? Or how can there be peace if we support wrongdoing? No doubt, supporting wrongdoing or turning a blind eye to wrongdoing emboldens the wrongdoer.

South Africa professes to be non-aligned in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Is this an ethical stance to take given that it was the refusal of other nations to be neutral, to be non-aligned that helped South Africans through the dark days of apartheid? The government’s claim of neutrality in the war contradicts South Africa’s public posture as a progressive country and its foreign policy posture of supporting the underdog. For example, South Africa is supporting Palestinians against the Israeli and it helped to negotiate peace in Ireland about 20 years ago. South Africa also helped mediate peace in several conflicts in Africa – in the DRC, in Burundi, in Sudan–South Sudan.

The ANC-led government of South Africa has come under fire for its stance and actions in the Russian-Ukrainian war. To quench that fire, the starting point may be to stop receiving handouts from blood-stained hands.

It has been more than thirty months since the current war began, yet peace is not in sight. Russia’s invasion of its neighbor is morally unjust but answers or solutions may entail an ethics of compromise, which implies that the solution may have to come from within rather than from without. An African (Yoruba) adage says, “The owner of the problem is the solver of the problem” (Alátiṣe ni mọ àtiṣe ara ẹ). Russia and Ukraine are siblings. A family problem can be resolved within the family through dialogue and compromise. Seeking a middle ground may entail making sacrifices on both sides and sacrifices that would guarantee the security of the most vulnerable victims of this war. But such an ethics of compromise, in my thinking, will demand that ethics be not compromised in that dialogue.

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Demaine Solomons

South Africa's Non-alignment Conundrum amidst the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict

1 Balancing an Act: Mapping the Landscape

South Africa's non-alignment stance on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has resulted in considerable debate about the feasibility and consequences of this approach, especially in highly polarized situations. Politically, non-alignment is characterized by avoiding allegiance to any grouping in a conflict, focusing instead on pragmatic and strategic interests. This strategy aligns closely with the principles of "realpolitik," a political philosophy centered on practicality and pursuing national interests above ideological or moral considerations. Pioneered by 19th-century Prussian statesman Otto von Bismarck, realpolitik underscores the importance of leveraging diplomacy, military strength, and alliances to consolidate national security and achieve political stability (Lerman 2004, ix–xi). Bismarck's application of this philosophy in Europe is often cited as an excellent example of balancing competing powers to preserve peace on the continent while maintaining Germany's preeminent position during his time in office. His ability to negotiate treaties, such as the Three Emperors' Alliance, exemplifies how strategic maneuvering can stabilize volatile geopolitical landscapes (Medlicott 1945). Today, the evolution of realpolitik into a broader framework for strategic statecraft has made it an invaluable tool for countries traversing complex geopolitical challenges. This often requires striking a balance between national aspirations and international obligations. This has allowed countries like South Africa to navigate complex Global dynamics without overtly aligning themselves with any particular bloc, thereby maintaining strategic autonomy while demonstrating high diplomatic flexibility. This principle is reflected in South Africa's apparent commitment to a non-alignment approach.

The notion of non-alignment is not new. Historically, it embodies the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement (hereafter NAM), established in 1961 as a platform for countries that chose not to align with the superpowers of the Cold War (Van der Westhuizen 2024, 613–614). At the time, the NAM's ethos, grounded in sovereignty, self-determination, and rejecting neocolonialism, strongly resonated with newly independent African nations and their liberation movements. The importance of non-alignment in specific contexts cannot be overstated. However,

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South Africa's non-alignment approach, particularly in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, has revealed critical shortcomings in coherence, consistency, and practical implementation. This has fueled intense debate about the feasibility and broader implications of non-alignment within a deeply polarized geopolitical landscape.

Since the onset of the conflict in 2022, South Africa has consistently maintained a policy of abstention in United Nations votes condemning Russia, a decision it claims to be rooted in a desire to promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict (Fabricius 2023). This position is consistent with South Africa's longstanding support for communication and amicable resolutions to Global conflicts. Nonetheless, this stance has drawn criticism for its seeming inconsistencies. For instance, while purporting neutrality, South Africa has actively engaged in joint military exercises with Russia and China, dispatched high-ranking defence officials to Moscow, and allowed the docking of Russian vessels under ambiguous circumstances (Bartlett 2024). Open to varying interpretations, these actions have fostered a perception of implicit support for Russia, undermining South Africa's claims of impartiality. In this regard, detractors contend that these developments hinder the country's capacity to act as an effective mediator, eroding its credibility as an unbiased and impartial actor in Global affairs. According to Akopari (2018, 247), this inconsistency, or unduly aligned stance with certain powers, puts South Africa's moral authority and diplomatic leverage at risk.

On another level, South Africa's non-alignment stance can be interpreted as an attempt to balance its historical ties with Russia, its membership in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) coalition, and its economic dependency on Western trade and investment. The ruling political party in South Africa, the African National Congress (hereafter ANC), and its historical alignment with the Soviet Union during the anti-apartheid struggle adds another layer of complexity. Concretized during the Cold War, these ties reflect a shared history of ideological solidarity against Western imperialism (Weiss and Rumer 2019, 4). Although these ties offer a tenable explanation for the ANC government's hesitation to denounce Russia, they also highlight its ambiguity and poorly defined foreign policy in coming to terms with conflicting perceptions of reality. For this reason, the ANC government has come under heavy criticism both domestically and internationally. Domestically, opposition parties and civil society organizations have demanded greater accountability and transparency of foreign policy. In this context, concerns have been raised about South Africa's commitment to respecting international norms and principles in light of its actions (Nadkarni et al. 2024, 452).

Despite the inconsistencies in the South African response, the principle of non-alignment, broadly considered, can be valid in certain situations. For in-

stance, it may apply in cases where conflicting parties bear equal culpability or when a country's neutrality allows it to mediate disputes between opposing sides. Historical examples, such as Switzerland's neutrality during the World Wars, underscore the utility of non-alignment in fostering peace and maintaining national sovereignty. In this way, Switzerland's neutrality has allowed it to play a pivotal role in hosting diplomatic negotiations and, in some cases, providing humanitarian aid where necessary (Fischer and Möckli 2016). Similarly, Harshe (1990, 399) claims that India's leadership in the NAM during the Cold War exemplified how non-alignment, supported by moral justification and well-defined goals, can improve a nation's international standing. What becomes apparent when using these examples is that South Africa's response to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict falls short of the clarity and moral foundation that undergirds neutrality. This results in an erosion of South Africa's reputation as a reliable arbiter of what may be considered just and humane. If anything, the effectiveness of non-alignment (and neutrality) as a strategy hinges on the capacity to engage constructively with those involved in the conflict. South Africa falls short in this regard, begging serious questions about the effectiveness of its current strategy.

2 Neutrality and Non-Alignment: A Double-Edged Sword in International Diplomacy

Given the South African predicament, the success of the non-alignment lies in its ability to balance pragmatic considerations with moral imperatives. Ideally, these imperatives should resonate not just with those within your immediate frame of reference, as in a narrow, selfish pursuit. However, it should also stir the moral imagination of those of the various factions involved in the dispute – keeping in mind that these decisions are rarely devoid of self-interest and are often framed within a broader principle narrative. Here, the example of France's opposition to the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 is quite helpful. Cogan (2004, 121–126) reminds us that despite France's status as a primary member of the Western alliance, it refused to endorse the military intervention in Iraq. Calling for further inspections, at the time, the French government remained unconvinced that Iraq indeed had weapons of mass destruction (or WMD), promoting significant backlash from its US counterpart. The French foreign minister outlined this position at the United Nations (hereafter UN), framing the matter within a moral and legal context, not least the domestic pressures, including widespread public opposition. This includes France's sizable Muslim population, who expressed fierce opposition to a large-scale invasion of a Middle Eastern country.

Not devoid of self-interest, France's non-aligned position illustrates a careful interplay of domestic, economic, and diplomatic factors while treading carefully not to forgo the moral argument. Cogan (2004, 128) notes that while some criticized France for prioritizing self-interest over allied solidarity, it nevertheless reflects a coherent and rational framework in which self-interest and moral responsibility coexist. With a focus on the principles that underpin international law and on prioritizing dialogue over unilateral military action, France demonstrated how non-alignment, when coupled with moral clarity, can reinforce diplomatic standing, a case exemplifying what is meant by *realpolitik*. In the process, it could withstand significant pressure from its allies, underscoring a strength of conviction that at least appeared credible, thereby bearing the hallmarks of a thoughtful, non-aligned position. This sharply contrasts with the ambiguity and inconsistency in the South African position. If anything, the South African expression of non-alignment raises serious questions about its strategic intent and moral legitimacy.

This contrast becomes even more pronounced when considering the historical context that shapes South Africa's approach. Here, ANC's longstanding alliance with the Soviet Union, rooted in shared struggles against colonialism and apartheid during the Cold War, offers a lens through which its current non-aligned position might be understood. This historical connection points not to a position guided by moral intent but rather something rooted in enduring ideological loyalties. In this case, it appears as if the ANC government's historical affiliation and ideological sympathies prevent them from condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, which are widely recognized as a violation of international law (Brinkel and Carel 2024, 351). The reluctance to denounce Russia's action in Ukraine undermines South Africa's claims to be a neutral arbiter. Moreover, it places the country in an untenable moral position. Announcements of President Cyril Ramaphosa's so-called peace mission seemed to signal a more constructive approach, some suggesting that it appeared to be an attempt to remedy apparent shortcomings (Imray 2023). However, the trip that included other African leaders with planned visits to Moscow and Kyiv fell far short of expectations. While the aim was to facilitate dialogue, the initiative lacked a clear objective to make a meaningful impact. There were no clear objectives nor any tangible outcomes (Orderson 2023). In this sense, the peace mission could be characterized as underwhelming. In the end, the trip symbolized a continuation of the ANC government's stance on refusing to acknowledge Russia's aggression despite the evidence pointing to the violation of Ukraine's sovereignty. This omission highlights a broader issue of South Africa prioritizing diplomatic caution over and against taking a principled stance against aggression, further diminishing its credibility as a trustworthy mediator.

3 Reframing South Africa's Stance in the Context of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict and Broader Global Dynamics

Whilst problematic, the issue associated with South Africa's non-alignment does not absolve the broader international community, most of whose responses have been equally problematic. Here, Western nations, in particular, have struggled to come to terms with profound historical, political, and structural dynamics in their approach to regional developments. In this sense, the war in Ukraine was not entirely unpredictable given over a century of geopolitical tensions, cultural entanglements, and historical grievances that have plagued this region's peoples. Mankoff (2022) reminds us that with its contested borders, shifting alliances, and unresolved identity crises, Eastern Europe has long been a site of geopolitical friction and existential uncertainty. The escalation of the current conflict, which some analysts argue could have been foreseen as early as 2008 during the Russian-Georgian War, or in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea, underscores the cyclical nature of sovereignty disputes left unresolved by the Western powers (Menon and Rumer 2015, 28). If anything, these developments highlight a broader pattern of instability rooted in the tension between the principles of national self-determination and the imposition of external influence – issues emblematic of the broader post-Soviet political landscape.

Solchanyk (1998, 539) reminds us that, at its core, the conflict in Ukraine reflects a struggle between competing frameworks of sovereignty and identity, which Western nations have largely ignored. For instance, regions such as Donetsk and Luhansk have longstanding affinities with Russia. These ties reach beyond political affiliation and extend into culture, history, and linguistic identity, especially as they relate to the broader Slavic world. In other words, there is an internal pluralism in Ukraine that rhetoric on unified sovereignty would find difficult to ignore. According to Solchanyk (1998, 540), this also speaks to the challenges associated with the fragility of understanding what defines the modern nation-state, especially when there is significant ethnic and cultural diversity. In this respect, Ukraine is no different since it also has to address the issue of specific sectors within its citizenry, especially those self-identifying as ethnic Russians who may challenge the coherence of Ukraine's territorial claims. Broadly, these nuances are overlooked by Western commentators, creating a scenario where the right to self-determination enshrined in international law is selectively applied, raising questions about its utility in mitigating instead of exacerbating conflict (Cassese 1995, 125). In emphasizing Ukraine's territorial integrity, the West has primarily disregarded the legitimacy of alternative perspectives, often

dismissing them as the mere justification of Russian expansionism, often ignoring the historical and cultural grievances that drive the origins of the conflict.

Coupled with this, entrenched biases within Western media and academic institutions compound the intellectual deficit in analyzing the conflict. Bashara (2022) reminds us that much of the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war has been shaped by ideological predispositions, resulting in an oversimplified narrative of democracy versus authoritarianism. This framing neglects historical continuities, such as NATO's post-Cold War expansion, which some argue fuels a climate of insecurity and mistrust in Russia (Park 2022, 147–148). NATO's eastward expansion, encompassing former Warsaw Pact states such as Poland, Hungary, and Romania, has been perceived by Moscow as a direct threat to its sphere of influence. Huntington (1996, 37) describes such omissions as a form of historical forgetfulness, wherein policymakers and the public fail to recognize the long-term implications of strategic decisions made in earlier eras. In this way, the conflict between Russia and NATO has fueled a sense of zero-sum thinking in international relations, which leads to mistrust and little opportunity for constructive dialogue.

Along with this, the proliferation of social media has further distorted perceptions of the conflict. Here, much comes in the form of political polarization, where sensationalist elements on both sides of the political and ideological spectrum replace moderate views of the conflict. This is also reflected in the dissemination of information, where the reinforcement of ideological echo chambers undermines the capacity for critical engagement. Sunstein (2018, 63–68) describes this phenomenon as one in which emotionally charged narratives overshadow nuanced analysis. The immediate accessibility of social media amplifies these effects, allowing disinformation to spread and erode the public understanding of the complexities associated with the conflict. This is further compounded by deficiencies in formal education systems, which often fail to equip individuals with the necessary tools to engage historical and geopolitical issues critically. Without such capacities, and as we have observed with the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, public discourse becomes embroiled in simplistic analysis rather than informed dialogue.

This tendency is further compounded by underlying Eurocentric and racial biases that shape the prioritization of Global conflicts in international discourse. For example, the disproportionate focus on the Ukraine war, at the expense of crises in Palestine, Yemen, South Sudan, or Libya, among other conflict zones, exemplifies what Said (1978, 227) alluded to as a kind of selective humanism of Western liberalism. The humanitarian disaster in Yemen, fueled by foreign interventions and arms sales to Saudi Arabia, receives scant attention compared to Ukraine's plight, reflecting what McCloskey refers to as a "hierarchy of victims"

(2022, 141) that privileges European conflicts over those involving predominantly black, Muslim, or non-European peoples. Similarly, the 2011 NATO-led intervention in Libya during the reign of Muammar Gaddafi also highlights the enduring biases of Western interventions. Western nations have proved inconsistent in addressing Global conflicts, indicating that geopolitical interests often precede the principles of universal justice and human rights principles. In this sense, NATO's geopolitical interests are firmly rooted in a Cold War mentality in which an adversarial dynamic is cultivated and maintained. These geopolitical challenges further underscore the shortcomings of a NATO alliance that is too willing to prioritize military action (often through proxies) over and above inclusive dialogue, especially when it concerns strategic interests.

The economic ramifications of these geopolitical decisions extend way beyond the immediate conflict. The continued boycott of Russian energy, designed to isolate Russia, has significantly impacted Global markets. The effects thereof result in fuel shortages in some parts of the world. These shortages led to energy insecurity, resulting in social unrest in parts of Europe and elsewhere. Moreover, Russia's strategic pivot towards emerging powers such as India and China, including other Global South countries, has provided the impetus for a shift in the political landscape, a shift in which we observe a rearrangement of Global alliances away from their traditional Western stronghold. Acharya argues that such realignments signal a shift towards a "multiplex world order" (2017, 276–277), where emerging powers assert greater autonomy in defining the contours of international relations. This development challenges traditional Western dominance and highlights the limitations of punitive economic measures as a tool of diplomacy.

If anything, the unfolding conflict demands the reimagining of conventional notions, not just how the Western nations have traditionally dealt with conflict but, more importantly, how we interrogate concepts of sovereignty and self-determination. For Ukraine, this means that the principle of self-determination, as outlined in the United Nations Charter, must be recognized as the country struggles to come to terms with the diverse aspirations of its population whilst ensuring the integrity of its territorial claims (United Nations 1945, Art. 1[2]). More broadly, the conflict is a reminder that the root causes of Global conflicts, including the structural imbalances that underpin them, will have to be addressed to work towards a more equitable and sustainable future as far as international relations are concerned. In this sense, Western nations will have to come to terms with the lingering effects of their colonial pasts – these systemic inequalities and geopolitical rivalries continue to be a key driver in constraining the agency of countries in the Global South. Overcoming this requires a collective commitment to histories of oppression to establish a Global order where mutual respect and the principles of justice and equity are firmly entrenched. The Rus-

sian-Ukrainian conflict is a cogent reminder that the international community and Western nations, in particular, can only hope to achieve a more inclusive and peaceful world order by confronting their complicity in perpetuating cycles of conflict.

4 Towards a Moral and Just Framework for Global Diplomacy: Revisiting South Africa's Non-Alignment Position

The dilemma of South Africa's non-aligned stance in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, juxtaposed with the West's often neocolonial approach to international disputes, underscores the challenges associated with working towards a just resolution in environments still grappling with the legacies of the past. The contradictions in South Africa's approach to the matter are evidently problematic. They highlight the tension between historical allegiances and the demands of working towards justice in a world that is quite polarized. This tension starkly contrasts with the moral clarity that once defined the Global fight against apartheid – a cause that the ANC championed and used to galvanize international solidarity in defense of justice and human rights. Just as the world once rallied against the injustices of the apartheid system, so too the current Global order requires a commitment to confronting unlawful aggression whilst at the same time upholding the principles of sovereignty and self-determination as outlined by UN statutes.

South Africa's position, characterized by caution and, in some cases, evasion, has sparked intense discussion at home and abroad on the implications of non-alignment, especially in cases where one party in a conflict is the aggressor. The merits of non-alignment, when applied appropriately, are not in question, as we have seen with the examples cited earlier. However, as we observe in the South African case, a distortion risks undermining the principles of justice and equity, which speaks to our existence as a modern nation-state. As a people whose liberation struggle is firmly rooted in appeals to the principles of justice and human rights, our government's reluctance to denounce Russia's aggression in Ukraine sharply contrasts with the values that are enshrined in our post-apartheid constitution. These values, collated in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, emphasize the inviolability of human dignity, equality, and human rights and freedoms (The Republic of South Africa 1996, Section 9–12). In this sense, non-alignment, as pursued by the South African government, is unsustainable simply because it is out of sync with local and international statutes focussed

on international law and human rights conventions. Drawing from our historical experiences of oppression, we are uniquely positioned to advocate an international order that prioritizes dialogue and inclusivity instead of contributing to cultures of divisiveness. Unfortunately, this potential remains unfulfilled as long as the South African government continues to pursue a foreign policy rooted in contradictions and undermines the pursuit of human rights. Similar to how the anti-apartheid movement was galvanized by moral clarity and dedication to justice, current international conflicts, such as the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, require a similar commitment to these ideals. If South Africa is not ready for this, its credibility as far as non-alignment is concerned will be diminished, reducing it to a nation with no more than a convenient political strategy rather than one that is meaningfully contributing to a just social order. Similarly, the international community and the Western nations must be guided by a comprehensive understanding of historical complexities, including their own complicity in contributing to these problems. This requires a departure from simplistic binaries and a return to principles that respect the sovereignty of all people. An acknowledgement of the multifaceted roots of the conflict is needed, including the historical grievances and geopolitical mistakes that have fueled tensions in the region. Above all, a reinvigoration of the principles of non-alignment is called for, not as a passive posture but as an active and moral commitment to promoting peace, sovereignty, and human rights above all else.

Drawing upon these insights, a peaceful resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is possible. However, before one can interpret the potential for a just resolution of the conflict, we must first articulate the profound deformities of the current international system – a system still premised on mistrust, competition, and unequal power dynamics. These deformities are observed in ways in which peace talks are often used as an ideological tool to negotiate power or being masqueraded (misleadingly) as genuine efforts for a just resolution. Unfortunately, while narrowly aimed at preserving our strategic interests, South Africa's non-alignment policy falls far short of anything meaningful. Unfortunately, here, we risk unintentionally participating in power struggles rather than emerging as an honest arbiter who can navigate the arena of international diplomacy through our past struggles and the moral clarity needed in this situation. It is clear that the search for a more meaningful resolution must transcend ideological power plays on both sides of the political spectrum. This creates an environment where nations are not merely passive participants swayed by shifting geopolitical sentiments. South Africa has an opportunity to be an active advocate in upholding the dignity and sovereignty of all peoples, not just those considered political friends, a stark reminder that non-alignment without moral clarity is an abdication of responsibility rather than a contribution to a more meaningful resolution.

5 Concluding Thoughts

Non-alignment necessitates moral coherence and an unyielding commitment to a just resolution of conflict. For this to be realized, South Africa must address the inconsistencies that hamper our efforts to contribute meaningfully to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. This also speaks to the need for nations in the Global South to redefine their diplomatic strategies beyond the ideological loyalties. When they do, countries like South Africa have the opportunity to transcend the binaries of Cold War–era geopolitics. Revisiting non-alignment through a contemporary lens offers a pathway towards a more equitable Global order that values inclusivity and justice over expediency. For South Africa, this entails transforming our foreign policy into a model that bridges historical consciousness with the imperatives of creating a more sustainable Global landscape. By prioritizing ethical accountability alongside strategic interest, South Africa could emerge at the forefront of reimagining a Global community that resists hegemony and affirms the shared dignity of all peoples. After all, the challenge lies not in choosing between ethical considerations and pragmatic decisions but reconciling them within a coherent vision for modern diplomacy.

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Part IV: **Brazilian Views**

Rudolf von Sinner

Ecumenical Lessons from the War against Ukraine: Passionate Protest and Loving Patience

1 Introduction

By origin, I come from the country of Switzerland, where I was born into a cold war with hot discussions.* “Go to Russia” was the saying if you were critical of the stout anti-communism and, especially, of the Swiss army and preparation for war against the supposed or real Eastern enemy. Many Christians insisted you had to defend the country, the faith and the “free world” – including, of course, the free market – against the “ungodly” socialists. Emotionally and in my faith convictions, I felt much closer to the peace movement and wondered why such a small country like Switzerland should have an army at all rather than invest heavily in development co-operation. The blatantly asymmetric terms of trade worldwide also upset me deeply. An eyeopener was the 1989 Basel Assembly, six months before the Berlin wall came down, on “Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation” (Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen und des Rates der Europäischen Bischofskonferenzen 1989). There were delegates from all over Europe, including Eastern Europe, discussing such crucial issues relatively freely. Both Russia and Ukraine were states of the Soviet Union then. In the midst of many important debates and encounters, of sharing prayer, knowledge, wisdom, and food, I never forgot that restless and impatient Irish priest. In the midst of a sophisticated, but for him too unengaged discussion on how to best protect and preserve the environment, he said: “I have fire in my belly – but love in my heart”. This became an ecumenical motto for me: passion and patience, struggle and love, prophetic denouncing and Gospel announcing have to go together. Peace is not a harmonious still life: it is active non-violent engagement with creative means. It implies dialogue as much as honesty and speaking up to power. The same is true for what I understand by ecumenism. It is staying together despite sometimes deep differences, without leaving out necessary questioning and criticism – of oneself first, and then of the other.

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I today live in the city of Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil, within a diversity of cultures of a variety of origins, churches, and religions, coming from Germany, Italy, Poland, Japan, Lebanon, Syria, as well as from the territory that today is Ukraine. Brazil has a Ukrainian diaspora of about half a million persons, mainly in Paraná state, and over 10 percent in Curitiba, the capital. In the municipality of Prudentópolis, at 200 kilometers from Curitiba, 75 percent of the population are of Ukrainian descent.¹ In terms of religion, they are Catholics of oriental rite, Orthodox, and Jews who have come since the last decade of the 19th century. In a first migratory phase, workers came from Western Ukraine (Galicia), which at the time belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A second wave came after World War I, during a short phase of independence combined with great political instability. The largest migration happened after World War II, of workers, prisoners of war, political refugees, and soldiers (Boruszenko 1969; Guérios 2008; Alves 2018). A recent wave of migration happened after the country's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, mainly of well qualified professionals. Refugees from the current war have come in small numbers only.² Yet, the Ukrainian memorial has become one of the most visited places in Curitiba. The community and their neighbors are scared and appalled.

What I would like to explore in this contribution are three things: 1) Political and academic positions in Brazil on Russia's invasion of Ukraine – or, as some say, into “NATOistan”; 2) the role of churches and theology; and 3) strengthening agency and voices in, from and with Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, within the ecumenical movement, broadly speaking.

2 Political and Academic Positions in Brazil

Brazil as a country, as you may know, has officially adopted a “neutral” stance. When the war broke out, then president Bolsonaro had just returned from a visit to Moscow. It is no secret that he has great admiration for Putin. In difference to other leaders in the Southern Cone, Bolsonaro avoided any critique in his first tweets, he did not even mention Russia at all, but only showed concern about Brazilians potentially trapped in Ukraine (Pitta 2022). The Foreign Ministry, on its part, issued the following statement:

¹ According to data compiled on the website of the Eastern-rite Ukrainian Catholic Metropolis (Czaikowski n.d.).

² Until February 2023, 422 humanitarian visa for Ukrainian refugees had been issued according to “G1” (2023). The deadline for applications for such visa was extended until December 31, 2024.

The Brazilian government follows with great sorrow the initiation of military operations by the Russian Federation against targets in Ukrainian territory.

Brazil calls for the immediate suspension of hostilities and the beginning of negotiations that can lead to a diplomatic solution to the issue, based on the Minsk Agreements, and that takes into account the legitimate interests of security by all involved parties, and the protection of the civilian population.

As a member of the United Nations' Security Council, Brazil remains engaged in multilateral discussions in view of a peaceful solution, aligned with the Brazilian diplomatic tradition and the defense of solutions oriented by the UN Charter and by international law, especially as to the principles of non-intervention, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and the pacific solution of controversies. (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2022; my translation)

Then Foreign Minister Carlos França declared to be well aligned with India and Turkey on the matter, in a “balanced position in which we would analyze national interest” (Casado 2022). This position of not taking sides but vindicating a peaceful solution within an international framework indeed has a tradition in Brazilian diplomacy and has been maintained in principle by the Brazilian Foreign Ministry throughout 2023. Brazil supported a number of UN resolutions in favor of Ukraine, including the one adopted on February 23, 2023, which demanded that Russia withdraw from Ukrainian territory (United Nations 2023).³ In this, it acted differently from the other BRICS countries that voted against (Russia) or abstained (China, India, and South Africa). In other issues, Brazil sided with Russia. And it did not support sanctions nor send weapons or ammunition to Ukraine. Jorge Heine and Thiago Rodrigues (2023) called this “active nonalignment”, a “foreign-policy doctrine” that is “not about neutrality or equidistance”, but “dynamic”, i.e., never unequivocally on one particular side.

Such position was generally seen as acceptable by many sides, including Russia; however, President Lula, stepping out of his country's rigorous foreign policy doctrine, created some unrest when he said, during a visit to China, that the United States and the European Union were “encouraging war” by sending arms to Ukraine (Schreiber 2023). Celso Amorim, President Lula's special advisor on foreign policy and former minister, was sent out to settle the unrest. He also went to Russia and was, against all protocol, received by President Putin himself (Machado and Paixão 2023). On his part, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov traveled to Brazil in February, 2023, and again in 2024 (Presidência da República 2024a).⁴ The Ukrainian government, obviously, was not pleased with this and has

3 The voting board appears on the website showing that Brazil voted in favor.

4 The “conflict in Ukraine” is mentioned only at the end of the note, as a side issue. Much more emphasis is given to Russia's intention to support Brazil's plea for permanent membership in the UN's Security Council and to the invitation for the October BRICS summit in Russia, which President Lula accepted.

shown discomfort with the Brazilian stance in various moments, but it seems to want to keep the door open given Brazil's not decisive, but important third-party weight. This might be wise. Brazil, then, might be seen as sufficiently neutral to be a partner in peace negotiations and can make some difference on the international scene. After all, Brazil was an elected member of the UN Security Council in its 11th tenure in 2022 and 2023 and held the presidency in October 2023. During Brazil's presidency, the main concern of course came to be the terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israel and Israel's devastating response to it, which has in the meantime been taken to the International Court of Justice in The Hague by South Africa, a case supported by Brazil, which has led to a considerable and clear court decision on immediate measures (International Court of Justice 2024). However, discussions on negotiations for an end to the war in Eastern Europe continued. Brazil admits they did not bring any progress. On the whole, the official evaluation is that "Brazil's diplomatic tradition of prioritizing political and diplomatic solutions to conflicts, especially in times of great geopolitical tensions" was valued (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2023). Surely, Brazil is sufficiently far away from the war not to be urged into immediate action, and it remains to be seen whether it can really offer and get approval for a good solution. Still, it represents a voice from the Global South that begs to differ from the traditional blocks, especially the United States with its miserable record on South America in the 1970s and 1980s when it strongly supported military dictatorships, including their practices of torture. Since later the United States looked to other places and became forgetful of the continent, it is understandable that its countries looked around for other partners. In any case, Brazil might surprise at some point, together with South Africa and other BRICS states and further partners. And, together with South Africa, it is a country with notable democratic and mediatic checks and balances, which cannot be claimed in the same way of Russia, India, China and the new BRICS members Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudia Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.⁵ As says Manuella Libardi on *Open Democracy* (2023), "Brazil is not a world power, but the countries of the Global South know that, collectively, they have power." Brazil certainly wants to be a Global player, as has been evident since Lula first became president in 2003. Notably, the country is presiding the G20 for the first time during 2024, and its summit will meet in Rio de Janeiro in November. Recently, Brazil and China presented a joint proposal for peace negotiations with the participation of Russia and Ukraine, focusing on deescalation,

⁵ According to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, the BRICS group includes 46 percent of the world's population, 36 percent of Global GDP and 25 percent of world trade; 30 countries have expressed an interest in joining. Brazil's former president Dilma Rousseff heads the BRICS' New Development Bank based in Shanghai (Holtzmann et al. 2024).

the avoidance of any use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and the protection of civilians (Presidência da República 2024b). Brazil has been insisting that Russia should be present in any initiative that seeks to end the war. As a consequence, it attended the June 2024 Bürgenstock conference organized by the Swiss Government, to which Russia had not been invited, only as an observer.

Of course, not only moral and political principles stand behind such position. Brazil is highly dependent on Russian fertilizers. In 2021, the country imported goods from Russia over 5,58 bn USD worth, 64% of them were fertilizers. The Russian company Gazprom announced in February 2023 to invest in the Brazilian energy sector, seeking to expand relations and cooperation. Brazil also imports considerable quantities of Diesel from Russia.⁶ Furthermore, Brazil exports large quantities of agricultural products to China, a semi-ally of Russia. Some earlier fascination for the Soviet Union when the US was dominant in Latin America might also be an ingredient. After all, however, all countries have their more or less evident or vested interests involved. Accordingly, such aspects should neither be over-, nor understated. Brazil is a powerful voice that deserves to be heard.

In difference to Western Europe, churches and theology in Brazil were by and large silent on the war in Ukraine. Even before that, there was no deeper reflection on peace ethics when it comes to wars between nations. There had been reflection and positioning on peaceful resistance, as represented by Archbishop Helder Câmara (1909–1999) in his time, inspired, beyond Jesus, by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. The military regime was able to prevent him three times from getting the Nobel Prize for Peace he was nominated for. And his famous phrase acquired new relevancy in the past years in Brazil: “When I give out bread to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a Communist” (Piletti and Praxedes 2008). Today, there is war in Brazil, in fact of quite high intensity and violence – in 2017 alone, there were over 65'000 homicides, mostly between drug traffickers and their overlords – but it is internal (von Sinner and Westphal 2018). And there is sometimes quite violent polarization, shamefully with very few initiatives of pacification, dialogue and truth-seeking (von Sinner 2023b). Mainly those related to the ecumenical movement, like Magali Cunha, are among those who truly seek alternatives.⁷ The traditional ecumenical winter course of the São Paulo based CESEEP was dedicated, in July 2022, to “Ecumenism in Times of War: Welcoming and Struggle for Peace with Social Justice” (Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Cristãs do Brasil 2022). In

⁶ These data are according to an article by senior economist José Caballero of the World Competitiveness Center of the International Institute for Management Development (Caballero 2023).

