

# working notes

*facts and analysis of social  
and economic issues*



## War and Peace - Exploring Irish Neutrality

Pax Nostra: The Role of  
Armed Forces in Replacing  
the Bonds of War with the  
Bonds of Charity

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Irish Neutrality, International  
Peacekeeping, and Policing

Nature, Consciousness, and the  
Anthropocene – Security Within  
an Ecosystem?

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Overtuning the Economics of War  
to Deliver a Co-operative Future  
and Peaceful Green Prosperity

Well-Founded Fear of  
Reception in Ireland: No  
Accommodation, No Minimum  
Standards, No Red Lines

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Can I Get a Witness:  
Who Would Jesus Bomb?

### **Working Notes**

Facts and analysis of social and economic issues

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# Editorial

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Dr Ciara Murphy

*“Every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil.”*

Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti

Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* articulates the utter devastation which war leaves in its wake.<sup>1</sup> As the Irish Government attempts to redefine what Irish neutrality looks like, and in the midst of the conflicts which are currently raging in Sudan, Ukraine and Gaza, these words are especially timely.

This issue of Working Notes contributes to the ongoing conversation<sup>2</sup> in Ireland relating to our security and neutrality. Ireland’s position of neutrality affords us a unique position in the global stage of international relations, but changing this policy of neutrality needs to be carefully considered to ensure that our contribution to peacekeeping is enhanced rather than diminished. Precipitated by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the ransomware attack on the HSE in 2021 and Russian warships in Irish waters exposing security vulnerabilities, alongside fears for the security of underwater communication and renewable energy infrastructure, a Consultative Forum

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (Assisi: Vatican, 2020), §261.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Dame Louise Richardson, *Consultative Forum on International Security Policy Report to An Tánaiste*, Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023, <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/275081/6cbe12c4-2f01-4fdc-a8e5-98e14c0e1546.pdf#page=null>.

on International Security Policy was convened in June 2023. Issues such as maintaining the Triple Lock mechanism,<sup>3</sup> disinformation, cyber security and Ireland's engagement with NATO were all on the agenda at the Consultative Forum and continue to be debated widely,<sup>4</sup> with an amendment to the Triple Lock legislation due to be published in September 2024.<sup>5</sup>

## MORE THAN LIFE OR DEATH

War and conflict is not just a matter of life and death. The impact of war is not isolated to the regions that are bombed and the people who are killed, maimed and deeply traumatised. There is a ripple effect which is felt in the economy and environment, visibly exacerbating pre-existing crises. How we respond to both the threats and the reality of war—as well as factors which can lead to conflict and other humanitarian crises—requires careful consideration and debate. The essays in this issue will contribute to the current conversation and attest to the many different aspects that need to be considered when we talk of war, neutrality and conflict.

The opening essay in this issue, “Pax Nostra; The Role of Armed Forces in Replacing the Bonds of War with the Bonds of Charity” by Dr. Elise Lefeuve, delves into what the Church has to say about war. She casts her net through the rich texts available including the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, and several Papal encyclicals. She identifies the main differences in what church and state asks of those involved in conflict – “[w]hile States have clearly defined legal frameworks, rules, procedures and ethics for the use of force, the position of the Church is instead radical (no use of violence) and somewhat contradictory (still indications for combatants when fighting).” The focus of the Church on ‘life’ and ‘peace’ are central themes in Lefeuve’s essay and are the scaffolding which she erects to support her comprehensive

argument that the church is ultimately asking us to “seek to surpass oneself, daring us to translate ideals into concrete actions, even if ideals – such as the end of wars – seem unachievable and fanciful.”

The theme of creating and maintaining peace is continued in Prof. Tobias Winright’s excellent essay “Irish Neutrality, International Peacekeeping, and Policing”. In this essay, he examines “neutrality, defence, and cooperation... [and]... Ireland’s distinctive approach in international peacekeeping, one that is consonant with its understanding and practice of policing.” Granting that neutrality is a contested term, both within Ireland and between different nations, Winright reiterates that Ireland’s approach to neutrality “has always been flexible, shifting in response to international events and domestic concerns.” In seeking to clarify our position and identify a potential way forward, he examines how our vision and practice of policing in Ireland – which is primarily unarmed and geared towards social peacekeeping – could be a model of just policing in international peacekeeping efforts. In closing, Winright asserts that “[a]s for the use of armed force, as long as it is aligned with a social peacekeeper approach to policing, I think this, too, is congruent with recent Catholic teaching.”

With firsthand experience of Ireland’s peacekeeping efforts, Dr Mark Mellett’s essay, “Nature, Consciousness and the Anthropocene – Security Within an Ecosystem?”, diagnoses factors that can lead to conflict and reduced global security. He then constructs a wide ranging and holistic vision of the future of global security which focuses on climate change and biodiversity loss as major risk factors – “we live in an extraordinary time where the rate of change on so many fronts, including climate and security, is akin to what one experiences in wartime and yet we try to act as if we are at peace.” Furthermore, Mellett examines how we can evolve as a society to live more harmoniously with each other and with our natural environment. Drawing on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ and Ilia Delio, he maintains that “greater convergence of science and religion” is vital to build and maintain global security. In this way he echoes

3 The Triple Lock mechanism states that the Dáil, the Government, and the UN Security Council have to agree before more than 12 armed members of the Irish Defense Forces can be deployed on peacekeeping operations overseas

4 Micheál Lehané, “Triple Lock Bill Will Not Put Neutrality at Risk - Harris,” April 30 2024, <https://www.rte.ie/news/2024/0430/1446424-defence-forces-triple-lock/>.

5 “Triple Lock Amendment to Be Published by September at Latest – Martin,” BreakingNews.ie, July 2 2024, <https://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/triple-lock-amendment-to-be-published-by-september-at-latest-martin-1645175.html>.

Lefeuve and Winright, articulating the importance of religion and its teaching in how we navigate towards global security. Practically, Mellett closes his essay by prescribing five ways to promote a more peaceful loving society including implementing the Loss and Damage fund; implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals; and promoting multilateralism and collaboration.

In “Overturning the Economics of War to Deliver a Co-operative Future and Peaceful Green Prosperity”, Deborah Burton and Dr. Ho-Chih Lin continue the exploration of the ecological aspects of conflict—with a particular focus on the carbon dioxide emissions associated with the military— through an economic lens. Borrowing themes such as ‘degrowth’ and the concept of a ‘Green New Deal,’ Burton and Lin introduce readers to the idea of shifting the economics of war onto a path of peaceful prosperity, it “is the starting point for much needed, if challenging, discussions that can lead us to a paradigm shift in geopolitics.” While economics is the mainstay of this incredibly informative essay, it also touches on how we need to rethink international relations for the economic potential to be implemented. Here the authors recognise how Ireland’s neutrality policy can play a role to somewhat counterbalance bigger military powers as “Ireland could lead the world again on these matters of international co-operation, human safety and investment in the things that really matter, if we are to avoid the consequences of catastrophic climate change.”

As well as contributing to the climate crisis, conflict and war has the potential to amplify other seemingly unrelated crises at a local level. This is powerfully illustrated in “Well-Founded Fear of Reception in Ireland: No Accommodation, No Minimum Standards, No Red Lines” by Eugene Quinn and David Moriarty. Drawing on their front-line experience with the Jesuit Refugee Service, they expertly document the undignified living conditions which people, who are forced to flee from zones of conflict and persecution, reside in. The housing crisis, which is endemic and inexplicably worsening in Ireland, is both fueling the increasingly desperate accommodation conditions and intensified by the increased

numbers looking for shelter. The growing discontent within communities around the housing and cost of living crises are also providing conditions in which far right sentiment can emerge. Subsuming genuine concerns, “anti-immigrant social media accounts and groups amplify fears, foment anger and call for protest and violence to counter the perceived threat immigration presents.” The failure of the state in its obligations are clear in this essay with Quinn and Moriarty outlining how the “Irish State is in breach of its international obligations under the EU Reception Conditions Directive” by failing in their responsibility to shelter those coming to Ireland seeking protection. The authors outline the steps the State needs to take in the short, medium and long term to deal with this unacceptable crisis in accommodation of International Protection Applicants.

In his interview with Irish filmmaker, Emmet Sheerin, Dr Kevin Hargaden maintains the focus at the level of our national policies. This piece — “Can I Get a Witness: Who Would Jesus Bomb?” — explores how Ireland is complicit in atrocities far from our shores, and how this impacts our neutrality. Touching on points discussed across many of the essays, Sheerin argues that “any furthering of this erosion [of our neutrality] would be massively detrimental.” Documenting the deeply Christian action of activists protesting the use of Shannon airport in the “global War on Terror”, he shines a light on the action which can be taken by Irish citizens while reminding us that “we were part of that conveyor belt of death..... we were facilitating huge numbers of Americans to go and fight, to kill and to die” which goes against our position of neutrality.

In 1946, Ernest Hemingway, scarred from being an ambulance driver in WWI and after the conclusion of WWII, famously said “Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime.”<sup>6</sup> As Ireland grapples with how to move forward peacefully, in an evolving and changing world, we hope that the essays within this Working Notes issue bring fresh perspectives to the national conversation on present and future neutrality.

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6 Ernest Hemingway, *Treasury for the Free World* (New York, NY: Arco Books, 1946), xv.

# Pax Nostra: The Role of Armed Forces in Replacing the Bonds of War with the Bonds of Charity

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Dr Elise Lefevre

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“The starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”

Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason (1788)

## INTRODUCTION

Military work is, in essence, the use of force; or more explicitly, the capacity to kill and destroy.<sup>1</sup> This is the singularity of military work, making it unique and demanding for military personnel who must comply with extremely strict rules of conduct and decision-making. This essay looks at the latter i.e. decision-making, which essentially refers to soldiers’ inner lives, beliefs, and values. The Roman Catholic Church has developed ethics of war, which are characterised by a strong focus on each soldier’s capacity for judgement and on defining soldiers as peacebuilders.<sup>2</sup> Considering soldiers as enlightened men building peace during their military operations is, therefore, the proposal of the Church.<sup>3</sup> This goes much beyond peacekeeping, which is the maintenance of an acceptable level of security and an avoidance of escalation. The Church believes instead that soldiers have the power to replace the bonds of war with the bonds of charity, thereby being peacebuilders even in times of war.

The Kant quote in the epigraph captures the persistent belief that men can reconcile the complexities of life on earth with their ethical ideals. This is true even for soldiers, who can approach their martial functions by combining their military ethics and the ethics of the Church. The Church has elaborated its ethics of war based on the Gospels and the lessons of Jesus of Nazareth. Nevertheless, these ethics are not directed to Christians only but instead to all people of good will to whom the Christian vision can resonate — “Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of

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The Church believes instead that soldiers have the power to replace the bonds of war with the bonds of charity, thereby being peacebuilders even in times of war.

good will (Luke 2:14 NIV).” In that perspective, contemplating Catholic ethics should not be contradictory with secularity—most States are now secular, often strictly separated from the Church, and so are their armed forces.

There is no single text or compendium containing all elements of the Church’s vision on warfare, which covers a wide range of practical topics such as decision-making, individual responsibility, conduct, right of self-defence, as well as larger ethical questions about the place of conflict within society. The Church’s vision on warfare is instead disseminated across several documents, notably the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, and several encyclical letters. The key ones being *Pacem in Terris*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Fratelli Tutti*.<sup>4</sup> In addition, this is supplemented by Papal sermons, publications by conferences of bishops, and significant works by academic theologians. This article proposes to summarise and explain the contemporary vision of the Church, displaying its resonance with current ethical frameworks and practices within the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Western and EU countries are already much aligned with the commands of the Church, due to their Christian roots. Even though there is a ‘by-default’ alignment, the vision of the Church still departs in many aspects. Bluntly summarised, the Church thinks

- 1 See: Robert J. Art and Kelly M. Greenhill, *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2015); Gloria Gaggioli, “Expert Meeting: The Use of Force in Armed Conflicts,” International Committee of the Red Cross, December 20, 2021, <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4171-use-force-armed-conflicts-expert-meeting>.
- 2 This article studies the ethics developed by the Roman Catholic Church, however it should be noticed that other Christian traditions have also developed their own interpretations (Calvinists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc.). In addition to this, other religions have their commands and teachings on the ethics of war, which might also be a source of inspiration to military staff.
- 3 All references to the “Church” refer to the Roman Catholic Church, unless otherwise mentioned.

4 John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: Citta del Vaticano, 1993), [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_INDEX.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM); Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: Citta del Vaticano, 2005), [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html); Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: Citta del Vaticano, 1963), [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html); Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican: Vatican, 1965), [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html#:~:text=Fraternity%20between%20all%20men%20and%20women](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat_ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html#:~:text=Gaudium%20et%20spes&text=1,of%20the%20followers%20of%20Christ;Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti (Assisi: Vatican, 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html#:~:text=Fraternity%20between%20all%20men%20and%20women).



about war as part of its wider project: to reform humanity and create a new society based on love and charity that pursues the common good.<sup>5</sup> No Western or EU nation has committed to such an absolute project, and secular nations have been instead directed to the cohesion and temporal welfare of their citizens, emphasising the role of individual rights in line with liberalism.

The first element to note addresses key concepts that underlie the commands and rules for warfare. Much of the difference between the ethics of the Church and armies originate here. The Church can be seen as idealistic and absolutist (ban of war, peaceful resolution of disputes) versus States and their armed forces that grapple with violence, aggressions, and provocations. The second element considers the practical commands for combatants, who are ultimately called by the Church to work on their inner self to profoundly anchor values including, love and charity. In short, combatants, whatever their rank and responsibilities, are asked to be builders of peace even in wartime through their actions and convictions. Building *pax in bello*<sup>6</sup> is necessary for a stable and durable *pax post bellum*, thereby gradually replacing the bonds of war with the bonds of charity, with the hope of reaching perpetual peace.

## VISION, COMMANDS AND EXIGENCIES OF THE CHURCH TO BUILD A PEACEFUL SOCIETY

Conceptions of life, society, men and peace have a somewhat different meaning in the view of the Church in comparison to the most commonly accepted definitions. These fundamental deviations lead the Church to enact more radical and difficult-to-implement commands. One of the purposes of the Church is to push humans to change,<sup>7</sup> and this includes battling against some of the most profoundly

anchored features of human nature and instinct (such as violence and hate), in order to become closer to God, i.e. perfection. The pursuit of saintliness, versus the pursuit of happiness often set as the objective in secular nations,<sup>8</sup> is therefore at the core of Christian life, and demands constant radical efforts over oneself. Consequently, the Church does not intend to be pragmatic and accommodate its commands. This however does not necessarily mean that the Church is completely disconnected from reality and ignores it – on the contrary, the Church as an institution accompanies its members drawn into matters of war e.g. chaplains in the armed forces.<sup>9</sup>

Ethics of war are built on the balance of the capacity to kill versus the risk of being killed.<sup>10</sup> The use of force is the monopoly of the State and soldiers have the exceptional right to kill during conflicts or under specific mandates. The use of force, together with conduct at war, are strictly framed by law (law of armed conflicts, international humanitarian law, national laws), rules (rules of engagement), and customs. In essence, soldiers are authorised to kill, injure and destroy designated military targets. Thus the force is always constrained and limited to military necessity. Hence, the prohibition of killing is the normal rule (under civilian criminal law), and the right to kill is highly constrained and exceptionally granted to soldiers by the State. While States have clearly defined legal frameworks, rules, procedures and ethics for the use of force, the position of the

5 However, as per the Church's doctrine, "Consisting both of body and immortal soul, man cannot in this mortal life satisfy his needs or attain perfect happiness", Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, §59.

6 Peace in war.

7 "[...] the Lord Himself came to free and strengthen man, renewing him inwardly [...]" Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 13. For a long time, the Church has focused most of its Bible study on sin and fear, see analysis in Jean Delumeau, *Le Pêché et la Peur, la cupabilisation en Occident, XIII<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1983); and Michel Grandjean, "L'Occident face aux feux de l'enfer" (Campus n°105: Université de Genève, 2011). The Church is now moving away from this approach, notably under the impulse of Pope Francis. Therefore, the renewal of people should now be understood as a life-long effort to live a life of love and charity, and not so much doing so in fear of purgatory or hell.

8 The most remarkable example is in the 1776 United States Declaration of Independence. Full text available in the U.S. National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

9 David Leonard, "Peacemakers: chaplains as vital links in the peace chain," *Joint Force Quarterly* 96, 7 February 2020, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2076112/peacemakers-chaplains-as-vital-links-in-the-peace-chain/#:~:text=The%20Geneva%20Conventions%20identify%20chaplains,of%20the%20Red%20Cross%2FCrescent..> In addition, see testimonials of chaplains for the Irish Defence Forces and the British Army: Intercom, "Interview: The Second Military Career of Fr David Murphy," undated, <https://www.intercommagazine.ie/interview-the-second-military-career-of-fr-david-murphy/>; Fr Ian Evans QHC, "Ministering to the Catholic and Wider Christian Community: Life As a Army Chaplain", *Roman Catholic Bishopric Of The Forces*, July 31 2023, <https://www.rcbishopricforces.org.uk/post/life-as-a-army-chaplain>. In international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions recognise and protect chaplains and ministers, see: Article 24 of the *Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field*, Geneva, 12 August 1949, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gci-1949?activeTab=undefined> and Articles 32 and 36 of the *Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, Geneva, 12 August 1949, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gcii-1949?activeTab=undefined>. See also the commentary by Stefan Lunze in 'Serving God and Caesar: Religious Personnel and Their Protection in Armed Conflict', *Revue Internationale de La Croix-Rouge/International Review of the Red Cross* 86, no. 853 (March 2004): 69.

10 François Lecoindre, 'L'action militaire aujourd'hui : un sens à partager', *Inflexions*, 1, no. 1 (2005): 89–101.

Church is instead radical (no use of violence) and somewhat contradictory (still including indications for combatants when fighting).

The radicalism of the Church lies in the absolute biblical prohibition of killing — “[t]hou shalt not murder (Exodus 20:13 NIV),” and in the effective Papal ban of war enshrined by Pope Francis. He practically ends the centennial just war theory,<sup>11</sup> which still applies theoretically, but simply no wars can now meet its criteria. Just war theory was, in short, a long-standing development that framed war as an exception, always wrong, but capable of being conducted with tragic integrity.<sup>12</sup> This tradition set out criteria and conditions allowing wars and limiting the use of force.<sup>13</sup> Although just war theory is now in the process of being decommissioned, it has durably influenced the Western conceptions on war and the use of force, and most of its principles are replicated in existing laws, rules and customs (e.g., necessity to justify war, necessity to find a peaceful resolution before entering into war). The prohibition of killing is corollary to the fundamental principle of the sanctity of life,<sup>14</sup> that is to say, men cannot destroy life because it is a divine creation and project. Hence, the entire vision of the Church for society and men’s conduct is built on the protection and defence of life.

Alongside life, peace is fundamental in Christianity. It is an attribute of God—“the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:5 NIV)” — and a legacy of Jesus of Nazareth—“[p]eace I leave with you, my peace I give to you (John 14:27 NIV).” This leads the Church to give an absolute definition of peace, which is “the fullness of life,”<sup>15</sup> as well as the divine plan for humanity.<sup>16</sup>



Credit: istock\_1135117500

Furthermore, peace denotes a state in which a society can live not only in moral and physical security but also in which it can develop strong and fair social bonds, i.e. “safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity.”<sup>17</sup> In the Christian perspective, society is the common place of living for human persons to contemplate the development of moral virtues—justice, equality, mutual respect, sincerity, honesty, fidelity<sup>18</sup>—which differs from the liberal view where the society is an aggregate of individuals linked by a social contract to pursue common well-being and interests.<sup>19</sup> Put bluntly, the Church (and Jesus of Nazareth in the first place) deliberately sets the bar higher so, rather than

11 “[...] it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a “just war”. Never again war!” See Fratelli Tutti, § 258.

12 Daniel M. Bell, *Just War as Christian Discipleship : Recentering the Tradition in the Church Rather than the State* (Grand Rapids, MI : Brazos Press, 2009), 24.

13 Jean-François Chemin, *Bellum iustum, aux origines de la conception occidentale de la guerre juste* (Editions Apopsix, 2018); Jean-Philippe Schreiber *Théologies de la guerre* (Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2006); ‘Guerre-Version 2016 | DSC’, *Doctrine sociale de l’Église catholique*, <https://www.doctrine-sociale-catholique.fr/quelques-themes/76-guerre>; Béatrix de Vareilles, ‘Guerre Juste ?’, *Justice & Paix* (blog), 12 January 2021, <https://justice-paix.cef.fr/paix-et-securite/guerre-juste/>.

14 “Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2319.

15 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 489 and 491.

16 “The kingdom of the Messiah is precisely the kingdom of peace” See *ibid*, § 488 and 491.

17 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2304. The Social Doctrine of the Church lists as well: “fruitfulness (Isaiah 48:19), well-being (Isaiah 48:18), prosperity (Isaiah 54:13), absence of fear (Leviathan 26:6) and profound joy (Proverbs 12:20)”; *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 489.

18 Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the celebration of the 52th world day of peace, 01 January 2019, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20181208\\_messaggio-52giornatamondiale-pace2019.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20181208_messaggio-52giornatamondiale-pace2019.html), § 3.

