

Against war. Reflections on the future

Summary

Peace is built through peace, by eliminating war from human history. Being in favour of peace is fundamental but not sufficient. Everyone says they are in favour of peace, but not everyone is against war. Above all, one must be against war.

Why must we be against war? We must abandon the belief that if we want peace we must prepare for war, which has always been invented and imposed by the ruling powers to justify and maintain their power and domination. War is destruction, death and hatred.

There is no such thing as a 'just war' in the name of God, nation, civilisation or security. Behind the invocation of these names, there is above all the murderous logic of domination and the economic interests of power and wealth of the strongest. War is a collective crime.

There is not even a 'defensive war'. War always involves various culprits, mistakes, complicity, provocation... as World War II and, today, the war between the US/NATO/EU and Russia in Ukraine have abundantly demonstrated. The current genocide of the Palestinians by the State of Israel is the extreme form of the desire to destroy the other as an instrument of peace, which is absurd.

How can war be eliminated? With audacity. Firstly, the patenting of life and knowledge (living organisms and the artificial world, including AI) on a private, for-profit basis, which has removed the politics of life from the public domain. Secondly, the financialisation of life, especially nature, which has led to the subjugation of public political powers to independent, free and predatory finance, even in the areas of public goods and services essential to life.

It is an illusion to think that it is possible to build peace without abolishing patents for private appropriation for profit; without banning arms trade licences; without maintaining tax havens; without eliminating the independence of financial markets; and without regulating the great planetary oligarchies at permanent war for domination. Citizens must free themselves from this illusion.

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Four reflections with great respect for the sincere and courageous strength of the civic commitment expressed by the thousands and thousands of people who will take part in the 'Third World March for Peace and Non-Violence', which will set off from San José in Costa Rica on 2 October 2024 and return there on 5 January 2025, after having circumnavigated the globe.

First thought. We must never stop campaigning for peace and non-violence, insisting on the concept/objective of being 'Against war'. In the present conditions, it is imperative that we never forget to recall that mobilisations for peace, from the local to the global level, must above all be against war. The specific and priority focus on 'against war' is necessary to leave no room for the credibility (ethical and political) of the still predominant idea of war as a natural and inevitable fact.

Everyone says they are in favour of peace, but not everyone, even outside the dominant social groups, is against war. Take the case of the progressive forces. Peace unites them, war divides them into opposing blocs: the pacifists, the warmongers and the '*it depends*'. The main narrative we need to combat is that of the instrumentalisation of war in the service of peace. Hence the theses on the legitimisation of the 'just war' and above all the 'defensive war'. The United States has been at war for over a hundred years, not to attack, it says, but to defend (its) free world, (its) liberal society, (its) free economy everywhere, whose models it considers to be the best. It is not for nothing that the preferred and imposed thesis of the dominant powers of all times is '*if you want peace, prepare for war*'. A principle applied unreservedly by all states. Just think of the flourishing, legalised international arms trade. Hence also the fact that the ministry formerly known as the Ministry of War has almost everywhere become the Ministry of Defence.

The concept of defensive war deserves to be modified

This concept, which appears to be incontrovertibly obvious, perpetuates in the popular imagination the false, or at least very ambiguous, idea of the legitimacy of ever more powerful weapons as a factor of 'deterrence' (see nuclear weapons). But it also transforms war into an instrument of peace, thereby legitimising the absurd.

The same logic of legitimising 'defensive war' is used by Netanyahu's government in Israel to continue the genocide of the Palestinians: the State of Israel 'justifies' genocide as 'self-defence' in response to Hamas's armed attack on Israel in October 2023. But this is a mystifying lie. The idea and the will to commit genocide do not date from October 2023. They have been an official part of the agenda of the leaders of the State of Israel, particularly the Zionists, since its creation in 1948. They have been at the root of the

conquest and colonisation, by force of arms, of territories inhabited by the Palestinian and, in general, Arab population, and have been denounced as illegal by UN resolutions on several occasions. Moreover, Israel's argument has been forcefully and rightly rejected by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

It is true that if someone attacks another person with a knife or at gunpoint, that person has not only the right but also the vital necessity to defend himself. The written rule on the subject also specifies that no-one can 'take the law into their own hands'. Furthermore, it is inevitable that in a world founded on the principle 'if you want peace, prepare for war', there should be treaties governing war, the arms trade and common military security agreements between countries/allies based on the obligation for each Member State to intervene militarily 'in defence' of another Member State attacked by a third State. However, thanks to alliance treaties signed on every continent, the United States has given itself the legitimacy to intervene anywhere in the world 'in defence of'.