⁷ See, for instance, her monthly contributions to *Carta Capital* (www.cartacapital.com.br) and her splendid work in checking fake news in the *evangélico* world: www.coletivoboreia.com.br.

the academy, I see very little theological reflection on peace, with the noble exception of Érico Hammes (2024), a Catholic who is ecumenical and peace seeking in all possible senses, but not under all circumstances.

In the journalistic and academic realm, one can find voices that tell a different story of the conflict than one would find in Western Europe and the United States. Left wing exponents like journalist Pepe Escobar see it as a “conflict of NATO against Russia” and use the term “NATOistan” (*Otanistan*, in Portuguese).⁸ José Luiz Fiori, professor emeritus of political economics at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, also emphasized the advance of NATO into Eastern Europe as a – apparently plausible, even if not necessarily sufficient – reason given by Russia for its invasion. He himself and colleagues have published recently, albeit before the war in Ukraine, two books “On War” (Fiori 2018) and “On Peace” (Fiori 2021), in which they trace its geopolitical implications throughout history. It is a sign of an attempt to widen perspectives in what may also could be called “active non-alignment”.

3 The Role of – Namely Orthodox – Churches and Theology

The Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe have, all through their history, maintained great proximity to the political authorities. Between the patriarch and the emperor existed a “symphony”, that is, two types of action cooperating toward a single goal. Along these lines, it was named by Emperor Justinian the Great (482–565) in the preface to his 535 novel (n° 6) to the *Codex Iustinianus*:

The greatest gifts that God, in his celestial benevolence, has bestowed on mankind are priesthood [*hierosýne*] and sovereignty [*basiléia*], the one serving on matters divine, and the other ruling over human affairs, and caring for them. Each proceeds from one and the same authority, and regulates human life. Thus, nothing could have as great a claim on the attention of sovereigns as the honor of priests, seeing that they are the very ones who constantly offer prayer to God on the sovereigns’ behalf. Hence, should the one be above reproach in every respect, and enjoy access to God, while the other keeps in correct and proper order the realm that has been entrusted to it, there will be a satisfactory harmony [*sympsonia*], conferring every conceivable benefit on the human race.⁹

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NRxmZGwzxl>. Accessed February 14, 2024.

⁹ Translation from Miller and Sarris 2018, 97–98. I thank Archpriest Prof. Dr Cyril Hovorun for providing me with the quotation from this book (Ponomariov 2021).

The church, in general, constituted the weaker part of the partnership, subject to the Emperor's decisions, although there were moments when the Patriarch interfered more directly in political issues – which in research triggered the concept of “political orthodoxy” (Bischof et al. 2014, 320). Patriarch Anthony IV of Constantinople (d. 1397), in a letter to the grand duke of Moscow, Basil I, famously wrote: “It is not possible for Christians to have a church and not to have an Emperor.”¹⁰ However, this understanding of a very close connection between church and state had to suffer a number of serious setbacks, namely the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The Empire was now no longer Christian, but Muslim. Even so, according to the Ukrainian theologian Cyril Hovorun, “symphonic mentality continued to be an important part of this experience” in an “Ottoman symphonia”, whose Sultans called themselves “Cesar of the Romans” (*Qayser-i Rûm*; Hovorun 2024 [forthcoming]).

During the Ottoman Empire, the Patriarch of Constantinople was also the political leader of his non-Muslim religious group, the *millet*, more specifically the *Rum millet* (the Rome/the Romans' *millet*), which had, among other things, to collect taxes for the empire. Only in the 19th century nation-states emerged that had a national Orthodox church responsible, not least, for the preservation of national identity. In Russia, which had not been under the Ottoman Empire, the relationship between church and state followed the symphony model, a relation that benefitted both parts.

With Peter the Great (1672–1825), there was a reform inspired by Protestant and Catholic Reformations, which subjugated the church to the Czar's power while it abolished the office of Patriarch and created a collective church government instead. With the Russian Revolution of 1917, the church got back its patriarch but was severely persecuted, namely by former seminarian Joseph Stalin. Had it not been for the German invasion of Russia in 1941, when the church aligned with the state, it might have become extinct (Bischof et al. 2014, 324). The church survived, but under strict state control. After the end of the Soviet Union, in Russia as in her neighboring countries, the Orthodox church gained prestige and configured itself as marker of national identity.

Religious, ethnic and political issues have always been intertwined. The origin of it all is the “Rus’ of Kyiv”, the baptism of Prince Vladimir in the year 988, when Kyiv was his capital and the emperor of Byzantium's daughter his wife.

¹⁰ As quoted in Hovorun 2024 [forthcoming] in his lecture to the VI Consultation of the Global Network of Public Theology in Curitiba, Brazil, on October 6, 2022, then under the title of “Ukrainian Public Theology versus the Political Theology of the ‘Russian World’”; he in turn refers to F. Miklošič and I. Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi II* (Vienna, 1862), 191.

Later, the capital was transferred to Moscow. While Russia understands that Moscow and its patriarchate would be the legitimate successors of this political and religious tradition, she intends to bring together “all Russians” from the “Rus”, whether they live in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, or Moldova, the countries of today. Many Ukrainian Orthodox, however, today see Russians linked to Moscow as foreign intruders. In turn, Roman Catholics in Ukraine are often understood as Poles, Lutherans as Germans, Reformed as Hungarians, etc., all of which are tolerated but not necessarily seen as part of the national tradition and conscience.

From this historical understanding came the idea of the “*sviataia Rus*”, the ‘Holy Rus’, propagated by Patriarch Kirill. The expression was first used in Prince Kurbskii’s letter to Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584), although, at the time, rather with dissident subtleties than being aligned with the installed power. In the 19th century, it reappears with a purely religious designation. Among Russian Orthodox intellectuals in the 20th century, however, the term emerged with a strong geopolitical connotation. From there, it was welcomed by Patriarch Kirill, who ascended to the ecclesiastical throne in 2009 after having headed the church’s department of foreign affairs for many years. As then President Medvedev greeted him on his enthronement, he recalled the “spirit of symphony” which, in his view,

opens up wonderful prospects for the development of church-state relations in such a way that neither the state or the church would interfere in each other’s affairs, [yet] respect each other’s position on these internal affairs and, at the same time, build a wide-range interaction, dialogue, and cooperation. (As translated in Ponomariov 2021, 238)

As prime minister in 2018, Medvedev reinforced this as a relationship established specifically with Patriarch Kirill, hoping such “symphony” would continue to exist. The most secular correlate of ‘Holy Rus’ is the *russkii mir*, the Russian world in the ethnic sense, including all “Russians” in any territory – similar to the idea of pan-Germanity that emerged with the unification of the German Reich in 1871 and extended strongly also to Brazil. Hovorun indeed draws an analogy to the “German world” with its idea of a strong state anchored in the respective *Volk* with its morality and rationality, similar to the diction of Helmuth Graf von Moltke (1800–1891) and Ferdinand Kattenbusch (1851–1935). It entails the idea of a messianic state whose “mission would be to bring culture and authentic Christianity to its neighbors” (Hovorun 2016, 199). If, at the time, for Germany the issue of republicanism namely of French making was considered the “mortal sin”, for today’s Russia it would be liberal Western legislation on human sexuality (Hovorun 2016, 201).

On his first visit to Ukraine as patriarch, Kirill designed ‘Holy Rus’ as “an essentially decentered entity, whose focal points and strongest geopolitical metaphors (the metonym of Russia, Russia’s cradle, Russia’s sacred capital, fortress of the Orthodox faith, etc.) are located on the geographical periphery – in Ukraine” (Suslov 2016, 169). This initial indication of the centrality of a non-center – Kyiv and Ukraine – came with the idea of Patriarch Kirill taking up a patriarchal residence in Kyiv and even obtaining Ukrainian citizenship. However, Russian politicization and expansionism meant that Ukraine ended up once again being relegated to the periphery to be managed by the center in Moscow.

The rhetoric only increased with the growing confluence of the ‘Russian world’ (*russkii mir*) and ‘Holy Rus’. The new idea that was propagated was that “today’s ‘Russian world’, led by the ROC [Russian Orthodox Church], is waging a war of liberation with a de-Christianized, hegemonic West” (Suslov 2016, 172–173). A similar moralistic agenda can be found in Brazil, in many parts of Africa and beyond. The tone was also raised against the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church united to Rome, alleging that it had collaborated with Nazi Germany and was nationalist and anti-Russian. The “schismatics”, that is, the orthodox churches considered noncanonical, were condemned. According to researcher Mikhail Suslov (2016, 162), the Russian Orthodox Church was now defining its borders no longer in temporal but in spatial and therefore geopolitical terms, and Ukraine became the battleground between the West and Russian and Orthodox civilization.

There has been, both political and, with the variety of Orthodox churches claiming canonical status in Ukraine and autonomy from Moscow, also religious dispute between Russia and Ukraine. Some argue the longstanding conflict between Ukrainization and Russification also in church terms is an important ingredient to the current invasion by Russia. In any case, if the idea behind the invasion was a quick success to bind Ukraine to Russia, the contrary has occurred. Even the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP) has been estranged from the ROC and has given signals (albeit somewhat generic and little concrete) for a rupture.¹¹ Right on the day when Russia’s invasion began, Metropolitan Onufry called it a “fratricidal war”. The Russian Patriarch, in a sermon on March 6, 2022, attributed to the war a “not physical, but metaphysical” dimension. For Cyril Hovorun, once the head of the External Relations Department of the UOC–MP, the religious dimension is more important as a motivation for war

¹¹ It is also politically being pushed that way, most recently through a law which bans religious organizations with links to Russia (Skorkin 2024). It is to be seen how this law will work in practice.

to President Putin than imperialism. He draws an analogy to Iwan Schatow in Dostojewski's *Demons* of 1872 who develops a strong faith in Russia, but only timidly in God. "He [Putin] managed to transform the ROC into such [an instrument of mass manipulation] – with the latter's full consent" (Hovorun 2022, 34). Indeed, says Hovorun, the war has a metaphysical, albeit paranoid dimension.

4 Strengthening Agency and Voices in, from and with Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus

There is growing resistance by theologians, monks and priests, Ukrainian or not, including some Russians, against the war and the conception of the "Russian World" that underlies it. A number of underground websites voice such resistance, as mentioned by Natalia Vassilievich from Minsk, Belarus, currently finishing her doctorate at Bonn University, during a Theological Study Day at Halle University in January 2024. She mentioned a number of persons and websites; however – for the Western reader – they are not available in English or German.¹²

"A Declaration on the 'Russian World' Teaching" was published on March 13, 2022, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and has since been translated into more than 14 languages and signed by 1,545 personalities (Public Orthodoxy 2022). It rejects the "ethno-phyletist religious fundamentalism, totalitarian in character, called *Russkii mir*" and calls it a heresy. It further affirms that "just as Russia has invaded Ukraine, so too the Moscow Patriarchate of Patriarch Kirill has invaded the Orthodox Church, for example in Africa, causing division and strife, with untold casualties not just to the body but to the soul, endangering the salvation of the faithful". In six theses and antitheses, subscribers "affirm" and "reject" what is Orthodox and what is not. It is clearly inspired in style and content by the Confessing Church's Barmen Theological Declaration of 1934. Such implicit, but very evident reference to Barmen seems significant and pertinent in a moment of *status confessionis* at a time of immense peril for the identity of the church, as well as for the nation and its citizens. As is the nature of *status confessionis*, it is the moment

12 <https://www.ethos.org.ua/>; <https://christians4peace.com/>; <https://shaltnotkill.info>. Among other examples, she mentioned that Russian priest Fr. Alexey Uminski refused to read the prayer for 'Holy Rus' and the "victory" of the Russian army and was defrocked on January 13, 2024, for "breaking his oath" of obedience to the church. She also mentioned the testimony of Sr. Vassa Larin in *Coffee with Sister Vassa*, a Russian theologian/liturgist born in the USA: www.youtube.com/@VassaLarin.

of using a clear and unmistakable language. Thus, the first “truth” affirmed states:

There is no separate source of revelation, no basis for community, society, state, law, personal identity and teaching, for Orthodoxy as the Body of the Living Christ than that which is revealed in, by, and through our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God.

We therefore condemn as non-Orthodox and reject any teaching that seeks to replace the Kingdom of God seen by the prophets, proclaimed and inaugurated by Christ, taught by the apostles, received as wisdom by the Church, set forth as dogma by the Fathers, and experienced in every Holy Liturgy, with a kingdom of this world, be that Holy Rus', Sacred Byzantium, or any other earthly kingdom, thereby usurping Christ's own authority to deliver the Kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24), and denying God's power to wipe away every tear from every eye (Revelation 21:4). (Public Orthodoxy 2022)

There are, between Barmen and the above Declaration, of course, differences in language and theology. In the case of Protestant Barmen, the reference is exclusively to Scripture and God's Word, while the Orthodox document includes references to the Church Fathers as well. On the other hand, the latter is more explicit and concrete as to the current context, which is understandable by the fact it was written by Orthodox that do not live in Russia and, thus, did not have to fear immediate retaliations. This was different in 1934, when Hitler had already taken power and the leaders of the Confessing Church were under great risk as they were situated, so to speak, in the eye of the hurricane. In both cases, however, the addressee is the church, which is to remind herself of her fundament in Jesus Christ and of her evangelical tasks, not permitting a blind adhesion to an authoritarian state. The first loyalty of Christians, according to both declarations, has to lie with God who revealed Godself in Jesus Christ and acts through the Holy Spirit. Following this logic, expressed more clearly in the recent declaration on (and against) the “Russian world”, any discrimination and stigmatization of other peoples and/or minorities is rejected. The Manichean vision of a Christian, morally correct and orthodox “East” against a secular, immoral and heterodox “West”, as implied in the positions of Patriarch Kirill and the “Russian world” doctrine, is not accepted, either.

More generally speaking, Orthodox theologians have not spoken out as their counterparts in the West have throughout history, not having developed a just war theory of their own. They have not had controversies like those in the West between state-related Protestantism and the radical Reformation, for instance (Hamalis and Karras 2017).

Rather than being silent or adopting one of the four Western stances, i.e., (1) just war theory, (2) pacifism, (3) holy war and (4) political realism, Hamalis (2017) proposes to “partner” with some less predominant Western options, i.e., (1) just peacemaking, based on the Sermon on the Mount and an incarnational Christology,

and (2) Christian realism inspired by Reinhold Niebuhr in the line of Augustine, considering the fallenness and redemption of human beings. This was written before the Ukraine war but shows Orthodox voices trying to grapple with war and finding a distinctive position, neither copying the West nor simply aligning with state power.

The ecumenical movement, on its part, is a privileged space to learn, as long as it is able to provide “safe and brave” spaces in which it is possible to be honest with one another but also solidary in crying and laughing, in sharing a meal and in praying for one another. Personally, I have been enormously enriched by such and other meetings within the ecumenical movement, especially within the World Council of Churches (WCC), ever since I served as a steward at the 7th Assembly in Canberra, Australia, in 1991. One of my colleagues in that group was a young Russian, today a priest and professor, whom I was privileged to reencounter at the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, 31 years later. Ecumenical space is a space where many experience more freedom and equality than in their domestic contexts, be it in the church or in society, or both. Much of what is said and heard there can and, in fact, must not be made public. It is not possible nor wise to expose to the public how persons present themselves when they make themselves vulnerable to others. However, it is necessary to turn public the nature of the WCC as such a place of encounter, of dialogue and of non-violent conflict.

The WCC’s Central Committee issued a bold declaration against the war at its meeting in Geneva in June, 2022, and again at its Assembly in September that year. Between (and, meanwhile, beyond) these events, there were visits to Ukraine and to Russia. This was necessary, in fact, the minimum of what had to be said. On his part, the former head of the Department of External Relations of the ROC, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), in his allocution before the Orthodox pre-Assembly, facilitated by the WCC, underlined the diaconal task of the church: “day after day, strenuous humanitarian and peace-making activities are being carried out, much of which remain unseen. We invite all interested parties to join efforts in rendering aid to the suffering. I think that time and again, our conflict-torn world will need Christians’ help” (Hilarion of Budapest and Hungary 2022, 59). This is the other bottom line: churches have to help the suffering. Metropolitan Hilarion also thanked the WCC explicitly for what it has done in other cases of conflict. At the same time, however, he did not spare harsh words and affirmed that “we must not be indifferent, seeing certain parts of the Western Christian world sliding into the abyss of absolute rejection of the Gospel and Christ and following the path of moral relativism and degradation” (Hilarion of Budapest and Hungary, 2022, 55). He, thus, reinforced one of the very pillars of the conflict on the Russian side, a construction of “us” against “the West”. An experienced partic-

ipant at ecumenical gatherings for decades, he should know better about the real West.

In Karlsruhe, there were present Christians from both sides of the conflict: all of them suffering and struggling, be it for conviction, coercion or survival. One of the plenaries was dedicated to Ukrainian churches, present as guests as they were not yet members of the WCC. Russian delegates also had their moments of raising their voices. Much was discussed in the corridors. It was evident, at least for the majority, that an exclusion of the ROC from WCC membership, which was claimed by a group especially from Western Europe and echoed, in unusually sharp words, in the German Federal President's address to the Assembly,¹³ is not the solution. It would signify the total failure of ecumenical dialogue, and once that church would be out of the ecumenical fold, it would probably not return for a very long time, if at all. Such exclusion would be water on the mills of very conservative and anti-ecumenical sectors in the ROC that have been vociferous for many years. Furthermore, the church would be out of conversation and co-operation so important for the postwar period when it finally comes. It is also good to remember the WCC has never excluded member churches on the basis of their position in political and religious conflicts, while at the same time it did not spare them from fierce criticism when necessary, as happened with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa for its theological sustenance of the system of separation of races (apartheid). The church itself withdrew from the WCC as a consequence. The fact that such withdrawal has not (yet?) occurred in the ROC's case can be seen as a positive signal of a search for alternatives, albeit in non-publicized ways. After all, in today's Russia, persons critical of the war – it may not even be named thus in Russia – and of President Putin are confronted with very severe punishment. Sometimes, silence can talk loudly, that is, not defending the war – which, as far as I could perceive, Russian delegates did not, they just tried to minimize criticism especially in relation to the ROC and its patriarch – is a sign of hope, modest and timid as it may be.

13 "There are also representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church here today. The fact that they are here is not something we should take for granted in these times. I expect this Assembly not to spare them the truth about this brutal war and the criticism of the role of their church leaders. Yes, time and again Christians are called to be bridge-builders. That is and remains one of our most important tasks. But building bridges requires willingness on both sides of the river; a bridge cannot be constructed if one side tears down the pillars that support it. [. . .] What sort of dialogue will we engage in here? That is the choice this Assembly has to make, and Germany's stance – I am speaking also on behalf of the Federal Government – is clear" (Steinmeier 2022). Steinmeier is a confessing Protestant Christian and has been an important lay leader for instance in the presidency of the German *Kirchentag*.

As for the documents from the Central Committee and the 11th Assembly, both deplore the war as an “illegal and unjustifiable war inflicted on the people and sovereign state of Ukraine” and declare it “incompatible with God’s very nature and will for humanity and against our fundamental Christian and ecumenical principles”, rejecting “any misuse of religious language and authority to justify armed aggression”. Furthermore, both affirm “the mandate and special role of the World Council of Churches in accompanying its member churches in the region and as a platform and safe space for encounter and dialogue in order to address the many pressing issues for the world and for the ecumenical movement”. The assembly statement did not reaffirm that “a fresh and critical analysis of the Christian faith in its relation to politics, the nation and nationalism is urgently called for”, present in the Central Committee’s declaration, but added that the “churches are called to play a key role in the healing of memories, reconciliation and diaconal care” (Central Committee 2022; Eleventh Assembly 2022).

Accordingly, in my perception, while dialogue was upheld, it was nothing harmonious, but rather honest and clear. Words of rejection of the Russian invasion and – less so, it is true – of its religious support were clear and consistent. They could have, of course, been more incisive. Time will show whether this was the right way to follow. On April 18, 2024, the WCC questioned Patriarch Kirill as to why he called the invasion into Ukraine a “holy war” in a document approved by the XXV World Russian People’s Council on March 27, a large public forum presided over by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. WCC General Secretary Jerry Pillay said “the World Council of Churches cannot reconcile the statement that ‘the special military operation [in Ukraine] is a Holy War’ with what we have heard directly from Patriarch Kirill himself, nor with relevant WCC governing body policy pronouncements, nor indeed with the biblical calling for Christians to be peacemakers in the midst of conflict”, considering it inconsistent with what the Patriarch himself had told a WCC delegation the year before (WCC 2024). The consequence of this – if any – is still to be seen, but it seems to indicate a step-up in tone of the WCC.

5 Concluding

In concluding, I would like to affirm that:

1. Brazil and other states in “active non-alignment” can make a diplomatic difference in the long run, as they are not pre-located in the polarized situation between Russia and the (North-)West.
2. A thorough peace ethical reflection is needed both politically and theologically. The current conversation is an important step towards this end.
3. Within the Orthodox church, both in Russia and Ukraine, voices critical to the war must be mobilized and supported. They exist inside the warzone – at extreme risk – and outside as well. They are thus the primary agents and voices in this situation.

While within the ecumenical movement, broadly speaking, one should not shun away from bold statements and fierce criticism when they are needed, it has to be done in a spirit of humility. Not least as a Lutheran it is very clear to me that good and evil, justice and sin are often intertwined in concrete situations. This should prevent us from being arrogant and feeling well in judging others. At the same time, Christians’ prime loyalty is to the Gospel, especially to Jesus’ ministry and proclamation. As this is their common calling, it is correct to call each other’s attention when we see the message blurred or distorted. As the ecumenical movement intends to stay together, move together and act together, it must not forget the Irish priest’s statement that critical prophecy with ecumenical dialogue is like fire in the belly and love in the heart.

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Erico Hammes

“Love Your Enemies” (Matthew 5:44): Does Peace Ethics Make Sense, Even in Times of War?

We are in Berlin. Here the two world wars in the 20th century were planned. Here lived the head of one of the greatest violence machines against humanity ever existing in human history. Here grew one of the coldest human decisions to kill millions of people only because they were different. Here, the other became the enemy. But it was also here, in Berlin, where some pacifist people faced violence with their own lives and tried to overcome the brain of violence. Later, in 1961, it was here that military victors built the wall that divided and separated the vanquished. But it was also here that in 1989 peaceful people broke down the wall of violence with the force of nonviolence. Violence was defeated by peace, not by war or violence. And now right here are we, in this city with these historic landmarks, to think about the ethics of peace and its challenges in face of another war.

Who am I? I'm not an atheist, nor an agnostic, but I try to be a follower of Jesus Christ whom I believe to be the absolute, even if not the only, mediation and offering of the triune God to the whole creation, of which human beings are part. This self-communication of the triune God, as triune, is the source of the dignity and personhood of every human person. Whoever loses this basic insight may lose also his identity and subjectivity in society.

Wolfgang Huber (1982) once registered the fact that investigations about the command to love the enemies are scarce. It seems that this subject doesn't belong to the New Testament kerygma. Nevertheless, more recent biblical commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount as well as the large amount of peace studies can lead the way to considering the peace ethical consequences of the commandment to love your enemies.¹

I will consider the following topics: Is it still possible to speak about just war? Does the command to love the enemies permit the waging of wars? Does it matter only for personal enemies or can it also be taken into account for politics? How can nonviolence and peace be improved in order to overcome war? I'll start with

¹ Here I would mention among others: Piper 1979; Huber 1982; Huber and Reuter 1990; Swartley 1992; Betz 1995; Bovon 2002; Luz 2007; Wengst 2010; Schockenhoff 2018. A survey of the research state on the subject until 1992 is presented by William Klassen (1992, 1–31).

some exegetical and historical observations, followed by systematic considerations and conclude with ethical perspectives.

1 Some Biblical Remarks

There are many questions about this sentence described as the peak of the Sermon on the Mount and the commandment of love: “the ethical requirement that addresses our most radical challenge” (Coste 1997, 109), “one of the central Christian texts” (Luz 2007, 285). Who are the enemies and what is the meaning of “love” in this context? For Jesus’ listeners, the enemies are first and foremost the Romans; for Matthew’s readers, they are the persecutors of the community. Even if there are suggestions in stoicism, in the Old Testament or in Qumran, there isn’t any commandment of such radical exigency as the “love your enemies” (as states Flusser, cited by Coste 1997, 112). It’s the imitation of God, the mercy of God, which enables a person to love the enemy.

The command to love the enemies is part of the Sermon on the Mount by Matthew as well as of the Sermon on the Plain according to Luke. As generally accepted, in both of its versions, the sermon derives from a common source, known as Source Q, and represents a kind of summary of the Christian ethics teachings, actually an extension and special form of essential Jewish traditions. In fact, even if the New Testament focuses on Jesus of Nazareth, in his speeches, acts and destiny, he doesn’t break with his own Jewish tradition, neither in the Sermon on the Mount nor the Sermon on the Plain. Nevertheless, in many cases, according to the New Testament, Jesus’ teachings present different emphases than found in other explanations or uses of the mainstream Jewish formula of his time. It seems that the love-your-enemies command is such an emphasis, even a radical extension of the love-your-neighbor command.

As a preliminary note, it is worth to register that, historically, there was and still is a debate about the question, following Gerhard Lohfink, to whom the Sermon on the Mount applies (Lohfink 2018). Has it to do only with personal ethics? Is it, maybe, a kind of ethics for elected people, like religious elites? Must it be taken as a constitution for politics, or can it be considered a government program (*Regierungsprogramm*) (Wengst 2010)? Joachim Gnilka, who puts the question in terms of “addressees” (*Adressaten*), is convinced that the possible Jesus’ teaching at the origin of the sermon was directed to the whole people of Israel. It is from this people that emerges the new people of God, whose “Magna Charta is the Sermon on the Mount” (Gnilka 1986, 290–291). In a similar way, Lohfink identifies the People of God as the ones to whom the Sermon applies. Looking at the imme-

ciate audience to whom the texts are directed, H. D. Betz (1995, 1–2) seems to be right in his opinion that the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew) comes from and is directed to a Jewish Christian community, while the Sermon on the Plain (Luke) reflects a Hellenistic Christian community.

2 The Versions of the “Love-Your-Enemies” Command

The command to love your enemies is found in two versions: in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew, and in the Sermon on the Plain, in Luke. Both in Matthew and in Luke the sermon starts with the Beatitudes in two different versions. It is important to connect the seventh beatitude of Matthew: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt 5:9) to the command to love the enemies. While in Luke the command immediately follows the “woes” (Luke 6:24–26), in Matthew there are many teachings regarding different levels of discipleship (Matt 5:13–42). Anyway, in both gospels the command to love the enemies is part of this special teaching known as the *Sermon on the Mount* or *on the Plain*. So, we can look at the two versions, as follows.

Matt 5:43–48²

43 You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? 48 So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Luke 6:27–36

27 But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic [. . .]. 31 Do to others as

2 The Bible texts and references are taken from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ site < <https://bible.usccb.org/bible> >

you would have them do to you. 32 For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same [. . .]. 35 But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful.

3 The Version of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew)

Matthew presents the command as the latest of the so-called six antitheses in which the traditional teachings and the Jesuanic interpretations are juxtaposed. According to the introduction verse here, the first part, 5:43, is taken from Lev 19:18: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But the second part, “hate your enemy,” has no written correspondent; it may be found in popular sayings, even among the Essenians. According to Betz, after a thorough examination, “[t]his particular interpretation of Lev 19:18 does not appear in other Jewish sources contemporary with Jesus. Thus I agree with most scholars that it should be attributed to Jesus as its originator” (Betz 1995, 309). In the same way for Luz the central statement – love your enemies (v. 44) – “certainly comes from Jesus” and reflects the source Q 6:27–28.35; while v. 45, reflecting Q 6:32–34, “probably does so” (Luz 2007, 284–285).³ The enemies cited in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:44) can be identified with Jews who persecuted Jesus’ disciples. But the disciples, instead of hating them or praying for their death, in the Sermon on the Mount are commanded to pray for them (Betz 1995, 313). In effect, as is shown, the enemies are part of the neighbors and to love means to pray for them (Betz 1995, 312).

Despite the fact that there is no exact correspondence with Old Testament teachings, some clues can be found that lead to the openness to love the enemies: Exodus 23:4–5 recommends helping the enemy’s animals, noting that it refers to the animals instead of the enemy himself; Ben Sira, for his part, recommends: “Do not be a foe instead of a friend” (Sir 6:1). Even in Greek philosophy, there are clear teachings against hating the enemies (Betz 1995, 306–307), and in both Greek and in Roman morality and ethics “the humane treatment of the enemy was demanded as an act of magnanimity or mercy, virtues becoming to the wise man

3 For the Logia Q text I use Hoffmann and Heil (2002).

and the good ruler” (Betz 1995, 311). What is noteworthy, according to Luz, is the fact that “[t]he catchword of the ‘love’ of enemies is missing” (Luz 2007, 285). Additionally, in “the time of primitive Christianity, these views had become commonplace in Stoicism.” Consequently, it is right to say “that Jesus’ demand in the Sermon on the Mount has precedent or preparation in the history of ideas, although it did represent a new step at that time” (Betz 1995, 311), and can be said to be distinctive for Christian teaching and praxis. According to Luz, Matthew sees here “the middle of the Christians’ ‘better’ righteousness, which he summarizes in v. 48 with ‘perfect’” (Luz 2007, 285).

The theological basis of the command in Matthew’s Gospel is the promise to become children of the heavenly Father. Just as the Father maintains creation and lets the rain fall and the sun shine over both just and unjust people, as a loving and merciful one, so his children may also love their enemies as the fulfillment of the love of the neighbor. As here, so the “whole of the Sermon on the Mount” points to the imitation of God: “Evidence [. . .] resides in the Beatitudes (5:3–12), the Lord’s Prayer (6:12, 14–15), and the frequent references to the heavenly Father and his sons” (Betz 1995, 325). Especially the seventh Beatitude merits to be highlighted here: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt 5:9) (Schockenhoff 2014, 166–172). As the 2007 memorandum of the *Evangelische Kirche Deutschland* states: “In his love for his enemies, God shows himself to be God, and in our love for our enemies we show ourselves to be children of God” (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland 2007, 67).

4 The Sermon on the Plain (Luke)

Following the suggestion of Betz (1995, 591), the whole unit should include verses 37–45 divided in three concentric parts: Teachings about the conduct toward the outside world (27–38), the conduct with in the community (39–42) and the conduct toward oneself (43–45). As he states, the rules presented are not simply rules but arguments in order to form a whole argument presenting the ethics of Jesus (See also Fitzmyer 1986, 627–646).

While the addressees of Matthew’s version are Jewish Christians and their cultural environment, Luke’s audience is formed by Greek Christian people. Therefore, the arguments sound quite different. In Matthew there are references to the Jewish teachings, while in Luke we can find more the Greek way of presenting ethical arguments. “The commandment to love the enemy (v 27b; 35) is cited, as elsewhere in the New Testament, as Jesus’ fundamental ethical doctrine” (Betz 1995, 592). The command is not based on biblical arguments, but seems under-

standable in the Greek environment of the Lukan audience. Another difference is that in Matthew there is the blessedness of peacemakers (5:9), but in Luke the love-your-enemies command occurs twice (6:27b and 35).

The love-your-enemies commandment (Luke 6:27b; 35) belongs to the first part of the unit and therefore has to do with the outside world. The enemies can be persons or groups or even nations. The reaction of Jesus' audience has to be to love them, in the sense that they should do good to the haters, bless them and pray for them: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31. cf. 6:35). Because, by doing good to their enemies, the listeners will have a great reward and they "will be children of the Most High," the Father, kind and merciful (6:27–36). The measure in Luke's Gospel is the Father's mercy (Fitzmyer 1986, 624–646, here 630; 637–638; Betz 1995, 619). Even in some texts outside the Bible, as Betz refers, there can be found references to the imitation of the gods' mercy. "In being merciful, the ruler imitates the gods" (Betz 1995, 613).⁴ Thus, according to Luke, the love commandment is horizontally based on the golden rule and vertically on God's mercy: The enemy is the other whom I must love as I hope to be loved; and as someone who acknowledges the Lord, the Father, it is he who is the measure. Here one could point to the command in John's Gospel: "love one another as I love you" (John 15:12; cf. 13:34), where loving one another is grounded in Jesus' love. Due to its strength, newness and radicality, it is possible to say that "the Beatitudes and woes serve only as starting-point for the heart of his message, the love which must dominate the life of the Christian disciple" (Fitzmyer 1986, 630).