19 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social ou Principes du droit politique* (1762), <https://www.rousseauonline.ch/pdf/rousseauonline-0004.pdf>

gathering humanity around some synchronised and negotiated interests, it asks humans to build a society articulated around the same profound understanding and practice of values and ideals. To do so, the Church urges for a change of perspective, which should ultimately lead to more peaceful and fairer societies, “we need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home.”<sup>20</sup> This society as defined by the Church does not exist yet, but the Church asks to work for its advent and this goes through the deep change of individual and collective mentalities and behaviours, i.e. “a new vision of the world and a new way of approaching others”.<sup>21</sup> Whereas the Church, as an institution, has had essentially conservative and reactionary positions, the recent return, impelled by Pope Francis, to the core concepts and commands restores Christianity in its original revolutionary approach (“the music of the Gospel”).<sup>22</sup>

“Christian peace”, seen by the Church as genuine or just peace,<sup>23</sup> is more exacting than peace being the mere absence of war,<sup>24</sup> and requires the full functioning and practice of institutions that guarantee liberty, democracy, and solidarity.<sup>25</sup> “Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.”<sup>26</sup> This absolute definition of peace leads the Church to pay a lot of attention to *post bellum* considerations. It is to be understood within the wider Christian project to free humanity from the bonds of war (“the Divine Providence urgently demands of us that we free ourselves from the age-old slavery of war”),<sup>27</sup> and to instead settle and stretch

the bonds of charity.<sup>28</sup> When war ends, the restoration of peace must be built to definitely end war and eradicate its roots. John Paul II declared that “[t]rue peace is never simply the result of military victory, but rather implies both the removal of the causes of war and genuine reconciliation between peoples.”<sup>29</sup> History tells that, indeed, inauthentic and incomplete peace has failed to stop the spiral of competition and war.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, armed forces have been involved in *post bellum* conflict contexts to ensure, among others, peace maintenance, the rebuilding of infrastructure, and settlement or restoration of democratic institutions.<sup>31</sup>

As noted earlier, the Church intends to reform people and urges them to overcome their most profound instincts. Therefore, the Church recognises that competition, violence, vengeance, and so war are inherent to human nature: “insofar as men are sinners, the threat of war hangs over them and will so continue until Christ comes again.”<sup>32</sup> Peace is eventually seen as the inherent objective of men— “[the] Creation, which is a reflection of the divine glory, aspires to peace.”<sup>33</sup> which effectively suggests that the end of war is achievable here and now, i.e. without waiting for the supernatural advent of a hypothetical Second Coming.

In the Church’s view, the eradication of war can be attained by the practice of mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation—which are pillar values taught by Jesus of Nazareth to “[l]ove your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44 NIV)”, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us [...] but deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:9-13 NIV)” —as well as by the strength of faith and prayer.<sup>34</sup> Although the Magisterium does not mention it, the right to forget can be added to the notion of forgiveness, as a way to end

20 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (Assisi: Vatican, 2020), § 17.

21 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 516.

22 Pope Francis, *Ecumenical Prayer* (Riga: Vatican, 2018), [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_20180924\\_incontroecumenico-riga-lettonia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/september/documents/papa-francesco_20180924_incontroecumenico-riga-lettonia.html)

23 Over the past decades, the Church and theologians have been developing the just peacebuilding theory, see: World Council of Churches, “Ecumenical Call to Just Peace” (2011), <http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources/documents/declarations-on-just-peace/ecumenical-call-to-just-peace.html>.

24 “Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2304, <https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/...P81.HTM>.

25 See also the analysis of the link between democracy and religion in: Harmut Rosa, *Demokratie braucht Religion* (Koesel, 2022).

26 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2304. Furthermore, within just peace theory, peace is inextricably bound up with justice and the rule of law, see Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Pacifism, Just War, and Peacebuilding* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2019); and Sara Gehlin, *Pathways for Theology in Peacebuilding: Ecumenical approaches to Just Peace* (Leiden: Brill, 2020)).

27 Gaudium et Spes, §81.

28 Pope Benedict XV, *Pacem, Dei Munus Pulcherrimum*, (Vatican: Vatican, 1920), § 10.

29 John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (Vatican: Vatican, 1991), § 18.

30 The best example being the failed WWI peace that led to WWII.

31 These are peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions, generally conducted under UN or NATO mandates. For example, NATO-led mission Implementation Force, then named Stabilisation Force, to ensure to return to peace in Bosnia Herzegovina, see NATO; “Peace support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-2004)” 11 April 2023, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52122.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52122.htm); and U.S. Department of State, “The Role of IFOR in the Peace Process” (1996), <https://1997-2001.state.gov/regions/eur/bosnia/fforrole.html>.

32 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2316.

33 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 488.

34 *ibid*, § 519; *Pacem in Terris*, § 171; and *Gaudium et Spes*, § 82.

the spiral of violence.<sup>35</sup> From that perspective, forgetfulness can be constructed as a form of enlightened remembering, i.e. “a deliberate choice to think differently about the past, an attempt to remember it in a more positive or constructive way.”<sup>36</sup> Forgetfulness can also be temporary to allow peace, thereby restoring peace and stability immediately after conflict, and waiting for Courts<sup>37</sup> to conduct their investigations and to rule the cases.<sup>38</sup>

Hence, the combination of action (behaviour, undertakings, collective achievements) and prayer (practices, beliefs, convictions) is the motor of profound change—“the Church insistently urges everyone to prayer and to action so that the divine Goodness may free us from the ancient bondage of war.”<sup>39</sup> Although the Church phrases this, understandably, in its technical language, this is still valid as a ‘secular takeaway,’ meaning that pacifism and the resilience of societies to violence and war happen in actions and mindset—the latter being even more critical with the current development of strategies around cognitive warfare.<sup>40</sup>

The Church recognises that societies are entitled to “the right to peace,”<sup>41</sup> which is going much further than what secular nations commonly recognise (security, access to elementary care and services). Peacebuilding and peacekeeping are therefore two processes promoted by the Church as “[b]lessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:9 NIV)”, which in that perspective supports

military staff acting in the safeguarding of peace and the rescue of threatened populations.<sup>42</sup>

## GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR SOLDIERS TO ACT AS ENLIGHTENED PEACEKEEPERS

The responsibility for the ethical conduct of war lies with military staff. They train soldiers. They interpret doctrines, establish procedures, and maintain chains of command. They take the crucial decisions in the field, receiving and responding to information, define targets, select weapons, and ultimately fire the shots. They are the ones engaging with civilians. They are the ones responsible for prisoners. Even if the Church stands against war, there is still the recognition that the military is essential to protect a nation or a population, and to ensure peacekeeping. Consequently, the Church supports military staff and provides them with guidance to perform their tasks in peace, deterrence, competition, (d)escalation, and war.

Most importantly, the Church traditionally does not speak only to its believers, but instead to all people of good will. Founded on the message of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11), the approach of the Church has been to talk to people in their own language, regardless of where they stand in their inner life (beliefs, faith, values) and in their life in action (work, social environment, family). This approach is exemplified in the slogan of St. Paul,<sup>43</sup> who adapted his speech to various cultural and political audiences.<sup>44</sup>

### Subsidiarity and Inner Leadership

In the Church’s view, military personnel have two key duties: the duty to serve their country and to act in favour of common good

35 “Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill”, Macbeth, Act III, Scene II; “The continuance of their parents’ rage”, Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Prologue. From a more explicitly theological perspective, one might consider usefully: Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

36 Patrick O’Callaghan, “Enlightened remembering and the paradox of forgetting: From Dante to data privacy” *Law and Humanities* 17, no.2 (2023): 210-227.

37 This is the role of International Criminal Court. Ad hoc tribunals were also created for specific conflicts, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. There are currently discussions to set up a special tribunal for the on-going Russian-Ukrainian war, Council of Europe, “Secretary General joins the summit of leaders for creation of Special Tribunal on the crime of aggression against Ukraine,” 9 May 2023, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/secretary-general-joins-the-summit-of-leaders-for-creation-of-special-tribunal-on-the-crime-of-aggression-against-ukraine>.

38 See analysis on *ius post bellum* in Le Comité exécutif de Justice et Paix Europe, “Vérité et justice – les piliers de la justice d’après-guerre” Justice et Paix, 9 December 2022, <https://justice-paix.cef.fr/justice-paix/verite-et-justice-les-piliers-de-la-justice-dapres-guerre/>.

39 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2307.

40 Paolo Giordano, “Cognitive Warfare: Strengthening and Defending the Mind,” NATO’s ACT, April 5 2023, <https://www.act.nato.int/article/cognitive-warfare-strengthening-and-defending-the-mind/>.

41 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 518.

42 The Church however does not support peace enforcement, which refers to the use of force in order to impose peace to parties against their will, see Jon Fink, “From peacekeeping to peace enforcement: the blurring of the mandate for the use of force in maintaining international peace and security”, *Maryland Journal of International Law* 19, no. 1 (1995): 1-47. In addition, the specific case of Afghanistan is analysed in: Neil Shortland, Huseyin Sari and Elias Nader, “Recounting the dead: an analysis of ISAF caused civilian casualties in Afghanistan”, *Armed Forces & Society* 45, no. 1 (2019):122-139.

43 “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.” 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 (NIV).

44 Daniel Marguerat, *Paul de Tarse, L’enfant terrible du christianisme* (Seuil, 2023).

and peace<sup>45</sup>; and the duty of disobedience to unlawful, inhumane or immoral orders.<sup>46</sup> For the latter, the Church targets the capacity of assessment of each personnel, thereby giving them an autonomy of decision as well as an individual responsibility, by being “fully responsible for the acts they commit in violation of the rights of individuals and peoples, or of the norms of international humanitarian law.”<sup>47</sup> Military personnel are consequently seen before all as reasoning humans able to give meaning to their actions and to conduct moral or ethical assessment of their actions. This is close to the German vision, which considers soldiers above all as educated citizens (Staatsbürger in Uniform). In that perspective, German military staff are trained and educated to have the necessary knowledge and awareness to act at the best of their conscience, so called “inner leadership” (inner Führung).<sup>48</sup> Delegating assessment to military staff refers also to the principle of subsidiarity, which finds its origins in church teaching, receiving its most influential modern treatment in *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>49</sup> For now and in most Western armed forces, delegation to subordinates generally concerns a limited range of actions leaving little leeway for initiative.<sup>50</sup> The Church and the Bundeswehr are here a step ahead by granting autonomy and anchoring a system of values in each personnel regardless of their rank (i.e. not only officers).<sup>51</sup>

Education and training of all soldiers on laws, morality, and ethics are critical and should be at a sufficient level to allow critical assessment. This is especially the case under stressful situations, during which reasoning is typically altered and instincts gain the upper hand because there is nonetheless “the permanent validity of the

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More than restoring a certain level of security and stability, military personnel are considered by the Church as active builders of peace and good.

moral law during armed conflict.”<sup>52</sup> Making the objectives of the military—“to defend good, truth and justice in the world”<sup>53</sup>—practical as well as instilling the reflex of critical assessment (on top of all fight reflexes) should therefore be the challenge of military academies and instructors.

### Common good and peace

While serving the country is commonly agreed (often referred to as ensuring national security and sovereignty), common good and peace are rarely phrased in this way. Instead, “peacekeeping” is more often used. While the task of defining missions and their objectives sits at the political level (national governments, North Atlantic Council), the military is in charge of their implementation (strategies, operations, tactics).<sup>54</sup> Therefore, common good and peace must be defined in concrete actions on the field by the military, considering inter alia the quality of communication with the population, attention to the perception of legitimacy of their actions, and humane treatment of the population.<sup>55</sup> More than restoring a certain level of security and stability, military personnel are considered by the Church as active builders of peace and good, so the seeds of peace must be sowed during their operations and during the war.

45 “Those who are sworn to serve their country in the armed forces are servants of the security and freedom of nations. If they carry out their duty honourably, they truly contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2310.

46 “They are morally obliged to resist orders that call for perpetrating crimes against the law of nations and the universal principles of this law.” *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 503.

47 *ibid*, § 503.

48 Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, “Staatsbürger in Uniform” (undated), available at: <https://www.bmvg.de/de/themen/verteidigung/innere-fuehrung/staatsbuerger-in-uniform>, last accessed 19 October 2023.

49 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 185-188.

50 Admiral Pierre Vandier, “Comment s’adapter à un monde d’incertitudes ?” *Harvard Business Review* (2023).

51 There is however a very extensive literature on the moral values and ethics for officers, including in relation to theology and religion. See, for example: Pierre Gillet, *Qui est comme Dieu ? - Essai sur les vertus chrétiennes au service du commandement* (Editions Sainte-Madeleine:2020).

52 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2312.

53 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 502.

54 For NATO roles and responsibilities, see: NATO, ‘North Atlantic Council’ and ‘Military Committee’ (undated), <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/68147.htm>, last accessed 24 October 2023. For the definitions of strategy, operation and tactics, see: USAF College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education, ‘Three Levels of War’ *Air and Space Power Mentoring Guide*, Vol. 1 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1997), <https://faculty.cc.gatech.edu/~tpilsch/INTA4803TP/Articles/Three%20Levels%20of%20War=CADRE-excerpt.pdf>.

55 Legitimacy and communication are now even more critical and have been deeply disrupted by the intensive use of social medias, see: Emily Harding, Harshana Ghooorhoo and Julia Dickson, ‘Seeking Legitimacy: Considerations for Strategic Communications in the Digital Age’, *NATO Strategic Communications Centre for Excellence*, 28 July 2023, <https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/seeking-legitimacy-considerations-for-strategic-communications-in-the-digital-age/289>; and Alex Aiken, ‘The power of information to build resilience in a volatile world’, *NATO Review*, 24 May 2023, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2023/05/24/the-power-of-information-to-build-resilience-in-a-volatile-world/index.html>.



The Church defines the duty of protection (“the duty to protect and help innocent victims who are not able to defend themselves from acts of aggression”),<sup>56</sup> with particular attention to civilians, refugees, and populations threatened of genocide.<sup>57</sup> This duty can legitimise the use of force (“those [...] [who] make use of [the] means of defence available to the weakest, bear witness to evangelical charity”),<sup>58</sup> and must have priority over military objectives (“the good of the human person must take precedence over the interests of the parties to the conflict”).<sup>59</sup> The duty of protection somewhat differs from the principles of humanity and discrimination, because it demands to actively engage the military in the protection of populations, and not only to avoid or bypass them during operations. Active protection of a population also involves a complex conduct of operations, because civilians enjoy a protected status under the Geneva Conventions<sup>60</sup> and other laws of war,<sup>61</sup> and because the relationship with the local population can be difficult or even hostile, thereby adding social and psychological parameters.

The duty of protection is effectively a third-party support in self-defence. The right to self-defence in treaties, laws, rules and customs is the only legitimate reason to enter into war.<sup>62</sup> The Church concurs with this approach (“the right and the duty to organize a defence even using the force of arms”),<sup>63</sup> but warns against “an overly broad interpretation”.<sup>64</sup> The Church states that all measures and efforts must be undertaken to avoid conflict,<sup>65</sup> and self-defence should apply only “once all peace efforts have failed”.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, the Church lists conditions for self-defence,<sup>67</sup> which originate from just war theory and do not substantially differ from the commonly agreed approaches (although nations have different doctrines). In addition, the Church sees the right to self-defence, combined with the duty of protection, as the only legitimate reason for having armed forces (“the requirements of legitimate defence justify the existence in States of armed forces, the activity of which should be at the service of peace”).<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the right to self-defence is the only legitimate reason for building armament stocks, which should cover self-defence needs only and cannot exceed them.<sup>69</sup> When it comes to armaments, the Magisterium prohibits possession and use of indiscriminate weapons,<sup>70</sup> and more particularly chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons,<sup>71</sup> because they are “far beyond the bounds of legitimate defence”.<sup>72</sup>

Consequently, the Magisterium has strong moral reservations on deterrence, because it leads to infringements to the principle of sufficiency,<sup>73</sup> and thereby increasing the likelihood of escalation of conflicts.<sup>74</sup> The Church does not consider deterrence as a permanent and sustainable solution for ensuring peace, as the latter should instead emanate from the “mutual trust between nations and not be imposed on them through a fear of the available weapons”.<sup>75</sup>

56 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 504.

57 *ibid.*, § 505 and 506

58 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2306.

59 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 504.

60 Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

61 International Committee of the Red Cross, “Practice relating to Rule 6. Civilians’ Loss of Protection from Attack”, *International Humanitarian Law Databases* (undated), <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v2/rule6> last accessed 24 October 2023.

62 See International Committee of the Red Cross, “Self-defence” Case Book of the International Committee of the Red Cross (undated), [https://casebook.icrc.org/a\\_to\\_z/glossary/self-defence](https://casebook.icrc.org/a_to_z/glossary/self-defence) and Doctors without Borders, “Self-defence” *The Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law* (undated), <https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/self-defence/>. In addition, collective self-defence is a NATO specificity: NATO, “Collective defence and Article 5” (04 July 2023), <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics.110496.htm>.

63 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 500.

64 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, § 258.

65 “All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2308.

66 *ibid.*, § 2308.

67 “[T]he damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain; all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; there must be serious prospects of success; - the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. the power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.” *ibid.*, § 2309.

68 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 502.

69 “The principle of sufficiency, by virtue of which each State may possess only the means necessary for its legitimate defence, must be applied both by States that buy arms and by those that produce and furnish them” *ibid.*, § 508.

70 *ibid.*, § 510.

71 *ibid.*, § 509. The Church called for the end of arms race and disarmament in: Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, § 109 to 113.

72 Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, § 80.

73 “The principle of sufficiency, by virtue of which each State may possess only the means necessary for its legitimate defence [...]” *Gaudium et Spes*, § 48. See also *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 508, and *Fratelli Tutti*, § 262.

74 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2315 and 2316, and *Gaudium et Spes*, § 81.

75 *Gaudium et Spes*, § 81. This encyclical was promulgated during the Cold War (1965), and was therefore particularly sensible to the armament and deterrence question, as nations, notably the USA and the USSR, were involved in the so-called “arms race”.

In summary, the Church's commands and guidance are insightful, insofar as their focus is on intelligent and meaningful military decision-making and action to allow a swift return to peace. Put simply, based on the Church's statements, the moral values of each military personnel should be sincerity, honesty, trustworthiness, respect, openness, fairness and charity.<sup>76</sup> These values translate into concrete actions towards oneself, comrades, civilians, and even enemies: protect, communicate, listen, care and take care, educate and integrate. Points of attention are the defence of human dignity,<sup>77</sup> and empathy<sup>78</sup>—"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out [...], and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them [...]" (Exodus 3:7-8 NIV). These values and behaviours should be developed and trained at the inception of a soldier's career, during training, when stationed, and when on mission, so that they become anchored in mindset and habit. Quality of work is eventually the most critical issue, and this is achieved by continual training of body, mind, and professional tasks (drilling of procedures etc.). All this should lead to the maintenance of values on which fair societies are built, even in wartime, and thereby limiting the disruption of order caused by wars as well as facilitating the restoration of peace.

## CONCLUSION

Through its commands, the Church seeks to effectively translate the peace of God (*Pax Dei*) in actions and convictions for people so that they can frame and build peace (*Pax Nostra*) by extending and improving their own capacities and resources. By operating this translation,

76 This non-exhaustive list has overlaps and adds-on with the numerous lists of military virtues. As per current doctrines: for Ireland, "respect, loyalty, selflessness, integrity, moral courage and physical courage", Irish Defence Forces, "Defence Forces Leadership Doctrine" (2016), [https://www.military.ie/en/public-information/publications/df\\_leadershipDoctrine.pdf](https://www.military.ie/en/public-information/publications/df_leadershipDoctrine.pdf), for the United Kingdom, "courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity, loyalty and selfless commitment", British Army "Values and standards of the British Army" (undated); [https://www.army.mod.uk/media/5219/20180910-values\\_standards\\_2018\\_final.pdf](https://www.army.mod.uk/media/5219/20180910-values_standards_2018_final.pdf), last accessed 20 October 2023. Lists of moral virtues have been developed through time, built on each other. Literature echoes ancient lists, such as William Shakespeare in *Macbeth*: "justice, verity, temperance, stableness/Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness/Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude" (*Macbeth*, Act 4, Scene 3).

77 As proclaimed in Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." Full text available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

78 Kevin Cutright, *The Empathetic Soldier* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022).

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Building peace is a mission for all humans.

the Church delivers a universal message, that is to say, all people of good will (and not only believers) can follow the commands to build a steadfast peace. This also means that building peace is a mission for all humans. It is not a task narrowly charged to Christians, although believers may find in their faith and prayer strength and inspiration to conduct the mission of pacification.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, the contribution of the Church to the ethics of war is insightful, primarily because it addresses all personnel—regardless of their ranks—with a challenge to focus on inner leadership, i.e. the most profoundly anchored values and beliefs that guide actions. In addition, the Church believes in the capacity of humans to create, impact, and change themselves and their environment by means of individual and collective actions. Therefore, although it is ancient, war is not an inevitability, and people are able to build peaceful societies. Believers may see in this the advent of the divine project for humanity as "[a] voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him' (Matthew 3:1-12 NIV)", whereas people of good will may simply see the human aspiration to live in security and solidarity.

Ultimately, the Church calls on people to seek to surpass oneself, daring us to translate ideals into concrete actions, even if ideals – such as the end of wars – seem unachievable and fanciful. Therefore, military personnel must not renounce and cease to believe, but instead they must live and act in "a world where action is [...] the sister of dreams."<sup>80</sup>

79 As exemplified by the prayer "*Agnus dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.*"

80 Charles Baudelaire, *The Denial of Saint Peter*. English translation of William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954); available at: <https://fleursdumal.org/poem/189>. Original book: Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857).