On the other hand, in a situation inspired by an effective and sincere quest for peace, international treaties of military alliance must be declared illegal and inadmissible. They must be replaced by institutions with strong and binding political and legal means to prevent, impede and abolish the use of weapons. We need a new, strengthened UN, without the current Security Council. Mobilisation against war must declare illegitimate those states that refuse to sign or respect treaties banning bacteriological weapons, nuclear weapons and the arms trade. In this spirit of justice, we must denounce those States that increase their military spending and decide to exclude it from the calculation of the public deficit, while maintaining in the calculation so-called social public spending (which is constantly falling in relation to needs). This is yet another example of the absurdity of the choice made by the dominant powers in favour of defensive war.

Hence the second thought: the mobilisation against war must clearly be conducted with the aim of making people understand the absolute uselessness of war and, in this day and age, the non-repairability of the destruction caused by war, particularly in the area of life. This is why the fight 'against war' must have two interdependent priority objectives, which today are trampled underfoot or abandoned: the realisation of the universal right to life for all and of life; the safeguarding and promotion of the world's common goods, both tangible and intangible, which are essential to life.

Why this proposal? We must not forget to point out that war destroys life and, therefore, humanity's ability to live together on a planetary scale. What's more, in this age of awareness of the Anthropocene and of the globalisation of living conditions on earth and their security, we must insist strongly on the evidence that war is incapable, by definition, of producing even a small crumb of justice. The logical principle is, as the genocide of the Palestinians demonstrates with extreme clarity, *'my security of existence and survival*

means your disappearance’.

The reconstruction of the world after the Second World War was possible because the ruling classes of the time based their reconstruction on the affirmation of principles, rights and rules inspired by a vision of life expressed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As we know, the Declaration was rightly criticised for being largely influenced by a Western, anthropocentric and patriarchal approach to society and life. This approach has been partially modified, corrected or even abandoned thanks, among other things, to the adoption within the UN framework of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Self-Determination and Self-Government, and the Declaration on Biodiversity. The fact remains that all these Declarations, Covenants, Conventions and Treaties have failed to prevent the worst violations to date. The time has come to redefine the broad guidelines for the common future that we must build in the decades to come, based on cooperation and harmony, and making the most of the gains achieved through citizens’ struggles.

One of the major achievements that deserves to be maintained and strengthened is the principle affirmed by the international community for the first time, that in order to live together on a planetary scale, it is essential and unavoidable to ensure and permanently strengthen two societal pillars. First pillar: the principle of the universality of the right to life for all the inhabitants and peoples of the Earth without distinction or exclusion. Hence the affirmation of the common and shared integral responsibility of peoples, of the rule of law on a planetary scale to safeguard and promote the realisation of these rights. The second pillar is the recognition of the principle of the existence of global public goods essential to the lives of all the Earth’s inhabitants, which ‘national’ public authorities are obliged to take care of, promote and enhance within a framework of close global cooperation and solidarity.

Until the 1980s, these two pillars enabled the world system to function and develop, despite its limitations, shortcomings and contradictions, and numerous local wars (linked to the process of demolishing the European colonial empires), without a third world war. Indeed, the world has seen a reduction in the rate of growth of inequality between rich and poor countries, which has helped to reduce the impact of the forces that generate structural conflicts and, consequently, destructive wars.

Since the end of the 1980s, the world system has seen its contradictions, shortcomings and weaknesses explode as a result of the processes of multinationalisation and globalisation of the economy and finance in accordance with the principles, objectives and violent mechanisms of the capitalist market economy. We are referring to the process of commodification and artificialisation of all forms of life; to the liberalisation and

deregulation of markets and all economic activities (less and less State and more and more market); to the privatisation of all goods and services essential to life through, in particular, the private patenting of living organisms for profit (examples: seeds, GMOs, medicines.), and technological innovation (new materials, new energies, computers, robotics and, today, Artificial Intelligence). All this has been achieved with the assent and political and financial support of the public authorities and a large proportion of the 'progressive' social forces.