What is the meaning of enemy and love? Someone might try to reduce the concept of enemy to an individual or local level. Here it is necessary to take the gospel in the whole radicality, also referring to Carl Schmitt on the basis of Huber (Huber 1982, 135–136). The concept of enemy, *echthros*, against Schmitt, includes all kind of enmity. "Jesus takes away absolutely nothing from the enemies' cruelty and maliciousness and [. . .] he demands not that one *also* love them, but that one love *precisely* them" (Luz 2007, 286; see also Schockenhoff 2018, 474–475). Love has to be understood in the sense of *agape*, gratuitous love, without corresponding answer. It is different from *philia*, friendship, or *eros*, the sensual love.

Both in Matthew and in Luke the command to love the enemies is preceded by the Beatitudes and can be read as one of its applications. In terms of Gnllka, the command is "the culmination of the Jesuanic ethics" (Gnllka 1986, 187; Schockenhoff 2018, 471). The ultimate source for this radical love is the perfect and mer-

⁴ Betz is referring to Seneca's *On Mercy* (De Clementia).

ciful God himself with the immediate goal to overcome the borders of the family, the group and the clan, and can be understood as an extension of the command to love the neighbor: the enemy has to be seen and treated as my friend or my relatives. For Christians, the specific motivation lies in the fact that she or he belongs to Christ (Gnilka 1986, 192).⁵ With Luz (2007, 392) it is possible to say, then, that "[t]he love of enemies is the essence and the summit of the 'righteousness' God requires, and of life in God-like 'perfection.'"

Following Lohfink, the meaning of the command can be understood to be a call to form a contrasting community, that is, to "become a city on the mountain and the light of the world [. . .] where the Sermon on the Mount is lived out and where Jesus' call to renounce the use of force is taken literally" (Lohfink 2018, 60–61. My translation). Also, Luz qualifies Jesus' ethics as "ethics of contrast based on the dawning of the kingdom of God – a kingdom that is different from the world" (Luz 2007, 398).⁶ Praying for one's enemy is certainly an act of nonviolence and thus of peacemaking. Even if in a postsecular world religious attitudes may not be common, the principle of recognition and respect of enemies is better than hatred and contempt.

In conclusion, the sermon has to be taken seriously as an essential part of the gospel, of Christian identity, faith and ethics. Additionally, its content has to do with the personal, the group, the ecclesial, the social, the political, the economic and other dimensions of Christian existence. And because Christians live in this world, they are called to be light and salt in this world in order to offer other possibilities or strengthen the currents moving toward a new and better life. Yes, they can provide a contrasting perspective, but they can never be an isolated group outside of society.

What effect did the Sermon on the Mount or the Sermon on the Plain and the command to love the enemies have on the community of followers?

It is well known that the early Christians rarely used violence or participated in war. In general, they followed the example of Jesus of Nazareth and were strongly opposed to war. It was only as they became more and more important in the Roman Empire that they developed a justification for participation in war. Consequently, Augustine's reasoning, based on some Roman and Greek sources, establishes the strict conditions according to which Christians could get involved in wars. It was what then became the just war theory whose classical authors,

⁵ According to Klaus Wengst, the Sermon on the Mount looks beyond the borders of the community (2010, 23).

⁶ In a later article, Luz seems to distance himself from this position by proposing that "The Sermon on the Mount is a text for committed minorities" [ein Text für engagierte Minoritäten] (Luz 2017. My translation). In this case the radicality of the Sermon would be only for small groups but not for the Christian communities.

among others, are Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas.⁷ But Augustine's intention was not to justify war; he tried to define the conditions under which Christians could make an exception and accept to participate in war. Strictly speaking, the conditions he formulated, and which were later taken up by Thomas Aquinas, limited war rather than justifying it, always with an eye towards peace. Augustine himself explicitly states that: "*maioris est gloriae ipsa bella verbo occidere quam homines ferro; et acquirere vel obtinere pacem pace, non bello*" [However, it is a greater glory to destroy even wars with the word than to kill people with the sword and thus to acquire or preserve peace through peace and not through war] (*Epist.* 229, 2, in: *PL* 33, 1020).⁸

From today's perspective, even if it is largely accepted under extreme circumstances, it seems right to say that the "just war theory" is primarily grounded in natural law and only secondarily in biblical and theological arguments. As Beloušek puts it, we can speak about *pax Romana*, *pax Americana*, both supposing the victory over the enemy, in contrast to *pax Christi*, as dying for the enemy (Beloušek 2012, 50–58).

5 The Loving Triune God of Peace and Active Nonviolence

The New Testament often uses the expression "God of peace." In the Old Testament there is only one similar expression (Judg 6:24), where it is reported that Gideon built an altar and named it "YHWH is peace." Now, according to one possible understanding, the expression "God of peace" could refer to the Father as the Father of peace. On the other hand, given the Christian Trinitarian understanding, if the Father corresponds to the Lord of peace, and if the Son in his incarnation is identified with our peace (Eph 2:14), then the identification of the divine with peace is strengthened. Peace is as divine as the Divine is peacemaker.

7 For a critical presentation, see L. S. Cahill's *Blessed Are the Peacemakers* (2019), where she rightly says that "the theory is more often used to excuse than to exclude war and where pacifist protests can seem honorable, yet naive and ineffectual" (Cahill 2019, x).

8 "Es bedeutet daher eine Verkehrung der Augustinischen Gewichtung und Blickrichtung, wenn man seine vereinzelt, restriktiven Konzessionen an die Möglichkeit eines 'gerechten Krieges' aus dem Zusammenhang seiner friedensethisch relevanten Aussagen herausucht und sie zu Grundbausteinen einer – möglicherweise sogar talionisch denkenden – systematischen, vindikativen Kriegsethik macht" (Weissenberg 2005, 175–178, here 177).

René Coste, after analyzing the expression “God of peace” in the New Testament, concludes that “[t]he God of peace in the Pauline corpus is the God of love in the Johannine corpus [. . .]. God is both love and peace in the communion of the three divine persons”. And this communion is turned towards humanity to call it to love and peace (Coste 1997, 91). “The God of the Sermon on the Mount or the Discourse on the Plain is indeed the God of peace and the God of love” (Coste 1997, 84). In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew) or on the Plain (Luke), there are references both to “your Father” in his love to the just and the unjust, who lets the sun rise over good and evil, as well as to the mercy of God. It is precisely the mercy of God that is the basis for the “love your enemies.” Since the God revealed by Jesus is a merciful Father, the commandment makes sense. Just as the Father is love and mercy, believing in him means acting and being like him (Gnilka 1986, 293). It corresponds to 1 Thess 5:23 and many other similar expressions in the New Testament: “May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The God of peace is revealed through Jesus, presented by Luke and Matthew, as “incarnate of the Holy Spirit,” and according to John, as the Word made flesh, giving the Spirit and peace. His mission and activity are summarized as preaching and realizing the kingdom of God, which is the beginning of the transition from violence and injustice to justice and peace (Hammes 2024). He preached peace and acted nonviolently throughout his life facing religious and imperial powers, testifying the merciful God, forgiving sins and casting out demons, healing sickness, feeding the starving, practicing table fellowship, living his sonship and teaching his disciples to pray to God, his Father, as “our Father.” They were invited to ask the coming of the kingdom of the Father, his forgiving of sins “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” And in the end, Jesus, like so many others of his time, was crucified and died. In his death it is possible to recognize the consequence of nonviolence. There is no victory, there is no overcoming, there is only the strength of weakness breaking the spiral of violence and throwing down the gods of oppression. When Jesus, according to the Gospel of Matthew (27:46, par Mark 16:34; cf. Ps 22:1), “cried out in a loud voice, *‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’* – which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” – he dissociated God and violence. Putting in Jesus’ mouth Ps 22 can be interpreted as the revelation of the new image of God. The crucified God, who does not protect against the evil, does not deliver from the cross but suffers the violence of the evil in solidarity with all the victims. To overcome the violence is not overcoming the enemies not even the enmity, but the hate, for he not only does not harm or hate the enemies, but he prays for them to his Father (Luke 23:34), in accordance with the command to pray for one’s enemies (Luke 6:27).

The Father and the Spirit were with him, not as victors, but as defeated. For the Christian faith, God is with the defeated, and the resurrection is the transformation of defeat into life, the death of death. It's true that the love of enemies may cost our own lives, but that is not the last word. The last word is the resurrection.

Following the Trinitarian hermeneutics of the expression “God of peace,” allows us to interpret the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of peace and nonviolence or, in Augustinian terms, remembered by Karl Barth, to view the Spirit as the bond of peace, *vinculum pacis* (Hofheinz 2014), just as Jesus “is our peace” and the Father is the “God of peace.” Specifically, the Spirit is the realization and gift of peace between human beings, between human beings and nature and human beings and transcendence, precisely because in the immanent Triunity the Spirit is himself the bond between the Father and the Son, obviously not as a “resolution of conflict,” but as a superabundance of love, as fullness. From the point of view of Christian life, this aspect of pneumatology leads to the consequence of a theological constitution of peace. The gift of the Spirit grants human beings peace, and not violence. And violence is the intrinsic contradiction of spiritual existence, as well as the rupture of communion, (Hammes 2022).

The mystery of the triune God becomes, then, the Trinitarian mystery of peace, and peace becomes the orthopraxis of faith. Through the giving of the Spirit, in the risen Jesus, the Divine is united to every human being and to the whole creation, and peace is irreversibly founded as a communal intersubjectivity.

6 Ethics of Peace: Nonviolent Conflict Resolution, a Naïve Claim?

Next, I would like to mention Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr., taking into account some recent ethical considerations and the objections of Max Weber, Carl Schmitt and Helmuth Schmidt (Hofheinz 2019; Wengst 2010, 14–15).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), despite his commitment to peace and ethics, was involved in the assassination attempt on the dictator. How could he justify such a stance? According to his own words, “[e]thical decisions lead us into the most profound solitude, the solitude in which a person stands before the living God. Here, no one can help us, no one can bear part of the responsibility; here, God imposes a burden on us that we must bear alone” (Frick 2017, 101; Bonhoeffer 2019a, 331–332). We have to decide, and we are the only ones responsible. Therefore, he decided to act against authority, without the church, aware of his sinful-

ness and trusting in God’s forgiveness and grace. He didn’t deny that it was a sin, but in his eyes it was necessary to free the world from Hitler’s violence and injustice. Since the early years of the Nazi regime, he had been preaching peace and looking for ways to overcome violence, even taking inspiration from Gandhi and asking for his help.

Western Christianity, he wrote in a letter to Gandhi, must be reborn on the Sermon on the Mount [. . .], what realization of faith means, what a life devoted to political and racial peace can attain. If there is anywhere a visible outline towards such attainments, then I see it in your movement. We are having great theologians in Germany [here he mentions Barth . . .], but there is no one to show us the way towards a new Christian life in uncompromising accordance with the Sermon on the Mount. It is in this respect that I am looking up to you for help. (Green 2021, 7)

About the issue on how Christians had to act in war, he stresses that there is no commandment; the church might not “give its blessing to war and weapons.” Therefore, “[i]f the Christian takes up arms, he must daily ask God for forgiveness for this sin and pray for peace” (Bonhoeffer 2019b, 791–795). According to Green, it is possible to distinguish seven main aspects of Bonhoeffer’s theological peace ethics practice, in any case not a radical, but a conditional pacifist. The first aspect is opposition to war, in his ecumenical addresses of the 1930s; the second is resistance against the militarist dictatorship, from January 1933 onwards; the third aspect was nonviolent resistance, based on the Sermon on the Mount, including training in nonviolent resistance, and by his 1934 plan to learn nonviolent tactics from Gandhi in India; the fourth was advocating for conscientious objection; as the fifth appears the work to protect and help victims of the regime; sixth, he teaches his Christian peace ethics to his students; finally, he demonstrates his willingness to suffer and die (Green 2019, 344–362, here 355).

Another example of non-violent action and love of enemies is how Martin Luther King, Jr. explains the potentiality of the Sermon on the Mount. He starts by saying that “Probably no admonition of Jesus has been more difficult to follow than the command to ‘love your enemies.’” Then he poses the question: “How do we love our enemies?” First, “we must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive.” Second, “we must recognize that the evil deed of the enemy-neighbor, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that he is.” An element of goodness may be found even in our worst enemy.” Third, “we must not seek to defeat or humiliate the enemy but to win his friendship and understanding.”

The second main question for him is: “Why should we love our enemies? The first reason is fairly obvious. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate [. . .], violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness.” The next reason, for him “is that hate scars the soul and distorts the personality.” The third reason

“is that love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend [. . .]. We must love our enemies, because only by loving them can we know God and experience the beauty of his holiness [. . .]. Love is the most durable power in the world. This creative force, so beautifully exemplified in the life of our Christ, is the most potent instrument available in mankind’s quest for peace and security” (King 2019, 47–50).

Here it is worthwhile to mention the German bishops’ interpretation. It seems that they do not take seriously into account the radicalness of the command to love your enemies when they refer to Thomas Aquinas’ explanation:

We would therefore like to join Saint Thomas of Aquinas in pointing to the decisive difference between love for one’s enemy as an enemy and love for one’s enemy as a person. Love of one’s enemies in fact does not call on us to love our enemy because they are an enemy, but because they are also humans as we are. Love of one’s enemies is therefore not a matter of accepting or indeed loving the enmity of the other person, and in fact we may defend ourselves against them. (The German Bishops 2024, nr. 73)

It seems that they are referring to *Summa Theologica* II–II 25,8 AD 2; II–II 25,9; II–II 83,8, specifically to II–II 25,8 AD 2: “Now our enemies are contrary to us, as enemies, wherefore this itself should be hateful to us, for their enmity should displease us. They are not, however, contrary to us, as men and capable of happiness: and it is as such that we are bound to love them.” Thomas Aquinas is responding to the objection that the contrary is naturally hated. The answer he is giving is that the enemy should be loved not because he is the enemy, but because he is a human being, which, according to the Sermon on the Mount and on the Plain, means that he is a neighbor, which sounds self-evident. But why is the document calling on this Thomistic differentiation? It seems that this sole reference in the whole document to the love-your-enemies commandment is made not in order to stress its distinctiveness and challenging role for peace, but only to mention it and weaken it by distinguishing between the human being and his enmity in order to justify his destruction or death: “We can defend us against the enmity.”

Here, the explanation of Schockenhoff sounds more plausible: “love of the enemy does not seek the destruction of the enemy, but the end of enmity” (Schockenhoff 2018, 478). The love-enemies command implies a kind of risk, a gift of love without expecting exchange, expressing the active attitude in opposition to the evil. The “intelligent love of enemies” seems more effective than the violence against him; despite the difficulties it implies, it “does not appear utopian or unrealistic,” but “shows the only way in which peace can realistically be expected” (Schockenhoff 2018, 479–482).

To sum up, Christian peace ethics definitely is not naïve in the sense of lack of pragmatism. And, yes, Christian ethics is naïve, and must be naïve in the sense that there is something more than only *realpolitik*. The gospel is a greater challenge than politics, ruled by money, borders, and human iniquity.

7 Love Your Enemies in Times of War? The Challenge

I was doing a research fellowship at DePaul University in Chicago when Ukraine was invaded in February 2022. The response to the invasion should be the use of the just war theory against Russia, as well as humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees. No one was talking about a peaceful solution. However, such voices existed in Ukraine itself, as can be seen in the following text:

We the Ukrainian pacifists demand and will strive to end the war by peaceful means and to protect human right to conscientious objection to military service. Peace, not war, is the norm of human life. War is an organized mass murder [. . .]. [I]t is especially important for us to maintain common sense, stay true to our non-violent way of life, build peace and support peace-loving people [. . .]. It is wrong to take the side of any of the warring armies, it is necessary to stand on the side of peace and justice. Self-defense can and should be carried out by non-violent and unarmed methods [. . .]. A desire for peace is a natural need of every person, and its expression cannot justify a false association with a mythical enemy. (Swanson 2022)

The concept of peace according to the Earth Charter is “the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part” (Earth Charter Initiative 2001). What the Earth Charter indicates is that peace has to do with the whole reality. Peace, then, must be researched, tried and built embracing the Global, universal, present and future conditions. Such a vision of peace requires peaceful and nonviolent means. War, the use of violence, the expenditure of scientific, technological, economic and political resources and the destruction of countless human lives is not consistent with the search for peace. Here too, we must remember the principle that the ends do not justify the means. In general, those who gain most from war are a few people and the arms industry. In fact, how much of a country’s or region’s GDP is spent on war and how much is spent on nonviolent means of conflict resolution? From the point of view of the “Global South”, even if it seems more difficult, a “Global North” that builds peace by peaceful means is essential. We even believe that conflict resolution by peaceful means can be cheaper than war with the arms industry and the high costs of military budgets.

If in times of peace it is necessary to invest in peaceful means, in times of war it is much more necessary: *Si vis pacem para pacem* (If you want peace, prepare for peace). According to the Ukrainian pacifists, mentioned above, peacebuilding must replace “the archaic and dangerous practices” by education and “full realization of human rights” including the “conscientious objection to military service” (Swanson 2022). In a similar way, David Grossman is asking about the Israel-Palestinian conflicts:

With the solution almost at hand, the only question that remains is: how much more blood must be spilled before we realize that peace is our only option? [. . .] True, it is easier to make war than peace. In our reality, war is basically always just a continuation, whereas peace would require difficult and complex mental processes, a process that peoples who are almost exclusively used to fighting find threatening. (Grossman 2024, 4–5, 8)

I must here agree with Franz Alt when he, in the face of the Russian-Ukrainian war, states that “exactly in times of war we need no less, but more pacifism” (Alt 2022, 16).

To be a Christian means to be crucified, to take up one’s cross and to follow Jesus (Matt 16:24 and par.). But it means also to be committed to peace and nonviolence on all levels: interpersonal, between groups, between nations, intergenerational and in the future. From this ethical perspective the love-your-enemies commandment has then to be also applied to the Russian invasion. As the Russian government has invaded Ukraine, it is considering that country and those people as enemies. Accordingly, all of the above considerations about loving the enemies apply to Russia; but they also apply to NATO members insofar as they consider Russia as their enemy.

From a Latin-American perspective, the first question we can raise concerns violence and the Theology of Liberation. In the beginning of liberation theology, until the 1980s, the question about violence was often raised. Liberation theologians were accused of promoting violent revolution in order to set Latin-American people free from dictatorship, structural injustice and oppression from North American and European exploitation mechanisms. Even if that accusation was not actually true, as it applied only to a few authors, it is necessary to verify if the ethics on the subject have changed: Is our ethical assessment of the use of violent means to transform society any different now, so that we can justify Ukrainian / NATO use of violence against Russia or Putin? Is it permissible to support violence against Russia, while the use of violence was condemned in Latin America? Are we using one paradigm for European people and another for Latin-American ones and for the Global South?

The second question we have to ask ourselves is about the moral authority of the United States to guarantee peace and nonviolence. I am not talking about the American people, but the political leadership and its use of different types of war, often in its own interests and not in favor of peace and justice for the countries affected.

The third question we have to face is about economic relevance. Who are the big winners in the war? Isn't it the war or the arms industry? How much money are NATO and individual countries investing in weapons and military supplies? To whom do the profits from these types of businesses go? On the other hand, how much money are Europe and its allies investing in resources for a non-violent solution to the conflict? Why is there only weak support for international organizations as the UNO? How many initiatives were taken in order to promote peace and overcome violence? What kind of international support is being given to the resistance against the war in Ukraine and Russia? Are the churches and are Christians convinced of their commitment for peace? Why is there only a hesitant commitment to support people and groups for peace and nonviolence, while many Christian religious leaders bless weapons, transportation of military equipment and soldiers?

Finally, would there be a defense for Ukraine and the West if the Russian ruler resorted to nuclear weapons? If we're dealing with someone like Putin, who possibly doesn't care about his own life, why wouldn't he use the most powerful weapons at his disposal, even at the risk of his own survival? If it is true that he isn't concerned with his image, or that he wouldn't change behavior in face of innocent victims, and that pacifist and nonviolent resistance would cost a lot of lives, it seems right to ask what about the people who will die from the use of weapons. Why would it be more ethical to die as an armed soldier than to die as an unarmed peacemaker or resistant pacifist?

Suspensions are sometimes raised about Brazil's attitude towards Russia's war against Ukraine. It is necessary to see that Brazil itself is an extremely violent country (Sinner and Westphal 2018). More than 45,000 people are killed every year, and it has one of the most unjust social structures world-wide. This is a great challenge we have to face. On the other hand, at an international level, Brazilian diplomacy traditionally seeks openness to dialogue and the peaceful resolution of international conflicts.

Against this outlined background, in our very being as Christians, we are not only committed to peace, we are peacemakers, and, inhabited by the Spirit, we are called to be peace, searching to transform ourselves, our neighbors, our environment, our activities and our structures in peace and nonviolence.

To conclude: Returning to Max Weber's distinction between ethics of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*) and ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*) (Weber

2004, 83) it seems that the support to Ukraine's war against Russia calls for a decision based on ethics of responsibility, the nonviolent way is not working, and Russian's aggression is unjust. So, the Ukraine has the right to defend itself by using violence against Russia. It is a just war. In this case, the ethics of peace needs to be reevaluated. But is this position really considering the consequences involved there? Is it truly based on the whole reality, or is it committed to an abstraction of the "just war theory," thus ethics of Conviction? Doesn't it in this case ignore the economic, the social, the environmental and the intercontinental costs, the costs of human lives and the real risk of using nuclear weapons?⁹ If, until today, "war was the normal way to resolve conflicts, today in face of the destruction power modern weapons have, a future war would signify the destruction of mankind and the whole life conditions" (Gnilka 1986, 197). Precisely in these questions, it is possible to see the limits and weakness of the use of war as a means for peace or one-sided defense.

Besides trying to apply the love-your-enemies commandment among themselves, Christians should also participate in the public sphere in order to offer their approach as mediators and for nonviolent resolution of conflicts. To love the enemies has to do with politics and government, and cannot be reduced to the subjective, personal or religious level. From a Christian perspective it is legitimate to take initial steps in order to overcome violence and build peace. And, yes, Christians like all other peacemakers, may fail in their attempt to resolve the conflicts, maybe paying with their and other innocent lives. Ghandi, Bonhoeffer, King Jr. and many others in the course of history and around the world, as well as Jesus of Nazareth, paid for their commitment to peace and nonviolence with their lives.

8 Conclusion

Peace must consider all types of violence because there is a kind of vicious circle between violence, hatred and enmity. Loving the enemy means breaking violence in a non-violent way. In this sense, peace and the corresponding ethics have to do with everyday life in all its dimensions, including the cosmic and environmental. In order to achieve peaceful loving relations with the enemies and preventing or ending war, peace education in its all-embracing dimensions is an essential condition. This is what the introduction to the UNESCO-Constitution recognizes: "That

⁹ See, for example, the considerations Martina Fischer makes in her article "Der Krieg gegen die Ukraine. Friedensethische Orientierung und Dilemmata," in Halbmayer (2024, 151–178, here 155).

since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed” (UNESCO 2022, 5). From this statement it is clear that defending “the love-your-enemies” command has to do with conversion to the love of others and to an education to overcome the temptation to violence on all levels: the personal, the social, the national and the international. The first level is the personal: interpersonal conflicts should be resolved non-violently. Similarly, all interethnic, political and ideological parties, economic interests and environmental issues must be treated in the light of the love of the enemies or the others. In Bovon’s opinion, at the end of his analysis of the Sermon on the Plain, “The pedagogy of peace teaches an approximation of the fulfillment of the command to love one’s enemies. On the basis of individual psychological mechanism and of public opinion, we can learn to deconstruct our developing images of enemies” (Bovon 2002, 245).

I would like to close with the testimony from Palestinian Christians, about the love-your-enemies commandment:

This word is clear. Love is the commandment of Christ our Lord to us and it includes both friends and enemies. This must be clear when we find ourselves in circumstances where we must resist evil of whatever kind [. . .]. Christ our Lord has left us an example we must imitate. We must resist evil but he taught us that we cannot resist evil with evil. This is a difficult commandment, particularly when the enemy is determined to impose himself and deny our right to remain here in our land. It is a difficult commandment yet it alone can stand firm in the face of the clear declarations of the occupation authorities that refuse our existence and the many excuses these authorities use to continue imposing occupation upon us. (World Council of Churches 2009, 4.2.4)

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Part V: **Peace Ethical Perspectives**

Nancy E. Bedford

Resistance, Otherwise: Considerations on Nonviolence in the Context of the Russian War on Ukraine

In February 2023, on the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Association of Mennonite Congregations in Germany put out a prayer:

War causes endless suffering. Locally, where people experience gun violence, rape, death and displacement; regionally, where the use of mines, heavy equipment and attacks on heavy industry contaminate habitats for future generations; and Globally, where inflation and rising food prices are further escalating the plight of people ravaged by other conflicts, wars and climate change. In memory of all those directly and indirectly affected by this war that violates international law, we pray: ‘DELIVER US FROM EVIL.’ (Arbeitsgemeinschaft 2023)

An attitude of prayer and humility is indispensable for life generally, but especially when we are dealing with painful and difficult subjects such as war. In looking at war from a perspective informed by the Christian faith, it is my conviction that only with the help of God’s Spirit can we discern how we might cooperate with God in that deliverance from evil for which we pray. In and through prayer we try to learn to think and act about reality in ways that are attuned to God’s work of transformation and liberation, as reflected in the gospels. It must be stated at the outset that this is not a practice that necessarily leads to pragmatic ends or to “realistic” postures, if by realism we mean what passes for common sense in the world of politics.

I have therefore titled my essay “Resistance, Otherwise.” This is meant to underline that from the outset for me as an Anabaptist theologian, the problem at hand is not a matter of whether to resist the evil of invasion or occupation or not, but rather about *how* to resist. The title is simultaneously a nod to what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls “epistemologies of the South” (de Sousa Santos 2019), that is, ways of thinking and acting that have too often been repressed, denied or dismissed – among them, forms of nonviolent resistance. Central to such struggles are “concepts such as land, water, territory, self-determination, dignity, respect, good living, and mother earth” (de Sousa Santos 2016, 41), that is, considerations that go beyond only anthropocentric perspectives about the costs of war. To look at reality against the grain or “otherwise” means to be willing to change our angle of vision, to look at a given situation in a counter-hegemonic way or indeed to look at it and try to deal with it in a way that disidentifies with dominant com-

mon sense. This epistemological approach comes to us from many different schools of thought, including decolonial theory and queer theory. “Resistance otherwise” then, means that the baseline for me as an Anabaptist theologian is not a matter of sitting by and doing nothing or of reacting passively or indifferently in the face of aggression. It is a matter of resisting evil and violence *otherwise*. As a follower of Jesus I believe this is what he did and what he still calls us to do today, with the help of the Holy Spirit, who enlivens us and guides us into the loving and creative ways of God, helping us discern in the face of conflict, and actualizing the teachings and actions of Jesus for our contexts.

There is no doubt that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been brutal. As Human Rights Watch has documented:

Since Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022, its war against Ukraine has had a disastrous impact on civilian life, killing thousands of civilians, injuring many thousands more, and destroying civilian property and infrastructure. Russian forces committed a litany of violations of international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate and disproportionate bombing and shelling of civilian areas that hit homes and healthcare and educational facilities. Some of these attacks should be investigated as war crimes. In areas they occupied, Russian or Russian-affiliated forces committed apparent war crimes, including torture, summary executions, sexual violence, enforced disappearances, and looting of cultural property. (Human Rights Watch 2024)

To be clear, then, in pondering “resistance otherwise,” I am not attempting to dispute or soften the brutality of the invasion, to say that the power distribution is even, or to say that both sides are equally at fault. What I am proposing is for us to try to look at and respond to this reality *otherwise*, posing the kinds of questions that our received scripts about how to respond in case of invasion and war make almost impossible to ask. I am referring to questions about whether there are better ways to resist and respond to such aggression than the answer that seems the obvious one and which the government of Ukraine has indeed pursued. How might we envision resistance “otherwise” to invasion, armed aggression and brutality? Do Christian approaches to nonviolent resistance have anything to contribute to such situations? What does the lens of nonviolent resistance bring to our understanding of this war and to the many other armed conflicts happening around the world?¹

One might justifiably ask: what can religion or theology possibly contribute to our analysis of this situation? Religion is deeply embedded in this and other conflicts, and not necessarily in good ways. Though people in the Global north

¹ For an interactive map of such conflicts, see “Global Conflict Tracker,” *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/>.

often think of religion as a privatized matter, the Russian-Ukrainian war has shown clearly that it is not so (European Academy 2022). In this conflict – as in many others – representatives of the Christian faith have justified war or armed struggle as necessary evils or even as worthy of praise. There are “good Christians” who have from the beginning supported and religiously justified Russia’s actions. Given that fact, it becomes doubly important to point out that these are not the only voices that emerge from the Christian faith, and that others question the religious justification of the Russian invasion. We can point, for instance, to an early Anabaptist statement that calls upon Patriarch Kirill to break with the logic of war, stating: “As Russia unleashes weapons upon Ukraine, we call on you as a Christian leader in Russia to speak and act boldly for the gospel of peace. Regardless of any rationale given for the attack upon Ukraine, this is an immoral action that Christians everywhere must condemn” (Kraybill 2022). Lamentably, Patriarch Kirill instead doubled down on his support of the invasion, making a “Prayer for Holy Rus” – and its victory – obligatory at church services. Not a few priests who refused to read the prayer or changed its wording from a plea for victory to a plea for peace “have been subjected to punishment (including defrocking), court procedures and fines” (Stoyanov 2024, 687).

Clearly, in any war in which there is an established Christian church presence, the problem of “military theocratization” can emerge, that is, a close alignment between representatives of a given church tradition and the justification of a “metaphysical struggle” or a “holy war” in defense of supposed Christian principles (Stoyanov 2024, 678). In the Russian-Ukrainian war, both sides have at times used religious or theological justifications of their stances, as is the case in most wars. When churches come down firmly on the side of either offensive or defensive war, they (perhaps unwittingly) sacralize armed violence, with unforeseen consequences. In so doing they also lose the opportunity to be a force for enacting alternative approaches of resistance in the face of discourses of inevitability.

In any Christian tradition (not only in those who are considered “peace” churches) it is possible to find those who resist the dominant scripts. Within Russian Orthodoxy, for example, there have been voices of resistance from the beginning of the conflict. In March 2022, almost immediately after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a group of 292 Russian Orthodox priests and deacons from around the world signed an open letter calling for an end to a “fratricidal war” and for reconciliation, “asserting that the people of Ukraine should make their choice on their own, not under military threat and pressure” (Stoyanov 2024, 681). Inside Russia itself, there have been instances of similar resistance, something that takes a good bit of courage, such that clergy “who have actively opposed the military incursion in Ukraine with anti-war statements and sermons have faced intimidation, censoring, prosecution and defrocking” (Stoyanov 2024, 683).

To question the religious justification of a war of aggression may not be a particularly difficult step, especially for those outside the parameters of a conflict. But to take seriously defensive modes of “resistance otherwise,” as I am suggesting, means also to consider a less welcome position that is the corollary of the above theological critique of a perpetrator’s actions, namely, to question the logic of armed *resistance* to such aggression and invasion. Within the Christian faith, there are a number of streams of faith and practice that make explicit their conviction that nonviolent forms of resistance in the face of violent aggression and war are more in tune with the way of Jesus than picking up the sword, and therefore challenge the normalization of war as a response to war. Such streams come to this conclusion in sometimes differing ways. In their 2022 book *A Field Guide to Christian Nonviolence*, David Cramer and Myles Werntz identify eight currents within Christian nonviolence, from virtue ethics and mysticism to liberationist and feminist approaches.² The streams sometimes run together and at other times can be quite different in their emphases, for example, in how much weight they put on the effectiveness of nonviolent action. Their variety belies the impression some have that there is only one way to approach Christian nonviolence, that of being a passive victim whose response to evil is to offer oneself up as a sacrifice. I am an Anabaptist-Mennonite Christian theologian, and thus formed by the peace church traditions coming out of the Radical Reformation, but also – as a Latin American, a feminist theologian, and a practitioner of contemplative prayer – by some of the other streams as well. These various theological influences do not lead me to conclude that passivity is the best option in response to armed aggression, but they do urge me to ask questions in the face of the dominant narrative for which the “good” response to the Russian armed intervention in Ukraine is a bellicose one.