# Irish Neutrality, International Peacekeeping, and Policing

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## INTRODUCTION: SITUATING IRELAND

After visiting Ireland regularly for over 24 years, my family and I moved to Maynooth from the United States of America two years ago. While there is obviously a closeness between the two countries, which have a lot in common, the contrasts between them have stood out too – beyond the great size and population differences. Ireland has 7,500 personnel in its Defence Forces (Óglaigh na hÉireann) that usually carry out peacekeeping missions under the auspices of the United Nations, a relatively unarmed police (An Garda Síochána), and the status of neutrality as a nation. In contrast, the US is a superpower with more than 1.34 million active-duty personnel and 800 military bases in over 70 countries and territories.<sup>1</sup> Its police are heavily armed and militarized.<sup>2</sup> And it has not been

neutral since the three “Neutrality Acts” passed by Congress between 1935 and 1937 prior to the Second World War. Yet, when Ireland allowed US aircraft to use Shannon Airport during the second war in Iraq, I found myself wondering whether the Emerald Isle “had stretched the concept of neutrality to the limit.”<sup>3</sup> If Ireland does not belong to any military alliance – with the US, NATO, or anyone else – then permitting the US to use an Irish airport, I speculated, has the appearance not of neutrality but, rather, taking sides and perhaps being an accomplice.

These musings returned to my mind during the past year when Ireland’s neutrality was being reconsidered, especially given Russia’s all-out invasion of Ukraine, the threat posed to undersea cables in Irish coastal waters, and the rising menaces to cybersecurity by foreign states and criminal organizations. “As wars rage in Gaza and Ukraine, neutral states are coming

1 David Vine, “Where in the World Is the U.S. Military?” *Politico* (July/August 2015), <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/us-military-bases-around-the-world-119321/#:~:text=Despite%20recently%20closing%20hundreds%20of,about%2030%20foreign%20bases%20combined;andhttps://www.governing.com/now/2021-military-active-duty-personnel-civilians-by-state>. See Tobias Winright and Nathaniel Hibner, “The Costs of *Jus Ante Bellum* and *Jus Post Bellum*,” in *The Business of War: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Military-Industrial Complex*, eds. James McCarty, Matthew Tapie, and Justin Bronson Barringer (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 200.

2 Tobias Winright, “Militarized Policing: The History of the Warrior Cop,” *Christian Century* 131, no. 19 (September 17, 2014): 10–12.

3 Ronan McGreevy, “Iraq war marked a ‘low point of Irish pretences to neutrality,’” *The Irish Times*, 8 June 2023, <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2023/06/09/iraq-war-marked-low-point-of-irish-pretences-to-neutrality/>. The quote is from former political director of the Department of Foreign Affairs Rory Montgomery, as shared by Conor Gallagher in his book, *Is Ireland Neutral? The Many Myths of Irish Neutrality* (Dublin: Gill Books, 2023).

under increasing pressure to pick a side,”<sup>4</sup> but does this necessarily mean militarily?

During the Consultative Forums on International Security Policy in Cork, Galway, and Dublin (I attended the third meeting on 26 June 2023 at Dublin Castle), Irish citizens raised questions and expressed their concerns about neutrality – whether to maintain, modify, or discontinue it. According to an *Irish Times*/Ipsos poll, a majority of voters continue to support neutrality, but at the same time they are increasingly open to cooperating with other nations and their militaries to counter threats to Irish security.<sup>5</sup> Many citizens worry though, that these two commitments – to neutrality and to cooperation with others for defence – are at odds with each other, with the latter eroding and undermining the former. Of course, where one stands on this question depends a lot on what one means by *neutrality*, *defence*, and *cooperation*.

## CONSIDERING IRISH NEUTRALITIES

As a theological ethicist possessing previous experience, beginning in 1984, as a law enforcement officer and some training, while briefly considering a military career, at the US Army’s Fort Benning in Georgia, I have long wrestled with questions about war and peace, the use of force and policing, and violence and non-violence. I continue to do so, because I am still learning, especially as the ground is continually moving beneath our feet concerning these questions, especially in Ukraine, Sudan, Israel, Gaza and elsewhere (including the US). In what follows, I examine neutrality, defence, and cooperation, with an eye towards what I think may be Ireland’s distinctive approach in international *peacekeeping*, one that is consonant with its understanding and practice of *policing*.

In *A Force for Good? Reflections on Neutrality and the Future of Irish Defence*, published in

2022, a number of contributors, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mairead Maguire, not only condemned “the use of Shannon as a US war-port,”<sup>6</sup> but any “cooperation and collaboration with NATO even without formal NATO membership,”<sup>7</sup> and the “erosion of our commitment to active neutrality and genuine UN-directed peacekeeping.”<sup>8</sup> While some of these contributors highlight Ireland’s “soft power” and diplomacy as significant aspects of its neutrality, others rule out any violence or use of force whatsoever, instead calling for disarmament, “a commitment to the exclusively peaceful resolution of international disputes”<sup>9</sup> and the “practice of non-violent approaches”<sup>10</sup> to peacekeeping. As Maguire puts it, “Violence is always wrong... Violence is never right.”<sup>11</sup> In such a view, which traditionally has been called a *pacifist* one,<sup>12</sup> all armed force, i.e., “violence,” is prohibited for defence and peacekeeping, and by extension cooperating in any way with other nations or military alliances that are involved in armed conflict is proscribed.

Yet, neutrality is not an univocal concept, and although most Irish citizens think neutrality should be retained, how this stance is understood, along with its implications for defence and peacekeeping, is not uniform. Indeed, not only do Irish citizens hold differing views of neutrality, so too does Ireland’s understanding and practice of neutrality differ in many ways from that of other neutral nations. For example, Switzerland adheres to an armed neutrality, with compulsory civil and military service and 150,000 military personnel, for the purpose of self-defence but

4 Connor Echols, “The death of neutrality?” *Responsible Statecraft*, 17 January 2024, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/qatar-hamas/>.  
5 Pat Leahy, “Overwhelming support for retention of Ireland’s military neutrality,” *The Irish Times*, 15 April 2022, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/overwhelming-support-for-retention-of-ireland-s-military-neutrality-1.4853176#:~:text=There%20is%20overwhelming%20support%20for%20the%20retention%20of,%2824%20per%20cent%29%20in%20favour%20of%20a%20change>.

6 Joe Murray, “Foreword: Ireland should be a voice for Demilitarisation, De-escalation and Disarmament in the World,” in *A Force for Good? Reflections on Neutrality and the Future of Irish Defence* (Dublin: Afri, 2022), 5.  
7 Iain Atack and Carol Fox, “Irish Neutrality: A Vital Resource in Danger,” in *A Force for Good? Reflections on Neutrality and the Future of Irish Defence* (Dublin: Afri, 2022), 40–41.  
8 John Maguire, “Towards a Safer Tomorrow? An Open Letter to Lt-General Seán Clancy,” in *A Force for Good? Reflections on Neutrality and the Future of Irish Defence* (Dublin: Afri, 2022), 34.  
9 Atack and Fox, “Irish Neutrality,” 43.  
10 John Maguire, “The Commission on the Defence Forces Report: An Initial Response,” in *A Force for Good? Reflections on Neutrality and the Future of Irish Defence* (Dublin: Afri, 2022), 52.  
11 See Mairead Maguire, “The True Cost of Violence and War,” in *A Force for Good? Reflections on Neutrality and the Future of Irish Defence* (Dublin: Afri, 2022), 22–23.  
12 Pacifism, too, is not understood and practiced univocally; there are a variety of pacifisms. Nevertheless, most agree that pacifism entails nonviolence and proscribes armed force. See David C. Cramer and Myles Werntz, *A Field Guide to Christian Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022).

not for deployment beyond its borders. For Switzerland, neutrality is not “a synonym for antimilitarism, pacifism or defencelessness.”<sup>13</sup> In contrast, Costa Rica has a demilitarized neutrality and a police-based model for security.<sup>14</sup>

It seems to me that Ireland’s approach to neutrality, which has developed across the decades and “has always been flexible, shifting in response to international events and domestic concerns,”<sup>15</sup> stands somewhere between these two examples. So, too, do many of the contributors to *A Force for Good?*, who support an Irish neutrality that is situated between Costa Rica’s and Switzerland’s, willing to see Irish forces deployed on peacekeeping missions *for good causes*, as authorised by the UN.

A few, like Maguire, appear to be advancing something akin to Costa Rica’s approach to neutrality, but even its police-based approach to security, while demilitarized, is not completely unarmed or non-violent. In her contribution to *A Force for Good?*, Karen Devine observes that “Ireland’s colonial and postcolonial experiences, with the derived values of the promotion of self-determination, anti-imperialism, and anti-militarism,” have left their mark on the island nation’s approach to neutrality.<sup>16</sup> But does such a neutrality necessarily entail non-violence? While Devine suggests – rightly, in my view – that “Ireland’s neutrality-based foreign policy approach is such a valuable resource in the realm of international relations and the promotion of peace,”<sup>17</sup> unlike Maguire, she does not seem to assume that peacekeeping (i.e., “the promotion of peace”) means *only* non-violent approaches. After all, she highlights how the vision of Frank Aiken, who was Ireland’s Minister of Foreign Affairs at the UN during

the 1950s–60s, includes a “peacekeeping capacity” that “restrict[s] their armaments to police level.”<sup>18</sup> This association between peacekeeping and policing is a characteristic of Irish neutrality, and it differs from Costa Rica’s neutrality in which the police-based model of security is internally focused instead of outwardly to keep the peace internationally. During the third session that I attended in Dublin last summer, the policing component of peacekeeping by Ireland’s Defence Forces was emphasised several times.

Almost four decades ago, Jerome Connolly wrote that Ireland should “examine politically and morally its own security, that of its neighbours and of the wider world,” and that if it seeks “to defend neutrality it must be as the means to some other goal, such as defence and security.”<sup>19</sup> Serving at the time as Executive Secretary of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace and a member of the Pontifical Commission *Justitia et Pax*, Connolly understandably observed, “A useful point of entry for Irish Churches into the assessment of neutrality, defence and security is through raising questions of justice, taking justice to be the measure of political action.”<sup>20</sup> In his view, justice entails “two fundamental principles”: (1) nonmaleficence (“do no harm” to other states); and (2) “a right to legitimate self-defence, and a duty to protect the innocent and vindicate justice.”<sup>21</sup> He added a correlative duty “to contribute positively to the common good of the community of nations, including the promotion of international security, increasing trust between peoples, arms control and disarmament, and the development of less violent means of defence and conflict handling.”<sup>22</sup>

Anticipating the recommendations of most of the contributors to *A Force for Good?* by over three decades, Connolly did not expect absolute non-violence as part of Irish neutrality, but he did hope for further attention to be given “to explore

13 Derek Scally, “Neutral but fully armed: Switzerland looks to its own defence,” *The Irish Times*, 21 June 2024, <https://www.irishtimes.com/world/europe/2024/06/21/neutrality-kept-switzerland-out-of-world-wars-but-it-was-not-a-synonym-for-antimilitarism/>.

14 John A. Booth, “Costa Rica: Demilitarization and Democratization,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedias* (23 February 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1888>.

15 Editors, “Irish defence policy: Defining neutrality,” *The Irish Times*, 17 June 2023, <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorials/2023/06/17/the-irish-times-view-on-irish-defence-policy-defining-neutrality/>.

16 Karen Devine, “Neutrality: Frank Aiken’s Legacy and Its Lessons for the Conflict in Ukraine,” in *A Force for Good? Reflections on Neutrality and the Future of Irish Defence* (Dublin: Afri, 2022), 8.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 15. The source from which Devine quotes is Aiken’s contribution to the 18<sup>th</sup> Session, 3 October 1963, paragraphs 18–19, 22.

19 Jerome Connolly, “Irish Churches and Irish Neutrality,” *The Furrow* 38, no. 5 (May 1987): 285–286.

20 Ibid., 286.

21 Ibid., 287.

22 Ibid.

systematically the possibilities of alternative non-violent defence, the so-called ‘Civilian Defence’, as a complement to and eventual replacement for conventional military defence.”<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, Irish neutrality, for Connolly, might offer a “more significant contribution to long-term international security, including our own, than any conceivable effort we could make in the direction of conventional military defence.”<sup>24</sup> Curiously, though, while he mentions in passing “social defence,”<sup>25</sup> Connolly, unlike some others, never refers explicitly to policing in connection with peacekeeping and defence.

## IRISH NEUTRALITY AND POLICING

Might policing offer a helpful lens to the discussion about Irish neutrality? In recent decades, the question about a police approach, rather than a military one, has been raised by a number of theological ethicists who espouse pacifism. After the terrorist attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center in New York City and damaged the Pentagon in Washington, DC, on 11 September 2001, many theological ethicists – pacifist or not (myself included) – were critical of the “war on terror” approach upon which the US embarked. Instead, these theological ethicists, along with many peace activists, regarded what happened on 11 September to be “a criminal act” that required a “law enforcement” approach – on an international level – for dealing with its perpetrators.<sup>26</sup>

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Just policing, as I and others have proposed, must include, in accordance with justice, strict constraints on the use of force.

While I agreed with this view, I also was surprised by the pacifists’ call for a police model, especially since policing in the US during the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had become increasingly armed and militarized to “fight” in the so-called “war against crime.” In such a “military” model, the use of force is the “essential” or “inherent” core of policing.<sup>27</sup>

In subsequent years this approach was on full display by the police in Ferguson and St. Louis, Missouri, following the killing of 18-year-old African American Michael Brown by a white police officer in 2014, and by police in other cities following the murder of 46-year-old African American George Floyd by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2020 – giving rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. Not all policing is just policing. There is also unjust policing. After all, who wants to live in a “police state”? So, to appeal simply to policing is insufficient. We must be clear about what kind of policing we have in mind. Even then, the police in most societies, even if they are not as heavily armed as US police, are not entirely non-violent. Just policing, as I and others have proposed, must include, in accordance with justice, strict constraints on the use of force.<sup>28</sup>

Admittedly, policing has been a lacuna in theological ethics, even though violence-related questions, especially regarding war and military service, have occupied Christians’ attention from the very beginning.<sup>29</sup> While there has always been a police *function* (e.g., a night watch, the hue and cry, etc.) in most, if not all, societies, the *institution* of policing as we know it really didn’t exist until Sir Robert Peel’s “New Police” of Metropolitan London in 1829. Indeed, criminologists and other scholars have identified several different

23 Ibid., 290.

24 Ibid., 292.

25 Ibid., 291.

26 Margot Patterson, “Experts Say Bombing Is Risky Strategy,” *National Catholic Reporter* (2 November 2001): 4. One of my teachers, the prominent Christian pacifist Stanley Hauerwas, suggested a police response that he would be more supportive of than war. See Jim Wallis, “Hard Questions for Peacemakers: Theologians of Nonviolence Wrestle with How to Resist Terrorism,” *Sojourners Magazine* 31, no. 1 (2002): 29–33. Also, see Edward LeRoy Long, *Facing Terrorism: Responding as Christians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

27 Vance McLaughlin, *Police and the Use of Force: The Savannah Study* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), 1. See Tobias Winright, “Community Policing as a Paradigm for International Relations,” in *Just War, Not Policing: An Alternative Response to World Violence*, ed. Gerald W. Schlabach (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 130–152.

28 The topic of my PhD dissertation was policing and the use of force; see Tobias Winright, “The Challenge of Policing: An Analysis in Christian Social Ethics” (University of Notre Dame, 2002). For a collection of some of my essays published between 1995 and 2020, see Tobias Winright, *Serve and Protect: Selected Essays on Just Policing* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020).

29 The observation that theological ethicists have neglected policing in their work was made, for example, by Ralph B. Potter, *War and Moral Discourse* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1973), 60. Another early treatment of the topic was made by Edward A. Malloy, *The Ethics of Law Enforcement and Criminal Punishment* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982).





*Gardaí patrol Dublin city centre day after 2023 Dublin riot. Credit William Murphy; WikimediaCommons*

models of policing in different times and places around the world. These range from the military or “crimefighter” model, at one end of the spectrum, to a community or “social peacekeeper” model, at the other end. The latter is supported by John Kleinig, a philosopher of criminal justice ethics.<sup>30</sup> He believes that this model is truer to the historical roots of policing as envisioned by Peel, who, notes David Ascoli, “was stubborn to the point of obsession that his ‘New Police’ should be seen to be free of all taint of militarism.”<sup>31</sup> The police in their blue coats were unarmed; the military in their red coats were armed. According to Kleinig, in the social peacekeeper model of policing, the “instrumental or subservient character is emphasized” concerning the use of force.<sup>32</sup> That is, the use of force by social peacekeeping police is “a last (albeit sometimes necessary) resort rather than their dominant *modus*

*operandi*.”<sup>33</sup> To me, this approach to policing is consonant with Ireland’s distinctive sort of neutrality and its commitment to peacekeeping.

After all, especially in contrast to police in the US, the Garda Síochána (“guardians of the peace”) are relatively unarmed (of course, the police in the US originally were unarmed, too, and didn’t begin to carry firearms until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century). Although the Gardaí, of course, are not perfect (no police or any other human institution is), their approach to social peacekeeping within the villages and cities, on the country roads and the motorways, helps us to imagine what Ireland’s distinctive contribution to international peacekeeping might look like. Space does not permit me to be more than suggestive here, but I believe I have identified a distinctively Irish approach to neutrality as a force for good in the world. Before closing, a loose end and a possible objection need to be addressed.

30 John Kleinig, *The Ethics of Policing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

31 David Ascoli, *The Queen’s Peace: The Origins and Development of the Metropolitan Police, 1829-1979* (London: H. Hamilton, 1979), 89-90.

32 Kleinig, *The Ethics of Policing*, 29.

33 Ibid.

First, the issue of cooperation warrants more investigation. It, too, is a word that frequently surfaces in the current discussion. As Neal G. Jesse observes, “Ireland’s singular stance contains the core element of nonparticipation in military alliances while also promoting activity in international peacekeeping operations, particularly under the auspices of the United Nations.”<sup>34</sup> But what about Ireland’s growing participation in other arrangements that are not exactly martial but are still part of a military alliance, such as NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) scheme? As Connolly asked, “would a change in our neutral status involve us in morally questionable defence arrangements?”<sup>35</sup>

## CONCLUSION: CATHOLIC TRADITION AND NON-VIOLENCE

The Catholic moral tradition recognizes that human decisions and actions – whether individual or communal – often are not straightforward and clear cut. Rather, they often interconnect with others, and the intentions of multiple actors might not be the same. For example, when one agent’s action, which is good, intersects with another agent’s action, which is evil, it is important to distinguish between licit and illicit cooperation in evil.<sup>36</sup> With this in mind, if we consider NATO’s possession of nuclear weapons and its use of them as a deterrent as an evil (after all, Pope Francis has declared that “the use of nuclear weapons, as well as their mere possession, is immoral”<sup>37</sup>), then should Ireland participate in the PfP?

According to the Catholic moral tradition, *formal* cooperation in evil occurs when an agent approves, explicitly or implicitly, of another’s evil action. It is explicit when an agent directly intends to cooperate in

another’s evil action for the end of the act itself. It is implicit when an agent intends to cooperate in evil, not for the end of the evil act, but rather for the end of some concurrent good. Regardless, both explicit and implicit formal cooperation are illicit because it is morally wrong to intend evil, either as means to an end or as an end in itself.

*Material* cooperation occurs when an agent is instrumental in another’s evil action without approving of that action. If the material cooperation is *immediate*, meaning that the agent is causally proximate to the commission of the evil action, then the cooperation is illicit. On the other hand, if the material cooperation is *mediate*, meaning that the agent is causally remote from the commission of the evil action, then cooperation may be licit, provided there is a proportionate reason for the agent to cooperate in the commission of the act. If Ireland’s cooperation with NATO or other EU defence arrangements is material and has sufficient reason, then it may be considered morally permissible. Given the defence needs of Ireland at this time (e.g., cybersecurity, airspace, subsea cables), and if Ireland focuses for its part on peacekeeping that is akin to just policing, I think that such cooperation is morally licit as mediate and material.

But what if not only nuclear weapons are considered evil, but, as Maguire asserts, “Violence is always wrong”? Indeed, her view has been echoed in recent statements by Pope Francis and other Catholics. In a message read to the United Nations Security Council on 14 June 2023, Pope Francis said, “The time has come to say an emphatic ‘no’ to war, to state that wars are not just, but only peace is just.”<sup>38</sup> To achieve such a just peace, the pope advocates nonviolence: “Let us make nonviolence a guide for our actions, both in daily life and in international relations.”<sup>39</sup> In the view of Isabelle de Gaulmyn, a senior editor at *La Croix International* and a former Vatican correspondent, “Catholic doctrine has continued to evolve, moving from a

34 Neal G. Jesse, “Choosing to Go It Alone: Irish Neutrality in Theoretical and Comparative Perspective,” *International Political Science Review* 27, no. 1 (2006): 8.

35 Connolly, “Irish Churches and Irish Neutrality,” 288.

36 T. A. Cavanaugh, “Cooperation: Material and Formal,” in *Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy*, ed. M. Coulter, S. M. Krason, R. S. Myers, and J. A. Varacalli (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007).

37 Quoted in Christopher Wells, “Pope Francis: A world free of nuclear weapons is necessary and possible,” *Vatican News*, 21 June 2022, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-06/pope-francis-a-world-free-of-nuclear-weapons-is-necessary.html>. See Tobias Winright, “What Do Pope Francis’ Statements on Nuclear Weapons Mean for Catholics in the Military?” *Sojourners* (15 November 2017): <https://sojo.net/articles/what-do-pope-francis-statements-nuclear-weapons-mean-catholics-military>.

38 Cindy Wooden, “‘Wars are not just,’ pope tells U.N. Security Council,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 14 June 2023, <https://www.ncronline.org/vatican/vatican-news/wars-are-not-just-pope-tells-un-security-council>.

