

Peace and Violence



"Bread in times of peace is better than cake in times of war."

Slovak proverb

What is the relationship between peace and human rights? Is peace a human right?

The massive violations of human rights during world war II and the desire and need for peace were at the origin of the Council of Europe.

A culture of human rights is a pre-condition to achieve a state of peace in any country of the world. The right to peace belongs to the third generation of human rights or so-called solidarity rights.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) is the leading institution that has been active in promoting this right. Indeed, in 1994, Federico Mayor, the then Director-General of Unesco, launched an international appeal for the establishment of a right to peace. In 1997, a proposal for a declaration presenting peace as a human right was submitted to the Unesco General Conference. The proposal was rejected, but the right to peace is still on the United Nations agenda. The Commission on Human Rights in early 2001 adopted a Resolution on the Promotion of the Right of Peoples to Peace.



Do you think there should be a specific right to peace, or is it part of existing human rights already?

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Then what is peace?

The concept of peace has an important cultural dimension. Traditionally in oriental cultures, peace has to do more with inner peace (peace in our minds or hearts) while in the western world, peace is understood to be outside the individuals (absence of war or violent conflict). For example, in India the word peace is "shanti" and implies a perfect order of the mind or peace of mind. Gandhi based his philosophy and strategy on a concept called Ahimsa, which means broadly to refrain from anything at all harmful. He said, "literally speaking, Ahimsa means non-violence. But to me it has a much higher, an infinitely higher meaning. It means that you may not offend anybody; you may not harbour uncharitable thoughts, even in connection

with those who you consider your enemies. To one who follows this doctrine, there are no enemies". In the Maya tradition, peace refers to the concept of welfare; it is linked to the idea of a perfect balance between the different areas of our lives.

There are many definitions of peace. One of them that has had a strong influence is the distinction that has been made between positive and negative peace by Johan Galtung, an internationally renowned Norwegian scholar and researcher in this field.

Negative peace means that there is no war, no violent conflict between states or within states such as the wars in the Balkans.

On the other hand, *positive peace* means no war or violent conflict combined with a situation where there is equity, justice and development.

We could summarise these two concepts the following way:

no war = negative peace

no war + social justice/development = positive peace

A high level of social justice and a minimum level of violence therefore characterise positive peace.

While some people think that all the problems have been fixed when a war has stopped, in reality a great deal of work remains to be done, namely, to rebuild the country and develop structures that will lead to more social justice and development for all the people living in the countries affected.

We can therefore say that peace is *not only* a matter of disarmament but it *also* has to do with the way people live.



Who should be responsible for implementing strategies preventing violence of any kind in your own community?

Peace Conference

In May 1999, 10000 peace activists of all ages met in The Hague in the Netherlands in pursuit of new strategies for a peaceful twenty-first century. Participants in the historic Hague Appeal conference included 1 500 young people from one hundred different countries. At the end of the conference, the Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century was presented to the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan. It is now an official United Nations document, with a 50-point plan for global action by governments and civil society.

But can we talk about peace without speaking of violence?

There are many definitions of violence, one of which is that violence is the use of strength - overt or hidden - with the objective of obtaining from an individual or a group something they do not want to consent to freely.

There are different kinds of violence. We can distinguish between direct and indirect (or structural) violence:

- *Direct violence* = physical violence
- *Indirect or structural violence* = poverty, exploitation, social injustice, no democracy, etc.

Therefore, there is peace when there is no direct *and* no indirect violence.

What is the cost of violence?

In a situation of non-peace, the parties involved in the conflict see their economic and social rights being violated (economy of the country disrupted, black market, loss of jobs or homes, etc.) as well

Key date

The third Tuesday of
September each year
International Day of Peace

as their civil and political rights (the right to life is threatened, as well as the right not to be tortured or the right to physical integrity, etc.). The short- and long-term consequences of a violent conflict in terms of human rights violations are devastating and leave deep scars in societies.

The statistics and information below illustrate the cost of violence in human and monetary terms.

Direct violence:

1. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite the 1995 General Framework Peace Agreements, between 850000 and 1.2 million people are still displaced internally or living as refugees; around 17000 people are still reported as having disappeared.
2. 800000 people died in three months during the 1994 war in Rwanda.
3. The total number of people who died during the first world war was 8538315
4. In the 1990s, civil wars killed 5 million people worldwide.
5. 500 million small arms are in circulation around the world.
6. In the 1990s, wars and internal conflicts forced 50 million people to flee from their homes.
7. 800 deaths a month are due to anti-personnel mines (landmines).
8. In 1995, 53 million people - one out of every 115 people on earth - were uprooted from their homes, either being displaced within their countries or becoming refugees abroad.