Out of the rich and multifaceted ongoing tradition of Christian nonviolence, one of the contributions that theology can make to the analysis of the Russian-Ukrainian war is to ask questions that do not emerge from the usual scripts applied to war. Rather, they come out of commitments reflected in the gospel ac-

2 The eight streams they mention are Christian Discipleship (André Trocmé, John H. Yoder, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Denny Weaver), Christian Virtue (Dorothy Day, Leonardo Boff, Eli McCarthy, Pope Francis), Christian Mysticism (Rowan Williams, Howard Thurman, Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton, Dorothee Sölle), Apocalyptic Nonviolence (William Stringfellow, Daniel Berrigan, René Girard, Jacques Ellul), Realist Nonviolence (Walter Rauschenbusch, Georgia Harkness, Lawrence Burkholder, Duane Friesen, Glen Stassen, Lisa Sowle Cahill), Nonviolence as Political Practice (Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Tutu), Liberationist Nonviolence (Oscar Romero, Hélder Câmara, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel), and Christian Anti-Violence (Elizabeth Albrecht, Traci West, Marie Fortune, Hilary Scarsella).

counts about the teaching of Jesus. I want to underline three such commitments or premises:

- 1) “You cannot serve both God and Mammon” (Matt 6:24);
- 2) “Let it not be so among you” (Matt 20:26); and
- 3) “Be as shrewd as serpents and as gentle as doves” (Matt 10:16).

The first premise encourages us to ask about the true costs of war and thus how effective it really is as a logic of resistance. The second leads us to question the wisdom of dominant scripts of how to respond in the face of aggression and violence, underlining the importance of decolonizing our imaginations. The third inspires us to consider concrete nonviolent ways of resisting the dominant logic of the inevitability of a violent response to violence, including (or even especially) for those of us who are not living in Ukraine right now, whose governments may be providing weapons used in the conflict.

1 Follow the Money: You Cannot Serve Both God and Mammon (Matthew 6:24)

Just before dawn on February 24, 2022, Russia rained down dozens of missile strikes on cities all over Ukraine and began an invasion with ground troops that initially reached the outskirts of Kyiv. They soon faced many logistical problems and strong Ukrainian resistance. By October of that year, the Russians withdrew from the north of the country, continuing to occupy areas in the South and the East (Visual Journalism Team BBC 2024). It is worth remembering that the Ukrainian resistance to the initial onslaught was not carried only through the use of arms. Many Ukrainians – and some Russians as well – enacted gestures of resistance. One article written in May of 2022 puts it this way:

Unarmed people block tanks. Street signs are changed so that “F*ck you!” is written on them or all roads point to The Hague to the International Criminal Court. Videos circulate of Ukrainians offering to tow Russian soldiers stranded without fuel to Moscow, and pictures of Russian deserters being welcomed with tea and cheers. (Isaak-Krauß 2022)³

There were also small and large nonviolent forms of resistance to the war inside Russia, from a woman filmed wearing the colors of the Ukrainian flag on the

³ The block quote above was taken from the version in English at <https://www.anabaptistwitness.org/2022/05/the-power-of-nonviolent-resistance/>.

subway, to scientists who publicly expressed their opposition to the war, and persons who demonstrated against the invasion (Christoyannopoulos 2022).

Nonetheless, the military response soon overshadowed all others and crowded out the narrative of alternative forms of resistance. By the day after the invasion, February 25, 2022, US President Joe Biden had already authorized the use of 350 million dollars in military assistance from Department of Defense (DOD) inventories, using Presidential Drawdown Authority. The latter is the capacity to provide military assistance, authorized under section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of the United States. It allows “speedy delivery of defense articles and services from Department of Defense stocks to foreign countries.” By December 27, 2023, there had been 54 such drawdowns. By the fall of 2024, the US had committed more than \$30.4 billion to Ukraine. The flow from US inventories has been constant: a steady stream of ammunitions, weapons and equipment, including Abrams tanks, HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, produced by Lockheed), Howitzers, Javelins, anti-armor systems, air surveillance radars, unmanned aerial systems, counter-UAS and electronic warfare detection equipment, air defense interceptors, anti-armor systems, small arms, heavy equipment transport vehicles, and maintenance support, artillery and tank ammunition, mortar systems, rockets, depleted uranium rounds and anti-tank weapons. The United States has also provided training of fighter pilots and of tank crews (US Department of State 2023).

Notably, none of these weapons have prevented continuing death and destruction in Ukraine. As Fernando Enns puts it:

Is the position of nonviolence in face of aggression obsolete? Not at all – on the contrary. Weapons do not protect from death and destruction. [. . .] The delivery of weapons does not put an end to war, but rather heats it up. [. . .] Neither can we [as peacemakers] protect people in war right now from death and destruction. We also are afraid. But our faith in the power of love is strong. Our trust in the power of nonviolence – as Jesus himself lived it out – is unbroken. (Enns 2022)

Lest his words seem overly idealistic, let us remember what we do know about the death and destruction that result from the way the armed conflict has played out. It is difficult to find reliable data about the consequences of the ongoing war in the lives of people both in Ukraine and in Russia. We know that there have been tens of thousands of civilian casualties in Ukraine,⁴ millions of internally displaced people, and millions of people who have left the country temporarily or permanently. By August 2023, around 70,000 Ukrainian soldiers had died and around 120,000 had been wounded (Cooper 2023). Pentagon calculations checked

⁴ By July 2023, the civilian casualties in Ukraine were calculated by the United Nations at 26,015: 9,369 killed and 16,646 injured (UNHR 2023).

by *New York Times* reporting in February 2024 put the deaths of Russian soldiers at 60,000, with over 240,000 wounded, including many thousands of amputees (MacFarquhar and Masaeva 2024). Neither side wants to publicize its casualties, which continue to add up day by day, week by week, month by month.

Militarism has unacceptably high environmental costs, even when a particular military force is not actively waging war. Military industrialization, for example, depends on fossil fuel consumption, as does the mobilization of troops. The Department of Defense of the United States alone produces more greenhouse gases than entire countries such as Norway or Portugal (Crawford 2023, 142). Both offensive and defensive aspects of the war in Ukraine have taken a terrible environmental toll. A UN report speaks of its “toxic legacy”: there has been extensive damage across the country, “with incidents at nuclear power plants and facilities, energy infrastructure, including oil storage tankers, oil refineries, drilling platforms and gas facilities and distribution pipelines, mines and industrial sites and agro-processing facilities.” As a result, there is air pollution and “potentially serious contamination of ground and surface waters.” Water infrastructure, “including pumping stations, purification plants and sewage facilities,” is severely affected. Furthermore, “multiple industrial facilities, warehouses and factories have been damaged, some storing a range of hazardous substances ranging from solvents to ammonia and plastics.” Alongside this, “hazardous substances have also been released from explosions in agro-industrial storage facilities, including fertilizer and nitric acid plants.” The bombing of livestock farms has led to carcasses that “pose a further public health risk.” Debris in destroyed housing is “likely to be mixed with hazardous materials, particularly asbestos.” There is an “increase of fires in various nature reserves and protected areas, as well as forested areas.” Beyond all of this, “pollution from the extensive use of weapons including in populated areas and the large volumes of military waste, including destroyed military vehicles, creates a major clean-up challenge” (UN Environment 2023). To this should be added the disastrous collapse of the Kakhovka dam in June 2023 (in the Russian-controlled Kherson region in the south) and the fragility of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Station (also in southern Ukraine). The list goes on.

At the same time that the people and the land are suffering horribly, however, the worldwide armament industry is benefitting and thriving. Military contractors Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, Pratt & Whitney, and Lockheed Martin have received millions of dollars in contracts to replenish the US Department of Defense stocks. These companies have gone as far as co-sponsoring a reception at the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington to celebrate their connection (Guyer 2022). Fossil fuel firms and big agriculture traders are also benefitting financially from the protracted conflict (Baines 2022). The triumph of Mars, the god of war, is ac-

accompanied by a triumph of Mammon, the god of money. From the perspective of the gospel of Jesus, both of these gods are idols that promise life but bring death and destruction. Clearly, there are very strong interests for whom the continuation of war means profit, and who thus push back against any perspective that would question the logic of the script that tells us that bellicosity is best dealt with by intensifying counter-bellicosity. Their influence is also a factor in our seeming incapacity to think about a response to the Russian invasion in any way save in terms of the logic of war and more war.

2 Scripts We Live By: Let it Not Be so Among You (Matthew 20:26)

The beginning of the invasion of Ukraine made it very difficult for many of us to think of resistance “otherwise.” It followed a script familiar to us from many movies and novels, that featured a young hero and underdog (Zelenskyy) battling an evil mastermind (Putin). Who would be so remiss as to question the logic of arming the underdog to help him triumph? Accepting this “script” as normative, however, tends to cancel out the possibility of thinking about alternative ways of supporting Ukraine. To imagine scenarios of nonviolent resistance supported by the kind of resources pledged to the war machine is literally “unthinkable” for those of us caught in the logic of spiraling violence and counter-violence. It seems to me that we need to pray for God’s Spirit to help us in “the renewing of our minds” (Rom 12:2) in order to begin to imagine fruitful possibilities for resistance that don’t conform to the business as usual of the war machine. A helpful approach is to ponder this question from the perspective of “otherwise” scripts in the face of war that depart from those normalized in popular culture. The examples that come to my mind are that of the prophet Jeremiah, that of the early Anabaptist theologian Michael Sattler, and that of some minority (or “fringe”) Protestants in Ukraine who are committed to nonviolence.

The Hebrew Bible prophet Jeremiah is a master of nonviolent gestures. His life of prayer – in his case, the prophetic experience of literally hearing and transmitting God’s voice – leads him to believe that it is wrong for Judah to trust in the weapons of the Egyptians in the face of the imminent Babylonian threat. Among his nonviolent gestures of protest are procuring a linen belt (that he then allows to rot; Jeremiah 13:1–11) and making an apparently senseless investment in a parcel of land he knows that is about to be overrun by the Babylonians (32:6–9). He is persecuted, receives death threats, and is mocked by false prophets. The manuscript he has dictated to his scribe Baruch is tossed into the fire by a ruler who

hadn't even finished reading it. He gets thrown in jail, part of the time at the bottom of a muddy cistern without food or water, accused of discouraging both the soldiers and the people generally from the proper defense of Jerusalem (38:1–28). In the end, as an old man, he ends up going with a remnant of the people of Judah to Egypt when they choose (against his advice and his prophecies) to go there.

We might be tempted to read Jeremiah's story through this lens of the Hollywood hero, the rugged individual who triumphs somehow alone against all odds. But if we read the story carefully, we see that Jeremiah is helped and defended by others all the way through. When the manuscript of his prophecies gets thrown into the fire, his scribe Baruch writes them down again, even adding more detail. In fact, Baruch keeps on writing all the way to Egypt. When Jeremiah receives death threats, friends step forth to protect him (26:24). When he gets thrown in the cistern, friends again come to his defense and manage to throw him a rope of rags tied together to get him out of the well. They convince the king to provide better conditions for his imprisonment, so he can have some light and fresh air (38:8). In the story of Jeremiah we see the power of nonviolent gestures of protest and the power of community in protest, even while nonviolent resistance is not always "effective" for the persons engaging in the protest: the tide is not always turned by their actions. Nonetheless, we still read the story of Jeremiah and learn from it today, because the descendants of those who went into exile to Babylon preserved it and cherished it.

The second script I want to mention is the story of Michael Sattler, the former prior of a Benedictine monastery in the Breisgau who became a leader of the early Anabaptist movement. His adherence to the Anabaptist way came in the context of the 16th century peasant unrest. In May 1527, he was tried for heresy in Rottenburg am Neckar, tortured and killed. The main matter at issue was his position on resistance to the hypothetical case of an invasion by the Turks, that is, by Muslims. Sattler, having conferred with his Anabaptist "brethren and sisters" and speaking for the group, pointed out that for confessing Christians, Jesus' command in Matt 5:21 ruled out warfare and killing. He thus insisted that if an invasion were to happen, his weapon of choice would be prayer, not armed defense (Williams and Mergal 1957, 144). Sattler refused to submit to the logic of responding to war with war, and even though such a war was at that moment a hypothetical, his refusal to submit to the dominant script about how a people should defend itself from invasion was enough to cost him his life. Nevertheless, his story remains as a powerful witness to resistance otherwise.

In Ukraine, the pressure on churches to sacralize the militarized defense has been intense. In the case of Protestant minority churches (Baptist and Pentecostal), many of the pastors and parishioners left the country soon after the Russian

attack, while simultaneously many new people began to attend services, in what the churches themselves describe as signs of an “awakening.” Some Protestants joined the war effort: “many Protestants (particularly from the mainstream officially registered all-Ukrainian Baptist and Pentecostal Unions) were drafted into or volunteered for the army and defended their country with weapons in their hands” (Vagramenko 2023, 123). However, some Christians belonging to more religiously marginal groups, such as unregistered Baptists, reformed Adventists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah’s Witnesses “refused to hold guns in their hands, firmly standing on their pacifist principles” (Vagramenko 2023, 123). These were groups that during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods had developed pacifist stances in an apparently “apolitical” manner that – nonetheless – has material, political consequences. Vagramenko argues that

although their refusal to fight in the war and their historically apolitical attitudes elicit social blame and can lead to the further marginalization of religious minorities, many Protestant groups attempt to develop alternative foundations for *bottom-up* peacebuilding and reconciliation in this war-torn society. (Vagramenko 2023, 124)

She points out that “these groups’ historical legacy of civil persecution and repression during the Soviet period helps to provide them with an interpretative framework to comprehend traumatic social changes and losses brought about by the war” and that “the ongoing war brought about re-traumatizing experiences,” but “traumatic historical memory has turned into a mobilizing force for believers’ agency and stimulated creative social responses during times of war” (124). As one Baptist man that Vagramenko interviewed for her ethnography puts it: “I am not going to fight; I am not going to shoot. I don’t want tears to be shed somewhere in Russia. I don’t want to kill, to kill Russians. I simply want to help people. If needed, I will give help to a Russian” (Vagramenko 2023, 133). He added that “In war, some prepare ammunition, some make Molotov cocktails, but we prepare our own weapon – the Word of God and prayer” (Vagramenko 2023, 134). These groups have also focused on organizing humanitarian aid. A network was created by religious communities from different confessions: “Pentecostals from one region arranged the production of packed ready-to-eat food; Baptists from another region distributed it to the front line; and Orthodox and Baptists organized evacuation transport from Irpin, Bucha, Hostomel, and Borodianka” (Vagramenko 2023, 133). Vagramenko points out that

[e]ven against the background of Russian aggression, the majority of Ukrainian Protestants don’t foster religious forms of nationalism or securitization of their faith (when a religious narrative is applied in the creation of an image of an external enemy). Many Protestant communities across the country keep Russian as a second (in some regions as the first) language in their religious services. (Vagramenko 2023, 134)

Of particular interest are the Jehovah's Witnesses, who have a hard-earned tradition of not participating in military service. This historical trajectory gives them a strong sense of identity and ability to "resist otherwise." As one man put it:

We don't fight with weapons, and people blame us for not protecting the country. I know for sure that there is not a single Jehovah's Witness in Ukraine who will kill someone in this war. But I also know for sure that there is not a single Jehovah's Witness in Russia who will take a gun in his hands, nobody in Ukraine will be killed by the hand of a Jehovah's Witness. (Vagramenko 2023, 136)

Vagramenko adds that "while standing on the grounds of faith-based pacifism, ordinary believers either develop alternative forms of social activism in times of war or pursue their own models for peace and dialogue, while refusing to engage in violence" (Vagramenko 2023, 136).

What are we to make of these alternative "scripts?" On the one hand, it should be said that there are actually many situations in which nonviolent resistance works very well to effect lasting societal change, as the work of Erica Chenoweth illustrates (Chenoweth 2021). On the other hand, I'm admittedly not bringing forth these alternative scripts as examples of great effectiveness in any immediate sense. Jeremiah failed in convincing Judah of the wisdom of his words. Michael Sattler was executed, as was the rest of his little community, including his wife. Those enacting their faith-based nonviolent resistance in Ukraine know that it is unlikely that their actions alone will put an end to the war. What I do want to point out is that for those of us who purpose to follow in the way of Jesus, through prayer it is possible to find in scripture itself, in the theological tradition, and in contemporary examples, inspiration for alternative life scripts to those which have been ingrained in us in everything from the *Iliad* to Hollywood – and even by some readings of the biblical narrative – in which violence is normalized and even sanctified. To explore such alternate scripts is to be able to imagine possibilities of resistance that are unthinkable otherwise.

3 A Plurality of Nonviolent Options: Be as Shrewd as Serpents and as Gentle as Doves (Matthew 10:16)

This takes me to my last point: what might we do right now to support nonviolent resistance in Ukraine? As Tatiana Kalenychenko points out, the process of peace and reconciliation requires internal effort: therapeutic work can help us put aside feelings of superiority and the need to put down another group in order to

elevate our own. That helps in re-personalizing and re-humanizing those who we perceive as our enemies (Kalenychenko 2023, 227). It is an exercise that is important as a spiritual practice in the face of “others” who may seem different to us or hostile, and one that gains all the more relevance when we are in the position of being attacked or harmed. How can we seek to defend ourselves without mirroring the indifference, the dehumanization or the hate that seems to be coming from the other side?

Eli McCarthy, who teaches Justice and Peace Studies at Georgetown University suggests five steps those of us outside Ukraine can take (McCarthy 2022).⁵

1. Amplify the nonviolent resistance to the war happening both in Ukraine and Russia (this can be done both in material ways through hubs for coordination of assistance and by circulating information)
2. Support unarmed, nonviolent civilian support and protection (for example through Unarmed Civilian Protection [UCP])⁶
3. Rehumanize all stakeholders (including enemies or adversaries; for instance, labels such as “thugs” and “monsters” should be avoided)
4. Encourage leaders in Ukraine, including Zelenskyy, to sign a phase-one agreement to end the war (this could save thousands of lives on both sides)
5. Send strategic delegations and humanitarian airlifts (for instance, cargo planes with medicine and foods) to help generate peace zones

For those of us attempting to imagine or live out alternative scripts to that of the inevitability of responding to aggression and war with more armed violence, an important dimension of nonviolent resistance is to avoid judging or condemning those who do not respond nonviolently to a situation of aggression. As McCarthy points out, “active nonviolence is not about condemning or judging people who lean toward violent resistance in really difficult situations like the one Ukrainians face.” The way people try to stand up actively against injustice are worthy of admiration. As he sees it, as a stance of accompaniment, active nonviolence is primarily about the solidarity we can exercise with people on the ground – Ukrainians and others – who are engaged “in a variety of creative, courageous, nonviolent ways” (McCarthy 2022).

As I’ve already mentioned, there have indeed been many nonviolent acts of resistance by Ukrainians since February 2022, some of them inspired by religious conviction, some of them not. As those who have engaged in such actions cer-

⁵ See also the recommendations of the Alliance for Peacebuilding, <https://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/ukraine-call-to-action-topline-recommendations>.

⁶ UCP is an evidence-based strategy for the protection of civilians through the methodology of non-armed violence interruption (more at <https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/>).

tainly know, neither a commitment to resistance otherwise that is born of following Jesus nor any other form of nonviolent resistance is a guarantee of success (neither is armed or violent resistance, for that matter). It may not put an immediate end to an unwelcome occupation and it may entail suffering. But what we do know for certain is that the current logic of war already in place is leading to massive suffering and destruction of people and of the earth.

I hope that by now it is clear that I am not arguing for non-resistance. I am, rather, asking whether mirroring violence and armed aggression is the best way to resist injustice, violence – and in this case, invasion – if what we are looking for is to minimize death, human suffering, ecological destruction, and cycles of renewed violence. My sense is that armed resistance is not the best way to do so, but rather that putting the amount of energy, bravery and resources that usually go into a war effort into alternative forms of resistance instead, may well be more effective. I'm also arguing that, beyond "effectiveness," for those of us who try to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, participation in armed struggle – which, it would seem, necessarily entails the dehumanization of the Other in order to be able to fight to the death – does not seem to me like the best way to be faithful to the teaching of Jesus to love God, our neighbors (and ourselves) and our enemies.

That said, I would not deign to prescribe to Ukrainians – or to anybody else, for that matter – how they should or should not act in the face of armed aggression and invasion. We don't really know how we will react or what we will believe until we are forced to respond to the pressure of extreme situations. Some people of faith who previously identified as pacifists changed their minds when faced with the brutality of Russian bombardments (Zordrager 2024, 468–469). Many Ukrainian women have found themselves supporting the armed forces on the one hand, while engaging in tactics of nonviolent conflict resolution and working at the grassroots level to provide food, shelter, and emotional care on the other (Zordrager 2024, 471). Others, who may have not thought they were not pacifists at all, have found that nonviolent resistance is the best way forward.

What I have tried to do here is, first, to suggest that an *otherwise* resistance is often more positively transformative in terms of human lives lost and of ecological harm than the script of warlike responses to war preferred by the powerful. Thus, we should hesitate to normalize that response as the only viable, possible or effective stance in the face of aggression. Second, even in the cases where it might seem ineffective at some levels, a prayerful exploration of nonviolent resistance may still be the preferable path. It opens up our imaginations and with them, new possibilities for transformation and for a future with hope. It seems to me that it is a way that is much closer to that of Jesus than the paths that our societies – who seem largely unwilling to ponder the actual human and ecological costs both of offensive and defensive war strategies – hold to be logical and reasonable.

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Dion A. Forster

Waging Peace and the Pragmatics of Force: On Being Christian in a Time of War

1 Introduction

Can you imagine a world without war? I find it pretty difficult to imagine such a world.

I have to think carefully about why I find it so difficult to imagine a world free from war and other forms of violence. As a theologian, I ask whether I have come to believe that war is part of God's plan for humanity and creation. Does God intend for us to be at war with one another, with all of the associated suffering and loss that accompanies the violence of war? If it is not God's will, then why do I, and other Christians, so easily and uncritically accept the 'reality' of war? This is a particularly important issue for us to reflect on at present – given the much-publicized war in Ukraine after the Russian invasion (Engvall 2022), the Israel and Gaza conflict (Mishra 2024), as well as the wars on the African continent, in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan (IISS 2022).

There is good reason for me, in particular, to be cautious and sober about speaking on this topic – I am a white man. In fact, I am a white, male, relatively straight, 50-something year old, English speaking, Protestant-Christian theologian who speaks from a position of undeserved power and privilege. This is a problem since white men are violent. By stating this I do not mean to say that I am an essentialist (although, feminist, queer, black, and liberationist theological siblings have convinced me that at times a measure of 'strategic essentialism' is necessary when it comes to intersectional issues such as race, gender, sexuality and class) (Spivak 2003, 42–58; 2012, xi; Eide 2016, 2278–2280; 2010, 63–78; also see the excellent work by Brown 2019). In part what I am reflecting on today comes from my own struggle with being a violent white man. By claiming that white men are violent I am not making an argument for causation (i.e., that only white men are violent). Of course, we can all think of women, and persons of color, who are also violent in their actions, speech, and intentions. However, this is an argument that is based on coherence – where white men are, there is often violence in thought, speech and action. After all, what is war but the violent enactment of a sense of superiority, and a kind

Dion A. Forster, Professor of Public Theology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and extraordinary Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics at Stellenbosch University

of chauvinism that believes that it is right, and others are not? In this coherent state, I am conscious of who I am, and the difficulty of talking about war and violence.

In this sense, as a white, male, educated theologian, I am somewhat like one of my former teachers, Stanley Hauerwas. He said that faithfulness to Jesus requires building the habits of peaceableness (in fact he said to be Christian you have to be a pacifist). When a student asked him why he claimed this he said: “I tell you this because, as you well know by now, I am a violent son-of-a-bitch and I need you to hold me to my confession” (Hauerwas in Collier 2015, 44). I apologize for the profanity – and I must warn you that there will be at least one more swearword in this chapter. However, it was important to get your attention, to make the point that men like me are prone to violence. And so, as a Methodist I have spent my faith life trying to learn the habits of peace and unlearn the habits of violence. So, in this essay the cussing Methodist theologian (who does not like to be called an ethicist), Stanley Hauerwas, will be a conversation partner. This is because both he, and I, are violent white men who come from a so-called peace church.

In 1988 (after the second state of emergency in South Africa), the Methodist Church of Southern Africa committed itself to bearing the name of the Prince of Peace in our worship and witness, and in doing so to order our private and public lives in peace. Simply stated, a peace church, “is one which declares, as a basic tennet [*sic*] of its teaching, its objection to war, participation in war, financial support for war and training for war” (Irvine 1988, 2). This sounds quite reasonable, given the one whose name we bear.

Yet, what I find so strange is that whenever I advocate for the peaceable witness of Jesus amid violence and war, people think I am naïve at best, and crazy at worst. Somehow, even Christians, have come to normalize war and violence to the extent that peace is presented as an irrational, unreal, and naïve way of life. People will respond by saying things like, “be a realist, wars will never end”. To them I say, “if you believe that war is inevitable because you believe in a real world in which wars exist, then I challenge you to see that there is a world more real than the world of war – that is the world that is redeemed from violence and death by Jesus Christ” (cf. Hauerwas’ treatment of this topic in Hauerwas 2011a, 14).

Somehow it seems more reasonable, even for Christians, to imagine the end of the world more readily than it does to imagine a world without war and violence. Simply put, the “statement that there is a world without war in a war-determined world is an eschatological remark” (Hauerwas 2011a, 15).

I hope to convince you of this truth in this paper. I want to convince you of a day that is coming – I call it, ‘that day.’ It is a day that we read about in Isaiah 11:6, we also read about it in Revelation 21:3–5. It is a day on which violence and enmity have ended, in which there is no more killing, no more dying, no more hatred, no more conflict, no more war. ‘That day’ is surely coming. Our task is to figure out

how we live today so that when that day comes, we will be able to say that we, our families, our churches, our communities, our nations, did our best to live on the right side of history. Stanley Hauerwas says on this topic that he aims “to convince Christians that war has been abolished.” In particular he points out that the, “grammar of that sentence is very important: the past tense is deliberate.” Since he says:

I do not want to convince Christians to work for the abolition of war, but rather I want us to live recognizing that in the cross of Christ war has already been abolished. So I am not asking Christians to work to create a world free of war. The world has already been saved from war. The question is how Christians can and should live in a world of war as a people who believe that war has been abolished. (Hauerwas 2011a, 13)

As the title of this paper suggests, I want to engage the complex and difficult topic of being Christian in a world of war – I want to ask what it means to ‘wage peace’ and to what extent the ‘pragmatics of force’ are necessary when coupling peace with justice. My hope is that we will think about these things with charity, humility, intellectual rigor, and honesty.

Since I am a theologian and an ethicist, we shall begin with a prolegomenon on the relationship between belief (doctrine) and action (ethics). Next, we shall dwell on some of the beliefs of Christianity, seeking to gain an understanding of what it means to be Christian. Having done so we will spend some time unpacking what we mean when we use the words ‘war’ and ‘violence’. Finally, we shall attempt to offer a theological and ethical answer to the question: What does it mean to be Christian in a world of war?

2 Becoming Who We Are: On the Relationship between Belief (Doctrine) and Action (Ethics)

A common misconception about Christian ethics is that it is a discipline that solves complex moral problems and tells people how to make the world a better place. Of course, that is not entirely un-true, but it is not entirely true either.

A better view of Christian ethics is that it helps us to understand how we should live so that we can become that which we were created to be. As Stanley Hauerwas puts it, “the first task of the church is not to make the world more just, but to make the world the world” (Hauerwas 2011a, 136).

I invite my students in systematic theology and ethics to dwell on the semantic and grammatical content of statements – a great deal of theology happens there. As you will see in this sentence, there clearly is a task for Christians and the church to undertake. We are not free from responsibility; indeed, we have

work to do. Second, our task is spelled out. We are to align our witness and our work with the work of God. God's work is witnessed to, and inaugurated, in Jesus Christ. God's work is moving towards the *telos* or plan that God has for history (thus, it is missiological, ecclesiological, eschatological, and soteriological all at the same time). We will dwell on that in a bit, so don't worry too much about it at this point. Lastly, this sentence witnesses to the truth that in Christian theology, while we are given responsibility, we should not think that we are the saviors of history and the world. It is God who created, it is God who holds history in God's hands, and it is God who gives us our identity and work in the 'in-between' times of the already (a world with war) and the not yet (a world that is free from war and violence).

Hauerwas further says that, "Christians believe that the true history of the world, that history that determines our destiny, is not carried by the nation-state. In spite of its powerful moral appeal, this history is the history of godlessness" (Hauerwas 2001, 421). I think that you can see where I am going. The question that we should ask ourselves is, are we willing to be Christian? In other words, are we truly willing to believe in God, and that God is the God of our world, and that we are not? If we truly believe this to be true, then we shall have to change our allegiances: to whom we bow our knee, for who, and for what, we are willing to die (or for that matter live), and on what we spend our precious attention, time and money.

I hope that what this short exercise has shown you is that in reality there can be no separation between theology and ethics. What we do in theology aims to understand who, what, and whose we are, and in ethics we seek to cultivate the habits of life that embody those truths individually and socially (Hauerwas 2011b, 256).

This may sound like quite a simple task, but as it turns out, we humans struggle to be who we truly are. Moreover, because we live in ways that are incongruent with who we are (we kill, we lie, we steal, we are selfish, etc.), brokenness has entered the world.

In Christian theology we call this brokenness sin, and we see the evidence of sin in how we treat one another, how we treat non-human creation, and how we become alienated from God, ourselves, and the rest of creation. Living in sin also means that we frequently must strive for perfection as imperfect selves living in an imperfect world. This leads to complex moral situations, where instead of being able to do what we know is right, we must respond to what we know to be wrong in the best possible way. Think about that statement for a moment, as Christians we often must respond to what we know to be wrong in the best possible way.

3 An Ethical Dilemma

Let me give you an example. How many of you would say that it is not morally or theologically acceptable for a Christian to murder another person in cold blood? Not many of us, I hope!

Yet, we have come to understand that there might be certain conditions under which it may be permissible (allowable, though never desirable) to take the life of another person. For example, in self-defence, or in defence of some other vulnerable person whose life is in danger? Some would say, yes, it is permissible perhaps even morally required that we should be willing to take on the guilt of killing another (*Schuldübernahme* as Dietrich Bonhoeffer explained this choice) (Bonhoeffer 1998, 6:275–285; see a detailed and very helpful discussion of this principle in Meireis 2022, 123). Bonhoeffer argued that it may in fact be unjust (or less just) to allow the life of another (or simply allow one's own life), to be taken without some responsible action to stop the unjust murder. The enactment of unjust violence upon the vulnerable engages an ethics of responsibility, but also the reality of guilt. However, do we always have the right to defense and retaliation, or are there limits to our actions of retaliation in relation to the actions of others?

Of course, this becomes more complex when we add in some 'variables' of contextual complexity. Most people would say that someone who cannot adequately protect themselves from harm should be protected from those who could harm them – right? After all, they are facing a situation of unequal power, the aggressor has the means, intelligence, or technology to cause harm that they are not equipped or informed to protect themselves from. That would be considered an unequal aggression where one party has greater power and agency than the other. Should the more vulnerable person always be protected? Some persons would answer yes. Now what if that person (who lacks the means, equipment, and intelligence to oppose aggression is Adolf Hitler?) Do we still offer him protection, or engage an act of retaliatory defence or violence on his behalf? You can see that things very quickly become complex. You can also see that there are a range of possible answers about what 'the greater good' is, or the 'lesser of two evils' could be, when dealing with complex ethical dilemmas.

Thus, working out what is permissible, indeed what is better, or what is less evil, in such complex moral situations requires that we apply our minds with rigor and care in order to come to a decision that is justifiable, or defensible, in relation to our core beliefs about God, creation, ourselves, and other human persons.

So, this is what we will do in the remainder of this chapter. We will think about what it means to be Christian amid war and violence.

4 What We Believe: Some Important Beliefs and Confessions in Relation to Peace and War

To be Christian means that we bear the name of Christ. The earliest creed of the Christian faith is simply, “Jesus is kyrios (Lord or Christ)” which is evidenced in Paul’s use of this phrase when writing to, and of, the early church (cf., 1 Cor 12:3; Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11). Stanley Hauerwas famously, and crassly, said “Jesus is Lord. Everything else is bullshit” (Hauerwas, n.d.). That statement sums up the Lordship of Christ pretty clearly, bearing the name of Christ and being members of the community of His Kingdom is a profound claim. It has personal, and political implications. We belong to Jesus the Christ, and we should rightly commit ourselves to being part of his good, redeeming work in the world. This is our mission according to John 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”¹ However, in order to become who we are, and do what we were created to do, we need to learn some things about the God who created us. We need to understand a few things about God’s good creation, and the good towards which God has intended God’s good creation to live. In this sense, theology is not only about what we believe about God, but also about what we believe about the God who believes things about us.