39 Catholic World News, “‘Let us make nonviolence a guide for our actions,’ Pope says in video,” *Catholic Culture*, 4 April 2023, <https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=58258>.

definition of 'just war,' i.e., morally acceptable, to a refutation of all war, including armed resistance."<sup>40</sup> However, I think her conclusion is incorrect if not premature.

According to Pope Francis, "Peacebuilding through active nonviolence is the natural and necessary complement to the Church's continuing efforts to limit the use of force by the application of moral norms."<sup>41</sup> While the traditional framework of just war theory is under scrutiny in the Church, what the *Catechism* and other magisterial documents refer to as "legitimate defence" remains in place. While such defence now prioritises non-violent methods, contrary to de Gaulmyn, armed resistance is not absolutely prohibited, as long as it is in accordance with the "strict conditions for legitimate defence by military force that require rigorous consideration."<sup>42</sup>

As one pacifist theologian has noted, the just war tradition, when strictly applied and adhered to, is closer to its origins in the Christian tradition to the function of policing.<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that even the Vatican has a police force as well as the Swiss Guard.<sup>44</sup> And even the exemplar of active nonviolence, Mohandas Gandhi, acknowledged that "even under a Government based primarily on non-violence a small police force will be necessary."<sup>45</sup>

One of the main things that attracted my family and me to Ireland is its neutrality. I especially support further honing of its distinctive approach to neutrality with its focus on peacekeeping, conflict resolution, disarmament, and humanitarian aid efforts in connection with the United Nations. As for the use of armed force, as long as it is aligned with a social peacekeeper approach to policing, I think this, too, is congruent with recent Catholic teaching.

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40 Isabelle de Gaulmyn, "Global shift in Catholicism," *La Croix International*, 9 May 2024, <https://international.la-croix.com/opinions/global-shift-in-catholicism>.

41 Pope Francis, "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace," World Day of Peace Message, 1 January 2017, par. 6, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20161208\\_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html).

42 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2309, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P81.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P81.HTM).

43 John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 75.

44 Adam Taylor, "Yes, the pope has a police force," *The Washington Post*, 3 November 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/11/03/yes-the-pope-has-a-police-force-heres-how-the-vatican-lays-down-the-law/>.

45 Quoted in Wolfgang Palaver, "Gandhi's Militant Nonviolence in the Light of Girard's Mimetic Anthropology," *Religions* 12, no. 988 (2021): 14, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12110988>.

# Nature, Consciousness, and the Anthropocene — Security Within an Ecosystem?

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Dr Mark Mellett

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## INTRODUCTION

The sense that as human beings we are separate from nature and the cosmos and the growing divide between science and religion, it is argued, are two root causes of the ecological crisis we now face. As human beings, we are part of nature, have come from the cosmos and will return to the cosmos. Unanswered questions around quantum entanglement, the dual particle and the wave nature of matter as examples, highlight the need for a more sophisticated dialogue between science and religion reframing our understanding of a traditional God with the birth of a new God and a deeper understanding of our spiritual being. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ provides a paradigm through which we can look at human beings and spirituality. He said “[w]e are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience”<sup>1</sup> and “[l]ove is the most powerful and still most unknown energy in the world.”

As love grows with greater consciousness and unity in evolution, so too God emerges as the Omega Point and the future of evolving life. Combining these perspectives with Philip Hefner’s request that “we entertain the hypothesis that love is rooted in the fundamental nature of reality, including the reality we call nature”<sup>2</sup> helps us begin to construct a framework through which to look at evolution, nature and the anthropocene. It invites us to explore the prospects of a future in which rather than thinking we are separate or even could possess the cosmos, instead we accept our interbeing and the binding energy which draws all matter towards a greater wholeness. This is a wholeness in which we embrace an emerging understanding of evolution with a rejuvenated view of religion. This is a wholeness that is empowered by love as a unitive force and the fundamental energy that brings about a greater integration and a deeper understanding of God in the future with a greater consciousness, integrating science and religion with spiritual awareness leading to sustainable development.

There are many reasons to suggest that the world as we know it is at a difficult point, particularly in the context of measurable climate change effects from 2023 supporting a negative outlook:

- Highest daily, monthly and annual global temperature anomaly;
- Highest level of atmospheric carbon for over a million years;
- Highest sea surface temperatures;
- Lowest Antarctic sea-ice extent;
- Greatest gain in sea level rise;
- Highest absorbed solar radiation.

These record breaking statistics have social and security consequences including impacts on public health, migration, destruction of infrastructure and conflict. Understanding how we have come to this point necessitates a broad ranging reflection which encompasses societal, economic, technological, theological and cosmological perspectives.

<sup>1</sup> This is widely attributed to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin for example in: Robert J. Furey, *The Joy of Kindness* (Crossroads, 1993), 138.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture, and Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993)

Firstly, this paper examines the evolution of human beings and society commenting on religion and how the shift from a geocentric to heliocentric perspective intensified the divide between science and religion. Next the paper examines the consequences of negative externalities, largely driven by a governance model where the market does not always tell the ecological truth. At this point it is worth reflecting specifically on some case studies that are inextricably linked with the climate and biodiversity crisis. Finally, I will suggest how a transition from hierarchy to holarchy with an evolution towards the noosphere as a third phase of earth's development after the geosphere and biosphere provides the route to sustainability. A future facilitated by courageous leadership where complexification leads to greater collective consciousness, diversity, interconnectedness and integration bridging the gap between religion and science.

## FROM THE BIG BANG, GEOSPHERE AND BIOSPHERE TO THE EVOLUTION OF THE ANTHROPOCENE.

Evidence of homo sapiens can be traced back to just over 250,000 years while the cosmos has been evolving for over 13.4 billion years. The Big Bang theory posits that the very atoms that provide the energy of life were created in stars. Through the course of millions of years, following the geosphere, the biosphere evolved and so "out of a long history of cosmic cataclysms and mass extinctions, we humans emerge. We are born out of stardust, cousins of daffodils and bonobos."<sup>3</sup> That said, despite the reality that we are a product of the big bang and an evolution towards greater consciousness, today, we think that as human beings it is all about us.

Human life, which has been present for less than 0.002% of the timeline since the Big Bang, has evolved as part of a global ecosystem influenced by religion and, more recently, science and technology, informing behavioural modernity, and adopting norms and principles informing values. Many of these values are internalised, often codified into

law which, in the main, are institutionalised within the state structure and its social systems. Up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, religion and science worked largely hand in hand with the idea of God being intertwined with the understanding of the natural world in which the geocentric model, endorsed by the Catholic Church, had the Earth as the centre of the universe. Galileo however supported the Copernican model of heliocentrism which posited that the Earth and other planets orbit the Sun. His work disrupted prevailing concepts laying the groundwork for a new science, which dismantled aspects of Aristotelian physics that had been integrated into Christian theology for centuries. So it was that a great divide emerged between religion and science which many would say has not been adequately addressed. Religion has failed to keep pace with science and has more in common with history than reality and evolution. Similarly, science has remained absorbed with what is, rather than considering what ought to be.

Today, in most democratic states, institutional arrangements for civil society are built on a separation between Church and state which serves as an impediment to integration. Values are shared or co-created with other states such as in the case of the European Union (EU) and inter-governmental organisations like the United Nations (UN) with frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was out of such a multilateral framework that, over 31 years ago, the Brundtland Commission published *Our Common Future*,<sup>4</sup> one of the first seminal reflections to advocate a holistic approach to the key principle of sustainable development. In the decades that have followed and in the context of the norms and principles that underpin good governance and inform our values, sustainable development should be what some describe as a 'meta-norm,' that is, something for which self-penalisation should occur for non-compliance. There is much similarity between Brundtland's findings and the SDGs which were originally co-sponsored by Ireland in 2015. Addressing the global challenges we face, the SDGs represent a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that

3 Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution and the Power of Love* (New York: Orbis Books, 2013)

4 World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press, 1987)

all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. In short, they are fundamental to the framework for humanitarian action and have remarkable potential as tools for accelerating convergence towards greater integration. That said, as we move towards 2030, where full implementation of the 2030 SDGs is to be achieved, it is clear that by any measure, SDG progress, at only 15%, has stalled.<sup>5</sup>

## SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE -EXISTENTIAL THREATS TO HUMANS

Robert Kagan, in the *Jungle Grows Back*,<sup>6</sup> reflects on progress in terms of global peace and security over the last number of decades and suggests that there is a sense of regression. Complexities like the rise in populism, polarised politics, religious fundamentalism, state sponsored cyber/hybrid attacks and interference add to the general decline in global security weakening societal and political institutions.

Too often the rate of change or deterioration in a particular continuum has two discrete stages, first slowly, then suddenly. Such is the case with climate change and biodiversity loss which may have non-linear impacts. Many argue we are approaching tipping points which present existential threats to the functioning of the Earth's ecosystem with dire consequences for species including humans. A congruence of factors and tipping elements, centred on climate change, biodiversity loss, food and water security<sup>7</sup> serve to make the problem more wicked.

An ecosystem is where the physical characteristics of an area work together with the biodiversity which exists in that physical space to form a "bubble of life."<sup>8</sup> With the growth in the human population and the transition to what is now widely called the

Anthropocene, biodiversity has been eroded and as a consequence, the resilience of ecosystems is reduced. Communal inter-dependencies are disrupted, replaced by rugged individualism.

A key driver to the current state of affairs is that the main economic models have failed to encompass total economic valuation (TEV) and as a consequence the importance of the goods and services we receive from ecosystems have been undervalued. The increasing recognition of the importance of biodiversity has resulted in advocates expanding the term "climate crisis" to "climate and biodiversity crisis." But there remains a lag in our understanding of the biodiversity crisis. Diminishing biodiversity often leads to or contributes to the breakdown of ecosystems which, in turn, further exacerbate the worst impacts of climate collapse.

Short term political decision making and market failure to incorporate the ecological truth or adopt total ecosystem valuations have resulted in negative externalities becoming part and parcel of the Anthropocene. As a result, the anthropogenic activity across the biosphere is resulting in serious second order effects in the geosphere sub elements<sup>9</sup> with destructive impacts for example through elevated greenhouse gas emissions. Anthropogenic activity over the last 50 years has contributed to a greater than 65% loss of vertebrate wildlife<sup>10</sup> while in the last 30 years there has been a 75% reduction in insects including pollinators.<sup>11</sup>

## THE LAWS OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES AND NEGATIVE EXTERNALITIES

The 6th Assessment Report (ARS6)<sup>12</sup> by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

5 Guardian Nigeria, "UNGA 78: Only 15% of SDGs Targets Are on Track, Says UN," The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News, September 18, 2023, <https://guardian.ng/news/unga-78-only-15-of-sdgs-targets-are-on-track-says-un/>.

6 Robert Kagan, *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperilled World* (New York: Knopf, 2018)

7 Jeremy Hance, "Could Biodiversity Destruction Lead to a Global Tipping Point?," The Guardian, January 16, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/radical-conservation/2018/jan/16/biodiversity-extinction-tipping-point-planetary-boundary>.

8 Ciara Murphy, "Rewilding: Biodiversity's Ability to Heal," *Working Notes* 37, no.1 (2023):30 - 39.

9 Geosphere subcomponents: lithosphere (solid Earth), atmosphere (gaseous envelope), hydrosphere (liquid water), and cryosphere (frozen water).

10 Rosamunde Almond et al, *Living Planet Report 2022 - Building a nature positive society* (Switzerland:WWF, 2022)

11 Caspar A. Hallmann et al., "More than 75 Percent Decline over 27 Years in Total Flying Insect Biomass in Protected Areas," ed. Eric Gordon Lamb, PLOS ONE 12, no. 10 (October 18, 2017): e0185809, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185809>.

12 IPCC Working Group II Sixth Assessment Report *Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability - WGII Summary for Policymakers Headline Statements*. (IPCC, 2022), <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/resources/spm-headline-statements/>



Drought causing harvest failure, iStock\_2044697758

(IPCC) shows a strong interplay between the differing elements of the ecosystem and the potential for anthropogenic activity to cause damage. While a comprehensive review of ARS6 is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief examination of four key themes—marine life, carbon emissions, health and human security— is warranted.

### Destruction of the Marine

Despite its importance to our biosphere, our oceans have been mistreated by humans for decades. The premeditated 130 kilotons of subsurface nuclear test explosions; man-made disasters like the Deepwater Horizon spill; the great garbage patches of the Atlantic, Pacific and other oceans; and ocean acidification caused by the excessive absorption of  $\text{CO}_2$  all have lasting and unpredictable consequences.

In Ireland, destruction of the ocean environment is often associated with unsustainable extractive fisheries. Cold Water Coral (CWC) reefs like *lophelia pertusa* flourished, along the break of the Irish continental shelf, 600 metres below the ocean surface. Associated with these reefs were deep water fish species such as orange

roughy, *hoplostethus atlanticus*, which gathered above the corals. These fish have a lifespan of more than 200 years with some individual fish alive today also alive when Darwin sailed on the Beagle. Over recent decades CWC reefs, that took over 8,000 years to form, have been destroyed in minutes by deep water trawling that was perversely incentivised by government grant mechanisms.<sup>13</sup>

### Impact of Carbon Emissions

In pre-industrial times, our ecosystem was essentially balanced in terms of the release and capture of carbon. Today, the annual release of nearly 40 billion metric tonnes<sup>14</sup> of  $\text{CO}_2$ , from the burning of fossil fuels, has resulted in our ecosystem carbon sinks being saturated. In 1958, atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  was at 313 parts per million (ppm)<sup>15</sup> with some estimating this will rise by over 50% to 490 ppm before we reach

13 Naomi Foley, Tom van Rensburg and Claire W. Armstrong, *The Irish Orange Roughy Fishery: An Economic Analysis* (The Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit (SEMRU), National University of Ireland, Galway, 2010) <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/researchsites/semrul/files/10-10.pdf>

14 "Global  $\text{CO}_2$  Emissions by Year 1940-2023," Statista, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/276629/global-co2-emissions/>.

15 Robert Monroe, "The Keeling Curve," The Keeling Curve, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://keelingcurve.ucsd.edu>.





Refugees on an inflatable boat, iStock\_500934402

net-zero. There is an inextricable correlation between increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and temperature rise with implications for human health and security.

### Climate Change and Health

The impact of COVID-19 has been seismic. At least 10,000 virus species have the ability to infect humans but, at present, the vast majority are circulating silently in wild mammals. However, changes in climate and land use will lead to opportunities for viral sharing among previously geographically isolated species of wildlife. Many argue that intensifying pathogen emergence can be attributed to climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, and an increasing rate of human and wildlife interactions.<sup>16</sup>

The Global Hunger Index<sup>17</sup> points to alarming levels of hunger in nine countries with serious levels in a further 34. The World Economic Forum has identified that about a quarter of the world's people face extreme water shortages, primarily caused by the climate

crisis, that are fuelling conflict, social unrest and migration.<sup>18</sup> The World Resources Institute has identified that 17 countries face “extremely high” levels of water stress, while more than two billion people live in countries experiencing “high” water stress<sup>19</sup> with over 800 water related conflicts recorded since 2010.<sup>20</sup>

### Climate Change and Human Security

Over the last 15 years, the world has become less peaceful according to the Global Peace Index produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace in 2023. The previous Global Peace Index stated that 71 countries have deteriorated in peacefulness; with a significant proportion of these countries having a high or very high risk from climate linked incidents such as floods, tropical cyclones or droughts. Earth's climate is more sensitive to human-caused changes than scientists have realised<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Colin J. Carlson et al., “Climate Change Increases Cross-Species Viral Transmission Risk,” *Nature* 607, no. 7919 (July 2022): 555–62.

<sup>17</sup> Klaus von Grebmer, et al., *2023 Global Hunger Index: The Power of Youth in Shaping Food Systems*. (Bonn: Welthungerhilfe, 2023) <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/pdf/en/2023.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2023 18th Edition*. (World Economic Forum: Cologne/Geneva Switzerland, 2023) [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Global\\_Risks\\_Report\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2023.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> “Water Wars: How Conflicts over Resources Are Set to Rise amid Climate Change,” World Economic Forum, September 7, 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/09/climate-change-impact-water-security-risk/>.

<sup>20</sup> “Water Conflict Chronology Timeline List,” accessed August 14, 2024, <http://www.worldwater.org/conflict/list/>.

<sup>21</sup> James E Hansen et al., “Global Warming in the Pipeline,” *Oxford Open Climate Change* 3, no. 1, January 1, 2023.

with a general acceptance that it will be 1.5°C hotter than it was in pre-industrial times within the 2020s and 2°C hotter by 2050. By 2070, extremely hot zones could make up almost 20 percent of the land, which means that a third of humanity could potentially be living in uninhabitable conditions.<sup>22</sup> The effects of climate change and environmental degradation will intensify food and water insecurity for poor countries, increase migration, precipitate new health challenges, and contribute to biodiversity loss.

The three brief case studies below are part of the mounting world evidence of climate change induced human security challenges. According to the IPCC, the additional pressures brought by climate change will increase vulnerability and the risk of violent inter/intra-state conflict.<sup>23</sup>

### **Migration**

The Irish Defence Forces have seen at first hand the interplay between climate change and security. In 2015, following a courageous decision by the then Taoiseach Enda Kenny, the Naval Service undertook deployments to the Mediterranean, initially as part of a bilateral response with Italy to address the growing irregular migration route across central Mediterranean. Some of those embroiled in the crisis were forced into irregular migration because of climate change. In the following years, the Navy rescued over 20,000 people, while witnessing hundreds of people drown and recovering many bodies. In one case, a fourteen-year-old boy was murdered just before rescue because he dared to complain that family members were suffocating below the decks of the overloaded craft.

### **Tri Border Region Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger and Western Africa**

The practical impacts of climate change and security is acutely apparent at the porous borders of the Sahel, particularly in places such as the Tri Border area of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, where traditional ways of living that have sustained communities are now jeopardised. For thousands of years, the 'open access' property rights regime facilitated practices such as pastoralism, enabling nomadic movement of Fulani Herders and their animals in concert with settled Dogan farmers. Declining resources associated with climate change coupled with more prevalent state and private property regimes have served to exacerbate tensions between the Dogans and Fulani.

### **Small Island Developing States**

The loss of sovereignty and sovereign rights in small island developing states (SIDS) is a third example of the impact of climate breakdown on human security through sea level rises. SIDS are home to 65 million people living on island groups made up of 38 United UN Member States and 20 Non-UN Member/Associate Members that are located in three regions: the Caribbean; the Pacific; and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas. They are particularly exposed to hazards such as sea-level rise, tropical cyclones, marine heatwaves, and ocean acidification, all of which are projected to intensify as global temperatures increase.<sup>24</sup>

22 Renée Cho, "Climate Migration: An Impending Global Challenge", *State of the Planet*, May 13, 2021, <https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2021/05/13/climate-migration-an-impending-global-challenge/>.

23 IPCC Working Group III, *Mitigation of Climate Change - WGIII Summary for Policymakers Headline Statements*. (IPCC, 2022), [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGIII\\_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf)

24 Adelle Thomas et al., "Climate Change and Small Island Developing States," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 45, no. Volume 45, 2020 (October 17, 2020): 1–27.

## THE NOOSPHERE: AN EVOLUTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY WITH NATURE AND THE COSMOS

The Anthropocene, as an era, may soon equate to an insignificant fraction in the evolution of the cosmos. I have argued that our current governance model is resulting in outcomes that are leading to the destruction of the ecosystem. The implications for life as we know it on earth are catastrophic. That said, many have argued that technology in areas such as renewable energy and other decarbonisation opportunities will mitigate the worst impacts of climate change. However, the deteriorating trends (articulated above) suggest that such a future requires a broader, more integrated, connected, and comprehensive institutional approach. An approach that incorporates principles around sustainable development; principles we so far have failed to embrace. Quantum entanglement and non-locality connectedness challenge classical notions of reality that cannot be explained; supporting a need for a more inclusive interdisciplinary dialogue beyond just science. While science seems to encourage an open and, to some degree, growing mindset, religion in the main has remained in the doldrums clutching outdated doctrine with a largely closed mindset. Consequently, while technology has connected us around the earth, our planetary spirit remains fractured with institutions struggling to keep pace with the rapid rise of technology, the politicisation of religion, and the impact of globalisation on both individuals and society. A science community that is satisfied to say what is, yet reticent to consider what ought to be, is also culpable. This missing values element, at the heart of so many of the challenges facing civil society, is inextricably linked to consciousness. While religion is fundamental to consciousness with a form-giving energy of wholeness, its reticence to fully embrace evolution allows the separation with the world of science and technology to grow.

Probably the most influential classification of how to relate science and religion has been developed by Ian Barbour<sup>25</sup> who proposes a fourfold classification; conflict, independence,

dialogue, and integration. Ilia Delio argues that the most useful perspective is one of integration noting how some like Teilhard saw computer technology as a potential means to a new level of consciousness called the noosphere or “mental sphere”, where humans could be more united and more unified by the attracting force of energy he called love. Teilhard, who died in 1955, would not have known how connected the world was to become through the world wide web, the internet of things and artificial intelligence. That said he clearly had a sense of what could happen. He predicted that increased communications would “link us all in a sort of ‘etherised’ universal consciousness” and that someday “astonishing electronic computers”<sup>26</sup> would provide mankind with new tools for thinking. Teilhard suggested a ‘giant human organism’ would evolve giving rise to even greater complexity with a blossoming of the noosphere in a form of super-consciousness. He argued that the noosphere as the next phase of human evolution brings together the geosphere (inanimate matter) and biosphere (biological life) growing towards an even greater integration and unification, culminating in the Omega Point, merging nature, human consciousness, love and God in the future. Delio and others suggest that this deepening of humanity through a new level of global consciousness is essential for the forward movement of evolution into a sustainable future. With a rise in ultra-humanity through a consciousness of our ‘interbeing,’ an awareness that we are not separate, but part of the ecosystem, part of one large interweaving of life becomes normalised as a new purpose. In such a state, society will ensure the ecologically acceptable influence of humankind on nature and the rationalisation of human needs. It is this paradigm through which we could address the challenge of climate change.

