



schwelle Foundation
Contributions to Peace

PEACE POLICY CHALLENGES

NONVIOLENCE IN TIMES OF STRIFE AND WAR

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PEACE POLICY CHALLENGES NONVIOLENCE IN TIMES OF STRIFE AND WAR

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF SCHWELLE FOUNDATION

The Russian government's war against Ukraine has occupied the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees of the Bremen Peace Foundation «die schwelle» in various ways since the beginning of 2022. It was very helpful that we were able to deal openly with different attitudes and positions, with ambiguity and dilemmas in the face of the peace policy challenge that this – and so many other – wars pose for us.

In August 2023, we recorded the result of our reflections in the text «Nonviolence in times of strife and war». Hamas' brutal attack on Israel and the Israeli government's subsequent war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip challenged us once again to consider our stance on non-violence. The text was therefore written against the backdrop of the war against Ukraine, but is not limited to this.

LEVEL 1: VALUES AND ATTITUDES

- the *schwelle* strives for non-violence in all conflicts.
- The right to sovereignty and self-determination includes the right to self-defence by military means in the event of an attack (see Article 51 of the UN Charter).
- The right to self-defence with weapons does not contradict a peace ethic committed to non-violence, but is its exception.
- The exceptional case does not override the principle of non-violence. Rather, it must be subject to clear ethical conditions for all parties involved in acts of war in self-defence. E.g. proportionality: The extent of the loss of human life and destruction must be in a justifiable proportion to the desired goal of restoring sovereignty and self-determination.
- In the face of state coercion, the individual's right to non-violence, for example through conscientious objection or flight, must be recognised and supported.
- Even in the event of war, peace ethics principles must be enforced through negotiations at all levels in order to break through the supposed lack of alternatives to arms deliveries.
- The right to self-determination and the justified security needs and interests of all (!) parties involved must be recognised and taken into account in order to achieve common security.



The meetings of the Board of Trustees are a place of intensive work and passionate discussions. The text published here is the result of many rounds of discussion.

LEVEL 2: ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

- It is the aim of the *schwelle* to deal with conflicts from a variety of perspectives in order to promote peace and to contribute to their analysis and discussion in public. One-sided, unreflected partisanship contradicts this interest in opening up spaces for discussion and critically analysing the actions of all warring parties (e.g. war crimes, sabotage).
- In academic and cultural exchange, voices from other countries can lead out of narrow perspectives: historical, cultural and future-oriented. *schwelle* incorporates the international perspectives of its project partners. It resists limiting itself to emotionally charged issues (such as arms deliveries) and focuses on the prospects of a lasting peace order.
- Findings from peace research and concepts of international cooperation enable in-depth analyses of the causes of conflicts and a differentiation of power structures based on political interests. *schwelle* reflects these findings from research and contributes to their dissemination in discussions, conferences and panel events.

LEVEL 3: PRACTICAL SUPPORT

- *schwelle* is committed to the protection of refugees and opposes the marginalisation and hostility of people and groups, as well as the demonisation or heroisation of one side or the other.
- It supports the opening of (cultural) spaces for hostile groups and promotes their exchange, including in intercultural dialogue. It stands in solidarity with creative artists in their autonomy and independence from war propaganda.
- *schwelle* supports conscientious objectors and deserters and connects with networks that are active in this area. It brings the issue of asylum for people from war zones who have avoided military service by fleeing to the attention of politicians and the public.
- *schwelle* supports people who campaign against war and violence and in favour of human rights. Special attention is paid to people who are threatened in authoritarian regimes because of their commitment.

LEVEL 4: POLITICAL-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

- In order to achieve its peace policy goals, the *schwelle* exchanges information with other organisations and initiatives and participates in networks and campaigns.
- It communicates its peace policy stance, values and current reflections in its media (annual report, flyer, newsletter, website) and organises events for this purpose.
- It cooperates with organisations whose goals and working methods are in line with its own principles of international understanding and solidarity with the disadvantaged. This excludes cooperation if a simplified scheme of good and evil is taken as a basis, if the dignity and human rights of all those involved in a conflict are not respected, or if hatred or nationalism dominate the discourse.

The *schwelle* Foundation is a member of the Rethinking Security network. In November 2023, the network published a new impulse paper: «Rethinking security strategies: stopping and overcoming violence! In Israel and Palestine. In the Ukraine. Globally.»

This paper is also being discussed intensively in the *schwelle*.

www.sicherheitneudenken.de



CONCRETE REALISATIONS

Those who want peace, make peace – non-violence as a contribution of civil society to peace

On 21 September 2023, the *schwelle* Foundation held an event at Bremen City Hall to mark the UN World Day of Peace. 150 people took part and discussed the need to actively shape peace and initiate encounters at eye level.

With: Bremen's Mayor Dr Andreas Bovenschulte, peace researcher Prof. Dr Hanne-Magret Birckenbach, Rana Salman from Combatants for Peace in Palestine, Otto Raffai from RAND in Croatia and Mirka Hurter from Peace for Future.

Peace Logic Perspectives in Times of War

From April to June 2024, the *schwelle* Foundation organised a well-attended series of events with six discussion rooms::

- **Jasper von Legat and Andreas Hamburg** with a Protestant perspective
- **Prof. Dr Olaf Müller** with a philosophical perspective
- **Dr Christine Schweitzer** with a pacifist perspective
- **Franz Nadler** with an antimilitarist perspective
- **Prof. Dr Fernando Enns** with a peace church perspective
- **Prof. Dr Eva Senghaas-Knobloch** with a peace research perspective

PLANNED REALISATIONS

Is peace possible in Israel and Palestine?

Study day on 26 October 2024 with Nirit Sommerfeld

Becoming fit for peace – facing multiple crises

Lecture on 15 November 2024 at 6 pm with Ralf Becker from «Rethinking security»

Study day on 16 November 2024 from 10 a.m. - 5.30 p.m. with workshops, inputs and discussions on

- Middle East with Anette Klasing
- Ukraine with Prof Dr Klaus Schlicht
- Climate crisis with Konstantin Leimig

Venue: Martinsclub | Buntentorsteinweg 24/26 | Bremen

Peace Logic Perspectives in Times of War

Continuation of the event series in spring 2025

More information at

www.dieschwelle.de/en