For Christians, our knowledge of God comes by God’s revealing grace. First and most clearly in the person of Jesus (John 14:8–8), and second and of great importance, in God’s presence and work in creation (Rom 1:19). In Jesus we see the fullness of God, and God’s nature, and God’s will revealed. Jesus the Christ is the promised “Prince of Peace” of Isaiah 9:6. His loving, peaceable, sacrificial life inaugurates a way of living that transforms both history and our political realities. However, as history shows us, the Church has often struggled to be Christian. Charles Villa Vicencio writes,

The high watermark of faith in the Abrahamic religions involves the praxis of love, peace, and justice measured in relation to the widow, the orphan, and the poor, rather than in rational understanding . . . [Yet] The prevailing ideas in any institution are, as a rule, those of the elite and benefactors of that institution, who keep a wary eye on those who deviate from the principles embedded in a Constantinian-type synthesis of religion and state. This has resulted in theological support for tribal and nationalistic beliefs that are more prevalent and emotionally persuasive in religion than many devout believers care to admit. (Villa-Vicencio 2021, 46)

¹ Translation taken from English Standard Version

Living as those who bear the name of Christ, in His Kingdom, is not uncomplicated. There is often a great deal of tension between those who pretend to have power, or those who only have temporal power, and the God of eternal loving power. Oliver O'Donovan calls this the "doctrine of the Two", since Christians live in two ages, "the passing age of the principalities and powers has overlapped with the coming age of God's kingdom" (O'Donovan 1999, 211).

As Christians, our belief in God is not a belief in a God of war. We believe that God is a good creator who created creation for good, that God loves all humans and non-human creation, that God's Kingdom supersedes the kingdoms of earthly rulers, and that God's good end for history is loving justice and flourishing. This is the foundation upon which our beliefs (and actions) are built. Emmanuel Katongole writes,

[. . .] even in a deeply divided world, even in the most deeply divided relationship, the way things are is not the way things have to be. [. . .] What we need is not simply better gear and techniques but a story that helps us remember another world is possible. The good news is that God's story offers us just that. In the midst of our world's deep brokenness, God's kingdom breaks in to create new possibilities. (Katongole and Rice 2009, 13)

I think that as Christians we have lost touch with what it means to be Christian. We have forgotten the story of our identity and our lives. Or, perhaps we no longer take our belief in who God is, who God has created us to be, and what God has intended for history and creation, seriously enough. If we did, we would spend a lot more time forming our churches, forming our families, forming our own lives for the task of 'waging peace', and a lot less time stuck on the seemingly inevitable, but ultimately doomed task of 'waging war.'

Perhaps, along with our loss of Christian belief, we also have lost the capacity for a Christ-inspired, Christian imagination of the world. John de Gruchy writes:

In a time when we know how to make war, but cannot make peace; when we can land people on the moon but struggle to find space for refugees; when we can build skyscrapers, but cannot build good houses for the poor; when we can transplant hearts and kidneys, but cannot eradicate hunger; when we have much information, but little wisdom, we need to acknowledge how, despite all our knowledge we are acting like fools, and putting the world at risk. We need to learn again to fear the Lord and affirm our humanity as we respect that of others. (De Gruchy 2016, 12)

Indeed, we need to "learn again to fear the Lord and affirm our humanity as we respect that of others". We need to have spaces in which we once again learn, and are taught, the truth of our Christian beliefs. We also need to build communities where we can enliven a kind of prophetic imagination for the world that God has created, for the *telos* of history that God has intended, and for the real purpose of our lives as we live in the in-between times (Forster 2022c, 20; 2022a). So,

let's be reminded again what we believe, and how this should shape our lives in relation to war. We should not have to,

[. . .] convince Christians to work for the abolition of war, but rather [. . .] to live recognizing that in the cross of Christ war has already been abolished. [We are] not asking Christians to work to create a world free of war. The world has already been saved from war. The question is how Christians can and should live in a world of war as a people who believe that war has been abolished. (Hauerwas 2011a, 13)

This is our identity, this is our calling, this is our destiny. This might be part of what it means to be Christian in a world of war. But, I can hear you say, if only it was that simple! If only we, and others, did not face onslaught and violence. Well yes, you are right. It is not so simple. To figure out how we live “in a world of war as people who believe that war has been abolished” we shall have to think very carefully about how our beliefs about the world engage the realities of the world in which we live.

5 Speaking the Truth: What We Mean by War and Violence

If we are going to think theologically and ethically about war, it is important to be able to articulate what it is that we are thinking about. There are many definitions of war. Some of them are helpful and instructive, while there are others that I think are deeply problematic from a Christian perspective.

Some persons and groups would want us to believe that any conflict involving two groups (normally nations, but sometimes also groups within nations) could be defined as a situation of war. Moreover, the grammatical understanding of the word ‘war’ has also shifted in recent years. From being a noun (i.e., a word that names something), it has recently been used as a verb (i.e., it describes an action, such as engaging in the ‘war on terror’).

The problem with vague understandings of the notion of war is that they are morally ambiguous and problematic. For example, in the telling of the history of military or political conflicts the ‘winners’ of a conflict (and I use the word ‘win’ in a very particular sense to mean those who triumphed in the battle, since nobody ultimately wins in a war) often describe their actions as ‘war’, while the actions of the losers of a conflict are described as ‘acts of terror’ (See Hauerwas’ discussion of this topic in Hauerwas 2001, 421).

No, such ambiguity will not do. One of the virtues of the Christian faith is that we will face the truth and not give into lies – not even the subtle lies that we tell ourselves to protect ourselves and those whom we love from facing the truth.

As Christians, we are called to face the truth unflinchingly, with courage, commitment, and stamina. If we believe what was stated earlier, that God is a peaceable God, that God has a plan for history that does not involve violence, that God's view of human persons does not favor one nation over another (God does not love South Africans more than Zimbabweans, or citizens of the United States more than Mexicans), and Jesus has already redeemed all of creation and history, then we need to base our definition of war on those convictions. That is our point of departure, and not the expediency of retelling our histories, or casting ourselves and those that we favor over those with whom we disagree. And so, we are told,

Only the church has the stance, therefore, to describe war for what it is, for the world is too broken to know the reality of war. For what is war but the desire to be rid of God, to claim for ourselves the power to determine our meaning and destiny? Our desire to protect ourselves from our enemies, to eliminate our enemies in the name of protecting the common history we share with our friends, is but the manifestation of our hatred of God. (Hauerwas 2001, 421)

So what is war? Well one answer is that war is our desire to be the Lords of our world, to be our own gods, and in so doing to structure the world in the manner that we believe is best. We want to draw the borders of our nations to include some and exclude others. Some nations wish to extend their borders, by the retelling of their histories, and they believe so much in this retold history, and in these contingent borders, that they will sacrifice the lives of young women and men – even the innocent – on the altar of their perverted religion, the construction of the self. So, let us name war for what it is – it is slaughter. It is the killing of other human persons, which is not natural, and the devastation of non-human creation.

Indeed, as we read in the scriptures, and see in our basic human nature, murder is neither right nor natural. The first record of a murder in the Bible is a brother killing his brother, Cain killing Abel (Genesis 4). Of course, when we think about it, all killing is fratricide – the killing of a sibling, a brother, a sister, a mother, a father, a child, and that is a declaration of our hatred of the God whose beloveds we are killing.

Let's not romanticize war, or valorize it, or lend moral sanction to so-called warriors in these struggles as the popular media and entertainment want to do. Some of us have been at war, whether the unjust wars of our nations, or the ideological wars of our peoples. Some of us know that the sacrifice of our lives and the lives of others is idolatry, and it must be named as such. But, there is promise:

Christians have been offered the possibility of a different history through participation in a community in which one learns to love the enemy. They are thus a people who believe that God will have them exist through history without the necessity of war. (Hauerwas 2001, 422)

If we take this to be true, then the only wars that are permissible (never desirable) are those that can be considered theologically and morally defensible – these are not religious crusades, but indeed, acts of courage, mercy, and above all love. They are acts of love, precisely because in choosing the lesser of two evils we still choose evil, and along with that choice bring guilt upon ourselves.

In Christian thinking there have been some attempts to figure out when it may be permissible for us to take on the guilt of participating in the sin of war, for the sake of justice, mercy, and life. This has often been called the “Just War Theory”, and it is traced back to St. Augustine. These are often called the “restrictions on going to war” or *jus ad bellum* (just conditions for going to war), and the *jus in bello* (attempts at safeguarding justice while at war).

Let me be clear, there is no such thing as a just war (*jus ad bellum*) – if we are Christians, then we need to confess that all wars are unjust. But, we can at least try to act justly in situations of war and violence (*jus in bello*). The traditional commitments to justice in war were that one would only resort to force or violence if it was a matter of justice (i.e., a just cause); then only when all other means had been fully exhausted; that those who declare the war should have some reasonable and defensible right to do so (i.e., be the proper authority or a moral representative of authority); that the intention of the conflict was just (i.e., not for reasons of power, wealth, or vengeance); that there is a reasonable chance of success; that due care be given for the protection of the innocent (civilians, the old or young, those who are vulnerable, and non-human creation) and that one would not use any more force than is absolutely necessary to achieve the just purpose or outcome of the war (Moseley 2023; Mokobake 2020). But, as you can see, these are complex, and often contested, criteria. So, let’s try in this last section to understand what it might mean to be Christian in a world of war.

6 Who Should We Be? What Should We Do? On Being Christian in a World of War

Up to this point we have been wrestling with the theological, and existential, tension that exists between our lived reality of war, and our eschatological expectation of peace. We have confessed that we believe in a peaceable God, who sent his son, Jesus the Prince of Peace, to abolish war and violence and establish His

Kingdom of fullness for all of humanity and non-human creation. Ethically, we have said that the eschatological certainty of peace – the certainty of ‘that day’ – demands that we should live today in such a way that when ‘that day’ comes, we may be able to affirm that we did our best to live on the right side of history and the right side of God’s loving will. In other words, we were Christian in identity and action – we were faithful in fulfilling our part in the *missio Dei*.

So, how might we do this practically, meaningfully, as Christians in the world today?

Based on what we have discussed above, I believe that there are two basic dispositions that we should hold. This is based on the notion of the “doctrine of the Two” that we dealt with earlier. How we are to live in this present world in which war is a reality can be related to what O’Donovan describes as the “passing age of principalities”, and the overlapping emergence of “the Kingdom of God” in the lives of believers and communities of peace (O’Donovan 1999, 211).

7 A Peaceable Witness

As I wrestled with this question, it brought to mind the struggles that I, and many other South African Christians, faced during South Africa’s apartheid era. As a young minister serving in a violence-wracked [black] township, I wondered what a responsible Christian witness would entail? What would responsible Christian ministry look like for the Church in the midst of political injustice and human and structural violence? My bishop at the time was the Rev. Peter Storey, one of the architects of the Peace Church movement in South Africa, a committed anti-Apartheid activist who was bold in his witness for peace (Storey 2018), the founder of the “End Conscription” campaign (Weekly Mail 1989). He offered the following advice for ministry, saying that there are four primary tasks that we should be engaged in to work for justice and peace as Christian ministers in apartheid South Africa:

The first was to be a truth-teller, to proclaim the truth without fear and expose the lies of apartheid; the second was to bind up the broken, siding with the victims of injustice wherever [you] found them; the third was to try and ‘live the alternative’, seeking to be a visible contradiction of the apartheid state’s cruel segregation practices and offering a picture of God’s alternative; the fourth was to work in non-violent, Christ-like ways to bring a new dispensation of justice, equity and peace. (Storey 2018, 131)

These four imperatives have shaped my ministry, and the ministries and theological thought of many others for some decades now (Forster 2022b, 41–61). While political apartheid may have ended, the colonial imperatives that informed it,

and indeed the violence that leads to all forms of sexism, racism, homophobia, and war, have not.

To be Christian in a world of war requires faith in what is true; deep care and solidarity with those who are wounded and being wounded; siding with the poor, the marginalized, the unjustly treated and the violated; living the alternative to the violence and abuse of this world by being, and becoming, agents of peace and reconciliation in a violent world and doing whatever we can – without violence – to replace evil with good.

Let me return to where we started. If we believe in a good God, who created a good creation toward good ends, then we need to cultivate the kind of habits (often called values or virtues) for good living. The person of virtue always tries to do the right thing, no matter what the circumstances. The bearing of the virtues of Jesus the Christ is the work of the church.

Some of you specialize in Christian education and the formation of young people and adults. Form us in the church to be like Jesus. Some of you specialize in aesthetics and worship – use liturgy, the arts, and cultivate within us a prophetic imagination that empowers us to see the world that God has created, and to lean with courage and conviction into that promise. Some of you specialize in preaching and teaching – share with us in ways that are true, convincing, and evocative of the truth of our faith, and the responsibility of being people of faith. Some of you are skilled and called to care – teach us to live in deep solidarity with one another, to care and be tender with each other, teach us patience and love, and school us in the arts of healing and wholeness. Siblings, sisters and brothers, this (and many other things) are the work of Christ, and so teach us to do this, and be this, as we seek to be Christian.

To cultivate a faithful peaceable witness in a world of war, I commend three habits that we can use to live faithfully in the midst of war, in a world that is on its way to peace.

First, be obedient to Jesus' command to "pray for your enemies" (Matt 5:44). As a Christian, be a person of prayer. This means that you should pray, and when you pray, also pray for your enemies.

Second, surround yourself with friends, and even critics, who hold you to account. Allow others to speak to you about you. Break the 'bubble' and 'echo-chamber' of group think and allow yourself to be challenged, invited, and renewed through the inputs and perspectives of the supposed 'other'.

Third, enliven your imagination for peace by directing your own attention, and the attention of others, to people and processes that embody non-violence. Think about Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu, and Peter Storey, and Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez and Martin Luther King Junior and so many more. Think about movements of non-violent peaceful change – there are many wonderful examples

of well-researched and developed resources for non-violent change (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

And when you encounter violence and you must act, let your actions be virtuous and loving, let them be redeeming, let them attempt to resolve rather than escalate, to build up, rather than break down. Remember that taking the role of non-violence, and the implications of such a stance, are always incomparably small compared to what non-violence makes possible.

At the end of the day, lean into the truer reality, pray to the Lord to give you both greater faith and actions to accompany that faith. Let's be reminded that, "Christians are called to live nonviolently, not because we think nonviolence is a strategy to rid the world of war, but rather because as faithful followers of Christ in a world of war we cannot imagine not living nonviolently" (Hauerwas 2011a, 16).

8 A Just Resolution of Violence for the Greater Cause of Peace

Violence is not a legitimate way of solving problems or disputes. We must confess and embody this. However, where we are subjected to violence, or called upon to act when seeing others being subjected to violence, how are we to be Christian? Torsten Meireis' notion of peaceable responsibility ethics is helpful to consider (Meireis 2022, 123–137). How do we responsibly decide "between two possible wrongs" (Meireis 2022, 123)? One of the first things that we can do, as was argued in the previous section, is to both tell the truth and live the truth.

First, the truth is that violence is never a desirable solution to complex problems, and as such those whose responsibility it is to curtail violence, or employ violence, should not be romanticized or idealized. Sadly, the contemporary media has done much to romanticize the notion of "our boys (and girls)" in uniform, who sacrificially offer their lives for our safety and security (Meireis 2022, 123). By adding honor to those who engage in war, we are helping to create the social imagination that makes war not only a possibility but something that our children, girls and boys, grow up admiring. Of course, it is entirely naïve to assume that only good people fight in 'our' wars and 'bad' people in the terrorism of others. Goodness and badness are moral attributes that are common to all of humanity in all situations. To call someone good because they were charged to kill is a category mistake of the gravest kind. The same can be said for unquestioningly calling those who fight wars on behalf of others, often not of their own choosing,

bad (Govier and Verwoerd 2004, 371–377; Verwoerd and Edlmann 2021, 207–235). We need higher standards of truth-knowing and truth-telling than this.

Among white South African men of a certain age there is a complex set of emotions with having been conscripted into military service. Some feel great shame, guilt, and live with the horror of what they did in the name of the temporal leaders and shifting political sentiments of the nation.

Hauerwas cautions that, “the moral challenge of war is too important for us to play a game of who is and who is not guilty for past or future wars. We’re all guilty, pacifist and non-pacifist alike. Guilt is not helpful. What can be helpful is a cooperative effort to make war less likely” (Hauerwas 2011a, 18–19).

Those of us who have been in combat, or faced violence, will be able to testify that the reality of war is dreadful, dehumanizing, and seldom leaves persons unscarred – even if they survive. Moreover, we need to name the truth that the logic of war is often much less honest in its claims and it’s telling. At what cost to human lives, society, and non-human creation do we engage in battle of any form (Mokobake 2020)? So, first, when we are faced with violence, we need to have the courage and the will to seek the truth, identify and call out the lies, and self-critically evaluate what we believe to be true about ourselves and others.

Our second instinct in war and violence should always be to position ourselves on the side of the victimized and abused, seeking both to bind up their wounds and also to stop the inflicting of further woundedness. Again, this is a complex moral issue. Some Christians who seek to offer a form of support for war turn to the ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor and theologian who for the sake of justice supported a plot to try to assassinate Adolf Hitler. The assassination attempt failed. Bonhoeffer was jailed and later executed. However, in his *Ethics* (written in the period leading up to his imprisonment in April 1943), Bonhoeffer wrote that it is not enough to only “bind up the wounds of the victims beneath the wheel” of injustice, but that Christians had a responsibility to “seize the wheel itself” (Bonhoeffer in Green and DeJonge 2013, 374). This is true – but what persons who appeal to this idea to support war fail to mention is that Bonhoeffer never advocated this as a moral choice, as something that was good or right, or free from guilt and judgment. You may remember that the context of Bonhoeffer’s hypothetical example comes from his 1932 lecture, *The Church and the Jewish Question* (Bonhoeffer 2009; Green and DeJonge 2013, 370–78). The question was, for a Christian Germany with the rise of National Socialism and the increasing harm and violence being enacted against Jewish Germans: What should a Christian do? Would it be more ethical to kill a person who was going to kill a number of innocent persons, or not do anything? In both instances death was inevitable and carried a penalty. In either case you will bear the burden of murder and be judged for it. However, in bearing that guilt, is it possible to secure greater

freedom and peace for the largest number of innocent others. To do nothing when innocent persons suffer is not necessarily the lesser of two evils. In such instances we may need to perpetrate a lesser evil, but still recognize it as an act of evil, out of responsibility for the greater good (Bedford-Strohm et al. 2016; Zimmermann 2016).

Third, when forced to choose to respond to violence or war, Christians should always witness to the alternative. This means that our choices should be directed towards peaceful resolution, the de-escalation of violence, the resolution of conflict in the most effective and fastest possible way, the rehumanization of both victims and perpetrators, and the disavowal of unjust or unnecessary power. When a conflict is done, how are we to live with ourselves and the supposed others with whom we have been in conflict (Govier and Verwoerd 2004; Gobodo-Madikizela 2010)? What might it mean to live with the kind of restorative grace that Jesus' life and ministry exemplify? If war has a liturgical character (as we have said above, it is imagined, supported in narrative and story, enacted by sacrifice etc.), then so does peace. Peace has a liturgical character that builds rhythms and activities of restoration, forgiveness, recompense, grace, and renewal. Even in times of war, we are called to be the church. The church is inclusive, restorative, honest, and loving. "The church simply names those whom God has called to live faithfully according to the redemption wrought through Christ. The difference between church and world is not an ontological difference, but rather a difference of agency" (Hauerwas 2011a, 16). The church has the possibility of difference from a violent world because Jesus frees us to choose how to live differently in a world of war. Jesus's death and resurrection give us redemptive and restorative agency, he offers us a new story to live by.

Fourth, whatever we are given to do, or choose to do, amid violence and war, it should be directed towards the ends of bringing "a new dispensation of justice, equity and peace" (Storey 2018, locs. 1754–1761 of 7927). As with Joseph, Christians are to take what was intended for evil, and do their best to turn it into good (Gen 50:20). The waging of peace in the midst of war can be dangerous work.

Again, Hauerwas says, "[t]o be kind in a violent world is very dangerous, but fortunately you will discover you were destined to be kind [. . .] Our gentle God created our kind to be kind by making it impossible for us to exist without caring for those both like and unlike us" (Hauerwas 2018, 27–28).

Our responsibility, as the Church, is not only for the war but indeed for the world. While we are working to resolve the conflict, care for the wounded, and bring about peace, we should constantly be praying for the wisdom and inspiration to know how to form ourselves and others to become the blessed community of peace that God has created us to be, and that we will be one day. This may mean that we choose not to use certain language, not to celebrate certain things,

or ever engage in certain acts again. It may also mean that we choose to live in ways that the world finds strange, even crazy, but in the end we will be able to witness to the truth that love wins and war does not.

9 Conclusion

The difference between Christians and the rest of the world, is of course not an ontological difference (we share a common humanity), rather it is a difference of agency (we choose to live differently because of what Christ has made possible). So, in this sense, being Christian means being the alternative to the mere acceptance of war. What we may find is that in a world of war, the waging of peace takes as much courage, as much intention, as much commitment, and as many resources as the waging of war. Of course, the return is much greater too. Let me end where I started, can you imagine a world without war? As a white man who was formed in the habits of violence, I long to be re-formed in the imagination that comes from believing in, and living for, the Prince of Peace.

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Matthias Smalbrugge

Memory Structures and the Choices in War and Peace: South African and European Stances in the Ukrainian War

1 Introduction

Modern historiography has turned, though not exclusively, to the structure of memory. What is it that transforms *memoria* into *historia*, and how does this process consider memory not as a fact but rather as an intervention making it possible to understand the past and to discover its different layers (Frijhoff 2010)? The answer is not an easy one, given the fact that memories are not data we can easily deal with as if they had some objective truth. Moreover, memories are not only the material of which history is made, they are also part of collective or individual identity (Hiscock 2018). Both aspects, however, can lead to fierce disputes. If memory is considered the pedestal of identity, it probably has a solid nature, pretending it might be a fact. If, on the other hand, memory is closely linked to imagination (Hansen 2015; Frijhoff 2008) aiming to create the possibility of writing history, then the idea of a pedestal is far from an ideal choice. Memory then becomes the sign of conflict and is essentially contested memory (Rawski 2023). This may lead to a division between ‘us’ and ‘them’, between those who represent the past and give it its voice and those who can only be seen as those who are represented by others. This division between ‘us’ and ‘them’, the legitimization of any representation of the past, is of course one of the major issues in the modern debate about decolonization. Statues that represented a glorious past are suddenly toppled and provoke the ire of those who once were subjected to the rule of these rulers. It goes without saying that in the current situation – a war raging in Europe and the international community being strongly divided – the topic of history and memory becomes an important one. Moreover, in this particular case it is clear that the cultural aspects are also intimately intertwined with religious ones (Assmann 2006).

Now, if we move from these general remarks to the concrete and current situation of the stance different countries take when it comes to the war in Europe, it matters perhaps most to mention first of all the South African position. This is for the following reasons. On the one hand, South Africa is an important voice in the North-South dialogue and it is a prominent member of the BRICS. It is, however, right in the case of this North-South dialogue that we encounter the tensions between the European point of view and the one often held by countries of the

Global South. These divergences are related to contested memories, and that is what we will deal with in this article.

To start with, I would like to picture some aspects of the current political situation as it is described by some specialists. First of all, there are some very useful observations made by Akinboade, Heske and Molobi (2023), who, in a recent article, summed up the main principles of South African foreign policy. What they see as the most important dimensions of this policy are the following ones. First of all, what matters is the notion of independence and non-alignment. Of course, this principle may imply a certain distance towards the Western stance in the Ukrainian war, but it certainly is not necessarily the case. A second element then is the preference for a peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes. This may be considered something obvious, but it can lead to downsizing the economic relationship with a belligerent country. Thirdly, there is the aspect of solidarity with those countries or nations that supported the South African battle against apartheid. This third principle may be at odds, at a certain moment, with the first one (non-alignment). Russia strongly supported the fight against apartheid (Geldenhuys 2015) and has now started a war at its borders. That raises the question of knowing to what extent non-alignment and support for parties that have shown their solidarity in the recent past are compatible. This is, in fact, the most difficult aspect of the South African policy, and its paradoxical nature is confirmed in many publications (Brosig 2022; Agyemfra 2023). Finally, the fourth element is then the protection of human rights. As you will understand, these principles may be foundational, but they are not necessarily principles that needlessly fit into one another. Priorities depend on geopolitical, interior politics, and perhaps also morals.

The authors therefore also mention some other principles, meant to allow decisions in complicated situations where the main principles may be at odds with one another. First, they speak about African solidarity, meaning solidarity with the African continent. Non-alignment is then taken in the sense of not belonging to either the West or any other geopolitical structure. The notion was developed in the times of the Cold War and indicated that countries were not willing to take sides with either of the two opponents, the West or the USSR. However, now that the Cold War has ended, the name and the organization remain relevant. It certainly has to do with defining first of all the interests of the national community and it therefore represents the emphasis on political independence (Keethaponcanlan 2016). Next, it also represents the larger similar stakes of certain countries in a certain region such as Africa. It then represents a certain African solidarity. Moreover, it also implies the idea that relationships with the Northern Hemisphere are essentially based on economic principles, they are not value-driven. In addition to these aspects, one could also mention the role of the BRICS alliance,

which tries to respond to the rapidly changing geopolitical order (Brosig 2019), attempting to escape from the traditional, Cold War, bipolarity between East and West, and wanting to reinforce the position of the Global South in a multipolar world. This is confirmed by authors such as Chigova, Hofisi and Tshidzumba (2023) who argue that South Africa should do its utmost to get rid of this Western predominance. The West is accused of disregarding international law, of disregarding new Global developments, a new Global order. Therefore, they suggest, South Africa should leverage its regional influence, thus becoming a more influential partner in the BRICS alliance. In addition to that point of view, one might also put forward that the relationship with the Northern Hemisphere is not solely based on economic principles, as was observed some lines above. One might also argue that the Global South rejects the Western point of view and the Western narrative of the Ukrainian war because it considers it to be a highly hypocritical stance, in which certain Western interests are protected without taking into account Russian interests and justified complaints (Nwaezeigwe 2023).

But there is also another point of view when it comes to Russian policy. Regarding Russian policy then – Russia being a member of the BRICS – a special volume of the *African Journal of International Affairs* highlighted several aspects of Russian politics in Africa. Shiskina and Liukomovich (2022) emphasized that the Russian narrative – which claims to side with the goals of African countries as was argued at the Russia-Africa summit of 2023 – is a distorted narrative, and they conclude that Russia, under the guise of an anti-colonial attitude, behaves as a neo-colonial power. A similar view is upheld by Allard Duursma and Niklas Masuhr (2022). This seems not to be a view shared by South African politics. The conclusion can be that South African foreign policy considers the possibility of increasing its influence in a changing world in particular in distancing itself from the West, silently supporting an old friend such as Russia, regardless of some moral aspects (Seekings and Saunders 2022). Even though the moral argument is used in many ways, both to keep a stance of neutrality as well as to support tacitly the Russian stance, the final argument will probably be based on the question of whether a certain position can serve any of the South African interests. Put differently, in a world where geopolitical changes succeed one another rapidly and unpredictably, there is a tendency towards *realpolitik* that mainly serves the national interests and that values moral arguments only in the second instance. They normally have only a rhetorical role, serving ideological goals. However, when there is a conflict of interests, morality may have a certain role and that might be the case in South Africa.

2 Morality

I would therefore like to have a closer look at the moral arguments to take this discussion further. I will not discuss certain political aspects that concern South Africa's interior political interests (which are certainly present), but focus on these moral aspects that can be involved in an international debate. In a recent article, dating from January 17, Sylvie Kaufman (2024), editorialist of *Le Monde*, argued that Western moral judgments were largely based on the memory of the Shoa and the principles of the Enlightenment (Kapasov 2017; Goldberg and Hazan 2015; Gilbert 2019), whereas for the Global South such a starting point is rather the history of colonization and slavery and hence the need for decolonization. One might say that the reproach to the West is that it claims a moral superiority, a high moral ground, of which the focus on the Holocaust and the 'never again' adage are the focal points. But this moral superiority hides geopolitical interests threatening the interests of others who reject this point of view as a moral cover-up. The West, she argues, quoting the black author Aimé Césaire, who was a great advocate of the idea of African identity, never worked on the memory of colonization and slavery. This may be a very plausible thesis and I would like to elaborate on it.

What matters in the first instance, is the fact that moral criteria are based on certain epistemological and historical structures, and these are the structures we must analyze. First of all, then, the epistemological structure. The Shoa has been considered, up to now, as a unique historical event involving techniques and a scale of destruction, systemic hate, and discrimination never seen before. The 'unique' character has been much debated, in particular in Germany during the *Historikerstreit* of the eighties of the last century, but in general, there is a widely accepted awareness of its singular character, though the recent *Historikerstreit 2.0* has tried to nuance this singular character (Rothberg 2022).¹ I will not dwell on this debate, but the general acceptance, though contested, of the singular character has led to the decades-old formula 'never again', which is repeated on many occasions (Baer and Sznajder 2017). It is the moral imperative derived from this

¹ Regarding the *Historikerstreit 2.0*, Rothberg writes: "The advances of postcolonial and decolonial activism and knowledge production, both in Germany and globally, entail that there is less and less legitimate space left for denial of colonialism's legacies" (1318). And also: "There is a paradox here: even as the absolutist conception of the Holocaust's uniqueness has become increasingly central to German *Staatsraison* and Germany's public memory culture in the twenty-first century, Holocaust memory has become increasingly entangled with issues only partially or even tangentially related to it" (1322). This clearly shows the impossibility of creating a memory culture *ab ovo*, as it were a '*Reinkultur*'.

hideous and horrific history. The singular character and its exclusive nature however have also cast a shadow on other horrific stories. They have perhaps even hidden these other stories. For instance, Are we sufficiently aware of what happened in Eastern Europe with its remembrance of the many crimes of Stalinism, the Holodomor in Ukraine (Kasianov 2021), and so on? But perhaps even more important, are we aware of the fact that the ‘never again’ adage should certainly be applied to the history of colonialism and slavery? As such, this widening scope represents the globalization of new, non-national, mnemonic structures and cultures, as is argued by Danielle Lucksted (2022) in her *Memory Laws, Mnemonic Weapons: The Diffusion of a Norm across Europe and Beyond*. Indeed, it reveals that our mnemonic cultures have long suffered from an exclusively Western scope that enabled us to remember and forget arbitrarily, without knowing exactly how the mnemonic structures are woven. Nelly Bekus (2022) suggests, in her *Memory Wars in Post-imperial Settings*, that this is because mnemonic structures are driven by interests and not by values, and her point is a relevant one: I will come back to it.

3 The Structure of Memory

Mnemonic structures, that is what the historian sees as the core of our discussions. Let us simply start with the observation that one can remember one thing and forget at the same time something else that is no less important. Why then do we forget things? What is the mechanism of remembrance and oblivion? Or to rephrase the issue, What do we know about the exact structure of oblivion? Indeed, if we do not know the structure of our oblivion, the gaps in the tissue of memory, then our concept of memory and remembrance is also flawed and defective. We ignore the exact nature of our memory because we do not understand the nature of oblivion. Normally speaking, what is forgotten is roughly constructed through what is remembered, as is the case with classical *damnatio memoriae* (Flower 2006). If our memory can be pictured as a rectangle, then the elements that have been forgotten will be elements fitting into the rectangle. They will, so to speak, be small rectangles. We do not know what we have forgotten, but we suggest that we know at least the contours of this particular case of oblivion. That is what we normally think because, in our view, oblivion must be derived from memory. But let’s imagine that the parts that have been forgotten do not look like small rectangles but that they represent small circles. In that case, we will not be able to put them into the rectangle of our memory. We should have to admit that if we have forgotten something, we cannot suggest that, though

it is forgotten, we still know the contours of what is forgotten. No, if what has been forgotten looks indeed like a small circle, we will not be able to put it in a rectangular structure and oblivion will remain something that, definitely, is forgotten. Put differently, we cannot be sure that oblivion can be derived from memory, it is perhaps the other way around: oblivion creates the structure of our memory. That, at least, was the Freudian perspective. Oblivion frames and phrases our memory, and our understanding of the past. The forgotten trauma, the repressed past, creates our present and our memory. We remember without being aware of the fact that oblivion cannot be derived from present memory but that the present has been created by these repressed remembrances. Therefore, we have to admit that we know what we remember, but the underlying epistemological structure remains hidden.