Indirect violence:

1. Around 17 million people die every year from lack of medicine.
2. About 24000 people die from the effects of hunger each day. That is about one person every 3.5 seconds.
3. More than 30000 children a day die from mainly preventable diseases.

Violence in general not only leaves physical scars but also emotional scars on any person that has participated either directly or indirectly in conflict situations such as wars or situations of interpersonal violence such as family violence. These scars can provoke long-term traumas that are not visible in people. They are impossible to estimate in terms of monetary costs but nevertheless have a high human cost.



Do you think that there should be rules limiting the levels of violence in TV programmes?

The International Campaign to
Ban Landmines is co-laureate of
the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.
www.icbl.org


Priorities in Public Spending (as % of GDP) ⁴¹

Country	Public Expenditure in Education 1995-1997	Public Expenditure on Health 1998	Military Expenditure 1999
Angola	6.2 (1985-1987)	5.8	23.5
Costa Rica	5.4	5.2	...
Eritrea	1.8	...	22.9
Ethiopia	4.0	1.7	9.0
Norway	7.7	7.4	2.2
Russian Federation	3.5	2.5 (1990)	3.8
Saudi Arabia	7.5	12.8	13.2
Turkey	2.2	2.2 (1990)	5.0
Ukraine	5.6	3.6	3.1
United Kingdom	5.3	5.9	2.5

The six major military spenders in 2000⁴⁰ (in billions of US Dollars)

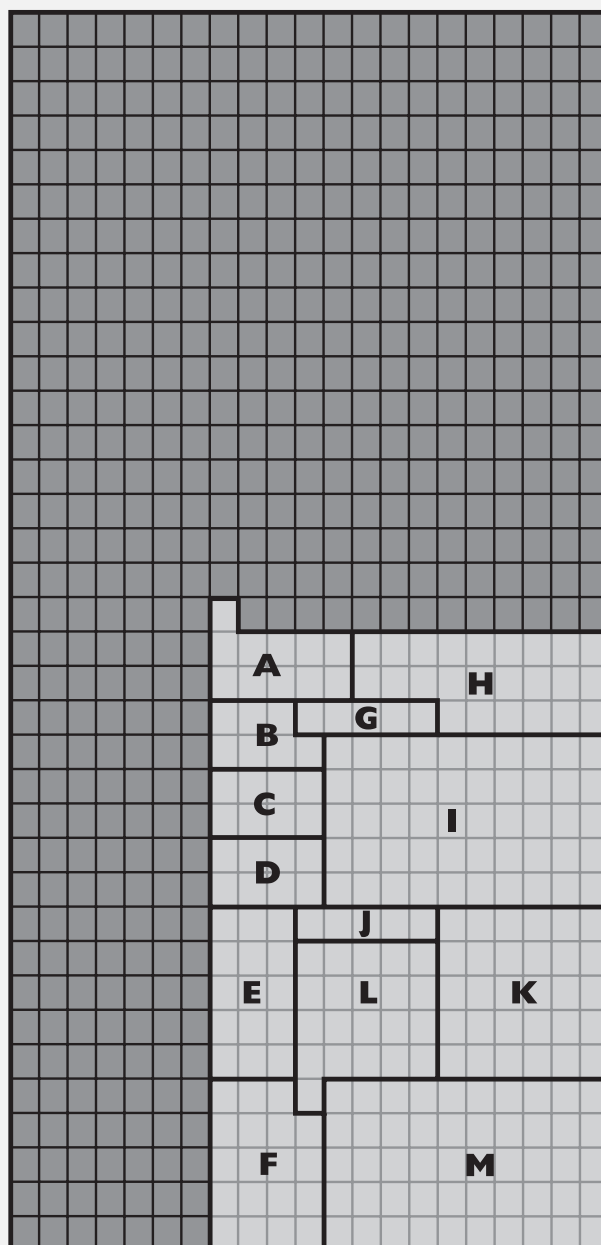
Rank 2000 (1999)	Country	2000	Share of world military expenditure (%)
1 (1)	USA	280.6	37
2 (7)	RUSSIA	43.9	6
3 (3)	FRANCE	40.4	5
4 (2)	JAPAN	37.8	5
5 (5)	UK	36.3	5
6 (4)	GERMANY	33	4

World military spending and its alternatives.⁴²

Total Chart = Total Annual World Military
Expenditure in 2001 (US\$ 756 billion)  = US\$1 billion

Amount Necessary to...