Drawing on these concepts, Ilia Delio’s *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being* provides us with an extraordinary reflection on which to think about the future. Delio says “[w]e all have a part to play in this unfolding Love; we are wholes within wholes; persons within persons; religions within religions. We are one body, and

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25 Ian G. Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1990).

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26 David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla, “Origins and Attributes of the noosphere Concept,” *Whose Story Wins* (RAND Corporation, 2020), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26549.9>.

we seek one mind and heart so that the whole may become more whole, more personal and unified in love.”<sup>27</sup> By embracing the concept of the noosphere at this critical point in human existence I make the case for a reframing of how the climate and biodiversity crisis, and indeed growing regional security crisis, are viewed.

Positively, the Anthropocenic paradigm, with all its shortcomings, has also given rise to conditions that may enable final fusion of the noosphere. Shoshitaishvili argues that by building on our recognition of the divergent paradigms of the anthropocene and the noosphere we can begin the essential process of reconciling them and thus developing steady global perspectives on uncertain worldwide change.<sup>28</sup>

**LEADERSHIP AS A DRIVER FROM THE ANTHROPOCENE TO THE NOOSPHERE AND GREATER SECURITY**

Notwithstanding the grave security challenges and sense of regression already described, and accepting that there are identified constraints such as cyber interference, and the inconsistent access to the internet; key tenets of the noosphere have already started.

These include the deepening of humanity towards ultra-humanity; a new level of consciousness; greater unity and unification in love; and a new evolutionary stage in the development of the biosphere. What is unclear however is how, against the backdrop of the existential climate and biodiversity threats emerging, can momentum towards the new level of consciousness be progressed in a manner which enables acceleration of the balancing of human and nature interactions.

Progress towards the noosphere as the next phase of human evolution requires leadership, mobilising civil society, market and government social systems not just nationally but also at a global scale. It also requires leveraging the technological base to the maximum, something every single individual can do. Similarly, at state level, Ireland and its institutions can contribute to that leadership recognising that ultimately this leadership must be dispersed across a multilateral framework leveraging Global Citizenry<sup>29</sup> institutions. Ireland’s social systems have a charisma that underpins a reputation for doing good. A reputation that is inextricably linked with values, values that have been forged in a furnace of famine, migration and more.

Here I propose five key ways in which the realisation of the noosphere might be advanced:

**Five ways to promote the Noosphere**

-  **Promote multilateralism, collaboration, interdependency and wholeness**
-  **Advocate for and Institutionalise arrangements for Loss and Damage**
-  **Revitalise the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
-  **Promote innovation, leveraging of our technological base for greater connectivity**
-  **Drive diversity and inclusion and gender equality**

Figure 1: Five ways to promote the Noosphere

27 Ilia Delio, 2013  
28 Boris Shoshitaishvili, “From Anthropocene to noosphere: The Great Acceleration,” *Earth’s Future* 9, no. 2 (2021).

29 Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, *Global Citizens 2030 Ireland’s International Talent and Innovation Strategy*, (Dublin: Government of Ireland, 2024).





Refugee camp, iStock\_157565994

### Promote Multilateralism and Collaboration as a Means for Wholeness.

Four hundred years ago, the English poet John Donne in *For whom the Bell Tolls* wrote, “[n]o man is an island, entire of itself.”<sup>30</sup> Donne’s key message is that we are interdependent in so many ways. Today, in a world of massive change and knowledge generation, when we are physically experiencing the effects of climate breakdown, we have never been more interdependent. Either we will go into the future together, or we will die together in a desert of our making. Nobody and no country can be neutral in the face of the existential threat facing us. Ireland can play a pivotal role, providing appropriate leadership, for example, integrating differing religious perspectives and encouraging a new dialogue between science and religion.

### Advocate For and Institutionalise Arrangements for Loss and Damage

One of the greatest perversities associated with the extreme impacts of climate change is that many of the communities least responsible for climate change bear the greatest impact from its effects. Ireland has

experience in the Mediterranean migrant crisis treating symptoms of migration. Mitigation and adaptation at source reduce the risks of forced irregular migration through, for example, loss and damage arrangements. Ireland’s competency in setting the agenda in this area was established by Minister Eamon Ryan and his officials who shaped the outcomes of the 27th UN Climate Conference (COP27) helping establish a new loss and damage fund (LDF). COP28 built on this with the operationalisation of the fund, receipt of several pledges and more with secretarial support from the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Key aspects of the LDF include locating the fund in the World Bank for at least four years with an aspiration for pledges to exceed \$1 trillion by 2050.<sup>31</sup> Initiatives such as the LDF provide a path for the deepening of humanity towards ultra-humanity.

### Revitalise Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are fundamental to the framework for humanitarian action and have remarkable

<sup>30</sup> John Donne, “No Man is an Island”, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, and several steps in my Sickness*, 1624.

<sup>31</sup> Fatemeh Bakhtiari and Mattias Söderberg, *Loss and damage at COP28: A historic step forward for loss and damage*, (UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre, 2023), <https://unepccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/loss-and-damage-at-cop28-web.pdf>

potential as tools for accelerating convergence towards the noosphere. The fact that such platforms exist offers encouragement for the SDGs and an opportunity to expand utility to accelerate towards the noosphere.

### Promote Innovation and Leveraging of our Technological Base for Greater Connectivity

Earth's history points to five mass extinction events of biological organisms. When we think of the last two in particular, most will agree that the reptiles and dinosaurs were not responsible for their demise, they did not know they were about to become extinct and even if they did, they could not have done anything about it. The noosphere recognises that humans are different with an extraordinary intelligence driving the growth in automation, robotics, internet of things and artificial intelligence. Innovation and artificial intelligence must be nested within a values-based structure that bridges the religion science divide while stimulating positive change, demanding new ways of thinking.

### Drive Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality

Key to a new dialogue between science and religion is a need to continue to lead in diversity, inclusion and gender equality across many levels. Advocacy for inclusivity and equity between the sciences, religions as well at the levels of government, civil society and market levels all require a greater sharing of wealth and technology transfer in line with the institutions of the LDF. Humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts should be actioned in a comprehensive and integrated manner seeking to mix state with enterprise, higher education institutions and civil society actors. One of the strongest indicators of intra- and inter-State violence is the gender gap. Mitigating and eliminating the gender gap across key areas such as education, religion, politics and employment is fundamental to accelerating towards the noosphere.

## CONCLUSION

Delio points out that for so long we have kept love outside the limits of nature, as if it is a peculiarly human emotion. While it is easy to be annoyed by love-talk, during which precious time is being wasted with sentimental silliness, “[y]et, apart from love we are not at home in the cosmos – literally.”<sup>32</sup> Love, however, must be viewed as the very energy that attracts, from quarks and leptons at the beginning of the cosmos to this very day where complexification creates greater connectedness. At every level, we all must strive for a more comprehensive understanding of love while striving for greater wholeness recognising interdependencies. Understanding love as God consciousness, a love that generates new life, urging cosmic life towards greater unity in love is a fundamental characteristic of the noosphere, while bridging the gap between religion and science.

We live in an extraordinary time where the rate of change on so many fronts, including climate and security, is akin to what one experiences in wartime and yet we try to act as if we are at peace. Clausewitz said, in war “everything is simple, but even the simplest thing is difficult.” It is a time for courageous leadership at every level from citizen to global citizenry, social institutions across state, regional and intergovernmental levels. The SDGs need to be revitalised. Diversity, inclusion, gender equality and associated values together with multilateral frameworks must be codified, actioned and recognised so that civil society and market organisations together with states promote wholeness. Equity and justice must be promoted in frameworks such as LDF.

Much that underpins our social institutions has been rooted in religion, today however this has been replaced by technology and AI with nobody really at the helm and a market driven ethos failing to tell the ecological truth driving ecological collapse. There remains an extraordinary opportunity to bridge the science religion gap, accelerating consciousness, interbeing and the noosphere

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32 Ilia Delio, “2015: The Year of Love”, *Global Sisters Report*, December 13, 2014 <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/speaking-god/spirituality/2015-year-love-17406>

as appropriate institutions are enabled with a more holistic sense of the evolution of the cosmos. This requires partnering, collaborating and multilateralism, unlocking our unprecedented knowledge. George Bernard Shaw said, “we are made wise, not by the recollection of our past, but by our responsibility for our future.”<sup>33</sup> Internalising human love within nature requires a more sophisticated understanding of how love, as an attracting energy, enables wholeness, helping eliminate externalities. The eyes of the future are looking back at us and they are praying that we see beyond our time and strive for a love of nature built on a wholeness that is cosmos centric. Where norms like sustainability underpin a consciousness and a transcendental vision of God, a coming of God in the future as we evolve towards the Omega Point. A point where greater convergence of science and religion, revitalised spirituality and our place as part of the ecosystem, where our security is further strengthened in the reality we call nature.

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We live in an extraordinary time where the rate of change on so many fronts, including climate and security, is akin to what one experiences in wartime and yet we try to act as if we are at peace.

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33 John Schwab, “Beautiful Quotes By George Bernard Shaw,” *Inspiring Alley : Quotes, Thoughts & Readings* (blog), May 7, 2020, <https://www.inspiringalley.com/george-bernard-shaw-quotes/>.

# Overturning the Economics of War to Deliver a Co-operative Future and Peaceful Green Prosperity

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## WHERE WE ARE AT

Wars in Ukraine and Gaza are fuelling a new arms race. We are in a new nuclear arms race too,<sup>1</sup> not to mention drones, AI and space wars. We are currently spending more than \$2.4 trillion on the global military, and the amounts keep rising every year.<sup>2</sup> At least a quarter of global military spending goes to arms and military service companies.<sup>3</sup> For some countries, like top military spenders US and UK, more than half of national military spending goes to private military contractors, such as Lockheed Martin and BAE Systems.<sup>4</sup>

The war in Ukraine has also led to NATO calling for its members to extend military budgets further to 2% or more of GDP – had this been in place between 2021 and 2028, it would have resulted in an estimated total military expenditure of \$11.8 trillion and a collective military carbon footprint of 2 billion metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e).<sup>5</sup> In other words, totally incompatible with climate targets and net zero.

Unless we change course, in the six years to 2030, the global military will receive more than \$14 trillion while necessary climate finance to achieve the UNFCCC 2030 targets remains severely underfunded. At the moment, public climate finance – all government expenditure on climate – was estimated globally to be less than one sixth of military spending.<sup>6</sup> As for the pledge by the developed countries under the Paris

Agreement to finance climate actions in developing countries, the ratio is even worse. The richest countries (categorised as Annex II in the UN climate talks) are spending (\$7.3 trillion between 2013 and 2020) 30 times as much on their armed forces as they spend on providing climate finance (\$243.9 billion) for the world's most vulnerable countries.<sup>7</sup>

But some, including the arms industry and its lifeblood, the oil industry, are more than happy with this status quo, making obscene profits while polluting and destroying the only habitat we have. The top 100 arms companies in the world made \$592 billion in arms sales in 2021, the year before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The top 20 alone accounts for two thirds of the total and come from just a handful of countries: US, China, Russia, UK, France and Italy. The global military carbon footprint, including emissions from both the military and the arms industry (but excluding emissions from conflict or post-conflict reconstruction), is estimated to be 5.5% of annual global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, more than emissions from civilian aviation and shipping combined.<sup>8</sup>

## THE WORLD IS AT THE TIPPING POINT

Nearly all past and present IPCC climate scientists now believe the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target will not be met and almost half believe the average global temperatures will rise to at least 3°C above pre-industrial levels this century.<sup>9</sup> Even the head of UNFCCC, a rather conservative organisation by its track record, issued an urgent warning in early 2024 that humanity has two years left to 'save the world'.<sup>10</sup>

1 François Diaz-Maurin, 'The US and China Re-Engage on Arms Control. What May Come Next', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (blog), 15 November 2023, <https://thebulletin.org/2023/11/the-us-and-china-re-engage-on-arms-control-what-may-come-next/>

2 Nan Tian et al., 'Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2023' (SIPRI, April 2024), <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2024/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2023>.

3 Xiao Liang et al., 'The SIPRI Top 100 Arms-Producing and Military Services Companies, 2022', SIPRI Fact Sheet (SIPRI, December 2023), <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2023/sipri-fact-sheets/sipri-top-100-arms-producing-and-military-services-companies-2022>.

4 Stephen Semler, 'Biden Sends Stimulus Checks to Military Contractors Instead of Ordinary People', *Substack newsletter, Polygraph* (blog), 30 December 2021, <https://stephensemmler.substack.com/p/biden-sends-stimulus-checks-to-military>.

5 Ho-Chih Lin et al., 'Climate Crossfire: How NATO's 2% Military Spending Targets Contribute to Climate Breakdown', *Tipping Point North South*, *Stop Wapenhandel and Transnational Institute*, 2023, <https://transformdefence.org/publication/climate-crossfire-how-natos-2-military-spending-targets-contribute-to-climate-breakdown/>; Carbon dioxide equivalents (CO<sub>2</sub>e) are a measure of the effect of different greenhouse gases (GHGs) on the climate, where other GHGs (e.g. methane) are compared to a unit of CO<sub>2</sub>.

6 Ho-Chih Lin and Deborah Burton 'Stockholm+50 and Global Military Emissions', *Tipping Point North South*, 2022, <https://transformdefence.org/publication/stockholm50-and-global-military-emissions/>

7 Mark Akkerman et al., 'Climate Collateral: How military spending accelerates climate breakdown', *Transnational Institute, Stop Wapenhandel and Tipping Point North South*, 2022, <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/climate-collateral>

8 Stuart Parkinson and Linsey Cottrell 'Estimating the Military's Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions', *Scientists for Global Responsibility*, <https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/estimating-military-s-global-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

9 Damian Carrington, 'World's Top Climate Scientists Expect Global Heating to Blast Past 1.5C Target', *The Guardian*, 8 May 2024, sec. Environment, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/may/08/world-scientists-climate-failure-survey-global-temperature>.

10 "Two Years to Save the World: Simon Stiell at Chatham House | UNFCCC", <https://unfccc.int/news/two-years-to-save-the-world-simon-stiell-at-chatham-house>.





Credit: iStock-1744749337

It is not the ‘averages’ that damage or even destroy a society. Rather, it is the frequency and intensity of ‘extremes’ that can destroy a civilisation. Even at 1.5°C of heating, which the world is currently experiencing,<sup>11</sup> the climate extremes are making many places in the world (especially in the global south) inhospitable, whether by unprecedented and prolonged flooding, heatwaves or drought. Professor Tim Lenton, the world’s leading expert on planetary tipping points, warned, “if we carry on the way we are going, I can’t see this civilisation lasting the end of this century.”<sup>12</sup> When global heating exceeds 3°C, the physical laws of thermodynamics lead us to expect that most, if not all, societies will be hit by climate extremes so hard and so frequently that there will barely be time to recover, let alone expect economic growth. Simply put, there is no meaningful local or global economy if the planet is in meltdown and humanity is left to fire-fight extreme weather. Our current fossil-fuel-driven neoliberal capitalism is – on most counts – on its last legs. Beyond 2°C of heating, the survival of our civilisation will be on the line.

11 Mark Poynting, ‘World’s First Year-Long Breach of Key 1.5C Warming Limit’, *BBC News*, 8 February 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-68110310>

12 ‘Extinction Rebellion (XR) on TikTok’, TikTok, accessed 4 June 2024, <https://www.tiktok.com/@extinctionrebellionxr/video/7067669420750998789>

## OVERTURNING THE ECONOMICS OF WAR

### Why we must kickstart degrowth and place the military economy in the degrowth narrative

The world has been following alarmingly close to the trendlines predicted by the Club of Rome’s 1972 book, *Limits to Growth*, which pointed to an eventual collapse of global civilisation.<sup>13</sup> We urgently need to ‘degrow’ until our economy reaches a steady state where the extraction and replenishment rates of resources are at equilibrium, bringing our society to co-exist harmoniously within itself and with nature,<sup>14</sup> and it will be too late if we do not start now.<sup>15</sup>

Degrowth is a planned and democratic reduction of production and consumption in rich countries to lower environmental pressures and inequalities while improving

13 Ian Sutton, ‘Limits and Beyond: No More Growth’, Substack newsletter, *Net Zero by 2050* (blog), 2 June 2022, <https://netzero2050.substack.com/p/limits-and-beyond>.

14 Hubert Buch-Hansen and Iana Nesterova, ‘Less and More: Conceptualising Degrowth Transformations’, *Ecological Economics* 205 (1 March 2023): 107731.

15 Charles Fletcher et al., ‘Earth at Risk: An Urgent Call to End the Age of Destruction and Forge a Just and Sustainable Future’, *PNAS Nexus* 3, no. 4 (1 April 2024): page106.

people's well-being.<sup>16</sup> So, if all areas of human activity must decarbonise and be considered for degrowth, why are we letting the oil-dependent militaries follow a different path? Economic anthropologist Jason Hickel made this point: "We can reduce resource use in rich nations quite dramatically while still meeting human needs at a high standard by scaling down forms of economic activity that are socially less crucial. SUVs, fast fashion, private jets, advertising, planned obsolescence, the military industrial complex... there are huge chunks of production that are organised primarily around corporate power and elite consumption and are irrelevant to human needs."<sup>17</sup>

Applying degrowth to the military means raising necessary questions about defence in this climate-changing era. A post-growth zero-carbon world demands we reduce military spending to sustainable levels and fully decarbonise our militaries, with less cash for their big-ticket hardware, overseas bases, war and, by extension, much fewer emissions. This is not about delivering 'green ways to conduct war'- weaponry and war will always kill living beings, will always destroy and pollute environments. Instead, this is the starting point for much needed, if challenging, discussions that can lead us to a paradigm shift in geopolitics.

The IPCC 2022 '*Mitigation of Climate Change*' report offers up routes to degrow the economy: *avoid* (by consuming less), *shift* (by substituting one for another), and *improve* (by greening the existing).<sup>18</sup> We applied this model to the military economy.<sup>19</sup>

**Avoid** locking into expensive and gas-guzzling weapon systems. While the imperative now is to avoid retail therapy and civilian flights, the global military has a free pass to buy and operate as many big-ticket gas guzzlers (e.g., F-35s and Eurofighter Typhoons) as it wants,

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This is not about delivering 'green ways to conduct war'- weaponry and war will always kill living beings, will always destroy and pollute environments.

with no questions asked by politicians. When the whole world is expected to reach carbon net-zero by 2050, isn't it absurd that the F-35 will still be the backbone of the US Air Force (and many other national air forces) at that time, flying above and laughing at us at a rate of 1 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per 80km?<sup>20</sup>

**Avoid** military aggressions. After the humanitarian (and climate) disasters of invasions by some of the top military spenders into Iraq, Yemen, Ukraine and Gaza, to name but a few in recent times, wars are incompatible and an 'absurdity' in the new zero-carbon world.<sup>21</sup>

**Substitute** "great power competition" with "non-offensive defence". Defence should be about our collective human safety, not power projection and exploitation. Whichever nationality, friend or foe, we all share the same planet we call home. Cooperation is the only way forward for humanity to deal with the climate crisis.

**Substitute** the defence industry with the green economy. Many skills in the high-tech defence industry are interchangeable with those required by the clean-energy industry. The continued growth of weapon production will only lead humanity to doom, either before or during full-on climate chaos.

**Improve** (by electrifying) the existing defensive weapons while gradually getting rid of offensive weapons, including nuclear weapons. We may never be able to get rid of all offensive weapons but if we are well protected by defensive weapons, isn't it reasonable to expect sometime in the zero-carbon future

16 Timothée Parrique, 'Sufficiency Means Degrowth' (blog), <https://timotheeparrique.com/sufficiency-means-degrowth/>

17 Jason Hickel, 'Degrowth Is About Global Justice', Green European Journal, January 2022, <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/degrowth-is-about-global-justice/>.

18 Priyadarshi R. Shukla et al., eds., *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, 2022.

19 Ho-Chih Lin and Deborah Burton, "Placing the Military in the Degrowth Narrative" 2023 *Degrowth Journal*, 21 August 2023.

20 To put this figure into context 1 tCO<sub>2</sub>e would be similar to driving 5,000km in a petrol car (varies depending on type of car etc) and the emissions per capita in Ireland in 2023 was 10.4 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e/person.

21 'Guterres in Ukraine: War Is "Evil" and Unacceptable, Calls for Justice | UN News', 28 April 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1117132>.

that we should start the conversation around how *few* offensive weapons we actually need to not just to feel safe but be literally safe?

**Improve** our (energy, transport and health) infrastructure to make them more resilient to crises and disasters in the understanding that when *human safety* is protected, it follows that *national security* is also secured.

**Green New Deals are an expression of degrowth – and the military must be a part of GND thinking because we need *peaceful green prosperity***

Alternative narratives to the growth agenda are encouragingly becoming mainstream; a leading idea in the US, UK and elsewhere is a Green New Deal (GND), an initiative to bring about green prosperity by transforming the economy, creating good and green jobs while at the same time tackling the climate emergency. It's a monumental, difficult task across myriad industries and areas of human activity. Nevertheless, notably absent in present day GND thinking is an awareness about the role of the world's militaries and their significant (and profoundly under-reported) contribution to climate change.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, high military spending inhibits economic and social development.

