

## **Peace promotion through joint security and economic cooperation**

### **Embargoes, sanctions, economic wars contrary to international law**

*June 14, 2025 Reiner Braun (International Peace Bureau)*

The alternative of 'common security' with diverse forms of cooperation seems unrealistic in view of the global war and crisis scenarios, almost like enemy propaganda, as it contradicts the threat narrative.

Cooperation refers to two deeply interconnected political fields and has a historical precedent, not least in Willi Brandt's policy of détente and the Charter of Paris:

- Cooperative relations between Russia and Germany
- Cooperation between Russia and Europe with a special focus on Russia and the EU.

The visions, philosophy, strategy and instruments for cooperative relations are in place: they are called 'common security policy'.

The central challenge for a new European security order is a return to the policy of common security based on the fundamental statement of the Olof Palme Report of 1982 and its continuation in the Palme Report 2 'our shared future' of April 2022, namely that the security interests of all states must be taken into account. Common security is based on cooperation, dialogue and negotiation, on the recognition of the legitimate security interests of all and, consequently, on compromise and balance. The security of one country is unthinkable without the security of the other, of the political opponent. Common security includes arms control and disarmament, economic and ecological cooperation, and diverse relations between societies and people.

### **In spring/summer 2025, we are miles away from this.**

The development of such a European peace architecture based on common security is a new Herculean challenge and is impossible without the active engagement of social movements and especially the peace movement.

This common security order is also indispensable for solving the global challenges facing humanity, especially for achieving climate justice.

### **What are the requirements for a new peace and security architecture?**

Without any illusions about the speed at which a new European peace order can be achieved, it must now be conceived, strategically developed and the first steps made politically feasible. The resistance of the political forces driving us towards war will be immense. But even Willi Brandt's policy of détente was

not achieved without a struggle by the people on the streets and at the ballot box. Let us not forget that Willi Brandt was almost overthrown politically as Chancellor by reactionary forces.

The dynamics of international change make it impossible to draw up comprehensive building blocks or precise roadmaps; this would be apolitical and illusory. The goal remains to achieve a new, inclusive peace and security order in Europe. The path to this goal is diverse, with many forks and setbacks.

### **Politics of common security and confidence-building**

Based on the principles of the Common Security Policy, the main task today is to develop entry points and open doors in order to counteract, to put it bluntly, the complete destruction of people, nature and the planet with a peaceful perspective.

In doing so, the focus must be on something that has been lost: confidence-building at all levels.

The aim is to find common solutions based on the interests of the various sides. Hardly anyone has formulated this more clearly than Egon Bahr: "International politics is never about democracy or human rights. It is about the interests of states. Remember that, no matter what you are told in history lessons.

The interests of all sides – not just your own – must be regarded as legitimate and worthy of discussion, and compromises must be considered politically sensible and necessary. Trust also means respecting the other side and recognising that they too are seeking solutions. Internationally, mutual security interests must be recognised, and dialogue, discussion and reliability are the key instruments. This also includes a social climate in which the projection of enemy stereotypes is ruled out, stereotypes are avoided and deliberately created fake news plays no role, and double standards or even fraud should be ruled out. Sincerity and truthfulness, including personal integrity, are important for creating a climate of trust.

### **Trust-building has various political and social levels and actors**

- At the level of 'high' national and international politics
- At the level of political institutions such as parliaments
- At the level of social organisations such as trade unions and churches
- At the level of civil society, e.g. peace movements
- Personal, individual contacts between people
- Trust-building in the military sphere. This could be linked to the concept of 'confidence-building defence'. The idea of rearming with an emphasis on defensive protection with the prospect of extensive disarmament was

also at the heart of Gorbachev's military reform and contributed significantly to overcoming the Cold War

These levels can overlap but also complement each other. However, entire levels may also be omitted, e.g. due to sanctions.

However, it is also necessary for society to put pressure on governments that resist processes of dialogue. This is a necessity for the peace movement's activities.

## **Steps to build trust**

So what can and should be done now in a situation of almost total confrontation in Europe?