- A) STABILIZE POPULATION**
US\$10.5 billion
- B) STOP DEFORESTATION**
US\$7 billion
- C) PREVENT GLOBAL WARMING**
US\$8 billion
- D) PREVENT ACID RAIN**
US\$8 billion
- E) PROVIDE HEALTH CARE**
US\$15 billion
- F) ELIMINATE STARVATION AND MALNOURISHMENT**
US\$19 billion
- G) STOP OZONE DEPLETION**
US\$5 billion
- H) PREVENT SOIL EROSION**
US\$24 billion
- I) PROVIDE CLEAN SAFE ENERGY**
Renewable Energy: US\$17 billion
Energy Efficiency: US\$33 billion
- J) ELIMINATE ILLITERACY**
US\$5 billion
- K) END DEVELOPING NATIONS' DEBTS**
US\$30 billion
- L) PROVIDE SHELTER**
US\$21 billion
- M) PROVIDE SAFE CLEAN WATER**
US\$58 billion



Key date Is violence natural?

25 November
International Day for the
Elimination of Violence against
Women

Many people are convinced that human beings are naturally violent and that consequently we cannot avoid wars, conflicts and general violence in our lives and our societies. Other specialists in this field claim that we *can* avoid thinking, feeling and acting violently. The Seville Statement on Violence elaborated in 1986 by a group of scholars and scientists from many countries, North and South, East and West, confirms this by stating that:

1. *"It is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors.... Warfare is a solely human phenomenon and does not occur in other animals...."*
2. *There are cultures that have not engaged in war for centuries and there are cultures which have engaged in war frequently at some times and not at others....*
3. *It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behaviour is genetically programmed into our human nature....*
4. *It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a "violent brain"... how we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialised..."*

Most of us are conditioned to react aggressively and violently by our environments. We learn to think, feel and act aggressively and in some cases violently. Wherever we live, we are submitted to a social and cultural pressure that conditions us to read about violence, watch violence, and hear about violence almost constantly. Television programmes, advertisements, newspapers, video games and the movie and music industries contribute largely to this situation. Before reaching adolescence, a child has seen thousands of murders and violent acts just by watching television. Our modern societies, whether consciously or not, make an apology for violence. Violence is seen as being of positive value. In most cultures, saying no to violence and avoiding physical violence or confrontation is perceived as a sign of weakness especially for men, who are put under a lot of pressure by their peers from a very young age.

? Do you agree with the statement that violence is never justified, even against the most violent people?

Bullying is a form of interpersonal violence among young people and illustrates how violence is used as a means to feeling more powerful while damaging others. In a 2001 survey, almost half of the students interviewed from a sample of Spanish secondary school students admitted knowing cases of fellow students who were being intimidated by fellow students.

Apart from bullying, there are many forms of interpersonal violence: alcohol- and drug-related violence, gang violence, forced prostitution, slavery, violence in schools, and violence related to racism are all manifestations of interpersonal violence that affect our lives or the lives of many others. Some of these forms of violence affect young people more specifically - gang violence, school violence and racist violence, for example.

? Do you agree with the belief that a "real man" should not be afraid of violence?

Sexual abuse and sexual violence against children or women (or even men), are widespread phenomena in our societies. Most of the cases take place in homes and private places and not on the streets, contrary to what is often believed. The offenders are very often known by their victims, and they abuse the trust and confidence they receive to commit their crimes. Most of the victims do not report the crime that has been committed or wait many years

"Just as 'wars begins in the minds of men', peace also begins in our minds. The same species that invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us."

Seville Statement on Violence

before they do. There are many reasons for this, most of the time interrelated, and , linked to the situation, the identity of the offender, the nature (duration and frequency) of the abuse, the personality of the victim, etc.. It can happen that the victim is too young and does not understand what is going on until much later; and/or they need assistance and have no one to trust; and/or they tell the story to someone who refuses to believe them, which happens quite often especially in the case of children; and/or they feel too ashamed, guilty and betrayed; and/or they are threatened and manipulated by the offender. In the majority of the cases, the offender is a family member.

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