In societies with big military budgets, there is a huge dividend to be reaped if there is enough political will to take the military into account in the GND and convert a significant part of the arms industry to other socially and environmentally beneficial industries, such as clean tech and green energy. Current defence policies and budgets of all major economies (primarily G20) are both socially and environmentally incompatible with the spirit of Green New Deals. Military spending is the least effective way to create jobs; for example, spending on health care, education, clean energy, and infrastructure instead of 'War on Terror' would have created a net increase of 1.3 million jobs in the US.<sup>23</sup>

The \$2.4tn military economy is maintained by an enormous workforce that will continue to pump substantial amounts of GHG emissions unless a GND that includes actions to cut and divert military spending is enacted. This could be a major source of funds for urgently needed and under-invested areas, such as universal healthcare and the wholesale electrification of the economy. It also leads to 'conversion' – converting the skills of workers in the arms industry towards equally highly skilled jobs in a sustainable low carbon economy by 'Just Transition'.<sup>24</sup> It is estimated that, compared to the military economy, 40% more jobs would be created in infrastructure or the clean energy industry, 100% more jobs in healthcare and 120% more jobs in education<sup>25</sup> for the same amount of spending.

Ever-mounting evidence shows that people and the planet get far greater value for money when we scale back the fossil-fuel reliant and carbon-intensive militaries of the world and invest that money into a *peaceful, equitable, green economy*. *Green New Deal Plus* (GND Plus), an economic proposal developed by our organisation 'Tipping Point North South', therefore argues the need to include the military and the arms industry in all GND thinking and is a way to bring GND thinking to meet the hidden reality of military carbon footprint.<sup>26</sup>

The G7 nations (especially the UK and US) are historically responsible for disproportionate levels of GHG emissions. A GND Plus is an opportunity for the G7 and the rest of the advanced economies to convert their arms sector into a green jobs revolution domestically while also diverting their military spending to support global climate justice – reparations for those injustices through transfers of finance and resources to support energy transitions and climate adaptation internationally.

22 Ho-Chih Lin and Deborah Burton, 'Indefensible: The True Cost of the Global Military to Our Climate and Human Security', *Tipping Point North South*, 2020, <https://transformdefence.org/publication/indefensible/>

23 Heidi Garrett-Peltier, 'War Spending and Lost Opportunities', *Costs of War*, 2019. <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2019/March%202019%20Job%20Opportunity%20Cost%20of%20War.pdf>

24 Ho-Chih Lin and Deborah Burton, 'Military Emissions, Military Spending & Green New Deals', *Tipping Point North South*, 2022, <https://transformdefence.org/publication/military-emissions-military-spending-green-new-deals/>

25 'Employment Impact | Costs of War', *The Costs of War*, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/economic/economy/employment>.

26 'Green New Deal Plus', *Tipping Point North South*, 19 June 2019, <https://transformdefence.org/transformdefence/economics/green-new-deal-plus/>





Credit: iStock-1347000353

Annual climate adaptation costs in developing countries are estimated at \$70 billion.<sup>27</sup> This figure is expected to reach \$140-300 billion in 2030 and \$280-500 billion in 2050. These are tiny sums in comparison to what is spent annually by the big military spenders. \$70bn is 6% of what G7 spends annually on military (a ratio of 1:16) and 3% of the annual global military spending (1:30). Simply by reallocating a few cents per dollar military spend, the top spenders would have enough money to fully fund vulnerable developing countries to adapt to the climate-changed world.

### **Ambitious and equitable – a route to driving down military spending and redirecting to ‘human safety’ needs**

The UN is calling for a climate finance increase from billions to trillions<sup>28</sup> – it says we need \$2.4 trillion every year from now on to address climate change. Global military spending is also \$2.4 trillion per annum. Evidently, the money is there for militaries but not for the world’s most climate vulnerable nations, which have

done absolutely nothing to create the climate chaos era we are now in. Furthermore, military spending positively correlates to military carbon footprint – the more you spend on big ticket weaponry, the more the emissions.<sup>29</sup>

We need concrete routes by which to start to reverse this climate injustice.

*The Five Percent Formula proposal* is a proposal to drive down military spending via a two-part mechanism to achieve major, year-on-year cuts to global military spending over 10 years and beyond in order to fund human safety needs and thus deliver a green peace dividend.<sup>30</sup> It aims to get back to that post-cold war ‘Gorbachev’ era of annual military spending of \$1 trillion from the current excessive \$2 trillion, and additionally to implement a ‘5% threshold rule’ linking reductions in military spending to the annual rate of change in GDP.

The first-part calls on the top 20 military spenders (who account for 85%) to cut their military spending by 5% each year for 10 years. This would see a compound cut to annual

27 United Nations Environment Programme (2021). Adaptation Gap Report 2020. Nairobi, <http://www.unep.org/resources/adaptation-gap-report-2020>

28 ‘From Billions to Trillions: Setting a New Goal on Climate Finance’, UNFCCC, <https://unfccc.int/news/from-billions-to-trillions-setting-a-new-goal-on-climate-finance>.

29 Ho-Chih Lin et al, ‘Climate Crossfire’.

30 ‘The Five Percent Proposal’, *Tipping Point North South*, 6 June 2019, <https://transformdefence.org/the-five-percent-proposal/>

global military spending by 40% after the first decade and could deliver \$960 billion in total to be redirected for human safety needs. After the first decade, part-two of the formula kicks in as we call upon all nations to adopt the 5% threshold rule, where the % change of military spend in a given year is determined by the previous year's rate of change in GDP, less 5 percentage points. For example, 2% GDP growth (+2%) means a 3% cut to the annual defence budget, and 1% GDP degrowth (-1%) leads to a 6% spending cut. This way, nations will sustainably degrow their military economy, such that every country reduces their military spending in a way that is faster and deeper than their overall economy.

\$960bn in total savings in annual global military spending over the first decade, could be redirected to fund:<sup>31</sup> international climate finance or global biodiversity conservation fund at \$100bn p.a. for 9 years, or WHO at \$2bn p.a. for 480 years, or UN disaster risk reduction at \$500mn p.a. for 1920 years, or UN peacekeeping at current \$5bn p.a. for 192 years.

There is certainly money available to fund critical human safety needs.

And there is one more funding source for the money pot – in addition to runaway military spending, there are excess profits made by the arms industry, it is imperative for us to have the political will to rein in it's profiteering.

### Excess profits tax on the arms industry

As we write this, the world has been witnessing Israel's indiscriminate carpet bombing in Gaza. It is the most destructive of this century and among the worst in history with respect to the size and density of the area, the built environment and the population. So much ammunition has been used that the total explosive yield was compared to multiple nuclear bombs on an area a quarter of the size of London but as densely populated.<sup>32</sup> All this destruction is not possible without the

ammunition supplied by Israel's allies. Gaza, Ukraine and many other such victims of wars, be they past, present or future, have the highly profitable global arms industry as the key enabler.

The current global military spending is a \$2.4 trillion feeding trough for arms companies in a sector infamous for corruption (an estimated 40% of all trade corruption) and with scant regard for human rights.<sup>33</sup> Arms companies, by definition, profit from the human, environmental and climate destruction of war. Moreover, many of these companies also profit by securing government contracts as part of the militarisation of emergency response to conflict and climate disasters. Arms companies can *never* make good the profound cost to humanity that they have caused over many decades. But the time has certainly come to put them in the climate polluter and profiteer frame. It is time for them to pay up.

We estimate that a global excess profits tax on arms companies could deliver \$30 billion dollars every year to fund international climate finance.<sup>34</sup> In times of war, an additional punitive war profiteers' tax could deliver considerably more. Had this war profiteers' tax been applied in 2024 (for Ukraine and Gaza wars), an extra \$52bn would have brought the 2024 annual total to \$82 billion. This tax alone would be more than four fifths of the pledged (but never fully fulfilled) \$100 billion a year climate finance by developed countries to developing countries.

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Gaza, Ukraine and many other such victims of wars, be they past, present or future, have the highly profitable global arms industry as the key enabler.

31 Ho-Chih Lin and Deborah Burton, 'Global Military Spending, Sustainable Human Safety and Value for Money', *Tipping Point North South*, 2020, <https://transformdefence.org/publication/value-for-money/>

32 Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 'Israel Hits Gaza Strip with the Equivalent of Two Nuclear Bombs', Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/5908/Israel-hits-Gaza-Strip-with-the-equivalent-of-two-nuclear-bombs>.

33 A Feinstein, P Holden, and B Pace, 'Corruption and the Arms Trade: Sins of Commission', in *SIPRI Yearbook: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (online: SIPRI, 2011), <https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2011/01>.

34 Ho-Chih Lin and Deborah Burton, 'Excess Profits Tax on the Arms Industry to Fund International Climate Finance', *Tipping Point North South*, 2023, <https://transformdefence.org/publication/excessprofitstax/>

**ALONGSIDE THE ECONOMIC  
‘SYSTEM CHANGE’, WE NEED NEW  
THINKING ON INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS**

Military power and spending has always been central to re-enforcing power, poverty, unjust distribution of resources, and economic and environmental collapse. Dr Martin Luther King’s ‘triple evils’— economic exploitation, racism and militarism — are alive and well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is, and always has been, a direct correlation between military power (and spending) and economic power with the former existing to reflect and protect the latter.

Meantime, geopolitical threats – real, perceived, exaggerated or invented – will likely always be with us and it is the job of the government to defend its citizens from such threats. But climate change, habitat loss, mass species extinction and the threat of future pandemics and the attendant global economic instability (poverty and inequality) are now, collectively, overriding all other conventional ‘security’ threats and are the clear and present threats to all humanity.

These multiple and entangled threats – as ever – hit the poorest of our family members hardest. In response, our collective \$2 trillion annual global ‘defence’ spending offers humanity no protection whatsoever in dealing with these threats to our collective safety. You can’t address climate change with a Trident nuclear missile or stop a pandemic with the F-35. Yet neither received the scale of funding needed for effective prevention or mitigation.



We are stuck with an out-of-date and not-fit-for-purpose defence and foreign policy paradigm, reflected in excessive and wasteful global military spending.

If we accept that we need a system change to transform the economic landscape to meet the challenges of this 21<sup>st</sup> century, then we must also appreciate that we need an accompanying transformation in security, defence and ultimately foreign policy, able to fully meet the enormities of the task we face.

**REPLACING THE ‘SECURITY’  
NARRATIVE WITH ‘SUSTAINABLE  
HUMAN SAFETY’**

We need to take back the narrative by replacing the loaded word ‘security’ with ‘safety’.<sup>35</sup> Outdated notions of national security should now be replaced by the concept of ‘sustainable human safety’. The ‘peace of mind’ derived from fossil-fuel driven militarism is — on many critical counts — no longer fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In its place, we need a new sustainable human safety foreign and defence framework, emphasizing collective well-being over self-centred interests and cooperation over competition.

Under the sustainable human safety framework, ‘defence’ is not a standalone area that is only concerned with ‘national security’. Rather, it is but one quadrant of a whole circle, also comprising *economy* (eg, *inequality and poverty reduction*), *health* (*pandemic prevention, well-being*) and *environment* (*climate change, biodiversity*), and has the principle of ‘non-offensive defence’ at its heart.

Figure 1: ‘Sustainable human safety’ consists of four interconnected, long-term threats to collective human safety including health, economy, climate change and defence

35 Ho-Chih Lin and Deborah Burton, ‘Global Military Spending, Sustainable Human Safety and Value for Money’.

Sustainable human safety builds on the concept of ‘human security’ (introduced by UNDP in 1994) and differs from the traditional notion of defence in that it does not put ‘national security’ over all other concerns of human safety. By emphasising the interwoven linkage between economy, environment, health and defence, it forces us to take a comprehensive and systemic approach to formulate defence policies fit for the 21st century. The sustainable human safety framework ensures that defence policies do not just look at ‘national security’ in isolation (the 20th century way).

Critically, the principle of *non-offensive defence* is firmly embedded in the sustainable human safety framework. Non-Offensive Defence is a defence strategy that aims to have a *minimum of offensive strength* while *maximising defensive capability*. Fundamentally, non-offensive defence focuses on defensive equipment, structure, deployment and tactics, while offensive and force projection capabilities are minimised. Furthermore, non-offensive defence focuses on territorial defence and a contribution to an international peacekeeping and reconstruction force that can carry out UN endorsed humanitarian interventions. Under this defence framework, major offensive platforms, including the US or Russian nuclear triads, the British Trident ballistic missile system, aircraft carriers and conventional nuclear submarines would be cancelled. A new international security architecture based on global disarmament should also be actively pursued by the world’s leading powers.

## COUNTERBALANCE TO THE BIG MILITARY POWERS.

Ireland, Spain and Norway’s recognition of Palestine has illustrated the efficacy of smaller nations to show moral power through ethical political action. Without, often smaller, nations acting as a counterweight to their bigger economic counterparts, international debate and decision-making – whether the UN, IMF, World Bank or UNFCCC – is denuded of integrity.

Neutrality can also play a hugely important part in this. As a neutral country, Ireland has

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Like Ireland’s position on Palestine, Ireland could lead the world again on these matters of international cooperation, human safety and investment in the things that really matter, if we are to avoid the consequences of catastrophic climate change.

a proud UN history including its outstanding commitment to peace-keeping. Ireland could be the closest thing in Europe to a non-offensive defence nation. In a debate about ‘the gaping gap’ in Irish air defence, a retired senior Air Corps officer recommended instead of purchasing overpriced top-of-the-range fighters such as the F-35, the Government could invest in “light combat aircraft” providing “90 per cent of the capability of their far more expensive cousins, at a fraction of the cost, and would provide an adequate, if limited, air policing capability.”<sup>36</sup> Such a sensible suggestion – let alone public debate – would be close to impossible to have in any big military-spending nation, NATO members included. Ever since its inception, the F-35 has been mired with myriads of problems.<sup>37</sup> Dubbed ‘the part-time fighter jet’ by the Project on Government Oversight, it entered service in 2015, nearly 10 years later, the fleet can still only perform its assigned missions 30% of the time.<sup>38</sup> They went on to conclude in their analysis that the weak oversight and negligent accountability made the F-35 “the most expensive and least ready modern combat aircraft in our history.” In spite of these, according to Lockheed Martin, at least 400 of its F-35s will be delivered by 2030 to European NATO members, in addition to more than 2,000 to the US.

36 ‘The “Gaping Gap” in Ireland’s Airspace Defence’, The Irish Times, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/the-gaping-gap-in-ireland-s-airspace-defence-1.4597124>.

37 Ho-Chih Lin, ‘The Military Industrial Complex: How I Learnt to Stop Worrying and Love the F-35 Lightning Jet’, *Tipping Point North South*, 2016, <https://transformdefence.org/publication/the-military-industrial-complex-how-i-learnt-to-stop-worrying-and-love-the-f-35-lightning-jet/>

38 Dan Grazier, ‘F-35: The Part-Time Fighter Jet’, POGO, <https://www.pogo.org/analysis/f-35-the-part-time-fighter-jet>.

Compared to many other nations, Ireland is well placed to build on its much understood, respected and longstanding neutrality by going even further and developing groundbreaking, future-looking policies of non-offensive defence. Moreover, Ireland's military spending is low and its military carbon footprint is relatively small, precisely because it lacks a strong vested interest in the military-industrial complex. Like Ireland's position on Palestine, Ireland could lead the world again on these matters of international cooperation, human safety and investment in the things that really matter, if we are to avoid the consequences of catastrophic climate change.

In the same way we see ever more imaginative, urgent and necessary thinking on economic transformation, we need that parallel transformation in thinking when it comes to foreign and defence policy.

*“What we urgently need now is a rethinking of the entire concept of security. Even after the end of the Cold War, it has been envisioned mostly in military terms. Over the past few years, all we’ve been hearing is talk about weapons, missiles and airstrikes... The overriding goal must be human security: providing food, water and a clean environment and caring for people’s health. To achieve it, we need to develop strategies, make preparations, plan, and create reserves. But all efforts will fail if governments continue to waste money by fueling the arms race... I’ll never tire of repeating: we need to demilitarize world affairs, international politics and political thinking.”*

Former President of the Soviet Union,  
Mikhail Gorbachev, April 15, 2020, TIME<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, 'Mikhail Gorbachev: When the Pandemic Is Over, the World Must Come Together', TIME, 15 April 2020, <https://time.com/5820669/mikhail-gorbachev-coronavirus-human-security/>.

# Well-Founded Fear of Reception in Ireland: No Accommodation, No Minimum Standards, No Red Lines

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Eugene Quinn

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# Current IPAS Accommodation Overview

Total Centres 307 Total IPAS 31,375 Of whom Children 7,994

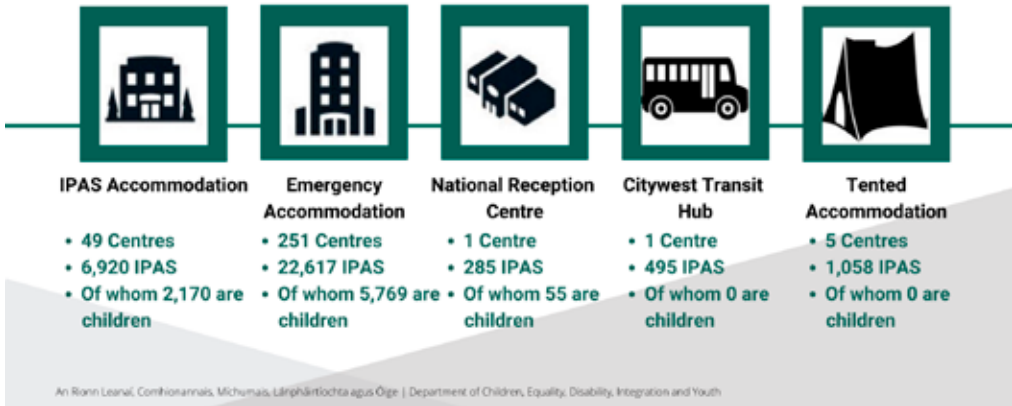


Figure 1: Current IPAS Accommodation Overview

## SEEKING PROTECTION IN IRELAND: HOSPITALITY IN RETREAT

### Record Levels of Forced Displacement

Ireland is a country synonymous with hospitality and welcome and the famed *céad míle fáilte*. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2024 triggered an unprecedented displacement of millions of refugees from the country and led the EU to invoke the Temporary Protection Directive.<sup>1</sup> Over the last two years more than 100,000 Ukrainian Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) have arrived in Ireland. In parallel, record numbers of applications for international protection<sup>2</sup> (IP) have been received from other areas and zones of conflict across the world. More than 13,000 people sought protection in 2022 and 2023. 10,604<sup>3</sup> new applications have been received by 30 June 2024.

The generosity of the Irish people in receiving and accommodating so many protection seekers despite a national housing crisis must be acknowledged. Ukrainian refugees have been

welcomed in every city, every town, and every parish across the country. Alongside, there has been a huge increase in the number of IP applicants from other countries arriving. This has been reflected in International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) centres accommodating record numbers of people seeking asylum in Ireland. At the end of June 2024 there were 31,375 applicants for international protection, including 7,994 children, living in 307 State accommodation centres across the country.<sup>4</sup>

### Ireland a Country of ‘One Hundred Thousand Welcomes’?

Despite the unprecedented support by the Irish State and its citizens, there are still many people seeking protection that cannot access appropriate shelter. This lack of available accommodation has led to asylum seekers sleeping on chairs and floors in transit centres and living in poor and overcrowded conditions in repurposed commercial buildings, converted warehouses, tents and army barracks. Since December 4<sup>th</sup> 2023, more than 4,000 IP applicants have not been offered accommodation on arrival, resulting in tented encampments on the streets of Dublin.

1 European Union: Council of the European Union, Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on Minimum Standards for Giving Temporary Protection in the Event of a Mass Influx of Displaced Persons and on Measures Promoting a Balance of Efforts Between Member States in Receiving such Persons and Bearing the Consequences Thereof, OJ L212/12-212/23; 7.8.2001, 2001/55/EC, 7 August 2001.

2 International protection applicant and asylum seekers are synonyms. Both refer to people who have crossed borders and sought the protection of another State, but a final determination on their protection/ asylum claim has not been made.

3 International Protection Office (2024) ‘IPO Monthly Statistics Report for June 2024’.

4 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2024) ‘IPAS Weekly Accommodation and Arrivals Statistics’, <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/297716/8e069bc9-8c2e-4374-9c53-88c1e43500f4.pdf#page=null> (accessed on 25/7/24)



*Tents inside the barricades set up along the Grand Canal. Photo credit Shamim Malekmian, Dublin Inquirer*

Soon after the war started in Ukraine a ‘two-tier’ response in the provision of accommodation emerged. Property providers were willing to accommodate Ukrainian BOTPs, but not IP applicants fleeing other conflicts and wars across the world.

The surge in arrivals and the Government’s unplanned – and as a result chaotic – approach to accommodating IP applicants ignited a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment, with protestors making the case not to receive more forcibly displaced persons because “Ireland is full”. Far-right tropes abound, with warnings about the dire consequences of “unvetted males of military age” and conspiracy theories around “replacement”, “plantation”, and “invasion” having gained traction among fear-filled sections of the general public. Anti-immigrant social media accounts and groups amplify fears, foment anger and call for protest and violence to counter the perceived threat immigration presents.

