

Security in Europe can only be a common security of all states

For the longest time, Europeans believed that wars and disasters only happened in other parts of the world. Now we are seeing that we cannot hide behind a wall against climate change and the threat of war.

We see how the policies of the major powers are pulling us ever closer to a major war, as if drawn by a magnet. Putting a stop to this disastrous development is therefore becoming the focus of left-wing politics. At its party conference in December 2022 and in its election manifesto, the EL condemned Russia's military aggression against Ukraine as a crime under international humanitarian law and called for a ceasefire, a return to the negotiating table and the withdrawal of Russian troops.

However, there are different views on the causes of war on the left. This formula is therefore a political compromise. But on the other hand, it is a clear and principled statement that, despite all our differences, we agree that the killing must stop. And now!

Two principles clash in the debate: militarism and anti-militarism. I would like to illustrate this. In its first session on 17 July, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on further support for Ukraine by a large majority. It calls on the EU Member States to do everything in their power to ensure Ukraine's military victory and to spend at least 0.25 per cent of their gross domestic product on this.

The EU Parliament has no competence in foreign policy. This resolution, which was launched by the European People's Party, the Social Democrats, the Renew Group and the Greens, was therefore primarily about expressing support for Ursula von der Leyen's policy.

To be clear: Ukraine has the right to self-defense and states have the right to support it in this. Nevertheless, everything about this resolution is wrong, above all because of what it does not say, what it excludes as a goal, even as a possibility, namely an end to the war through political and diplomatic means and an initiative by the European Union in this direction. This exclusion of a political solution reveals a frightening militaristic logic of fighting the war to its bitter end, although this is not foreseeable.

And this militaristic logic is unacceptable from a left-wing point of view.

The resolution further welcomes that Ukraine supposedly is on an irreversible path to NATO membership. But what justifies the European Parliament coming to such a conclusion? There are still member states in the EU that do not belong to NATO.

Moreover, we know that Ukraine's NATO membership is a major obstacle to a peaceful solution. Certainly, the people of Ukraine have a right to national sovereignty and security. However, the reasonable alternative to NATO membership would be an international security guarantee by the UN or the major powers, as envisaged in the peace plans of the various parties, including the Vatican. But here too, the European Parliament is choosing the path of military confrontation rather than political détente.

And finally, the resolution welcomes the opening of EU accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova as a geostrategic opportunity.

It is true that EU enlargement could play a positive role on the road to peace if it is orientated towards pan-European ecological, economic and social necessities. But what does geostrategic mean in this context? Against whom is this geostrategy directed? The EU's enlargement policy is

at a crossroads. It can either be a peace project that unites peoples, or it can be an instrument of European confrontation and thus lead to further civil wars and wars. And it is once again militaristic logic that is steering the EU in the wrong direction.

The militarists believe that they represent the majority opinion of EU citizens. But this is not true. Opinion polls, such as the one recently published by the European Council of Foreign Relations, show that the majority is in favor of an end to the war and in favor of negotiations.

Austria, as you know, is still a neutral country. And allow me to make a remark on the term "buffer state" which was used this morning. I can tell you that Austria has been a "buffer state" when it gained its independence in 1955, namely a state located between heavily armed military blocs. And this existence of a neutral buffer state did not change anything about Austria's national independence, it did not prevent us from building up a fantastic capitalism, did not even prevent us from nurturing a neo-Nazi party for decades. The truth is, being a buffer state allowed Austria to play a positive role in solving international problems and facilitating détente during the cold war.

As usual when all concepts are recycled they are presented as if they were completely new findings. Today conservatives, social democrats, liberals as well as the Greens call for a new discourse on European security. But if you listen you find out that the new discourse is the old one about arming NATO.

We need to demystify the debate about NATO. The usual and simplified question is, are you for or against NATO? I am against NATO. I have seen what NATO has done to the Greek, Turkish and Cypriot peoples. However, the current discussion is not about what NATO has done in the past, it is about what NATO does today and what it intends to do in the future.

We are against further increases in arms spending, as NATO has decided, because already today the USA and its allies are spending more on armaments than the rest of the world put together. This has led to huge profits for the arms industry, but not to greater security.

We are against the stationing of medium-range missiles in Germany, not because it is the USA that is deploying them. We are against them because they can lead to pre-emptive strikes and make our cities the target of counter or pre-emptive strikes, bringing Europe one step closer to war.

The fundamental question is whether we believe that security can be achieved by highly armed armies threatening each other with mutual annihilation.

We do not have too few weapons in Europe, but too many. The arms race that will be triggered by the deployment of new medium-range weapons will further undermine military security on our continent.

To talk seriously about military security in Europe requires recognizing that it cannot be achieved against each other, but only together as a common security.

The European peoples will therefore only be able to overcome heteronomy in security policy, i.e. achieve strategic autonomy, if their security policy is based on a concept of peace in Europe.

In its manifesto, the EL calls for the principle of non-violent resolution of international conflicts to be enshrined in the EU treaties. It calls for the EU to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW) and to work towards making Europe a continent free of nuclear weapons.

This also includes recognizing neutrality and non-alignment as positive elements of a new European security order.

The war in Ukraine harbors the immense danger of an uncontrolled escalation into a major European war. It must therefore be ended by political and diplomatic means. All the factors of European security policy are concentrated in this war. If we succeeded in breaking through the militaristic logic and replacing it with a peace policy logic, this could open the door to a new European security order.

The question of how peace can be preserved in Europe is not new. A non-militaristic security policy can be based on well-developed concepts. I need only mention the Nobel Prize winner Alva Myrdal and the recently deceased Johan Galtung, but above all the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, which will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year.

It is up to us to recall this non-military anti-militarist tradition and to fill it with new life.