- Maintaining and expanding dialogue with Russia at the level of civil society, with a focus on science and culture
- Reviving scientific contacts with Russia. Breaking off these relations in an institution committed to international cooperation was irresponsible; Einstein would be turning in his grave. The same applies to trade unions and churches.
- Expanding personal contacts. Many people, especially in eastern Germany, have such contacts and maintain them. Even now, people can go on holiday to Kaliningrad, Lake Baikal or Kamchatka. Reintroducing direct flights would be a step towards reviving contacts.
- Reviving initial – courageous – non-public contacts at the political level. Even controversial discussions can build trust. Contact between parliamentarians should follow soon.
- Economic contacts with the Soviet Union opened doors to political contacts in the 1960s. The almost complete breakdown of economic cooperation is damaging to both sides and should lead to initial new steps towards cooperation. The need for cheap energy cries out for cooperation, or do we want to be dependent forever on dirty fracking gas and Mr Trump's tariffs? The European companies still operating in Russia can certainly open doors. Sanctions that harm one side more than the other should be lifted, not only because they violate international law, but also because they are useless and even harmful. New contacts for the modernisation of Russia and the reopening of economic relations (over 7,000 German companies in Russia by 2022) – raw materials in exchange for technology – remain on the agenda.
- Economic warfare that violates international law, especially sanctions that cause more damage to one's own country, is fundamentally unacceptable and destructive for any future partnership. Only the UN Security Council can impose economic sanctions that are binding under international law; all other sanctions are political arbitrariness and therefore contrary to international law.

- Those who believe in the strength of democracy and arguments are not afraid of discussion: media exchange, public discussions with 'the other side' and the most comprehensive media presence on all sides lead to understanding and reflection.
- It is certainly also necessary to revive town twinning schemes, which have been a solid building block for cooperative relations for decades.
- Ecological contacts at the bilateral and international level will become more important than they have been in the past 70 years. These are imperative in view of the global dimension of man-made climate change, and even more so in view of Trump's destructive policies.
- A rational debate about Russia's politics and leadership, which is historically informed, overcomes enemy stereotypes and demonisation, and analyses developments based on facts with the aim of identifying common ground and initiating discourse processes for controversial points of view, is necessary.

These first necessary steps should be accompanied by an 'action of hope': a meeting of all (!!) CSCE heads of government on the 50th anniversary in Helsinki. This meeting could open the way to greater understanding, and the advocacy and work for this 'summit of hope' could put the idea of cooperative security back on the political agenda. This is a goal worth working for.

## **Arms control and disarmament**

Agreements on arms control and disarmament are an indispensable component of a new policy of détente. It is a central task of the peace movement and a revitalised peace research community to initiate this debate at an early stage and feed it into the political discourse.

This includes, among other things really important for the Baltic Sea

- The revitalisation of arms control agreements, no foreign troops
- A ban on the deployment of medium-range weapons
- Demilitarised zones and the withdrawal of offensive weapons, closing of foreign military basis, No NATO headquarters, back to 2 plus 4
- Nuclear-free zones and states
- Contractual agreements on cyber security and AI
- A freeze on arms build-up

Ultimately, the goal is comprehensive disarmament agreements that drastically reduce arms spending in favour of social development and solving global challenges.

Ending the war in Ukraine through negotiations, a ceasefire and a peace agreement that excludes Ukraine's membership of NATO and includes peace and security guarantees for all parties involved is essential for progress towards common security. A process of peace, reconciliation and reconstruction

with and for all those involved in the conflict is an international but also a European peace challenge.

Europe is part of a rapidly changing world, and despite Western confrontation policies, many parts of the world, including the US/Russia, Japan/China/South Korea and India/China, are moving towards a policy of détente (despite all the contradictions). This will not leave Europe unscathed and will have a positive influence on a new attempt at détente. Strengthening changes in the balance of power and a tendency towards greater cooperation in crucial parts of the world will not bypass Europe.

The reverse is also true: the European peace order of the future will be a Eurasian one, or at least essential elements of peace will also be oriented towards Eurasia.

### **Nothing without a peace movement**

Nothing on this recognisably rocky and thorny path will happen without the international and national civil society, especially without the peace movement. It is the inspiration, the driving force, the avant-garde, but also the critical companion on the path to détente, peace and disarmament. Its actions and activities are indispensable in preventing the development of a looming catastrophe of a major war and opening the door to the vision of a just and peaceful world.