As a consequence, round the clock protests have become the norm at locations procured by IPAS to house asylum seekers. In East Wall/Santry/Coolock (Dublin), Inch (Clare), Rosscahill (Galway), Ballinrobe (Mayo), Buncrana (Donegal), Dromahair (Leitrim), Rosslare (Wexford), Brittas/Newtownmountkennedy (Wicklow), and Roscrea (Tipperary) people have opposed the opening of new accommodation centres.

There have been more than 20 fires at properties associated, sometimes incorrectly, with accommodating asylum seekers in 2023 and 2024. Deputy Garda Commissioner Shawna Coxon told an Oireachtas Justice Committee investigating these arson attacks, “this country has been fortunate so far that it has not suffered a death or deaths as a result of these arson attacks”<sup>5</sup> on buildings earmarked or rumoured to be used for housing asylum seekers. The response of local politicians to the burning of Rosscahill House was equivocal. Councillor Noel Thomas (Independent Ireland), told RTÉ’s Morning Ireland that Ireland should not continue to accept people looking for asylum “because the inn is full.”<sup>6</sup>

Protests have become more vehement, confrontational, and violent. In April 2024, the Taoiseach and Garda Commissioner condemned events at a protest in Newtownmountkennedy. Six arrests were made following violent clashes between Gardai and protesters. “We’ve seen an attempt to burn a small outhouse-type premises, but also then, disgracefully, attacks

5 Jonathan McCambridge, “Country fortunate spate of arson attacks has not led to loss of life, says Coxon”, The Irish News, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2024, <https://www.irishnews.com/news/ireland/country-fortunate-spate-of-arson-attacks-has-not-led-to-loss-of-life-says-coxon-PQKWYIGYD5AXPCJIHE24GKXTYE/>

6 Conor Gallagher and Cormac McQuinn, “Gardai believe Galway hotel fire the work of local opposed to immigration” The Irish Times, December 19<sup>th</sup> 2023, <https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/2023/12/19/galway-hotel-fire-gardai-believe-local-person-opposed-to-immigration-behind-arson-attack/>

on members of An Garda Síochána who were attacked with stones, and vehicles have been damaged, and one vehicle, the vehicle behind me, was damaged with an axe.”<sup>7</sup>

A Guard was injured and 13 people arrested following a night of unrest on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, outside a newly contracted accommodation centre in Ballyogan, Co. Dublin, previously used to house Ukrainians. The first group of IP applicants to arrive at the centre could not access the facility due to a demonstration. Journalists reported banners reading “Get Them Out, Get Them Out” and “No Unvetted Migrants” on the gates to Ballyogan Centre.<sup>8</sup>

In July 2024 there was a further escalation in the level of violence at the former Crown Paints Factory in Coolock. Since March, a protest camp had been established near the site entrance, proclaiming “Coolock Says No”. Work to convert the site into accommodation for 550 IP applicants had been delayed due to protests. Trouble flared after construction vehicles and equipment were brought onsite, overnight. A large crowd of protestors gathered and a violent confrontation followed. Three Garda cars were damaged, petrol bombs were thrown, and mattresses set on fire damaging a JCB.

There is external agitation at these protests. The language and rhetoric towards migrants is increasingly hostile and dangerous. A recent article in *The Journal* highlighted a banner held at the front of the Newtownmountkennedy protest which said “No plantation; send them back” and “We will not be replaced”. *The Journal* examined hundreds of posts and comments in a local Facebook group related to the protests. Many contain racist rhetoric, misinformation tropes and conspiracy theories about immigration including references to migrants as “vermin” that should be “housed in cages”.<sup>9</sup>

These protests and arson attacks are occurring at a time when more than 2,400 unaccommodated IP applicants are on the streets with risks to health and wellbeing.<sup>10</sup> There are real fears that if these incidents of arson and violent protests persist, it will inevitably result in loss of life. How has Ireland so quickly found itself following an anti-migrant pathway seen in many other EU member states? As Gerard Howlin noted “the immigration genie is out of the bottle and cannot simply be wished back in.”<sup>11</sup>

## THE RAPIDLY CHANGING CONTEXT FOR FORCED MIGRATION AND ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION

### Global and Regional Forced Migration Trends

UNHCR reported in 2024 that there are more than 117.3 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide.<sup>12</sup> A prolonged war in Ukraine, fresh conflicts in Gaza and Sudan, and the aftermath of humanitarian crises such as the 2023 Syrian/Turkey earthquake continue to force people to leave their homes and cross borders in record numbers.

In 2023, the EU+ (EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland) received the highest number of asylum applications since the 2015-16 refugee crisis, with more than 1.14 million IP applications in the European bloc. This represents an 18% increase on the 966,107 new asylum applications EU+ countries received in 2022. In addition to a seven year high in asylum applications, 4.4 million displaced persons from Ukraine are benefitting from Temporary Protection.

The EU Asylum Agency warned, “these concurrent trends – the surge in asylum applications and the influx of displaced persons from Ukraine – are exerting immense strain on the EU+ asylum and reception systems.”<sup>13</sup>

7 Emmet Malone, “Newtownmountkennedy protests: Taoiseach condemns ‘thuggery’ after violent clashes with gardaí at site earmarked for asylum seekers”, *The Irish Times*, April 26<sup>th</sup> 2024, <https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/2024/04/26/newtownmountkennedy-protest-wicklow-asylum-seekers-garda-arrest-protesters-clashes/>

8 Cathal Ryan, “Garda injured and 13 arrested following night of unrest at Ballyogan asylum seeker site”, *Irish Mirror Online*, 23 May 2024, <https://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/garda-injured-13-arrested-ballyogan-32871024>

9 Eoghan Dalton and Stephen McDermott, “From private Facebook groups to a clash with gardaí: Inside the Newtownmountkennedy standoff”, *The Journal*, May 1<sup>st</sup> 2024, <https://www.thejournal.ie/newtownmountkennedy-protests-migration-6367932-May2024/>

10 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2024) ‘Statistics on International Protection Applicants not offered accommodation’.

11 Gerard Howlin, “The immigration genie is out of the bottle and cannot be simply wished back in”, *The Irish Times*, February 14, 2023, <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/2023/02/14/the-immigration-genie-is-out-of-the-bottle-and-cannot-be-simply-wished-back-in/>

12 UNHCR (2023) ‘Forced displacement continues to grow as conflicts escalate’.

13 European Union Agency for Asylum (2024) ‘Latest Asylum Trends 2023 - Annual Analysis’.

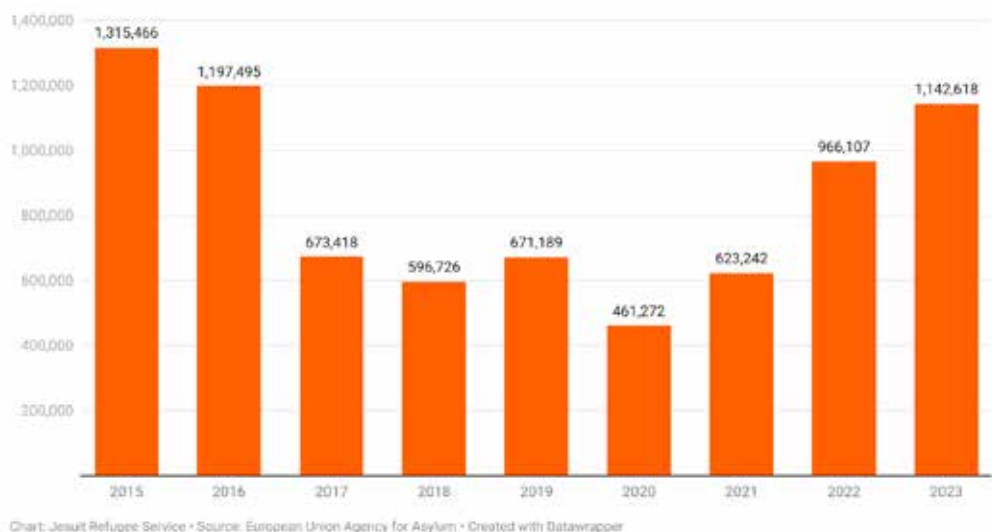


Figure 2: Number of Asylum Applications to EU+, 2015 - 2023<sup>14</sup>

### National Asylum Application Trends

Historically, Ireland has had relatively low numbers of IP applications but mirrored the trend in other EU states with a steep increase from the mid-1990s until 2002. There was a significant decrease after the Citizenship Referendum in 2004.

Ireland noticeably was not impacted by the increase in numbers arriving in 2015-2016 from the Syrian Refugee Crisis seen in other European countries. Applications began to increase steadily from 2017, until they were interrupted by COVID-19 travel restrictions.

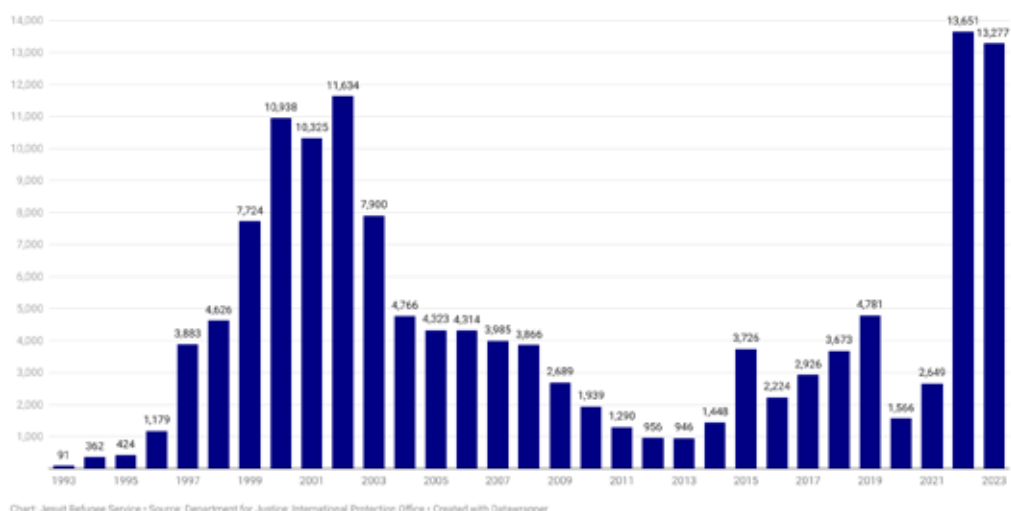


Figure 3: Ireland Asylum Applications, 1993 - 2023<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> International Protection Office, available at [www.ipi.gov.ie/en/ipi/pages/statistics](http://www.ipi.gov.ie/en/ipi/pages/statistics); Houses of the Oireachtas, "Asylum Applications. – Wednesday, 4 Apr 2007 – Parliamentary Questions (29th Dáil) – Houses of the Oireachtas," text, April 4, 2007, Ireland, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2007-04-04/128>; Houses of the Oireachtas, "Asylum Applications Data – Wednesday, 27 Sep 2017 – Parliamentary Questions (32nd Dáil) – Houses of the Oireachtas," text, September 27, 2017, Ireland, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2017-09-27/116>;

<sup>14</sup> ibid

Post-pandemic there has been a sharp increase in IP applications. In 2022 Ireland received a record number 13,651 applications, which represents 1.16% of new asylum applications in EU+ countries in that year and consistent with Ireland’s 1.14% share of the regional population. A similar level was sustained in 2023 with 13,248 new asylum applications.

The number of asylum applications in Ireland has continued to trend even more strongly upwards in the first half of 2024 with 10,604 applications received, an increase of 93.9% on the same period in 2023.<sup>16</sup> On an annualised basis if this level is sustained, more than 20,000 new IP claims will be received this year.

**The Irish Asylum Accommodation System at Breaking Point**

In line with record levels of new asylum applications, the number of IP applicants residing in IPAS accommodation has grown exponentially from 7,244 at the end of 2021 to 31,375 at the end of June 2024. This does not include the further 2,400+ people seeking protection yet to be offered accommodation.

The arrival of 100,000 BOTPs from Ukraine since February 2022 has placed unprecedented demands on the State to provide accommodation. Of the 66,500 Ukrainian BOTPs in mid-2024 who are in State-sponsored accommodation, around 47,500 are in directly provided housing with a further 19,000 in pledged accommodation. This response is striking given there is an estimated 250,000 domestic vulnerable people and households with unmet housing needs in Ireland.

The asylum accommodation system in Ireland has been stretched to breaking point. Over the past two years living conditions have deteriorated rapidly. In June 2022, interviewed about the situation of 300 IP applicants being accommodated in the ‘overflow’ area of the Red Cow Moran Hotel in Dublin, the JRS Ireland National Director, Eugene Quinn, said: “It takes your breath away to see. It’s like a humanitarian disaster to see asylum seekers sleeping on floors and chairs.” He described the living conditions on RTE Radio News at One as “extraordinary and unacceptable” and “the worst he had seen in 16 years in the sector.”<sup>19</sup>

Table 1: Asylum Seekers and BOTPs in State Accommodation

Year	Number of IP Applications	Asylum Seekers <sup>17</sup> in IPAS Accommodation	Number of Ukrainian BOTPs	Ukrainians BOTPs <sup>18</sup> in Accommodation	Total IPA/ BOTP in State Accommodation
2021	2,649	7,244	-	-	7,200
2022	13,651	18,534	71,000	51,500	70,000
2023	13,248	26,279	102,500	75,000	101,300
H1 2024	10,604	31,375	106,000	66,500	97,900

16 Maggie Doyle, “72% increase in number seeking asylum compared with first three months of last year”, RTÉ, April 4, 2024, <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2024/0404/1441672-asylum-latest/>

17 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2023), ‘IPAS Weekly Accommodation and Arrivals Statistics - Report date 31/12/2023’; Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2024), ‘IPAS Monthly Statistics June 2024’.

18 Central Statistics Office (2024) ‘Ireland’s Relationship with Ukrainian People and their Economy’.

19 RTE Radio One (2022), ‘Concerns raised about overcrowding at hotel’, *News at One Monday 13 June 2022*, <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22108932/>

On two occasions the Irish State has stopped offering accommodation to single male asylum seekers who are, as a result, homeless. The Irish State is in breach of its international obligations under the EU Reception Conditions Directive, which require a Member State to provide a person seeking protection with material supports, including accommodation. Although they have these rights under the Reception Directive, asylum seekers cannot access homeless services. Thus, when the State denies an IP applicant access to accommodation, it knowingly puts them on the street with all the associated risks to health and wellbeing.

A reliance on private, short-term emergency accommodation has been unsustainable, hugely expensive, and failed to add meaningful capacity to the system. In spite of eye-watering expenditure – an estimated €640million in 2023<sup>20</sup> – the asylum accommodation system remains utterly broken.

## ABSENCE OF STANDARDS: LIVING WITHOUT DIGNITY

### Rapidly Deteriorating Living Conditions 2022 - 2024

Since the beginning of 2022 there has been a steep decline in the quality and standard of accommodation provided to IP applicants. The system has been overwhelmed by the unplanned and chaotic nature of accommodation procurement and allocation to newly-arrived asylum seekers.

#### Sleeping on Floors and Chairs

Failure to sufficiently increase the capacity of the traditional Direct Provision system, in parallel to recourse to inadequate Pre-Reception (six block-booked hotels) centres, ultimately resulted in both systems becoming overwhelmed by May 2022. As a consequence of insufficient bed spaces, conference rooms in the Citywest Transit Hub, Red Cow Hotel, and other locations were designated as “overflow facilities” for the purposes of providing temporary accommodation.

In practice, this amounted to recently arrived asylum seeking men, women, and children “living” on the floor in large open-plan conference rooms with no sleeping bags, pillows or bedding of any description provided. Initially there were also no designated hygiene/wash facilities or access to healthcare. The basic dignity of IP applicants was denied and there was no privacy for families, giving rise to significant child protection and safeguarding risks.

JRS Ireland raised significant concerns about people sleeping on floors and chairs and the impact on the safety and wellbeing of residents in overflow facilities.<sup>21</sup> This resulted in urgent transfers of some vulnerable individuals and measures to mitigate the most inappropriate living conditions. However, in the months that followed, the central Citywest Transit Facility – effectively a large open-plan conference arena – would regularly operate at over 200% of its capacity permitted under health and safety regulations. The lived reality for many asylum seekers during this time meant sleeping on chairs or other make-shift beds for weeks at a time, delayed access to shower facilities, fears for safety due to inadequate registration procedures and a chaotic and unsuitable living environment.

#### Threat to Family Life

By the end of 2022, alternative forms of accommodation, all temporary in nature and not originally designed to house people, became the new norm. These included sports stadiums, schools, university campus buildings, and warehouses. Soon a preferred alternative model of accommodation emerged: Re-purposed commercial accommodation – essentially, open office floors converted into pod living spaces, often separated only by flimsy partitions, which do not extend to the ceiling.

While the quality of re-purposed accommodation varies significantly across the IPAS portfolio, pods fundamentally fail to protect the privacy and dignity of families. Common concerns include the absence of

20 Jack Horgan-Jones and Sorchá Pollak, ‘New asylum-seeker accommodation agency is under consideration’, The Irish Times, April 4, 2024, <https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2024/04/04/work-on-agency-dedicated-to-dealing-with-migrant-accommodation-to-get-under-way/>

21 Pat Coyle, “Asylum Seekers Sleeping on Hotel Floors,” Jesuits Ireland (blog), June 13, 2022, <https://jesuit.ie/news/asylum-seekers-sleeping-on-hotel-floors/>.



separate showering facilities for children; cramped cubicles; inadequate laundry and bathroom facilities; a lack of appropriate space for children; a lack of natural light and the absence of privacy.

Also, groups of houses in estates or isolated rural locations have been designated as IPAS centres. Families of up to 5 persons are accommodated in single bedrooms, irrespective of the age and gender of children. This accommodation neither respects nor promotes family life and runs contrary to the best interests of the child. Placing children aged 10 and over of opposite gender in the same bedroom is in contravention of IPAS House Rules and longstanding best practice over many years.

### **Tented Accommodation**

Utilisation of tents marked a shift in the reception conditions offered to IP applicants from the provision of accommodation to mere “shelter”. Since their introduction, JRS Ireland has consistently held the position that tents fail to meet the “basic needs” requirement under the EU Reception Conditions Directive and fall below the minimum standards required for a person to live with dignity.

The first iteration of tented accommodation was for eight persons. No furniture other than beds were provided. Showers and toilets are external. Food is provided in open-plan communal settings. Heating and lighting are drawn from generators or other external sources – and charitable donations of heaters, bedding, and adaptors have at times been required.

An intervention by the Irish President and the Taoiseach was needed to suspend the use of tents in Knockalisheen, Co. Clare, and to source alternative accommodation during the sub-zero conditions in December 2022. However, as with sleeping on floors, recourse to tented accommodation has also become mainstreamed and normalised, with a large IP encampment established in the former Central Mental Hospital (CMH) in Dundrum in South Dublin, and Ukrainian families temporarily housed at Stradbally, Co. Laois.

Even tented living conditions deteriorated with each new iteration. Residents in tents in Knockalisheen were provided with divan beds, while those in tents in the CMH Dundrum were on army cots. This meant IP applicants ended up using cardboard boxes from Dundrum Town Centre as makeshift mattresses.

The quality of commercial tents used in Crooksling, in the foothills of the Dublin mountains, are poorer and less durable than army ones. Furthermore, where previously eight people were in tents, now there are six bunkbeds with twelve applicants sharing the same space. Inconsistent and uneven accommodation provision which has characterised the system now extends to tented facilities.

### **Unaccommodated Asylum Seekers: A New Low**

A new low was reached in January 2023, when newly arrived single male asylum seekers were not offered accommodation. Between January and May 2023, some 1,400 individuals were not offered accommodation by IPAS. There was a high of 593 people sleeping rough for weeks at the worst point during this period.<sup>22</sup>

The practice of not accommodating male asylum seekers did dampen the number of new arrivals. However, new IP applications trended strongly upwards in the second half of 2023. The result was that on December 4<sup>th</sup> 2023 IPAS once again ceased offering accommodation to single male applicants.

Nevertheless, applicant numbers continued to increase in the first half of 2024. In the period 04/12/2023 – 25/07/2024, 4,087 single male IP applicants were not offered accommodation by the State on arrival but were given an additional contingency payment of €75 in lieu (an amount insufficient to secure alternative accommodation). While 1,652 of those were subsequently offered accommodation, 2,435 await offers.

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<sup>22</sup> Irish Refugee Council (2023) ‘Now I Live on the Road: The experience of homeless international protection applicants in Ireland’, Dublin: IRC.

Table 2: Number of Unaccommodated IPAs on 26/7/24<sup>23</sup>

International Protection Applicants (IPAs)	
Total number of eligible male IPAs who presented since 04/12/23	4524
Accommodation offered after availability and vulnerability triage	437
Received contingency payment in lieu of accommodation	4087
Subsequently offered accommodation	1652
Awaiting offer of accommodation	2435

JRS supported a rapidly growing settlement of asylum seekers living in tents in the alleys behind the International Protection Office (IPO) on Mount Street in Dublin 2, through weekly outreach, accompaniment, and the provision of vouchers. In the course of this outreach, JRS found living conditions rapidly deteriorated as the number of tents increased daily. There were no toilets, showers or laundry facilities available for the 150+ men,

other than those provided in day services of homeless organisations some distance away. Rubbish was piled high and uncollected. Human waste was openly visible in drains and on the streets. This led to an outbreak of a wide range of medical conditions, including highly contagious skin conditions. JRS and other support organisations raised concerns with senior officials about an emerging humanitarian crisis.