Ownership and control over the use of resources fundamental to the economy have ceased to be the responsibility and obligation of the public authorities. They have come under the domination and power of the private subjects (companies, institutions, markets, stock exchanges) of the capitalist economy. As we know, the ultimate goal of the capitalist system is not the guarantee/security of the rights to and of life, nor the preservation of the good ecological state of the Earth, the common home. The aim is to increase the financial value of capital and the most powerful *stakeholders*. What's more, the system's main modus operandi is not cooperation or solidarity, but predation, oligopolistic competition and the competitiveness of all against all. The other has become the enemy and the market has been transformed into an arena where the strongest gladiators acquire the right to life granted by the emperor (finance) after having eliminated the others.

It is easy to see how, in these conditions, the factors of violence and permanent structural war have taken over. Inequalities have reached unacceptable levels. The war of the rich against the poor has never been so openly waged. And, last but not least, we have witnessed the resurgence of the most integral form of the destruction of life and humanity, namely deliberate mass genocide (*which will be the subject of our final reflection*).

Third thought. Since mobilisation against war requires struggles for the planetary reconstruction of the two pillars, mobilisation must focus on two objectives: the abolition of patents for private and lucrative purposes; and the outlawing of predatory finance.

The pursuit of these two objectives is not easy, because private patents and predatory finance are violently and unscrupulously defended by all the dominant groups, including above all the world that revolves around the supremacy and economic-financial and technological-military domination of the United States (and the EU).

Today, in conditions marked by a profound crisis in the Earth's life-support system, it is necessary to take global action to '*disarm the technology of the conquest of life*' (precisely, *patents*) and, at the same time, to '*outlaw predatory finance*' (*which translates into the transformation of all forms of life into financial assets*).

Disarming the technology of conquest obviously means abolishing patents for the private, profit-making appropriation of living organisms and artificial intelligence, and banning the

arms trade. It is no longer just a question of the right or wrong use of knowledge and technology, which would be *neutral* by nature. Today, knowledge and technology are no longer essentially forces external to human beings, but a construct of human societies that define their aims and concrete objectives.

Outlawing predatory finance means banning tax havens and tax evasion, introducing a system of global taxation to ensure global justice, and abolishing the independence of the stock exchanges, which have become purely private global companies beyond the control of public authorities.

It is an illusion to think that it is possible to build peace and a non-violent society without abolishing patents for the private appropriation and predation of life; without banning arms trading licences; with the maintenance of tax havens; without eliminating the independence of the financial markets and without regulating the great planetary oligarchies in permanent war for domination.

It is also illusory to think that it is possible to achieve the above objectives in a few years and through the solitary and disorganised action of this or that 'big' civil society organisation, in the absence of strong strategic cooperation and effective solidarity between the various realities of resistance and opposition to the current world.

My fourth and final point. Today, 80 years after the genocide of the Jews by Nazi Germany, humanity is being plundered and prey to the absurd by the genocide of the Palestinians by the State of Israel, not to mention the other exterminations of populations in the four corners of the world, particularly in Africa and Asia. The genocide of the Palestinians is the most advanced form, today, of the inadmissibility and absurdity of the so-called just and defensive war.

It must be clearly stated that the genocide of the Palestinians is not a war as such. It is a deliberate, unilateral destructive action against life, operating on a different dimension of the human condition from that 'dictated' by war and displayed as 'security for survival'! Just as the genocide of the Jews was not dictated by a problem of 'security' for the Germans, but by a profoundly unequal, violent, excluding and repressive racist vision of the peoples of humanity, so the genocide of the Palestinians is the brutal expression of absolute and dogmatic forms (in this case of racist religious origin) of inequality and exclusion of others.

The futures of peace that are at stake in the current context embrace multiple conditions and obey multiple logics, in all fields, especially concerning conceptions of life, of the human being, of the global community of life on Earth.

Putting an immediate stop to genocide, as rightly ordered by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, is not essentially a question of international law. It is above all a question of planetary human and ethical responsibility incumbent on all the subjects of Humanity, including the world's social, cultural and moral communities. The members and authorities of these communities must go beyond appeals for peace and petitions to the political authorities of states and the powerful.