Saint Augustine (2009) was the first to focus on these dynamics, showcasing it by a striking example (which I have somewhat simplified). You enter a grocery or supermarket, knowing you must run some errands, let's say four things. You manage to do so rather quickly, you pay and leave the shop. Once you are back in your car, you realize, you brought only three items with you instead of four. There is one thing you have forgotten. Now the problem is that, on seeing the three items, you remember to have forgotten the fourth one. That is the paradox, even an oxymoron, how can we remember what we have forgotten? Isn't that impossible? Something is either forgotten or remembered, but how do we remember what we have forgotten?² Epistemologically the conclusion must be that we do not know what we know about our memory. We know we remember things, but we don't know the underlying structure.³

Now, if we do not know what we know about our memory, what then is the moral worth of the adage 'never again'? If the underlying epistemological structure of a moral imperative is unclear, how can we claim it should be seen as a universally moral imperative? 'Never again' implies that we will always remember. But at the same time, we have to admit that this remembrance does not reveal whether something has been forgotten. Putting it even more pointedly, the 'never again' adage presupposes oblivion (Pasture 2018). It warns against obliv-

2 Augustine, *Confessions* X,16,24: "But when I remember forgetfulness, both memory and forgetfulness are present-memory by means of which I could remember, forgetfulness which I did remember. But what is forgetfulness except loss of memory? How then is it present for me to remember when, if it is present, I have no power of remembering? What we remember, we retain by memory. But unless we could recall forgetfulness, we could never hear the word and recognize the thing which the word signifies."

3 A good example of an endeavour to trace these developments, certainly within the literature, is to be found in Burch (2015).

ion, but it can only do so if it presupposes that things have been forgotten. No one who remembers and sits in front of his memories would say ‘never again’. Yes, of course, he would say ‘never again’ when confronted with unheard suffering and torture. But only as long as he can stand it. There will be a moment when memory becomes too painful, too confrontational, and that will be the moment oblivion will help secure a certain distance between a subject and his memories.⁴ Now, if that is the case, if the ‘never again’ cannot reach every memory of one’s inner life, and therefore has no ‘universal’ range in one’s mind, how then can it have a universal meaning in the outside world? Mnemonic studies mention therefore the hierarchical structure of mnemonic cultures, the national aspects, as well as the transnational use of mnemonic structures as an attempt to clarify some of the gaps mentioned.

4 Cultural Memory and Identity

Yet, given the fact that these gaps have a cultural origin, they will never be comparable. They are similar when it comes to their function (securing a distance between the subject and his memories), but they cannot be compared. The gap that represents the atrocities of colonial history is strangely different from the gap that represents the horrors of the Holocaust. Indeed, the gaps are similar, but they cannot be compared. Given these gaps and the variety of these gaps, it seemingly is not possible to decontextualize memory and to consider it something that exceeds national or cultural boundaries. On the contrary, it is the cultural context that helps to create oblivion and remembrance when needed. Looking at another culture from inside one’s own culture implies that one’s cultural structures determine what can be seen from the other culture. Certain angles will be overlooked, and others will be emphasized. Now, these national and cultural aspects and the impossibility to decontextualize memory create the battle of memory, which can become a first step toward cultural wars. Next, if memory belongs indeed to cultural structures, then it will also represent an *identity* structure. It is, in fact, the moment that a so-called universal principle ‘never again’ becomes a structure of one’s identity and therefore loses its strength. The ‘never again’ fits only in the structure of a certain culture and it functions at the same time as a cipher of this culture. It does not only have a moral component but also one revealing one’s identity, allowing people to recognize their culture. Forgetting then that memory

⁴ This is impressively described by Apel (2020). She pictures how the remains of Jewish settlements in Poland, where her family used to live, have been destroyed.

has a cultural and identity structure, oblivion can play its hidden role. Is it then still possible to remember what has been forgotten, as Augustine tried to show? It certainly is, once one is confronted with the pluralistic nature of our society. However, that is a process that cannot easily be achieved. It demands that, first of all, we become aware of the fact that the cultural aspect of remembrances gives birth to a certain morality. Meaning, such a morality will also bear the stamp of a cultural background. Yet, morality, though created within a certain cultural context, should have a broader reach than just being appropriate in a particular cultural context. There should be a possibility to partly decontextualize it. Indeed, the identity aspect of memory undermines the moral aspect that arises from such a memory. On the one hand, the moral aspect should have a universal value, but it cannot have it because it also functions as a cultural cypher. On the other hand, it is precisely this cultural aspect that gives birth to moral commands. You need a culture that defines the equality between men and women to create a morality that counters gender discrimination. At the same time, a debate is needed about the notion of 'equality' that reveals the cultural aspects of such a notion. We may defend equality between men and women, but can equality also be applied to economic structures?

Understandably, these questions about the connection between memory, identity, and morality have led to conflicts, disputes, and quarrels. However, systematic reflection on the epistemological structures of mnemonic patterns is strikingly absent. How do we remember what we remember? There is of course the identity structure we have to keep in mind, but, next to this, there is also a logical aspect that is often overlooked. Memory must always have a preliminary memory. You have to recall that you want to stick to 'never again'. You must not forget to pick up this book. You must think not to forget, you must think to think about, and you must remember to remember. This preliminary memory is not determined by the same cultural structures as the remembrance it tries to waken. It just reaffirms the role of the primary remembrance. Yet, it also shows that memory is capable of duplicating itself and in that sense, it strengthens the cultural aspect. It brings one back to one's cultural 'home' so to speak. For instance, you must stick to the 'never again' formula. Sure, but this appeal therefore sharpens the context in which the formula was created, and it reaffirms the boundaries we live with. Moreover, the duplicating aspect even is an endless process, as Augustine observed when he made clear that memory is always present to itself: *so when I remember memory, memory is available to itself through itself*. This inside presence is nothing less than the effect of two mirrors placed in front of each other: they will endlessly reflect each other. The same goes for memory, it is the most 'visible' form of the I looking at the I, looking at the I – the subject not being able to entirely reduce itself to an object. That is the logical structure of

memory, representing also a kind of inner battle: What do I forget, what do I remember? The answer to the Augustinian question, ‘How can I remember what I have forgotten?’, then lies in the cultural context of our memories. They create a framework that models our memories and that hides certain of our unwelcome remembrances.

5 The Battle of Memories

However, this selective memory allows us also to use its national and cultural character in a more public way. On the one hand, it can serve to reinforce the national identity, e.g., by modifying certain educational programs. In that sense, the creation of a national narrative, taught at school and propagated on TV and social media, is extremely effective when it comes to the use of mnemonic structures. Once this narrative has been created, it can even serve on the battlefield itself (Noordenbos 2022): memories as weapons, weapons meant to justify, even in a moral sense, the battle itself. That is the use of mnemonic structures Russia currently adopts in its war in Ukraine. It constantly refers to the need for the so-called denazification of Ukraine, and it invokes the Great Patriotic War as a justification for this war, in particular because of Ukraine’s rapprochement with the European Union, viz NATO (Pakhomenko et al. 2018), developments that are seen as a historical threat to Russia’s independence. Moreover, according to the Russian argument, there is a striking lack of remembrance, in the West, of Christian values, leading to a decadent culture (Soroka 2022). Ukraine on the other hand defends itself by pointing at the Holodomor and the many crimes of Russian imperialism. Russia puts forward, in this mnemonic war, that Ukraine has always been part of its territory, Ukraine refers to the Orange Revolution and the Maidan Revolution as decisive moments in its decolonization attempts.

Their current use on the battlefield proves how strong these mnemonic structures are, and it therefore remains extremely important to analyze their structure and power. We know how to discover what has been forgotten, we know how to approach moral questions and those about identity, and we know the ambivalent character of moral commands resulting from a cultural context yet not identical to them. How then can we look at the South African stance in the Ukrainian war?

6 The Christian Stance on Memory

One might argue that what matters in this particular case is to deconstruct prevailing structures and to develop new ones. It is only then, once we have deconstructed and understood the structure of memories and oblivion, that we can think of morality and eventually of peace. I am not sure this will suffice, but it is a task we cannot run away from as theologians rooted in a Christian tradition. Indeed, Christian theologians work in a tradition that is in itself a huge mnemonic structure: *do this in remembrance of me* (Luke 22:19; I Cor. 11:24). The same goes for Judaism: *remember that you were a slave in Egypt, but the Lord your God brought you out of there* (Deut 5:15 ISV). If that is the case, we are bound, even morally, to understand the theological aspects of the mnemonic traditions. Indeed, what then is, from a theological point of view, the underlying structure of remembrance and oblivion? Is the theological aspect identical to the cultural one? Or do they have to be distinguished? Where can we find clues to a possible answer?

I would like to start with Hannah Arendt. Arendt suggests in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and in *Responsibility and Judgment* that thinking in itself is a kind of protection against a lack of morals. Put differently, you have to remember that you must remember. Because, if you do not remember to remember, if you do not remember to think, morality will be lost. This is something that often can be witnessed in courtrooms when the perpetrator claims: I do not remember. Meaning, I refuse to remember and I do not want to think that I must remember. That was, as she explains in *Responsibility and Judgment*, the core of her analysis of Eichmann, his refusal to think about his deed and role. Yet, recently the reception of Arendt's works has shown a more nuanced image, though more pessimistic. Jissov (2020) argues that, in the line of Agamben's *State of Exception*, thinking can definitely be absent, and thus morality can completely collapse. Are we not constantly living in a state of exception? Thinking is therefore not the protection Arendt suggested it was, says Jissov. Yet, I would like to emphasize that, though thinking may be absent and morals may be absent, as long as one refuses to remember, this refusal to think is also an act of thinking. There is no absolute absence and even when it comes to the absence of morals and thinking, thoughts can be developed. In the particular case of the 'never again' adage, if we do apply this adage, but at the same time apply it in a limited way and thus create oblivion, a gap in our memory, how can we approach this absence of thinking?

Let me make a calculated guess, putting forward some Christian element in the dynamics of remembering and forgetting. This guess will be based on the fact that Christianity is indeed a mnemonic structure and that this mnemonic structure is traditionally strongly connected with the notion of sacrifice. As is well

known, this connection was studied in detail by René Girard, who insisted on the importance of a mimetic aspect in our desires and acts. Girard was the one to show-case the importance of the notion of sacrifice as something we continuously repeat but at the same time forget by introducing a scapegoat. There are then two sorts of sacrifices, and we would like to forget both of them. On the one hand, there are the ones we have sacrificed, on the other hand, there are the sacrifices for the benefit of others we refused to make. Those we have sacrificed, we forgot about them. We forgot about them, e.g., in the case of slavery and colonialism, because it was a mimetic affair. We did so because it had always been done this way. We are simply acting in a mimetic way, repeating what did our forebearers. We only did something because others did it. We sacrificed people because it was always done and even though we desired to do so, it wasn't our desire, it was just the example that was shown to us, it was the mimetic desire, it was a mimetic act. In fact, we did not do it. That might be the reason we forget: we were not the ones who sacrificed, we only repeated what was done before us. If women were sacrificed, if children were, if black people were, we do not remember, because we did not do it. The 'never again' didn't apply to those victims, because it was not an exceptional moment in our history, it was ordinary history. Even if it was remembered, then it was not our deed, it was an incident, something a few weird others perpetrated. If you talk, e.g., about slavery: yes, we had slaves, but at least we treated them very well. If you talk about #metoo, yes, women were mistreated and violated, but that only happened in the world of artists, movies, and journals. If we talk about abuse in the church, yes, it happened, but the perpetrators were only some isolated members of the clergy, a very small percentage. We constantly dealt with unfortunate incidents. Even if we remember, we remember it as something belonging to others, to the past, not as something that still is present in our society in many ways. Would it still be there, we probably would have forgotten it. Sacrifice is the shameful remembrance we do not remember.

7 Sacrifice

Now if we focus on the notion of sacrifice as the key to oblivion, we can compare the mnemonic structures of the West and the South. The West emphasizes the singular character of the Holocaust and tries to remember it. This is not easy because there are still aspects we would rather not remember, in particular the way antisemitism was not a German particularity, but a phenomenon widespread in the whole of Europe and even considered a mark of high culture. Elite organizations often refused Jews to become members of their organization. We continued

to argue that, yes, there was the Holocaust, but that was the fault of the Germans, they are to blame. On the one hand, we used the Jews as scapegoats, on the other hand, we did the same with the Germans and we escaped from any moral responsibility ourselves. Of course, there was antisemitism in Europe, but it was Germany that made the step towards sacrifice. They sacrificed, we did not and therefore we can forget about our past. Yet, especially in Germany there is this sincere endeavor to remember and it is in particular Germany that has created an exemplary mnemonic culture when it comes to the memories of WW II. Now the values on which this endeavor to remember is based (which comes down to creating a new mnemonic structure) can be seen as those present in the French Revolution as well as in Christianity, the most important being the equality of all men, which is already present in Christianity; think of the famous phrase, *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Gal. 3:28 NIV). It is this value (equality) that creates the other values such as freedom of consciousness and freedom of religion. The other important one is of course solidarity. Equality and solidarity can both be recognized in the Kantian categorical imperative: “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time want it to become a universal law” (*Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten* 4, 421; my translation).⁵ At the same time, these values, to create a new mnemonic structure, are also defined by a cultural context. Equality was therefore often only equality for those who were like Westerners, meaning that equality became something like identity.⁶ Recently Yasha Mounk (2023) wrote an impressive book, called *The Identity Trap*, in which he warned against the divisive nature of thinking along the identity lines. Communities are divided into ‘us and them’, creating hatred and anxiety. Solidarity suffered from a similar fate. It was solidarity with those who are as we are. Solidarity with Ukraine can then be seen as just another example of a restricted use: they are like we are, so we must show solidarity and defend freedom as sovereignty. Right, but these notions were not adopted universally, though the West claimed they were universal. And as they were not applied universally, they sacrificed others and we forgot about these victims. Consequently, unless these values are reevaluated, they will continue to be used in a limited way, leading to, once again, sacrifice and from there, to oblivion.

⁵ “Handle nur nach derjenigen Maxime, durch die du zugleich wollen kannst, daß sie ein allgemeines Gesetz werde.”

⁶ Think of the history of suffrage. Voting rights were first only granted to men with a certain income, then to men only, and finally universal suffrage was granted to men and women.

8 Conclusion

Where do we take it from here? How can peace ethics be realistic and idealistic at the same time? It is – in my view as a historian and looking at the topic of peace ethics from a different angle – only possible if we reevaluate our mnemonic structures. What matters is often not what we remember, but what we have forgotten, in the West as well as in the South. The South cannot only claim to be a victim, but it also had its proper responsibility in creating mnemonic structures. Now, if we can discover the structure of this oblivion, we can also understand why we remember what we remember. What I suggested is that behind this oblivion, through the gaps in the tissue of our memory, we can discover the shadows of the victims of our sacrifices. I think that a Christian theologian can never escape the notion of ‘do this in remembrance of me’ as well as the notion of sacrifice which is so strongly related to this memory and which has created a whole theology, running from Augustine to Anselm to Luther, to Bonhoeffer. The notion of sacrifice has often been associated with the ghosts of guilt, sin, and depraved nature. We have to ward off this spectre of doom. What matters is to stop the dynamics of sacrificing, in order to create new mnemonic structures. Otherwise, we will continue to reproach others for forgetting what has to be remembered. The battle of memory is not about what is the most singular atrocity we have known in our history. In that case, we will end in victimization and identity politics. The battle of memory is about the efforts humans make to avoid sacrifices. But that can only happen if we reconsider our mnemonic structures and do so in an honest debate. Such a debate is indispensable, but it is also incompatible with the use of memories as weapons on the battlefield. Weapons and debate are not compatible. However, weapons cannot be fully excluded. The theologian who is confronted with a debate that started peacefully but that afterward ends up in an armed fight, may feel obliged to answer with weapons.

Let me be clear and give you an example. The stance currently taken by the World Council of Churches (WCC) on the Ukrainian war is, in my view, not a tenable one. Its executive committee declared recently that war is contrary to the will of God, a declaration that is nothing less than an open door. However, the declaration continues and states:

We commend and encourage the WCC general secretary’s continuous efforts to seek ways of addressing this crisis through dialogue within the ecumenical fellowship of churches as well with other partners, and deeply regret that those efforts are yet to bear visible fruits

[. . .] We ask member churches of the WCC to urge their governments to seek peace in Ukraine by taking and supporting initiatives for dialogue.⁷

First of all, one might wonder what kind of dialogue the WCC has in mind in the case of Ukraine, a country that has been shamelessly attacked and invaded. Secondly, speaking about a “fellowship of churches” implies that the WCC still counts the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) among its members, not willing to suspend the membership of the ROC. Finally, peace must be sought by urging governments to engage in a dialogue. Now, that is surprisingly naïve as the dialogue would already put belligerents at the same level. It is a refusal to attach consequences to the fact that Russia in this case is the perpetrator, the country that invaded Ukraine. Such a point of view only favors, in the end, the WCC itself because it can preserve its relationship with the ROC. But it is also a refusal to deal with a certain reality. The reality is that peace can sometimes only be achieved through arms, but that churches are not capable of admitting such an ‘ordinary’ fact, withdrawing themselves to a high-pitched, idealistic position where prayers and diplomacy can be situated outside the geopolitical reality. Floating above reality, this allows the WCC to forget things and escape from an analysis of oblivion and remembrance. Now, as we had this conference in Berlin, we may be permitted, perhaps, to recall Bonhoeffer, whose name is honored at this faculty, and his decision to take part in an armed assault against Hitler. Consequently, what the WCC forgets, is its own ideological framework in which some interests are more important than others.⁸ What is lacking, therefore, is a clear analysis of the way we avoid naming those who sacrifice and those who are sacrificed and the difference between them.

⁷ *Minute on the Escalation of the War in Ukraine*, Executive Committee WCC, June 11, 2024: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/minute-on-the-escalation-of-the-war-in-ukraine>.

⁸ Cp. also Clements (2023). The author insists on the need to make choices based on the confession. He bases his argument on Bonhoeffer and Rowan Williams, as well as on the attitude of the WCC towards certain white South African churches at the time of the apartheid. Quoting Visser ‘t Hooft, he writes: “We had placed such an emphasis on the duty for the church to remain the truly ecumenical church that there was a danger that the church would be looked upon as a haven of refuge above the world and not give guidance to their decisions in this world. I came therefore to the following conclusion: ‘The ecumenical movement dare not be silent at a time when various forms of nihilism tend to submerge large parts of Europe, and when the validity of such basic norms of human relationships as justice and freedom for the life of our whole civilization is at stake.’” (258–59) Cp. also Peränen (2023) who writes: “The World Council of Churches’ discussion was, in my opinion, very unproductive. In fact, it seemed to be mainly an opportunity for people to express their opinions, which the President, Metropolitan Nikon of Targoviste, did not seem to appreciate.” (115)

Finally, if this is the outcome of our analysis, we will need touchstones that can show us how we deal with memory and forgetting, with sacrifices and sacrificers, victims and perpetrators. The recent case of the death of Alexei Navalny is a striking example. How he will be remembered – that will be a fierce debate in which the West and the South will have a particular responsibility. Was he a kind of Mandela? Was he a martyr or a stubborn nationalist, rejecting the independence and sovereignty of neighboring countries? How will his memory be framed and can we discuss the basics of this new mnemonic structure? What will be the role of theology in these secular debates? I do hope that our discipline can at least add some notions to the debate about memory and then make clear not only how we create memories but also how we tend to forget what is contrary to our interest.

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Lukas Johrendt

Between Justice and Law: The Concept of *Jus* within the Doctrine of *Jus ad Bellum*, *Jus in Bello* and *Jus post Bellum*

1 Introduction

1.1 Key Issue

The question of whether the legitimacy and legality of the use of force can be sufficiently clarified by reference to the rules of international law, arises again in view of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which violates international law. The defense of Ukraine, the alliance loyalty of the Western powers by supplying weapons, and the explicit condemnation of Russian aggression by the United Nations follow the clear rules of international law in the case of a war of aggression. It is therefore clear that under Article 51 of the UN Charter, Ukraine can defend itself against Russia's use of force (Asada 2024, 15). The United Nations Charter states that "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security." (United Nations Charter 1945, Art. 51) This seems to be undeniably the case with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as the aggression criterion of an armed attack through a foreign state is clearly given here (Hobe and Kimminich 2020, 212–214). The Ukrainian people – the Charter asserts – have a "natural", "inherent" right to individual and collective self-defense against Russian aggression. This is true even if the extent, the objectives and the methods to be used are not that clear (Asada 2024, 14–19). For example, it is debated whether the reoccupation of Crimea is covered by the right of self-defense granted to Ukraine in Art. 51 of the Charter, or whether this cannot be applied in the same way, as it is usually assumed that the act of self-defense must be in close "direct" temporal connection with the armed aggression (Hobe and Kimminich 2020, 213–214; Asada 2024, 14–19).

Even if Ukraine's right to self-defense is legally undisputed, it raises ethical problems. The extent, means and objectives of Ukraine's self-defense, as well as the arms supplies it demands for this purpose, are also the subject of controversial ethical debates. The spectrum of positions ranges from absolute pacifism to calls for the nuclear armament of European states (Meireis 2025).

This example – the extent of the Ukrainian people’s right to self-defence – shows how ethical and legal questions about the use of force, its limitation and its termination coincide.

It is therefore questionable whether peace ethics can be replaced by reference to the law. As Reuter notes, the juridification of international relations is one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for achieving the ideal of peace of law (Reuter 2022, 149). The relationship between law and morality in discourses on peace and military ethics needs to be clarified in order to answer this question.

Ethical discussions addressing the issue of war and peace often refer to the distinction between *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus post bellum* to explain whether and how a *bellum justum* can be conducted (Meireis 2017; Werkner and Liedhegener 2009; Jackson 2011a; Bugnion 2003; Stahn 2006, 2020; Walzer 2005). Although the connection or separation of the three areas of rights is at issue here, they can be found in the vast majority of contributions to the debate on peace and military ethics.

But the question of what exactly is meant by *jus* and whether this understanding differs between the different areas is usually not asked. This raises the question of whether the concept of *jus* differs in the individual aspects *ad bellum*, *in bello* and *post bellum*.

The term *jus* can be understood as juridical rights – i.e., concrete national and international law or concrete legal norms. This seems to be particularly the case for *jus in bello* and refers here, for example, to laws of armed conflicts (Oeter 2017, 146). Or *jus* can be understood as a moral obligation in the sense of a morally upheld right, as seems to be the case in the debate on *jus ad bellum*, for example (Baumann 2008, 420–422). To clarify the question posed, the discourses surrounding the just war theory and the theory of just peace will be examined regarding their respective use of the term *jus*. Finally, it should become clearer which gaps exist between legal and moral rights in the respective use of the terms.

Before we can address the question of whether the closer definitions of the category *jus* in the debates raise a juridical right or a moral claim to justice, we need to clarify how both – juridical rights and moral claims to justice – can be defined and how they relate to each other.

1.2 The Nature of Law

According to Reuter, law can be understood as the “objective set of norms for the external coding of actions” (Reuter 2013, 192; all translations in this chapter are

by the author). Their legitimacy is based on the fact “that they are socially effective, properly established and (at least minimally) just” (Reuter 2013, 192).

If this abstract definition is to be concretized, rules that sanction certain types of actions, regulate compensation for damages, and determine their (judicial) enforcement can be included here (Huber 1996, 42). Law can be understood as a “referential context of norms and legitimating principles” (Huber 1996, 51). Thus, law is a “system of norms that is established according to legitimating principles, that is broadly socially effective, and that has a minimum of ethical justifiability” (Huber 1996, 102). This broad definition specifically may include the following types of law: Constitutions, formal and substantive laws, regulations and statutes, court decisions, international treaties, agreements and conventions (von der Pfordten 2011, 80–81).

It should be noted here that it is not the enforcement of the law by legal force, by instruments of the (state) monopoly on the use of force or by international institutions legitimized to take coercive measures that is alone decisive for the legal character of the norms in question. Especially in the context of international (public) law, the execution of the law is often difficult and only realized by a few institutions that are not universally accepted by all states. Consequently, the law is not defined by its execution (Huber 1996, 63). This applies in particular to the legal norms of international law at issue here. Due to their long historical lineage of juridification of moral and ethical concepts, these norms exhibit a certain international heterogeneity and cannot always be understood as a uniform body. There is no uniformly closed system of international law, at least at its margins (Reder 2013, 160, 167–172).

Despite the vagueness of international law, which may be related to the lack of a consistent legislator, it is possible to identify widely accepted legal sources of international law (Huber 1996, 362–364). These are treaties, international customary law, general sources of law and resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council, as well as so-called “soft law” (Hobe and Kimminich 2020, 139). The enforcement of the international law codified in these legal sources is always subject to certain limitations due to national sovereignty. Overall, however, in its present form it assumes the function of a law of peacekeeping, which to a certain extent depends on voluntary compliance by the community of states (Huber 1996, 364–366).

1.3 The Realm of Moral Rights

In contrast to legal rights, rights in a moral sense can be understood as non-legally guaranteed claims that individuals or communities can make, without

legal entitlement or enforcement of those claims (Baumann 2008, 78–81). Those claims can be made by individuals against other individuals or against communities, or by communities against individuals or other communities (von der Pfordten 2011, 227–229). Nevertheless, moral rights are also legitimate claims, but they must be based on other justifications than juridical rights. They are based on notions of justice, of good and right. The term “good” is used here when addressing particular contexts of justification, while the term “right” is used when making generalizable claims to justice that transcend particular contexts (Meireis 2008, 240–244). The latter is usually the case in questions of peace and military ethics, even if, for example, in the framework of a theory of just peace, religious-Christian imaginations of the “good” are used to claim certain moral rights to a life in peace – in the sense of a meaningful and sophisticated concept of peace (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland 2007, 50–56).

Moral rights can so be understood in the case of *jus ad bellum*, *in bello* or *post bellum* – with reference to Judith Thomson – as universalizable claims to what “people ought or ought not do, and may or may not do” (Thomson 1990, 33). This definition of “moral rights” corresponds to the definition of morality as the sum of “all actually existing, non-legal, categorical norms existing in a society” (von der Pfordten 2011, 84). Nevertheless, going beyond v. d. Pfordten, moral rights are also to be understood as norms that do not yet exist within a society, but should be applied in it for reasonable, intersubjectively plausible arguments. In this way, moral rights can be understood as rights that moral subjects have in order to satisfy rationally enforceable minimum requirements of justice that can be fulfilled or violated by actions, conditions, or events (Lohmann 2017, 152–153).

1.4 Beyond Legal Positivism and Legal Essentialism

Because of the weak enforcement of international law, the tension between its legality and legitimacy needs to be addressed (Reuter 2022, 155). For example, legal essentialist positions regard moral claims to justice as an intrinsic part of law as law, whereas strict legal positivism categorically separates the two spheres, arguing that they are conceptually or even ontically incongruent. This positioning, in turn, has considerable implications for the question of the right to, in, and after war, since the two meet in several ways, at least argumentatively.

At a superficial level, a dichotomy can be drawn between natural law and legal positivism (von der Pfordten 2011, 107). While natural law positions usually assume a super-positive order of moral norms identifiable by human rationality and set this as the critical standard for positive law, thereby assuming a close argumentative-justificatory connection between juridical and moral rights, at least

strict legal positivism can be characterized by the lack of a morally super-positive standard for the justification of law (von der Pfordten 2011, 110–111).

A closer look reveals that this dichotomy cannot be maintained. Rather, a separation and connection thesis of legal and moral rights should be assumed (von der Pfordten 2011). This means that a justification of the law in terms of legal ethics by moral rights is either impossible, possible, real, or necessary (von der Pfordten 2011, 121).

Here, as a working hypothesis, the possibility of legal-ethical criticism of positive law through moral rights is to be assumed in order to prevent a premature identification of juridical with moral rights, on the one hand, and not to completely separate the two and thus prevent criticism of juridical rights, on the other (von der Pfordten 2011, 80). A distinction should be made between “law as it is and law as it should be” (Huber 1996, 101). Legal and moral rights are then distinguished above all by their reason for validity, their changeability and their form of enforcement, but they always remain related to each other, since both strive for human action and communication processes (Huber 1996, 99). It must therefore be recognized that a “realistic” position on international relations, which relies unilaterally on the (non-)enforcement of international law or on inter-state anarchism, also entails normative positions – i.e., moral principles (Reuter 2022, 152).

In this way, a relational content of justice within juridical and moral rights can be presupposed for the question of juridical and moral rights within military and peace ethics (von der Pfordten 2011, 217). We can therefore speak of justice as a manifestation of right (Lohmann 2017, 156).

2 Jus within the Just War Theory and the Theory of Just Peace

2.1 *Jus ad Bellum*

Not only in traditional just war theory but also in revisionist just war theory and the theory of just peace, the criteria of *jus ad bellum* serve to limit war. They limit war both legally, in the form of international law, and morally, as a justification only for certain forms of the use of force (Haspel 2009, 72). *Jus ad bellum* can so be traced back to the “why” of military interventions or understood as the “right to (wage) war”, either as a juridical or moral right (Jackson 2011a, 581). The *jus ad bellum* thus questions the moral and legal legitimacy of the use of military force (Lohmann 2013, 111).

But the legal meaning of *jus ad bellum* can currently only be understood negatively. Although historically it meant a juridical right to war guaranteed by the sovereignty of states, at the latest with the Charter of the United Nations this has been decisively excluded (United Nations Charter 1945, 2.4; Oeter 2017, 140–142). The UN Charter is thus interpreted as a drastic change in the *jus ad bellum* (Keichiro 2015, 1210). In its modern juridical form, *jus ad bellum* is interpreted as a “prohibition of the use of force between states” (Fassbender 2013, 177). The literature usually refers to the Charter of the United Nations and its codified rules on interstate violence (Fassbender 2013, 177–178). According to the UN Charter, there is no longer any positive *jus ad bellum* derived from the sovereignty of states (Lienemann 2017, 311). In juridical terms, the *jus ad bellum* – if we look at the debates on peace and military ethics – comprises exclusively a right of defense (Haspel 2017, 319). Takemura, for example, understands international law as “law governing the right to go to war”. It “regulates the use of force as a whole” (2009, 187) and pursues a general prohibition of the use of force in international relations, with the exception of Article 51 or Chapter VII (Security Council) of the UN Charter. The proportionality of the means used is a legitimating and limiting criterion that also underlies the decisions of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Thus, a negatively understood *jus ad bellum* functions in the debate as a limitation even of the right of self-defense (Christodoulidou and Chainoglou 2015, 1187–1190). The *jus ad bellum* as “international law regulating the use of force” is thus understood as a legal right or a legal limitation of the right (Keichiro 2015, 1209). Newton interprets the *jus ad bellum* codified in international law as a “restrictive body of law” that permits only the lawful use of force (2020, 90). Stahn interprets international law, and with it the *jus ad bellum*, as an “architecture of the law of armed forces”, which includes considerations of fair and just peacemaking (Stahn 2006, 929, 941). In its prohibitive form, the *jus ad bellum* thus takes the form of a “law of peace” that limits any use of force – including the use of military force *in war* (Greenwood 1983, 221–223).

To a certain extent, the peace memorandum of the Protestant Church in Germany – which is used here as a central text of just peace theory – also follows the interpretation of *jus ad bellum* as juridical law *ex negativo*. The memorandum thus rejects the framework of *bellum justum*, since a just war seems impossible according to the prohibition of violence in the UN Charter. A positive right to war in the sense of *bellum justum* is rejected. According to the EKD, there is no juridical or moral right to war (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland 2007, 66–68). Thus, the memorandum admits the dependence of peace on law and emphasizes the prohibition of violence in the UN Charter (EKD 2007, 57–58, 68). A just war in the sense of a *jus ad bellum* concept no longer has a place in the concept of just peace, since the UN has abolished the just war (EKD 2007, 65–68). The memoran-

dum thus replaces the moral considerations of the *bellum justum* with the concept of “law-preserving force” and transforms the *jus ad bellum* into a moral consideration of the necessary, but never just use of force (EKD 2007, 65–68).

Accordingly, beside the negative juridical understanding of the *jus ad bellum*, it can be interpreted as a moral constraint (Jackson 2011a, 581) and in this way also represents a moral right to war (Baumann 2008, 330). A positive *jus ad bellum* is thus not juridical, but at best conceivable as a super-positive, self-imposed *jus ad bellum* – sometimes based on ideas of natural law (Reuter 2022, 155). Positions that advocate a positive moral *jus ad bellum* see certain acts of military force as at least morally justified or even necessary. In other words, war is morally legitimized by the *jus ad bellum*. This is usually justified by a right of the individual to the protection and enforcement of basic human rights. Proponents of a moral *jus ad bellum* thus understand this as a universal requirement, e.g., as a “right of the innocent” (Lohmann 2013, 102–103).

For Walzer – as one of the most prominent proponents of just war theory – the distinction between just and unjust wars lies in a moral distinction that is to be sought beyond a legalistic argument of international law (Haspel 2017, 319). Walzer understands the *jus ad bellum* as a “reason states have for fighting” that allows wars to be qualified as just or unjust. The morally interpreted *jus ad bellum* enables him to distinguish between aggression and self-defense (Walzer 2005, 21). Here Walzer finds the normative structure of war and a moral theory of aggression (Walzer 2005, 44, 231). Buchanan argues in a similar way, using the *jus ad bellum* as a criterion that shows when war can be considered “morally right”. He seeks a morally objective justification for going to war (Buchanan 2018, 67–68). In doing so, the *jus ad bellum* forms a “direct action guiding norm” for political leaders (Buchanan 2018, 74). He expands the understanding of the *jus ad bellum* as a resource for justifying wars by interpreting it as a social practice and thus linking public acts of justification and justificatory practices (Buchanan 2018, 81–83). The criteria of *jus ad bellum* thus obtain the quality of institutional processes. The morally interpreted *jus ad bellum* here is an instrument of “moral evaluation of legal institutions for constraining war” (Buchanan, 90) and thereby a subject of moral thinking (Buchanan 2018, 88, 94). In the context of her cosmopolitanism, Fabre also interprets the *jus ad bellum* as moral guidelines and “principles governing the resort to war” (Fabre 2012, 3–4), extending the question of the *bellum justum* beyond state actors to non-state actors. She therefore asks whether a *jus ad bellum* as a moral right to wage war exists for non-state actors (Fabre 2012, 148–149). McMahan interprets the *jus ad bellum* as a moral right in a similar way to the one outlined above. Starting from the assumption that the purely legal perspective of international law always comes to a short end and needs the distinction between permission and excuse (McMahan 2009, 110–111),

he calls for a moral and legal perspective on unjust combatants in (un)just wars (McMahan 2009, 126).

This clearly demonstrates the addition of ethical criteria to a “legalistic” interpretation of the *jus ad bellum* (Haspel 2017, 75). In addition to the legal legitimization, according to the principles of the UN Charter, a moral right to war and a morally just reason for war emerge (Hidalgo 2009, 85). It can therefore be concluded that a *jus ad bellum* in the legal sense is primarily spoken of as a right of limited prohibition of violence. The analysis shows that there is a legal right to war only in the sense of a right to self-defense. Morally, the *jus ad bellum* seems to be much broader. Here the positions diverge strongly regarding the bearers of a right to war, as well as regarding the criteria applied and their relationship to positively established law. The *jus ad bellum*, however, is understood positively in moral terms.

2.2 *Jus in Bello*

In most debates, *jus in bello* is understood as a set of rules for belligerents, codified in the Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907), the Geneva Conventions (1949), and the Additional Protocols of 1977 (Schneider et al. 2017, 62). The Geneva Conventions are considered to be the fundamental principle of modern international humanitarian law as the *jus in bello* (Takemura 2009, 188). A legal regime of the Geneva Conventions is thus assumed (Bugnion 2003, 184). It is therefore first and foremost a set of legal rules for the proper conduct of war. The *jus in bello* standardizes the legal limitation of the use of force in armed conflicts (Baumann 2008, 379). According to Hobe and Kimminich, the *jus in bello* can be understood as “the entire body of rules of international law applicable during an armed conflict to persons present in the area of conflict and to the legal evaluation of combat operations” (2020, 498).

The *jus in bello* “governs the conduct of war” (Greenwood 1983, 221) as its legal regime and can thus be equated with international law (Greenwood 1983, 221, 225). Schmitt sees the two even as synonyms: “*jus in bello* or international humanitarian law” (2010, 319). For Stahn, too, the legal dimension of *jus in bello* predominates (2006, 928). The summary can be that *jus in bello* is “international humanitarian law” (Keichiro 2015, 1211). This means that a legal point of view of *jus in bello* is predominantly represented in the discourse (Takemura 2009, 193).

If *jus in bello* is understood as “law applicable in armed conflicts” (Fassbender 2013, 177), then this law is intended to “keep military conflicts within limits” in order to minimize suffering in war (Fassbender 2013, 185). The *jus in bello* as codified law thus serves to protect the victims of war and to protect soldiers

from unnecessary suffering (Fassbender 2013, 187). *The jus ad bellum* therefore contains defined prohibitions of certain actions and tactics and objectives (Baumann 2008, 386–387) and focuses on the principle of distinction between combatants and non-combatants for the protection of civilians (Koch 2019, 84). These rules are laid down within the armed forces in rules of engagement or rules of behavior and are handed out to soldiers in the form of “pocket cards” (Baumann 2008, 399). International courts are responsible for prosecuting violations of the *jus in bello*. It is through them that the *jus in bello* is also given the power of legal enforcement (Baumann 2008, 405–414).

The *jus in bello* includes conventions and agreements in the sense of international humanitarian law and is therefore understood as codified law (Lienemann 2017, 304, 312). For example, Koch even sees an ethical *jus in bello* as having become obsolete due to the expansion of international humanitarian law (Koch 2017, 847). He interprets *jus in bello* as a “set of norms to which the participants in the war must adhere” (Koch 2009, 111–112). Although Koch admits that “the legal norm [. . .] is not the only criterion [for the assessment of acts of war], it is nevertheless the essential one” (2009, 120), and thus he wants to recognize positive law in its regulatory function. Juridical rights therefore have a normatively ordering function (Koch 2019, 80, 91). Despite the enormous efforts to codify *jus in bello* (Greenwood 1983, 225), a number of contentious legal issues remain within the *jus in bello* discourse. For example, the meaning of *jus in bello* in non-international conflicts is questioned (Bugnion 2003, 169). Is the legal *jus in bello* only applicable in international or also in non-international armed conflicts (Schmitt 2010, 319)? Here, as in other borderline cases, the question arises as to the scope and applicability of *jus in bello* (Stahn 2006, 925). Since the codified *jus in bello* includes international humanitarian law, its applicability in internal conflicts remains controversial (Bugnion 2003, 175). New codifications of the rules applicable to non-international armed conflicts are or were necessary (Bugnion 2003, 192). Therefore, the Geneva Conventions must be interpreted with regard to non-international armed conflicts (Bugnion 2003, 197). This further development can be exemplified by international criminal law, which has followed the development of this problem. Nevertheless, there are repeated calls for reforms of international law (Koch 2019, 90–91). With regard to the *jus in bello* as a whole, we can assume a “juridification of international relations” on the one hand, but also an “ethicization of world politics” on the other (Habermas 2004, 115).

In addition to juridical norms, the *jus in bello* also includes “moral constraints on the justifiability of conduct in war”. The “how of military action” is specified by a *jus in bello* that is at least understood ethically, too (Jackson 2011b, 584). However, it must be made clear here that – in contrast to *jus ad bellum* – the ethical discourse on the rules of *jus in bello* presupposes the complex set of rules of the

international law of war (Haspel 2017, 317). Especially the problems of asymmetric warfare raise ethical issues here, since the legally codified *jus in bello* does not seem to be adapted to these types of conflicts. Within such conflicts, the distinction between combatants and civilians required by *jus in bello* becomes increasingly difficult (Koch 2017, 844–845): “The ethical debate also deals with the problems arising from the new forms of warfare” (2009, 122).

Above all, the borderline cases of the application of international humanitarian law and the scope, validity and interpretation of *jus in bello* have been raised as ethical questions in the discussion (Greenwood 1983, 225–229). It is therefore less a debate about military ethics than “ethics of international humanitarian law” (Koch 2019, 87). In essence, it is a legal-ethical debate about the legitimacy and applicability of certain legally established norms. Walzer, Fabre, and McMahan, for example, focus primarily on questions of the ethical legitimacy of the legal norms of international law and not on rights or prohibitions for the use of military force that go beyond them (Koch 2009, 116). Walzer thus defines *jus in bello* as the question of when, how, and whom to kill in war (2005, 41). Together with the *jus ad bellum*, the *jus in bello* for him lies in a common “set of articulated norms, customs, professional codes, legal rules, religious and philosophical principles, and reciprocal arrangements that shape our judgments of military conduct”, which he calls “the war convention” (Walzer 2005, 44). Walzer’s concept of the “war convention” oscillates between legal and moral perspectives. However, he subjects the norms of law to moral justification or moral criticism (Duquette 2007, 42, 52). Fabre, on the other hand, focuses her ethical considerations of *jus in bello* on the requirements of proportionality (Fabre 2012, 224). She understands *jus in bello* as defining the right to kill in war as an individual right (Fabre 2012, 11). Similarly, McMahan understands *jus in bello* as a proportionality constraint on acts of war by just combatants (McMahan 2009, 198). For him, “*in bello* morality coincides with *in bello* laws. But there may also be uncertainty about their application in particular circumstances” (McMahan 2009, 127).

Looking at the discourse, it becomes clear that *jus in bello* is understood more in juridical than in moral terms. For the most part, *jus in bello* is understood as the legal obligation of combatants to protect life (Koch 2019, 86). The moral questions raised around *jus in bello* refer to the limits of a basically juridically regulated right (Lohmann 2013, 115). The legal-ethical debates are conducted in recognition of the legal codification of *jus in bello* (Koch 2009, 109).

2.3 *Jus post Bellum*

While the distinction between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* has long been part of the debates on *bellum justum*, it must be noted that the discussion on *jus post bellum* is more recent, even if the discourse is often conducted with reference to Kant. All in all, the *jus post bellum* can be understood as the sum of criteria that should lead to a just peace after war. Here the final phase of the use of force is taken into account. The *jus post bellum* has its roots in the ethical discussion about the extension of the aspects of the *bellum justum* beyond the actual war phase (Rudolf 2019, 106–107).

The *jus post bellum* has been “mostly theorized as a moral paradigm” (Stahn 2006, 931). It’s then a particular kind of morality of ending wars (Mollendorf 2008, 654). From this perspective, *jus post bellum* asks for “justice after war” and the possibility of a justly ended war (Rocheleau 2011, 582). For the most part, the discourse shows a shift away from a purely legal and institutional understanding of *jus post bellum* towards comprehensive peacebuilding conditions of a just order (Lohmann 2020, 24). The proponents of a *jus post bellum* approach therefore want to discuss “what belligerents owe one another in the aftermath of armed conflicts” primarily from an ethical point of view. They are concerned with an ethical evaluation of warfare, in the sense of an overall ethical evaluation of the use of force (O’Driscoll et al. 2021, 859).

In normative terms, the debate raises negative and positive duties for political transformation and reconstruction after military violence (Rudolf 2019, 108). Restorative and transformative tasks form the core of this debate (Frank 2009, 741). According to Knesebeck, the ethical demands of the *jus post bellum* are the restoration of the rights of the victims, the distinction between those militarily and politically responsible and between combatants and the population, the punishment of war crimes, compensation, and the overall rehabilitation of a just regime (von dem Knesebeck 2014, 134–140). Bass supplements *jus post bellum* with the duty to repatriate prisoners of war and the rights and obligations of post-war reconstruction (2004, 385–390). He emphasizes, however, that the moral imperative to punish the guilty is not the only moral principle at stake. For him, the moral duty to peace outweighs the duty to – juridically interpreted – justice (Bass 2004, 404–405). To maintain and promote peace, he calls for obligations of economic restoration and reparations (Bass 2004, 405–408).

This is aimed at strengthening the state, economic reconstruction, socio-cultural repair work, which is why Rigby, for example, calls for forgiveness and reconciliation in *jus in bello* in a similar way – but here again in a clearly more ethically charged way. He is concerned with the question of “a peace that’s ‘just’ enough” (Rigby 2022, 181), which is to be answered by the *jus post bellum*. Forgive-

ness as the beginning of a new memory represents for him the core of a morally interpreted *jus post bellum* (Rigby 2022, 184). This can be interpreted as claims to responsibility after winning a war and ethical obligations to just post-conflict behavior. These are expressed in moral obligations to the defeated party (Braun 2023, 58–60).

If we look at the ethical debate surrounding the *jus post bellum*, we see that it is primarily a matter of embedding the just war theory in the ethics of peace, which is oriented toward the end of military violence (Frank 2009, 739). An ethically understood *jus post bellum* therefore finds its realization in justice after war and should contribute to the promotion of a just peace after an armed conflict (Braun 2023, 57, 61). The rules of peace ethics, the limitation of violence, its – not only legally interpreted – regulatory capacity as well as its orientation towards justice thus find their way into just war theory (Frank 2009, 750). For Evans a just peace perspective requires a *jus post bellum* position and both – *jus ad bellum* and *in bello* – are seen as morally dependent on *post bellum* (Evans 2008, 535). Looking at the *jus post bellum* is meant to help understand what's morally right and wrong about past wars (Evans 2008, 537). The *jus post bellum* should thus contribute to the clarification of the morality of war and enable a sufficiently just peace (Stahn 2020, 19).

Jus post bellum can, from an ethical perspective, be understood as the promotion of minimal justice (Evans 2008, 539). The strong ethical focus of the underlying debate is certainly also due to the lack of a legal tradition of *jus post bellum*, which is also acknowledged by representatives of a legal perspective on *jus post bellum* (Stahn 2020, 19).

In legal terms, there is an ongoing controversy about post-conflict settings. That's why Günnewig states “*jus post bellum* as a legal concept is still in early stage” (2020, 441). From a legal point of view, these are mostly rules of customary international law of state responsibility, whose clear interpretation and criteriology have not yet crystallized (Günnewig 2020, 446, 469). Rather, a “legal void of *jus post bellum*” (Günnewig 2020, 470) must be assumed. Customary international law usually only regulates minimum conditions of acceptable behavior after the war (Knesebeck 2014, 132). Here, for example, legal duties and rights after a military intervention are discussed (Haspel 2017, 322–323). International law should therefore increasingly take the post-war phase into account and focus on the fact that an actual just peace-making and not the restoration of the status quo ante is intended (Stahn 2006, 936). This would also require charter-based considerations of *jus post bellum* and a “post-conflict law” (Stahn 2006, 937). In this way, war crimes could be made legally accessible through international jurisdiction and judged retroactively (Frank 2009, 742). At the same time, the legal implementation of *jus post bellum* requires a pluralistic and problem-solving approach to peace-

making, since international law contains certain normative gaps to a post-war perspective (Stahn 2006, 941). Thus, a comparison with *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* also shows that the legal dimension of *jus post bellum* is not as clearly defined as the other two (Fleck 2014, 43). For a juridically understood *jus post bellum*, nevertheless, it can be emphasized in a positive way that, in contrast to *jus in bello*, for example, it shows a specific openness of rules. The *jus post bellum* contains a broad spectrum of different levels of regulation, which covers very different branches of international law. Thus, *jus post bellum* is not always bound by codified legal frameworks and thus allows for a balance of formal and informal approaches (Fleck 2014, 43, 53–55).

Overall, it can be shown that *jus post bellum* clearly predominates ethical considerations. Large parts of the discussion understand *jus post bellum* as a moral obligation and moral right to a just post-war order, to and for reconstruction and social reparation in the sense of restorative justice, which includes coming to terms and dealing with the injustices suffered. In addition to these ethical considerations, however, there is also a growing legal debate about the necessity and possibility of a legally constituted and codified *jus post bellum*.

3 Justice and Law: The Relationship between Juridical and Moral Meaning – Normative Gaps

All in all, it can be assumed that law and ethics are deeply intertwined in the field of military and peace ethics, although the two can be clearly separated from each other.

In examining the state of the discussion, it has become clear that the *jus ad bellum* can only be interpreted ex negativo in legal terms. If, on the other hand, it is interpreted in terms of a moral claim to justice, a far-reaching and controversial debate on the possibility and necessity of war can be discerned. There is a normative regulatory gap here, especially in the contrast between the legal use of *jus ad bellum* understood in a negative sense and the moral use understood in a positive one. The situation is different for *jus in bello*, where the discussion is dominated by the interpretation of legal rights. Here there is a normative gap in which ethics is more concerned with the applicability and borderline cases of juridically codified law than with the critical consideration and super-positive evaluation of the law itself. This is where the ethical debate should be strengthened and conducted in such a way that it can actually function as a critical corrective to juridical rights. Here, ethics must assume its legal-ethical responsibility and

raise moral rights as a claim to justice and its codification in the sense of their enforceability.

The *jus post bellum*, on the other hand, requires a much stronger legal implementation of the moral claims and moral rights raised in the debate. Here, the normative gap is clearly on the side of positive law. While the possibility and appropriateness of a just post-war order is widely discussed in ethical terms, this is still not sufficiently reflected in codified international law and its concrete positive provisions. There is a need to update the international law, which has its roots in ethical reflection on the post-conflict phase.

Overall, the survey of juridical and moral approaches to *jus ad bellum*, *in bello* and *post bellum* shows how closely law and morality are linked and that progress in the field of peace and military ethics can therefore only be achieved through joint interdisciplinary discussion if no normative gaps are to be perpetuated or created. A complete replacement of peace ethics by law therefore seems impossible (Oeter 2017, 115).

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Torsten Meireis

“Justice and Peace Will Kiss” (Psalm 85:11): Christian Peace Ethics — Delusional in a Multipolar World?

The Global situation in international relations looks bleak in the middle of the third decade of the second millennium. The African continent is torn by a number of intra- and interstate armed conflicts, so is the Middle East, tensions between China and its neighbors loom large in Asia and in Europe, Russia’s war against Ukraine takes high death tolls, also among civilians.

In that situation, the divine promise in Psalm 85:11 has a strange ring to it: **הַסֶּדֶק-וְהַאֱמֶת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם יִשָּׁקוּ** (Faithfulness and truth meet, justice and peace kiss. My translation). It is doubtlessly one of the most controversial passages in the 2007 peace memorandum of Germany’s Protestant church federation, the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD). Does this promise apply to our world at all? What validity can ideas like the one expressed in this quote claim in a multipolar world, scarred by terrorism and crimes against humanity? How can justice and peace thrive under the reign of authoritarian rulers who none too seldom come to power in the democratic elections they’re trying to do away with, when any notion of a world order based on rules is crumbling away? With a Russian Federation attacking an independent state for the criminal reason of imperial reminiscence? A US presidential candidate framing the NATO as a mob protection racket? A Global North bending trade regulations to their favor? A Middle East where terrorism and war crimes abound? And a disparate Global South sometimes unified only in holding a single nation responsible for all the evil in the world? Does not the talk of justice and peace on a Global scale have an almost delusional ring to it, as political theoreticians like John Mearsheimer hold?

The controversy around this biblical quote can be unpacked in three different directions. The first is hermeneutical. Just an example: in English translations, *tzedek* is understood as *righteousness*, in German ones, it is understood as *justice*. In a contemporary understanding, *righteousness* is an individual trait, while *justice* is, at least in John Rawls words, the virtue of institutions (Rawls 1999, 3). A translation focusing mercy and truth, righteousness and peace would then look to the individual virtues of a good ruler rather than a structural development. And of course, the languages applied here are English and German, not isiXosa, Ko-

Note: KJV and BHS count differently, in KJV it is 85:10, in BHS and Luther it is 85:11.

rean or Quechua, for that matter, bringing the issue of decolonization to the fore. Which kind of hermeneutics should we apply here?

A second controversy may be marked by the different discourses in question. In the Anglo-Saxon world, ethical issues of war and peace are usually dealt with in the normative language of the just war tradition. Even those critical of its assumptions will use its concepts, thus, the thoughts of Jeff McMahan (2009), David Rodin (2003) or Cécile Fabre (2012) will go under a *revisionist just war theory* or a *cosmopolitan theory of just wars*. In the German speaking world, but also in Scandinavia, notably by the renowned Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), but also by comparable efforts like the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), a normative language of peace has been established, in case of the EKD or the Roman Catholic Church, it is the formula of *just peace*. The question then is where to start reflection: at war or at peace?

A third controversy finally has to do with a debate usually located in political sciences and pitting *realism* vs. *liberalism*. While the so-called realists (from Reinhold Niebuhr to Kenneth Walz, from John Mearsheimer to Herfried Münkler) understand nation-states as rational agents interested primarily in self-preservation and security pursued prominently by military means in an anarchic state system, liberals like Robert O. Keohane, Michael W. Doyle or Michael Zürn argue for cooperation and a broader range of interests and means of conflict solution. While the former accuse the latter of latent moralism and a naive view that doesn't take power relations and interests into account, the latter argue that realists treat states like black boxes as the internal processes are largely ignored. In a Christian vein, the conflict is exemplified for instance in the controversy between H. Richard (1932) and Reinhold Niebuhr (1932) or positions like Fernando Enns (2019) on one and Nigel Biggar (2013) on the other hand. In a way, it might be also seen as embodied in the controversy between Tinyiko Maluleke and Will Storrar, where white theologian Storrar (2011), arguing public-theologically for a public-political discourse of formally equal citizens is criticized by black South African theologian Maluleke who argues, among other things, that the reality of post-colonial inequality renders such attempts futile because the public sphere in South Africa and maybe even in the Global post-colony is in a constant state of war.

It is not merely that some are men and others are women, but rather that men are gods and women their dispensable temptresses; not merely that some are white while others are black, but rather that the whites are masters and the blacks are servants; not merely that some like wine while others like beer, but rather that some have much to eat and drink while others have nothing; not that some believe in hell and others believe in heaven but rather that some live already in heaven while others live already in hell. These are the real

differences in our public sphere. [. . .] Our language is violent and violence is our language. (Maluleke 2011, 86.89)

The following paper will try to tackle those controversies not from a position from nowhere, but from a given positionality that shapes my perspective: I am German, not Ukrainian or South African or Brazilian. The cultural memory of a people which has committed crimes against humanity from the beginning to almost the end of the 20th century in a sort of colonial empire and a fascist as well as a Stalinist dictatorship, against Nama, San, Jews, Sinti, disabled persons, Poles, French, against communists, homosexuals, with a Christian church widely acquiescent or even actively supportive and a post-war society drowning its shame in economic success, has deeply scarred me with a feeling of dread, which I try to turn into a sense of responsibility. Because for me, growing up in West Germany in the seventies, the church was a place of liberation from this materialistic anodyne remedy and a place of responsibility for justice, truth, and peace, the gospel a message of liberation.

At the same time, I am a citizen of one of the most affluent countries in the world, a West German brought up in a democratic and liberal society with its share of inequality, but a by and large well-working social security system that has granted me upward mobility and that we tend to take for granted, even though it is not. And I grew up in a society where East Germany, Eastern and Southeastern Europe and Russia were seen as somewhat backward – with today’s hindsight I would call that a neo-colonial attitude that tends to prevail if we look at the economic behavior of the EU – which in turn leaves me self-critical regarding my own blind spots but also generally critical towards claims for moral superiority. And this concerns, of course, also the present-day controversies in the German Protestant mainline churches, where some call for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine in the name of peace (Kramer 2023) and others call for European or even German nuclear armament in the name of security and propose to give up attempts at human rights universalism in the name of contractual pluralism (Evangelische Militärseelsorge 2023, 32–37).

While this chapter is about war and peace in Ukraine, it is necessary to remember that this is just one of many terrible conflicts in the world and that the war between Russia and Ukraine is situated in a Global context where attention and regard are scarce and tend to be bestowed according to perspective and position: while the wars in Ukraine and Gaza command attention in Europe, the ongoing conflicts in Sudan or the DR Kongo do so to a much smaller degree, even though they are no less cruel.

Nonetheless, I will try to tackle the controversy focusing the war in Ukraine by claiming, firstly, that the biblical text should be understood as pointing to a

divine promise of an abolition of war through the perspective of structural non-violent conflict resolution, which implies, in the words of Amnesty International Secretary General Salil Shetty, a “compelling vision for humanity which resonates with ordinary people” (Shetty 2018), combining goodness and faithfulness, justice and peace. That then implies, secondly, that we have to start with a concept of peace rather than focusing on an alleged inevitability of war. And this in turn will lead us to an epistemological perspective that challenges the framing of a distinction like the one between realism and liberalism (or idealism, for that matter) exactly by focusing the grim reality of the conflict in Ukraine.

1 To Kiss or to Fight?

As Jürgen Ebach (1996) points out, the Hebrew verb *naschaq* has a dual meaning. It may mean kissing in greeting or reunion, but it may also mean fight or arm oneself. Sigrid Eder (2017) argues that personified justice and peace have to be understood as aspects, angels of God’s presence, coming together in an intense dynamic after having been absent – as do love and faithfulness. This encounter is located in a situation of deprivation and attributed to God’s epiphany (Seybold 1996, 335–336) – with very real consequences. The dynamic of the psalm itself depicts a bleak situation in which the remembrance of God’s promise procures hope for the future.

Regarding the meaning of the terms, we have to take the literary context into account. Evidently, all four personifications belong first and foremost to God, and thus have foundational impact on the world, as God is the source of all four – for that reason, they are not to be understood simply as individual human virtues. According to Klaus Koch (1953, 1955), *tzedakah* and *tzedek* signify a relational obligation to the community rather than quantifiable equivalencies as in the Aristotelian sense of justice, the difference being that different agents are obliged in different ways to uphold the community. According to Ebach (1996, 45–46), *chesed* implies love in the sense of a voluntary, but reliable, emotionally charged care, *emet* truth in the sense of veracity or authenticity. Gillis Gerleman (1973) has traced the root *šlm* back to the concrete sense of having one’s fill, being satisfied, thus it is more than the absence of war.

But what exactly is the dynamic between the four personified terms? Ebach posits the encounter in different receptions in Jewish and Christian theology, in midraschim and psalters, showing that both interpretations, kissing and fighting, have been applied. In Midrash Genesis Rabbah on Gen 1:26 the auxiliary angels argue about the creation of man: Justice and love are in favor, as man will be

able to do works of loving justice; truth and peace are opposed, because man will be a belligerent liar. But as commander in chief, God doesn't hear them out but interrupts them: creation of man is accomplished already. In *Midrash Exodus Rabbah* on Exod 4:27, Moses and Aaron meet and kiss, and Aaron is taken to represent love and peace as a priest, Moses to represent truth and justice as a prophet. Ebach goes on to trace similar developments in the Christian tradition, and we could go on, but the point should be clear. In consequence, Ebach recommends leaving the question of kissing and fighting open in interpreting the relationship of all four as part of a discourse already begun in the psalm itself.

The hermeneutics in question posit neither the biblical text nor its interpreters as authoritative in the sense that they give us a fixed meaning, but rather suggest an open discourse in which participants, media and issues need to be negotiated incessantly. As decolonial exegesis rightfully points out, those negotiations are entrenched in power asymmetries and power struggles and need to be kept open (Sugirtharajah 2012, 142–173): in the light of an isiXhosa translation/interpretation of the Bible, the terms might assume a different meaning still, as they did and do when interpreted in Greek, Latin, German, or English. The beauty of the biblical text in question is that the strife of love, peace, truth and justice carries the promise of a concrete good life on the land.

Where does that leave us? I would like to stress three aspects.

First of all, we need to be aware that the terms in question shouldn't be understood as abstract individual virtues but – as God's properties – are foundational and relational at the same time. Truth, love, justice and peace describe communal relations that are beneficial in a very basic way, regarding the fruit of the land, a basic subsistence for all.

Secondly, the good life people hope and pray for is not a prestabilized harmony but an energetic encounter of truth and love, justice and peace. Fighting – in the sense of arguing – and kissing are not mutually exclusive. What is prevalent in which situation is by no means certain, but the good life needs all four and the continuous negotiation of the relation between those four. No peace without justice, no justice without peace, no love without truth, no truth without love, but what takes the precedence in any given situation needs to be determined.

Thirdly and finally, the psalm reminds of past blessings in a supposedly bleak situation to invoke a divine promise to comfort and give normative orientation at the same time. God's presence with the dynamic encounter of justice, peace, truth and love is a reason for hope as well as an opportunity to get one's bearings, to reflect on the plausible relationship of justice and peace, truth and justice in a given situation. It invites an ethics of correspondence that looks at human, finite answers to God's promise in the realm of the penultimate and draws on sources like Barth's, H. R. Niebuhr's, Soelle's and Moltmann's political theology, but also

on liberation theologies. All of those share Bonhoeffer's sharp distinction between the ultimate and the penultimate: we cannot achieve or obtain God's kingdom or God's peace, but we may and should answer to that promise. In that vein, the 2007 peace memorandum argues that the significance of the biblical promise of the encounter of justice and peace as God's gifts lies in the perspective of a new understanding of peace as a process involving justice rather than the absence of war, resulting in the idea of *si vis pacem, para pacem*: 'if you want peace, prepare for peace'.

2 Just War or Just Peace?

As a matter of course, the language of *just war* is the predominant paradigm in international security discourse, and usually it is defended by its alleged realism. It goes back a long way. Developed in stoic circles, the just war tradition has been famously and paradigmatically rephrased by Thomas Aquinas (1966, q40, 82–96) in a forensic way, as war is understood as the ultimate means to right wrongs. His conceptualization is characterized by a number of distinct aspects framed in the criteria he gives. Most importantly, the objective of just wars must be peace. Thomas unpacks this requirement in a twofold criterion. The rightful intention, *intentio recta*, states that the agent needs to aim at peace if a war is to be just. That, however, has a second implication. The rightful intention entails the use of means that do not embitter the enemy so as to preclude peace, a criterion that has later been rephrased *debitus modus*, the required operating mode. Thomas discusses the consequences of this criterion at length and concludes that cruelty, lies and ambushes need to be avoided. This intentionality, however, makes sense only in the setting Thomas envisions for just wars: the remedy of evil. This setting is framed as the criterion of *causa iusta*, the just cause. War is only to be waged to fight an unjust lesion, a crime. Additionally, a just war implies that this crime, or lesion, can't be punished in any other way. This precondition is phrased in the criterion of *legitima potestas*: only if there is no other, higher political authority the victim may turn to in order to right the wrongs committed, may war be justified. Thomas devises his concept of a just war in the context of the mediaeval Western world, which was understood as a Christian universe, *orbis Christianus*, ordered by the Roman church and led by the rightful emperor. In theory, then, everybody had a higher authority to turn to and just war was almost ruled out. In practice, however, things were quite different: the range of power of any emperor was severely limited, nobles and knights were in constant feuds, and church and regal authorities were often at odds. And of course, the *orbis Christi-*

anus, the Christian universe, was divided at least in two spheres of influence in Thomas' times, the Roman and the Byzantine Empire. Regarding just war outside of the Christian world, Thomas has nothing to say at all.

After the Thirty Years' War in Europe, framed as a post-Reformation religious conflict but actually giving rise to the emerging modern nation state, the idea of an *orbis christianus* lay shattered. With not even a nominal overarching authority in place, each nation-state would declare its warfare just: the Westphalian system implied a *bellum iustum ab utraque parte*, wars fought justly for both of the belligerent parties, leaving open the question of justice and seemingly impossible to decide.

In his somewhat ironic memorandum on *eternal peace* – the title alludes to a Dutch tavern of that name, situated besides a graveyard – the philosopher Immanuel Kant reflected on this situation (Kant 1977). His argument was twofold. On one hand, he assumed that a republic with the people as a sovereign would not be interested in wars, as ordinary citizens did not stand to gain from them but would lose out in terms of the haleness of life and limb as well as prosperity (first definitive article). His experiential background was of course a historical epoch in which feudal lords and monarchs pursued warfare mainly for reasons of the consolidation of dynastic power. On the other hand, he argued that an international federation of peace (2nd definitive article) would be desirable and probable, which would end the continuous threat of war between states and thus form a surrogate to the civic state of law. In the amendments Kant then tried to supplement his moral reasoning with a political one based on his teleological concept of nature governed by regulative ideas. According to Kant, war has been nature's device to afford the human population of the most remote areas of the earth, since less warlike peoples have been forced by more aggressive ones to populate even barren areas. The threat of war from their neighbors then forces all peoples into the formation of a lawful nation-state, which alone affords the coordination needed to repel aggression by others, and the spreading of this lawful state then would prepare for a law of peoples. Kant argued that the emergence of a single world nation was rather impossible due to human malice, the diversities of language and religion and the overstretching of governing power. A legally binding federation, however, would be conceivable exactly because of the forces of individual interest and the lessons learned nationally regarding the favorable outcomes of a rule of law: even though individual nations are not inclined to hold the peace, the spirit of commerce rooted in self-interest would eventually guide them to achieve such a federation, which affords protection. Even though Kant tried to argue for the political feasibility of his philosophical ideas – which included a harsh critique of colonialism – this concept was little more than a nice idea in his time. And in spite of Kant's critique of colonialism, he assumed a Euro-

centric normative teleology that juxtaposed *civilized* and *savage* peoples and severely tainted his universalistic ideas of human dignity.