In the face of war, the predominant practice is to believe that you can be on one side or the other. In our opinion, we must always take a stand 'against war' and act to create the necessary and indispensable conditions for peace. Faced with the genocide of the Palestinians today, we can only be against it without any reductionist limits. *Genocide is the complete negation of life and justice. The genocide of the Palestinians is also the genocide of humanity.* By not stopping it, we are giving the genocidal state the more than symbolic right to massacre humanity and justice.

And a future without justice will always be a future without peace, an anti-human future. By the way, the founding fathers of the Italian Republic did well to establish Article 11 of the Constitution, which stipulates that 'Italy repudiates war'.

Conclusion

Even the current empires of conquering technology (Musk-style) and the 'new lords' of the world's industrial and financial conglomerates will collapse. The important thing is not to wait for this to happen on its own. It's not Microsoft, Google, Meta, Amazon, Black Rock, Vanguard, Crédit Agricole, BNP, Crédit Suisse, Walmart, BASF, Bayer, Syngenta, Pfizer, Coca-Cola, Exxon, Nestlé, Danone. Dow Chemicals, China Petroleum, who will be able to prevent and stop the 'Third World War'. Not to mention X, Tesla, Space X and their bosses, the stock exchanges of London, New York, Chicago, Shanghai or Tokyo,...the European Commission, the World Bank and the IMF, the American government, the governments of the NATO member states, the government of the Russian Federation, the independent European Central Bank.

It is up to the citizens in revolt (in particular women, peasants, indigenous peoples, the 4 billion people without basic medical cover or access to clean drinking water, the homeless, the millions of migrants looking for a host country, the workers, etc.) to impose a halt, all together. In this respect, the world's moral authorities, for example from the world of religious and ethical beliefs, have a major role to play not only in terms of their power to influence, but also in terms of their decision-making power. Many solutions can be clearly and explicitly supported by them.

To promote the necessary and indispensable conditions for building peace, here are some

examples, in addition to or to reinforce the solutions already formulated in the preceding pages, of solutions to be applied in the field of life, its safeguard, promotion/protection, rights and common goods:

- Reject the private, for-profit patenting of living organisms and of Artificial Intelligence, because such patenting grants decision-making power over life to private parties motivated essentially by the lure of profit and power. We need to restore collective responsibility for life to institutions and common democratic public bodies from the local to the global level.
- Establish a World Citizens Security Council for the Global Commons essential to life for all, in particular water for life, food and health, abandoning the privatisation and predatory financialisation of these three key goods and services.
- In a context inspired by the effective and sincere search for peace, the international treaties of so-called 'defensive' military alliances must be declared illegal and inadmissible. They must be replaced by global institutions with strong and binding political and legal means to prevent, impede and abolish the use of weapons. The UN Security Council is a model to be abolished.
- Create a World Economic Council for Cooperation and Solidarity-based and Sustainable Trade to replace the World Trade Organisation, which requires all goods, services and relationships between humans and between humans and nature to be treated as commodities and financial assets. The grabbing of the planet's land and water must be declared illegal.
- Ban all agricultural, industrial and tertiary use of chemical substances that poison the life of the Earth and lead to the degradation and loss of the planet's biodiversity and biocapacity.
- Abolish tax havens, symbols of the legalisation of the theft of collective wealth and its ethical acceptance by our societies, and ban tax evasion.
- Restore the public nature and functions of money and currencies. The privatisation of money and global finance is one of the most powerful instruments, along with technology, for generating conflict and wars for power and domination. Local, national and global authorities must regain joint control of finance. There is an urgent need to drastically reduce the power of domination over savings and investments, far greater than that of States, acquired by the big banks, investment funds and stock markets. We need to organise a global citizens' convention on banks, investment funds and stock markets to draw up a global plan for financial restructuring, security and peace.

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The 'anti-war' struggle is the struggle of the just, it is the ethical struggle for life. It's a reaffirmation of the primacy of the spiritual and of the fight to re-irrigate the Earth, to green the deserts, to give oxygen back to the oceans, to practise fraternity, to live friendship, in a word, to give joy and love back to life.

Brussels, 26 August 2024.

List of first signatories

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(deadline for first signatories: 25 August 2024)