When the idea of a federation of nations was taken up politically after World War I by US president Woodrow Wilson, it was universally considered naive and impossible. Only after World War II, the concept of an assembly of United Nations took hold, and even then it was in fact governed by the rivalry of the two military superpowers of the time, the United States of America and the Union of the Socialist Soviet Republics, who ferociously fought for their political and economic zones of influence, often in so-called wars by proxy, especially in countries freshly independent from their colonial European masters.

One of those wars, the Vietnam war of notorious memory, became the trigger for the modern classic of just war theory. In a fresh communitarian approach to ethics, Michael Walzer (2006, 3–20) argued that war, even though terrible, had never been devoid of moral rules, and he proposed a set of criteria for the distinction of just and unjust wars, rooted in concrete historical cases and their reflection in context. Invoking the distinction of *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello*, Walzer first of all argued for the *ius in bello* principles of discrimination and proportionality. As war constitutes a separate moral sphere, the liability to be killed is morally bound to the capability to kill by carrying and operating arms, which implies a discrimination between combatants and non-combatants who must be spared (Walzer 2006, 41.138–159). Additionally, Walzer argues for a principle of proportionality echoing the idea of *debitus modus* and avoiding excessive cruelty in favor of the least destructive military means necessary to reach a given goal. But Walzer also tackles the problems of *ius ad bellum* that had been left untouched in the Westphalian system of *bellum iustum ab utraque parte*. Starting from the intuition that the antigenocidal intervention by the allies in World War II was justified while the Vietnam intervention was not, Walzer argued that self-defense and the intervention “to assist secessionist movements (once they have demonstrated their representative character), to balance the prior interventions of other powers, and to rescue peoples threatened with massacre” justify military intervention (Walzer 2006, 106–107). But Walzer walks a tight line between so-called idealism and realism, and he goes even so far as to reflect on cases of “supreme emergency” when, in his opinion, the principles of just war must be jettisoned (Walzer 2006, 251–268). In the struggle of idealism and realism, Walzer takes an inconvenient middle position when he acknowledges the necessity to abandon moral principles in extreme situations and have those who executed those decisions dishonored afterwards (Walzer 2006, 323–325) – in the case of nuclear deterrence, he argues at the same time for its abolition and its necessity:

Nuclear war is and will remain morally unacceptable, and there is no case for its rehabilitation. Because it is unacceptable, we must seek out ways to prevent it, and because deterrence is a bad way, we must seek out others. [. . .] I have been more concerned to acknowledge that deterrence itself, for all its criminality, falls or may fall for the moment under the standard of necessity. But as with terror bombing, so here with the threat of terrorism: supreme emergency is never a stable position. (Walzer 2006, 283)

Walzer’s approach is characterized by an uncomfortable balancing act between the insight into the factual impact of morality in warfare on one hand (Walzer 2006, 3–20) and the acknowledgment that moral principles may give way to opportunistic calculations in extreme situations (Walzer 2006, 251–268), all the while fully aware of the danger in invoking situations of supreme emergency (Walzer 2006, 283). In so many words, then, Walzer acknowledges that even just wars aren’t so just after all.

And albeit all the emphasis on morality in warfare, Walzer never questions the inevitability of war. The idea that the institution of war might be overcome, does not really enter his argument. His rationale is explained in an afterword (Walzer 2006, 329–335) where he deals with the question of nonviolent defense and states: “Nonviolent defense depends on noncombatant immunity” (Walzer 2006, 334).

Classical just war tradition framed war in a forensic way, trying to mitigate the cruelty of war to promote peace. With the emerging nation states, however, this concept became less cogent, and war was increasingly seen as a plausible extension of political means (Clausewitz 1834, 140), as an instrument to foster national unity or even as morally beneficial. Such positions that see war not only as an unavoidable evil but as beneficial in some way have been labeled *bellicist*. On the other hand, proponents of pacifism have for a long time pointed to the problems of the just war approach (Huber and Reuter 1990, 105–115).

First of all, killing is usually considered morally wrong in most cultures and moral codes, the prohibition of killing being one of the most widespread moral principles. Warfare implies mass killing, modern warfare implies mass killing on an industrial scale, in the case of nuclear warfare with cataclysmic consequences that elude any attempts at justification. If morals are valid in war, as Walzer contends, his argument may also work towards a problematization of killing in war, as protagonists of the revisionist just war theory have contended (cf. McMahan 2009; Meireis 2017). In a Christian perspective, killing and violence may even be seen to constitute original sin, as the Hebrew root denoting sin (*chatah*) appears first of all in the story of Cain’s killing of Abel (Gen 4:7, cf. Kiefer 2017, 30–31).

Secondly, as may be argued in a more utilitarian vein, war tends to destroy what it seeks to uphold or to remedy because it effects lasting and even hereditary trauma in combatants and noncombatants alike. Additionally, war is one of

the major drivers of environmental degradation and climate change (Closman 2009; Meaza et.al. 2024). Its potential for sustainable conflict resolution (*ius post bellum*) is minimal, especially, as wars not necessarily end with peace treaties: more numerous are cases of temporary subjugation, a more or less hurtful stalemate, a frozen conflict that can rekindle any time or a total military victory by one side, which, however, does not necessarily resolve the underlying conflict but breeds new tensions (Kingsbury and Iron 2023, 4–7; Johnson 2023, 41–42).

Thirdly, war usually not only entails killing, but crass violence and cruelty that can never be fully contained. Thus, even the most important principle of containment of violence, the distinction between combatants and noncombatants, or, in revisionist just war theory, the innocent and the guilty, is always blurred, especially as regular interstate wars only comprise 15 percent of all wars since 1945 (Schreiber 2021). The issues of collateral damage and atrocities committed by traumatized or brutalized soldiers (even in armies of democratic states), which are almost impossible to avoid, make the justification of war highly problematic. Moreover, those problems are not mitigated by the increasing use of highly automated weaponry or robotics, but rather on the contrary (Singer 2009, 382–412).

Finally, the security-based prerogative *hope for the best, prepare for the worst* may lead to a primary option for the military and thus to a security dilemma in which exactly the investment in military security by one agent leads to insecurity on the part of its neighbors, who are then motivated to bolster their own military on their behalf, which may lead to a spiraling of insecurity on all sides and may result in exactly the armed conflict that was to be avoided.

But if war cannot be justified morally, is pacifism an alternative? Positions of absolute pacifism propagated by authors like Stanley Hauerwas (2003) or Fernando Enns (2019, 2017, 2013) have to deal with a different problem: the reality of violence.¹ As Walzer had insisted, nonviolent resistance is dependent on Global public moral attention to take effect or has to actively incur and condone martyrdom. Public moral attention is a scarce resource and tends to fade quickly, martyrdom, on the other hand, cannot be demanded from others but only be taken upon oneself voluntarily.

For that reason, a position of conditional pacifism has been proposed. The Protestant Church in Germany (EKD 2007) memorandum thus approaches the problem from a different angle. The prioritization of peace over war is not predominantly understood as the absolute dedication to nonviolent defense, but as an epistemological operation that starts with a broad look at instruments of conflict resolution rather than with the fact and phenomenology of war. Even though

1 For a thorough discussion of the arguments cf. Kunkel 2024, 116–280.

inspired by the divine promise of ultimate peace and harmony in Psalm 85:11 and elsewhere, it does not purport to bring such a peace about. Rather, it envisions humans corresponding to this divine promise by attempting to overcome violence and war, especially in a time of weapons of mass destruction. Religious promises thus motivate thinking about the possibility of ending war without pretending access to God’s power to end conflict in harmony, while the assumption of an inevitability of war may preclude the timely analysis of conflict causes and the scrutiny of non-violent measures of conflict resolution.

This perspective, labeled *just peace approach* in its German-speaking Christian theological variety, may be characterized first and foremost by the epistemological operation mentioned above. Focusing peace instead of war, it starts with an analysis of conflicts, their reasons and emergence, it then scrutinizes possible ways of nonviolent conflict resolution and defies the assumption of an inevitability of war. The suspension of violence, the fostering of individual freedom, the mitigation of human need in a quest for Global justice and the propagation of cultural recognition are then understood as basic principles of conflict resolution (Reuter 2022; Meireis 2012).

Accounting for the reality of violence in human affairs, this approach reserves force as an ultimate ratio to forestall atrocity and unmitigated violence, but without mistaking force as a means of conflict resolution. Rather, force or the threat of it are understood as instruments of suspending violence so as to make nonviolent conflict resolution viable. As a means of last resort on different levels, force may be applied in self-defense, in regard to policing, in cases of legitimate resistance against violent oppression or in cases of national defense against unwarranted aggression (UN Charter Art. 51). However, as the use of force usually implies the threat of violence or violent practices, it may never be fully justified morally and thus implies incurring guilt (Bonhoeffer 1992, 256–299, esp. 275; see also Kunkel 2025, 340–350).

Following Kant’s lead and the emergence of an international human rights regime, the EKD memorandum then argued mainly for international law like the UN Charter and United Nation institutions such as the Security Council to be employed for conflict resolution. The legal cooperation on a Global scale thus was understood to regulate the anarchic relationship of nation states in lieu of a world state (EKD 2007, 57–79).

While the ethical argumentation holds, the emerging multipolarity as well as the far-reaching failure of political institutions like the Security Council widens the gap between a moral understanding of law as presupposed in the EKD memorandum and the political maneuvering in the arena of positive law (cf. Reuter in this volume): sanctions against Russia’s clear breaches of humanitarian law have repeatedly been vetoed by security members for political reasons. The contrast

between universalist moral principles and political behavior dedicated to egocentric moral considerations and the question of how to deal with that contrast has led to an intense debate in political sciences, where protagonists of a so-called liberal view favor strategies of international cooperation for peace, whereas defendants of a so-called realist position put their trust in strategies of national military security.

3 *Realism or Idealism in the Perception of International Relations?*

The paradigms of realism and liberalism – or sometimes, idealism – as understood in the political sciences of international relations form a backdrop also for discussions in Christian theology in Europe – but also in other parts of the world. Theologians like Ulrich Körtner (2024) or Nigel Biggar (2013) argue in favor of just war theory, military intervention and, in the case of Körtner, even a nuclear military build-up from a so-called realist position. As Biggar stresses, however, *realism* may mean very different things in various reference systems, although it is mainly a presumed attitude of wishful thinking that the claim of realism is pitted against (Biggar 2013, 1–15). In moral theory, ‘realism’ denotes the view that moral principles and values are objective facts rather than social conventions; in theological anthropology, realism refers to the sinfulness and moral ambivalence of humans (Biggar 2013, 12–13). Biggar grounds his reasoning mainly on two ideas: the moral principle that evil needs to be resisted for reasons of love² and the assumption that the historical balance sheet of violence against non-violence is beyond our reckoning (Biggar 2013, 61–91, 326–331). In a political perspective, however, the concept of realism signifies a number of strong assumptions regarding the nature of international relations and political entities that may be briefly characterized in turning to John Mearsheimer’s paradigmatic offensive realism.

In a famous article, Mearsheimer (2014) has argued for a Western responsibility for the war between Russia and Ukraine on the grounds of an interest collision: “The West’s triple package of policies – NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and democracy promotion – added fuel to a fire waiting to ignite.” (Mearsheimer 2014, 4) This analysis is based on a number of assumptions regarding interna-

² Biggar argues with Augustine for an understanding of love encompassing ‘harsh kindness’, which may result in killing (Biggar 2013, 61–91). For a contrary view that understands love as an end of violence, cf. Meireis 2018.

tional relations and, on a larger scale, anthropology. The insights that humans are social beings and that the capability for reasoning about basic principles of life is limited lead Mearsheimer to three important conclusions: firstly, that a plurality of social groups with distinctive cultures is a given; second, that politics and political institutions are inevitable for social cooperation and are essentially about the quest for power; and thirdly, that survival is the central and all-encompassing rationale for individuals and social groups (Mearsheimer 2018, 15–17, 34). Since he rates human ability to transcend the limits of a certain culture rather low (Mearsheimer 2018, 35–38) and understands relativism as the last word regarding moral beliefs (Mearsheimer 2018, 33), survival and the quest for power become the central motives for political institutions of social groups, which by definition act in an anarchic setting (Mearsheimer 2018, 40). This is because a practical consensus on normative principles governing society or the relationship of a number of societies is, in that view, ruled out by the essentialist assumptions about the unchangeable cultural differences of groups and individuals, and the limits of reason. As survival is the central rationale in an anarchic setting, the quest for military power becomes all-encompassing:

"The importance of power in anarchy is not that it determines who writes the rules, because rules do not matter much in intergroup relations, but that it is the best means for societies to protect themselves against violent threats from another society. They want abundant material resources, especially military ones, to maximize their prospects of survival in the face of existential threats. In the absence of a higher political authority, fear is a powerful motivator. [. . .] No society can ever be too powerful relative to its competitors. (Mearsheimer 2018, 40)

Mearsheimer perceives liberal ideas that focus on the importance of individual rights and norms of peaceful conflict resolution, a mutual interest in prosperity or an inclination to follow rules in international relations, for that reason, as delusionary: "In the realist story, states worry about their survival above all else, and this motivates them to pursue power at each other's expense" (Mearsheimer 2018, 191). And even if peaceful cooperation between a number of given nation states can be achieved, the theory holds: "But as long as there is some chance of war between any two states in the system, every state has little choice but to privilege survival and act in accordance with realist principles" (Mearsheimer 2018, 193). Combined with a scathing critique of attempts at liberal hegemony by force (2018, 120–151) and the firm belief that "anarchy is here to stay" in international relations (Mearsheimer 2018, 151), Mearsheimer advocates for restraint in international relations, especially regarding the protection of human rights (Mearsheimer 2018, 152–187). Even though he by no means rules out war as an instrument of realist politics, he argues that realist policies will result in less warfare

than liberal ones, firstly, because realists are interested in “maximising their share of Global power, there are only a limited number of regions where they should be willing to risk a war” (Mearsheimer 2018, 222). Secondly, they are aware of the balance-of-power logic, which brings with it caution towards other powerful agents. Thirdly, they are aware of the fact that war almost always brings about unintended consequences (2018, 222–223).

For those reasons, it is perfectly in line with his argument to advocate for the cutting of military aid from the West:

One also hears the claim that Ukraine has the right to determine whom it wants to ally with and the Russians have no right to prevent Kiev from joining the West. This is a dangerous way for Ukraine to think about its foreign policy choices. The sad truth is that might often makes right when great-power politics are at play. Abstract rights such as self-determination are largely meaningless when powerful states get into brawls with weaker states. Did Cuba have the right to form a military alliance with the Soviet Union during the Cold War? The United States certainly did not think so, and the Russians think the same way about Ukraine joining the West. It is in Ukraine's interest to understand these facts of life and tread carefully when dealing with its more powerful neighbor. (Mearsheimer 2014, 12)

Recent interviews of Mearsheimer's and an open letter from a number of realist scholars strongly discouraging an inclusion of Ukraine into NATO point in a similar direction (Open Letter 2024, Mearsheimer 2024 a, b).

Of course, self-professed realists may differ considerably in their views: while Biggar and Mearsheimer both believe in an inevitability of warfare, Biggar advocates going to war for moral reasons of ‘harsh love’ in an Augustinian spirit, while Mearsheimer would restrain military operations to those motivated by strict national self-interest in the expansion or conservation of power, avoiding any overstretching.

An alternative view is offered by political scientists like Michael W. Doyle or Michael Zürn who identify as belonging to a tradition of liberal theory in international relations – seconded by philosophers like Charles R. Beitz – and stress the significance of human rights (Beitz 2009, 197–212, 2007). Doyle, who is one of the leading figures of a democratic peace theory approach in international relations, has recently suggested to strive for a ‘cold peace’ instead of a ‘cold war’ in international relations. Doyle distinguishes between national corporatist regimes, in the case of Russia and China also autocratic, and liberal democratic ones, which are, however, under strong assault from right wing movements fueled by a “combination of increasing domestic inequalities in some places (such as the United States) with seeming loss of control of borders and economy in others (as in Europe)” (Doyle 2018, 7). He then argues against explicit strategies condoning a hot or cold war, even though he is in favor of a continued Western support of Ukraine

that empowers the country to negotiate a cease-fire with Russia that does not amount to a Ukrainian surrender (Doyle 2023a; 2023b, 225–227). While *hot war*, in his language, denotes armed conflict against territorial integrity or political independence, *cold war* means hostility and subversion just short of armed force. *Warm peace* then denotes shared legitimacy, mutual respect, peaceful cooperation and competition, *cold peace* means rivalry, mutual suspicion and lack of shared legitimacy, but also *détente*, limited cooperation and refraining from subversion (Doyle 2023b, 11–16). In the tradition he stands for, a precondition for peace is seen in the coincidence of economic interdependency, jointly managed international institutions and democratic regimes (Zürn 2022, 406). Thus, contrary to realism, the possibility of multilevel cooperation even in multipolar settings is acknowledged, rendering them not simply anarchic; and the internal affairs of nation-states are perceived as relevant to international relations. Neither one of those elements, however, is a guarantee for stability and peaceful relations in itself: democracies tend to be peaceful only against other democracies, are under the temptation to impose their political systems and values on non-democratic countries and may – in the case of the United States – also be in danger of falling into the ‘Thucydides trap’ of trying to preemptively defend their hegemony against other rising powers (Doyle 2018, 6). Economic interdependency is an important argument, but people might be willing to sustain prosperity losses for the sake of security, as the costly German shift away from the dependency on Russian gas shows. And international institutions may be instrumentalized or abused – and it is not always the autocratic regimes who are responsible for such instrumentalization (Zürn 2022, 405; 2018, 84–88, 107–136, 170–194; Zürn, Wolf and Stephen 2019, 372).

And of course, a simple assignation of falcons and doves is out of the question: Realists will not always advocate for war, and liberals will not always vote for peace (Zürn 2022, 398–401).

In the same way as the label of ‘realism’ is at least multi-faceted, the simple distinction between ‘realist’ and ‘liberal’ positions may be misleading. Political scientists like Michael Zürn have pointed to the fact that the landscape is much more diverse. Institutional approaches, even though taking legal rules and moral norms more seriously than the realists, do take military force into account and may even advocate for it.³ Theorists seeing some merit in realist positions have suggested a distinction between the theory and the heuristic of realism: while, in

³ Zürn 2022, 400 – Zürn’s argument is here that the ‘realist’ approach stressing power balances and national security by military force does not provide a criterion for the preferability of restraint or force in a given situation.

their opinion, the theory allows for helpful perspectives, especially if combined with other views, the heuristic promises a simplistic and none-too-helpful catch-all approach (Driedger 2023a).⁴

In an ethical vein, a ‘realist’ position like the one propagated by Mearsheimer has two distinct disadvantages: normatively, it professes neutrality while actually favoring an egocentric moral view where the survival and security interests of the agents in question claim attention first and foremost. At the same time, those moral decisions are not acknowledged as choices but declared as based on invariable anthropological fact. Descriptively, it tends to underestimate the factual impact of normative attitudes, also in international relations.

Doyle’s position profits from insights into the balance-of-power logic professed by the concept of realism, but tends to be more complex. It takes into account that social realities are a matter of construction regarding their perception and formation and tends to include a wider variety of factors; additionally, it is usually aware and reflexive concerning the moral choices that ground its research, even though it is of course descriptive rather than prescriptive in nature. In that regard, one might even claim that it is more realistic than realism, as it is better equipped to describe complex realities.

For that reason, Christian ethics might be well advised to acknowledge that a simple binary of ‘liberal’ and ‘realist’ is misleading, and the heuristic of ‘realism’ (Driedger 2023a) with its claim to a non-ideological view of the ‘pure facts’ is outright dangerous, while the institutional theory of international relations may just incorporate enough realism to come to terms with social and political reality. While the just peace approach outlined in the last paragraph strives for a ‘warm peace’ and the rule of mutually endorsed and respected international law in international relations, the emerging multipolarity and also the shortcomings of the institutional regulations and the misdemeanors of autocratic as well as liberal states (Zürn 2018) make this a long-term goal rather than a short-term one. Theological realism then implies taking God’s promise seriously and not giving up hope. It faces grim realities with a clear view of conflicting interests, intersectionalities and one’s own limitations. Meanwhile, Doyle’s suggestion to work for a ‘cold peace’, implying a measure of cooperation and non-subversion between different agents, and to avoid hot and cold wars where possible seems to be a realistic aim which may be reconciled with the idea of a sensitive long-term commitment to universal human rights, an orientation towards a Global governance

⁴ Driedger 2023a (cf. also the contribution in this volume) provides a very thorough and detailed blow-by-blow analysis of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict regarding the explanatory power of realism, coming to highly ambivalent results.

(Zürn 2023) and the epistemic perspective of conditional peace ethics, even if it entails painful compromise.

If we adopt the epistemic perspective advocated for by Christian just peace ethics with its motto of *si vis pacem para pacem*, ‘if you want peace, prepare for it’, analytical procedure would start with conflict analysis and the scrutiny of possibilities of nonviolent conflict resolution. It entails a broad concept of security and integration of Global economic conflict issues without involving strong cosmopolitan assumptions: even if the claim to universality of human rights and the beneficence of democratic participatory structures may be upheld, it needs to be recognized as a disputable ethical claim that cannot and must not be implemented by force but has to respect regional and national self-determination (Rawls 1999b, 4.58–88). If all else fails, a containment of violence by forceful means, always incurring guilt, may be necessary to prepare non-violent solutions. Under the label of law-sustaining force, the 2007 EKD memorandum reserved this for cases of legitimate self-defense against unwarranted aggression and to prevent crass atrocities (EKD 2007, 65–70), but it argued for restraining forceful intervention into the affairs of another nation in the most rigorous way (EKD 2007, 70–79).

Upholding a claim to universal human rights as a consequence of corresponding to God’s promise of peace must, however, not leave human rights language and practice unchanged – the multiple tasks connected to that effort can only be indicated very briefly here: In acceptance of postcolonial critique, human-rights language must be reconstructed to decenter European perspectives, for instance regarding development trajectories (Mutua 2008; Shetty 2018). In the same vein, international law needs reconstruction to overcome neocolonial approaches (Anghie 2004), and, as a matter of course, UN institutions are in need of a reconstruction that allows for more equitable terms (Zürn 2018, 219–247). The fact that those endeavors involve long-term effort does not render them less realistic, as they provide a map for orientation so as not to lose one’s way in troubled times.

4 Ukraine and Christian Theory of Just Peace

How the current situation in Ukraine developed is widely known. On February 24, 2022, Russia attacked the sovereign republic of Ukraine with all-out war claiming the prevention of an alleged genocide in the Donbas, the ousting of a Nazi regime and the restitution of greater Russia annexation (Putin 2022). This unwarranted attack was a clear breach of international law and was subsequently answered by UN resolution ES 11/1 of March 2, 2022, approved by a majority of 141 states

and only rejected by five (Walker 2024). Additionally, states like Finland and Sweden gave up on their neutrality and joined NATO. War crimes committed by Russian troops in Bucha and elsewhere (OHCR 2022) became notorious, and also Russia's warfare from the start targeted civilian infrastructure and cities. Already before, in 2014, Russia had annexed Crimea following an internationally non-recognized referendum and the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine. Despite the Minsk Agreements of 2014/15 fighting continued in the Donbas, where Russia conducted hybrid warfare (Walker 2023).

Explanations for this behavior are numerous and vary according to theoretical perspective (Driedger 2023a, b): While authors like Mearsheimer (2014) have held the attempts to extend NATO or EU membership responsible considering them as a threat to Russia's need for security in its claim for an unchallenged sphere of interest and as disturbing a balance of power, others have stressed Putin's internal strife for unchallenged authoritarian rule (Heinemann-Grüder 2022, 25) or argued for a systems conflict between liberal and authoritarian regimes (Doyle 2023, 63–151; Zürn 2022, 404).

In the background of the conflict looms the retreat of the United States as unchallenged hegemon and the succession of an emerging multipolar geopolitical Global situation, where US military hegemony is challenged by its nuclear contender Russia and a number of other regional powers; economic hegemony contested by China and the EU as well as rising countries like India or South Africa; and of course the question of the type of desired international order.

Suggestions regarding short-, medium- and long-term strategies and reactions vary correspondingly, even though a given theoretical perspective does not necessarily mean consensus regarding measures (Zürn 2022; Driedger 2023a). While some realists vote for deterrence, but also a long-term concentration of forces and therefore an abstaining from offering Ukraine NATO-membership (Open Letter 2024), others plead for the inclusion of Ukraine in NATO to restrain Russia (Knop 2023). In the short term, most Western theorists argue for an ongoing support short of direct military intervention, whereas for instance Chinese scholars see the Russian outright aggression as a legitimate intervention and reaction of a cornered state (Guihai 2024) – which also goes for European right-wing politicians like Viktor Orban or the German Party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), but also for the German leftist party *Die Linke*. Long-term recommendations again vary: while liberal institutionalists like Doyle opt for a model of 'cold peace' involving a multiplicity of measures (Doyle 2023, 220–244), others plead for a national military build-up.

A just peace approach cannot follow a 'realist heuristic' that underestimates the complexities of national, regional, and Global situations, even though it might profit from 'realist' insights like the importance of a balance of power. While ac-

knowledging the reality of violence and oppression, it needs to keep a vision of sustainable peace as the guiding line for political thinking from a Christian mindset. Thus, projecting the choice of strategy into an alternative of prosperity transfer, appeasement and deterrence (Münkler 2023, 71–85) falls short of the mark and is less realistic than claimed. As institutionalists contend, economic interdependence is only one factor important in the support of peaceful relations, but not enough to secure them (Zürn). The term *appeasement* on the other hand already implies that the strategy tries to satisfy a bully by giving him reign without consideration of legitimate interests on any side. And *deterrence* is a strategy based on the risk evaluation of rational agents who also might fail to grasp the situation (Driedger 2023b). Instead, a policy that supports forceful legitimate self-defense of Ukraine to curb unmitigated oppression and violence in the sense of law-sustaining force in the absence of a functioning international rule of law seems to be plausible (EKD 2007, 67. Reuter in this volume). At the same time, it is necessary to look for viable ways to negotiate at least an armistice that would not amount to a freezing of the conflict, during which time Russia could regroup and regenerate its military forces for the next strike – a scenario that could not possibly be suggested to Ukraine. The question of when legitimate self-defense should be halted to allow for negotiations is, of course, not a trivial one and is a matter of political decision in which the most concerned, i.e., the Ukrainian people represented by its democratically elected government, should have the strongest voice.

As has become clear, the Christian response is more than divided upon the issue of war in general (see section 2 in this chapter), but also in regard to war in Ukraine. This is not only true regarding the different autocephalous orthodox churches, notably the Russian Orthodox Church with its doctrine of *Russkiy Mir* and Patriarch Kirill’s strong alignment with Russian warfare (Clark and Vovk 2020). The World Council of Churches (WCC) – where the Russian Orthodox churches have member status – has repeatedly criticized Patriarch Kirill for the characterization of Russia’s aggression as “holy war” (WCC 2024) and urged Russia to stop its aggression (WCC 2022). Pope Francis’ encouragement of a negotiation addressed at the Ukrainian government (Watkins 2024) was widely understood as a call to surrender, but rectified later by the Vatican’s secretary of state Cardinal Parolin who condemned Russia’s war as an unjust invasion (Starcevic 2024). In Germany’s Protestant Church, debate arose not only over the question of supporting Ukraine with arms, but also in regard to the doctrine of just peace in general (Körtner 2024; Evangelische Militärseelsorge 2023; EKD 2019), a debate in which one faction moved towards a position of absolute pacifism and the other in the direction of just war doctrine and nuclear deterrence. Since religious agents like the Christian churches are often important agents in societies and theological

debate may contribute to the formation of imaginaries of faith and public opinion, this debate is not futile, but necessary.

A Christian position originating in just peace theory, even though acknowledging the necessity of force as a last resort of self-defense or the prevention of genocide in situations where an effective legal sanctioning system is absent, may not narrow down its scope of thinking to the immediate necessities of one given party in a situation of war. Instead, it needs to think from a broader perspective of conflict analysis, that takes past and future of the warring parties, the geopolitical and also the Global economic situation into consideration. In particular, it needs to reflect on its own contributions to the problematic situation and to bring those into the political debates of Christians and a wider public in the society where a given Christian community is located. And it needs to take God's promise of peace as a beacon that motivates its strife for a Global warm peace, however imperfect and arduous the way. In that sense, it is not delusional but highly realistic.

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Nicole Kunkel & Torsten Meireis

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.

List of Contributors

Nancy E. Bedford, Dr. theol., Georgia Harkness Professor of theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Her research interests focus on global feminist theories and theologies, Latin American theologies, Latinx theologies in North America as well as whiteness, violence and racism.

Jonas J. Driedger, Dr., postdoctoral researcher at the research department “International Security” at the Leibniz Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) and at the research center Transformations of Political Violence (TraCe). His research interests include interstate wars, deterrence in international politics, relations between great powers and their neighboring states, Russian and transatlantic security and defense policy.

Dion A. Forster, Dr. Dr. theol., professor of public theology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and extraordinary professor of systematic theology at Stellenbosch University. His research interests include theological anthropology and intersections with race, social identity complexity theories, and justice.

Erico Hammes, Dr. theol., senior professor of systematic theology at Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná and professor emeritus at Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul. His research interests include Christology and theology of peace and non-violence, Latin American theology, ecumenism, theology and natural sciences, as well as social ethics.

Lukas Johrendt, research fellow for protestant theology at Helmut-Schmidt-Universität / Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg and doctoral student for systematic theology and ethics at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. His research interests include fundamental ethics, commandment ethics and questions of the normativity of theological conceptions of law, social ethics with regard to political ethics and political theory, peace and military ethics.

Margaryta Khvostova, M.A., postgraduate research student for politics and international relations in the Department of Politics and International Relations at University of Surrey. Her research interests include human rights, international conflicts, and democracy during the war.

Nicole Kunkel, Dr. theol., research and teaching fellow for systematic theology and ethics at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and at the Berlin Institute for Public Theology. Her research interests include peace ethics, ethics of AI and technology, critical posthumanism.

Alex Leveringhaus, PhD (LSE), lecturer in political theory, School of Social Science, University of Surrey, and co-director of the Centre for International Intervention (cii) at Surrey. His research interests include contemporary political philosophy, normative and applied ethics, ethical issues in armed conflict, and military intervention.

Torsten Meireis, Dr. theol., professor of systematic theology and ethics at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, director of the Berlin Institute for Public Theology and professor extra-ordinary at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. His research interests include ethics of sustainability, social ethics, economic ethics, political ethics, peace ethics, medical and nursing ethics.

Funlola O. Olojede, Dr. theol., research and teaching fellow for Old Testament and in the Gender Unit in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University. Her research focuses on feminist and gender-conscious interpretation of the Bible from an African perspective with special regard to ethics.

Hans-Richard Reuter, Dr. theol., professor emeritus of theological ethics at Universität Münster. His research interests include theory of ethics, legal ethics and human rights, social ethics, sociology of religion, and international relations.

Matthias Smalbrugge, Dr. theol., professor of the history of Christianity at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His research interests include memory, image, the self, Christianity and culture in Europe.

Demaine Solomons, Dr., associate professor of public theology and ethics at Stellenbosch University. His research interests include lived religion, social ethics, reconciliation, peace and conflict, race and identity, human rights, and moral philosophy.

Andreas Trampota, Dr. phil. habil. M.Th., Acting Director at the Hamburg Institute for Theology and Peace (ithf). His research interests include ancient ethics, modern moral philosophy, contemporary and analytical philosophy, medical ethics, as well as peace ethics.

Rudolf von Sinner, Dr. theol. habil., is professor of systematic theology and of human rights and public policies at Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná in Curitiba, Brazil, and professor extraordinary at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. His research interests include public theology, political ethics, bioethics, ecumenical and interreligious hermeneutics, religious mobility and pluralism, contextual, intercultural, and ecumenical theology, as well as the doctrine of the Trinity.