Front cover of the Dublin Inquirer July print edition highlighting the most striking example of hostile architecture, of designing against humanity, in the city in recent years. Credit Harry Burton (Political Cartoonist) and Lois Kapila (editor of the Dublin Inquirer)

23 “Statistics on International Protection Applicants Not Offered Accommodation,” December 12, 2023, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ec5f2-statistics-on-international-protection-applicants-not-offered-accommodation/> (access on 26/07/2024)

Due to mounting public health concerns on 16 March 2024, 150 men were moved from tents around the IPO to the former HSE facility at Crooksling. Speaking on Newstalk, Eugene Quinn said: “This [centre] is effectively a short-term sticking plaster. People have been given access to toilets, shower facilities and food but it is not a long-term solution. We need a housing-led, whole of Government emergency response. Short term accommodation needs to be stood up on State land and longer-term additional State accommodation capacity added and resourced adequately.”<sup>24</sup>

As the asylum seekers continued to arrive in record numbers, a new encampment developed on the Grand Canal. When this encampment grew to a level that could be not ignored, State agencies intervened again. The people in the tents were again moved to IPAS accommodation. The tents were destroyed, and fences were erected along the canal. This process was repeated with tents put up further along the canal. Since May 2024, IP applicants putting up tents given to them by the State are moved on by Gardai without offers of accommodation. Ad-hoc tented encampments have developed in different locations across the city centre.

On 17 July 2024, the Irish Times reported tents housing 15 asylum seekers on Dublin’s quays were attacked by men with knives and pipes. The tents were slashed and the belongings of some of the IP applicants thrown into the River Liffey.<sup>25</sup> The risks to the health and wellbeing of homeless unaccommodated IP applicants on the streets of Dublin are very real.

### Accommodating with Dignity: Incontestable Case for Minimum Standards

A key recommendation of McMahon Working Group in 2015 was the establishment of a standard-setting committee and an inspectorate to ensure compliance across the

sector.<sup>26</sup> Despite initial delays, a Standards Advisory Group was convened in 2017 and tasked with the development of standards that would “provide a framework for the continual development of person-centred, high-quality, safe and effective services and supports for residents living in [IPAS] accommodation centres.”<sup>27</sup> The resulting National Standards became legally binding in January 2021.

The subsequent February 2021 publication of the *White Paper to end Direct Provision*<sup>28</sup> marked a seismic shift in system reform, officially recognising Direct Provision as “not fit for purpose” and committing the Irish Government to phasing in a new model by the end of 2024. While this development essentially overtook efforts to operationalise the National Standards, it is worth noting that the White Paper Transition Team was charged with evaluating how to strengthen the National Standards during the process.<sup>29</sup>

It was a welcome development when the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) were given responsibility for monitoring the compliance of existing centres (crucially however, Pre-Reception and Emergency Accommodation locations were excluded) during the transitional period, with inspections commencing in 2024 following pilot inspections earlier in 2023.

The National Standards aim to ensure “respect for the dignity of persons in the system and [to] improve the quality of their lives.”<sup>30</sup> Any derogation from implementing National Standards or exclusion of any category of accommodation undermines the ability of the State to uphold the dignity of vulnerable persons seeking protection. JRS Ireland have consistently called for minimum standards across all forms of IPAS accommodation to enable all IP applicants to live with basic dignity.

24 James Wilson, “Asylum Seeker Accommodation Issue Needs ‘emergency Response’ from Government,” Newstalk, accessed August 12, 2024, <https://www.newstalk.com/news/asylum-seeker-accommodation-issue-needs-emergency-response-from-government-1707888>.

25 Siorcha Pollak, “Gardai Investigate Alleged Attack on Asylum Seekers’ Camp in Dublin City Centre,” The Irish Times, accessed August 12, 2024, <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/social-affairs/2024/07/17/gardai-investigate-alleged-attack-on-asylum-seekers-camp-in-dublin-city-centre/>.

26 ‘Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers -Final Report June 2015’ (McMahon Report), Dublin: Department of Justice and Equality, Recommendation 4.226.

27 Department of Justice & Equality (2019), ‘National Standards for accommodation offered to people in the protection process’, Dublin: Department of Justice & Equality.

28 Government of Ireland (2021), ‘A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service’, Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

29 Albeit within the confines that the National Standards apply to congregated settings – which the White Paper seeks to move away from.

30 Department of Justice & Equality (2019)

# THE WAY FORWARD

## Establishing Pragmatic Minimum Standards

Given the need to speedily procure emergency accommodation over the past 24 months, it is understandable that not all properties procured would fully adhere with National Standards immediately.<sup>31</sup> But it is unacceptable that there is no plan or timeframe for these forms of accommodation to become compliant.

The traditional system of Direct Provision consists of 50 centres, whereas more than 250 emergency accommodation centres have been opened in the last two years. There is an unquestionable need for the establishment of pragmatic minimum standards, applicable to all IPAS accommodation, that ensure basic dignity of residents is respected.

At a minimum, JRS Ireland recommends IPAS ensure:

- Every resident, especially children, are accommodated in a safe and secure environment;
- Every resident is accommodated in a permanent physical structure (not tents);
- Every resident has a bed (not a camp bed or military cot);
- Every family has access to an enclosed, private space;
- Every resident has access to appropriate washing and hygiene facilities;
- Every resident receives adequate food;
- Every resident has reasonable access to the medical care they need;
- Each person’s rights are progressively realised (a better standard of accommodation with each move);
- Medical screening / vulnerability assessment informs allocation of suitable accommodation.

## A Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy for International Protection Applicants

Minister Roderic O’Gorman acknowledged at the Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy for International Protection Applicants launch in March 2024, that the system was “in desperate need of reform” and “it’s clear

the current system of accommodation isn’t working.”<sup>32</sup> The Strategy outlines a move from private to State-owned provision, which ensures the State “holds the reins on accommodation, its location and its standards.”<sup>33</sup>

It is proposed to scale up capacity to 35,000 bed spaces by the end of 2028, assuming an average of 13,000-16,000 persons will arrive annually. This will be achieved through a blended model of State-owned accommodation, commercial accommodation, and temporary commercial emergency accommodation. State-owned beds will seek to “raise the overall standard of accommodation within the system.”<sup>34</sup>

Table 3: Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy 2024-28<sup>35</sup>

Accommodation Type	Bed Capacity	Ownership
Reception and Integration Centres and Accommodation Centres, at national standards	Up to 13,000	State Owned
In-Community Accommodation for vulnerable persons, at national standards	Up to 1,000.	State Owned, operated in partnership with NGOs
Contingency Accommodation, at national standards	Up to 11,000	Commercial Providers
Emergency Accommodation.	Up to 10,000	Commercial Providers

31 Catherine Martin T.D. (2023) Direct Provision System, Tuesday, 17 October 2023, Dáil Éireann Debate.

32 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, ‘Government agrees new comprehensive accommodation strategy for International Protection applicants’, March 27 2024, <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/9ed23-government-agrees-new-comprehensive-accommodation-strategy-for-international-protection-applicants/>.

33 Ailbhe Conneely, ‘4,000 State-owned beds for IP applicants by 2028 under revised plan’, RTÉ, March 27, 2024, <https://www.rte.ie/news/politics/2024/0327/1440150-ireland-politics/>

34 Government of Ireland (2024) ‘Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy for International Protection Applicants’, Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

35 *ibid*.

The Strategy acknowledges the need for improved communication, targeted both at local community level and at national level. The process of community engagement with stakeholders when opening new IPAS centres has come under huge criticism following the disturbances and violence in Coolock. Local community groups and politicians in the area have argued there has been inadequate or no engagement with them around their concerns with plans for the former Crown Paints factory to house 500+ IP applicants.

The strategy contains a welcome commitment to the National Standards providing a framework for person-centred, high-quality, safe and effective services and supports in IPAS accommodation. Yet it warns “there is also an increasing likelihood that families, including women and children could find themselves without an offer of accommodation in the coming weeks or months.”

While this plan offers some positive and concrete steps towards increasing accommodation supply long term, it is not clear what the Government will do while the additional capacity is being acquired to address the current, urgent and unacceptable living conditions of IP applicants already in the system or on the street.

### Increased Budgetary Resources

Under the Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy, the Government committed to develop a core accommodation offering of 14,000 beds in State-owned facilities by 2028. Briefing materials supplied by the Minister of Integration put “the cost of supplying 10,000 beds for asylum seekers over 20 years at €5 billion, based on current prices – but argue that buying the same amount of accommodation sourced from the private sector would potentially cost billions more again.”<sup>36</sup>

In 2023, the model of accommodation for IP applicants – reliant on private providers – cost a reported €640 million. The budget allocated

for 2024 is 38% lower (€409 million). As the numbers of IP applicants arriving have continued to spiral upwards, it is difficult to understand these Government calculations. In light of the fact there has been a 93% increase in new asylum applications in the first half of 2024, it is clear a substantial supplementary budget will be required.

The External Advisory Group in its 3<sup>rd</sup> Report in January 2024 recommended that “given the severe accommodation shortages and the limitations of the private sector approach, there is an urgent need to increase both current and capital spending from 2024 onwards.”<sup>37</sup>

### Will the Comprehensive Strategy Work?

While the Strategy contains welcome elements, significant doubts remain on its ability to deliver urgently needed additional capacity on time, to scale, and on budget. Implementation is the greatest challenge. It echoes the *White Paper on Ending Direct Provision* in that it is high on aspiration but low on detail as to how it will deliver the promised accommodation. The fact that the strategy spans the lifetime of the next Government raises questions about its feasibility.

There is a question of adequacy, given that 20,000+ new applicants are expected this year (well above the strategy’s 13-16,000 range). Yet near-term challenges remain of greatest concern.

As the numbers of unaccommodated applicants continues to grow, the Comprehensive Strategy contains no concrete detail on the type and scale of short-term contingency accommodation that can be brought onstream. The prospect of unaccommodated children and families living in squalid, unsafe, and unsanitary conditions in tents is unthinkable. Urgent action and a whole-of-Government response is required to prevent even greater humanitarian crises developing on the streets of Dublin.

JRS Ireland retains serious concerns that although the strategy is comprehensive

<sup>36</sup> Jack Horgan-Jones, ‘State to spend €5bn housing asylum seekers over next 20 years, Ministers told’, The Irish Times, April 2, 2024, [www.irishtimes.com/politics/2024/04/02/cost-of-state-owned-accommodation-for-asylum-seekers-put-at-5bn-between-now-and-2044/](https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2024/04/02/cost-of-state-owned-accommodation-for-asylum-seekers-put-at-5bn-between-now-and-2044/)

<sup>37</sup> C Day, D Donoghue, L Sirr, ‘Report No.3 from the External Advisory Group on Ending Direct Provision’, January 2024



in name, it is not in the detail. The deep structural risks and constraints in the Irish housing market are not clearly addressed. Also, the growing opposition in communities across the country to opening centres in their locality will be a very real practical constraint to delivery.

### Rapid Build Accommodation on State Land

Since the onset of this crisis, JRS have advocated for the provision of rapid-build modular houses or portacabins on State land. This approach was also strongly endorsed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the External Advisory Group on Ending Direct Provision submitted to the Minister for Integration in July 23: “The State could, and should, use emergency powers to prepare suitable State owned land for rapid build accommodation. It has already used such powers to provide modular homes for Ukrainian refugees. If no suitable sites are available the State should procure them, including if necessary, through compulsory purchase, prepare them for rapid build and ensure that contracts for rapid build accommodation are launched.”<sup>38</sup>

The failure to progress this practical recommendation while continuing to expend vast amounts on unsustainable and unsuitable private accommodation, including tents, is hard to fathom. The Government has been unwilling to date to use emergency powers to unlock additional accommodation for IP applicants. Ironically, the only derogation due to the emergency has been to compliance with National Standards in IPAS emergency centres, transit locations, and tents. The human cost of these decisions to the dignity of asylum seekers has been significant.

## CONCLUSION

### No Accommodation, No Minimum Standards, No Red Lines

There has been a shocking deterioration in living conditions for asylum seekers. While the intensive efforts by IPAS in the face of challenging circumstances to source and offer accommodation to every presenting IP

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The asylum accommodation system is utterly broken. The risks to health and safety of unaccommodated IP applicants is growing.

applicant should be acknowledged, the current crisis around unaccommodated asylum seekers has drawn attention away from a lived reality of the worst living conditions encountered by JRS Ireland in its 17-year history. A cruel irony is that this has occurred in a period the Government committed to end the system of Direct Provision.

Regrettably, with each iteration, a lower and ever more inadequate level of accommodation becomes normalised. From Pre-Reception hotels to sleeping on floors and chairs to unsuitable pods in repurposed commercial buildings to living in tents and army barracks, it reached a nadir with the denial of accommodation.

The unacceptable, unsafe, and squalid living conditions in the tents around the IPO – that required an intervention on public health grounds – should have drawn a line in the sand. Ultimately however, when there is no offer of accommodation, minimum standards are rendered redundant and there are no red lines.

The asylum accommodation system is utterly broken. The risks to health and safety of unaccommodated IP applicants is growing. The State provides tents and then threatens arrest if they are used in public spaces. The dangers to those on the streets are very real. At the same time, many applicants silently suffer in inhumane, unsuitable, and overcrowded living conditions in emergency and temporary centres with their basic needs unmet, without dignity or basic minimum standards.

It is an indictment of the Government’s failure to act and adequately respond over the last two years.

<sup>38</sup> C Day, D Donoghue, L Surr, ‘Report No.2 from the External Advisory Group on Ending Direct Provision’, July 2023,



## Recommended Next Steps

Housing has been the greatest failure of successive Irish Governments. The unprecedented accommodation demands arising from 100,000+ Ukrainian refugees and rocketing IP applications post-Covid in Ireland has seen the accommodation challenge develop into a full-blown emergency.

The Government's reliance on a private market-led model has proved unsustainable, hugely expensive, and not 'fit for purpose'. The recent Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy is high on aspiration but low on detail. It already looks inadequate with arrivals trending significantly higher than the numbers contained in the strategy's projections.

JRS Ireland is calling on the Government to:

- (i) Establish a whole-of-Government Emergency Asylum Accommodation Response, similar to NPHET during Covid, but led by Housing experts;
- (ii) Identify all possible accommodation options to ensure every applicant is accommodated on arrival and the current practice of not offering accommodation is ceased;
- (iii) Have recourse to emergency powers to enable rapid-build houses or portacabins being developed on State land;
- (iv) Allocate sufficient budgetary resources to meet growing asylum accommodation demands on the ground, with capital and current spend increased appropriately;
- (v) Ensure all private emergency asylum accommodation is subject to practical minimum standards that enable all applicants to live with basic dignity.

## Fear or Fáilte?

Over the past year, concerns about the response to increased numbers arriving in search of protection has polarised public opinion. Violence and confrontation at protests (Coolock, Ballyogan and Newtownmountkenedy) is becoming the norm when IPAS tries to open new centres. A battle for hearts and minds on how to respond to new IP applicants arriving, especially single males, is being waged across the country and in local communities.

The Government has singularly failed in its communication with receiving communities. The chaotic, disjointed and reactive response of the Government has fanned rather than assuaged fears among the general public. Even people well-disposed to welcoming asylum seekers are disturbed at the poor and unsafe living conditions and a failure to receive and accommodate IP applicants with basic dignity and in accordance with minimum human rights standards.

Ireland is at a crossroads. Can the Irish people resist the fear-filled calls to shift to a more closed and less hospitable approach to receiving asylum seekers and choose to stay open and welcoming to those arriving on our shores in search of safety and protection from conflict and hunger?

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The Government has singularly failed in its communication with receiving communities. The chaotic, disjointed and reactive response of the Government has fanned rather than assuaged fears among the general public.

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# Can I Get a Witness: Who Would Jesus Bomb?

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Dr Kevin Hargaden

Kevin Hargaden is Director of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice and its Social Theologian.

Emmet Sheerin

Emmet Sheerin is an Irish documentary maker, he traveled to the Middle East as a human rights observer where his work involved monitoring and reporting on violations of human rights and international law. His work includes the documentary, *Who Would Jesus Bomb?*

## AN INTERVIEW WITH IRISH FILMMAKER, EMMET SHEERIN

Emmet Sheerin is an Irish filmmaker, who has a particular interest in the work involved in making peace. His documentary, *Who Would Jesus Bomb?*<sup>1</sup> premiered at the 2023 Galway Film Fleadh. We spoke to him about the film, the longstanding protests at Shannon, and what that all means for Irish Neutrality.

### Kevin Hargaden (KH):

Can you tell us the premise of *Who Would Jesus Bomb*?

### Emmet Sheerin (ES):

[Laughing] I'm not always the most articulate, which is half the reason why I make documentaries: That way I can make the film as opposed to have to talk about it!

But the film examines Ireland's complicity in the global War on Terror. It looks back over the 20 years since the invasion of Iraq. Specifically, it looks at how a number of Christians have tried to intervene and disarm the American War machine by getting into Shannon airport and damaging or searching the US military planes. So, for me, the film tries to raise awareness about – and raise questions about – Irish neutrality. This is particularly in light of the Shannon issue, but also to raise questions and spark debate around forms of activism. And I think it also challenges what it means to be a Christian.

In a nutshell, that's what the film is: It considers Ireland's complicity in the global War on Terror and brings out those themes of Christian activism that tried to stop that.

**KH:** It might surprise some people that Ireland is complicit. We didn't send any troops to Afghanistan or Iraq. So, what were we doing?

**ES:** Well, we've facilitated 3 million US troops to go through Shannon Airport since 2003. And a large amount of them have gone to the Middle East. Especially at the time when the Iraq war was in full swing, America was a belligerent state that was going essentially to kill and destroy, partly for oil, partly to flex

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We were part of that conveyor belt of death, and while we weren't sending troops – we were facilitating huge numbers of Americans to go and fight, to kill and to die.

their muscles, on dodgy evidence presented to the world as to the legitimacy of what they were doing. And we were facilitating that as a cog in the wheel. We were part of that conveyor belt of death, and while we weren't sending troops – thankfully – we were facilitating huge numbers of Americans to go and fight, to kill and to die.

**KH:** Right, and the movie focuses then, at least in its first half, on the “Pitstop Ploughshares”.<sup>2</sup> Who are they? What did they do? And what happened to them?

**ES:** They were a group of Catholic Worker activists<sup>3</sup> who decided to take action at Shannon Airport – to gain entry to Shannon and to try and disarm a US naval plane using hammers and a few other items.

They saw this as part of their Christian witness and their need to intervene and to try and save lives, to stop the American war machine. They managed to get in and they got to the plane and they managed to disarm that – to hit it and to do some damage to it. And they waited to be subsequently arrested.

And after three trials, they were acquitted of it because it was recognised that they had lawful excuse to do this, that they were doing this damage with the view that they were trying to save lives in Iraq.

**KH:** That's a very interesting judgment because the Irish courts basically admitted that the war in Iraq wasn't just. Would that be a correct understanding?

1 *Who Would Jesus Bomb?*, Emmet Sheerin, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUGOw...o2uE&t>.

2 Harry Browne, *Hammered by the Irish: How the Pitstop Ploughshares Disabled a U.S. Warplane, with Ireland's Blessing* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2008).

3 A global movement of autonomous collectives inspired by the pacifist activism of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin: <https://catholicworker.org/>



Protester featured in the documentary “Who would Jesus bomb?” Credit Emmet Sheerin

**ES:** Well, it was mainly that the jury felt that their actions could be justified – that they were legitimately trying to save lives. And that’s the key thing: they had a lawful excuse to do what they did.

**KH:** This Christian activism isn’t a once off thing. It has continued. Can you tell us about the other case the film covers, that of Colm Roddy and Dave Donnellan?

**ES:** In 2016, two more Christian activists, Dave Donnellan and Colm Roddy went into Shannon Airport. They had heard that there were two US planes, military planes at the airport. And they gained entry to Shannon to try and inspect them, because the issue is that the US military planes should not be carrying arms or munitions or any weapons of war. But the problem is, we don’t know if that’s the case, because they’re not being inspected by the Government, despite numerous calls for that to happen. So, if the State wasn’t going to do it, Colm and Dave felt that they needed to do it, and for them it was part of their Christian witness as well.

They gained entry through a fence and managed to get to a Lear jet, which was parked on the runway. They didn’t manage to get to the plane itself because they were stopped by the Irish military who were guarding the plane, and subsequently arrested.

They too were eventually acquitted because again, the judge allowed them lawful excuses to do what they did. The judge granted that it was their belief that they were trying to save lives.

**KH:** Right, so we have these two remarkably brave acts that are largely unknown, even among activist circles. Especially in the case of the Pitstop Ploughshares, there was a high risk strategy because legally speaking, they didn’t have an awful lot of precedent to back them up. And Colm Roddy is a much older man and would be quite vulnerable if things turned rough. So, why are they so little known? Why are they celebrated so little?

**ES:** Yeah, it’s a good question. I mean, it’s partly one of the reasons why I wanted to make the documentary, because there’s so little awareness about them, about these immense acts, even within churches and faith-based communities here. Like, going to church,

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It’s partly one of the reasons why I wanted to make the documentary, because there’s so little awareness about them, about these immense acts, even within churches and faith-based communities here.

I'd never have heard of this. I regularly go to Church and I was educated by the Jesuits. I hadn't heard about this at all, either of these.

Now that's partly down to my own kind of growth as an activist. My own interest was only still emerging around the time. But I don't think the media necessarily want to be promoting this kind of activism! [Laughs] You know, best not to talk about these people damaging the planes. When they do get discussed, it is common that they get portrayed as strange and foolish and undermining the credibility of quote/unquote "moderate" activists.

But for me, I just saw an absolute purity in what they were doing, this pure love of one's neighbour. And I think this is very special, to risk your freedom for your convictions like that. It kind of blew my mind a bit that people would do that. I decided this story had to be told a bit more. Like, you know, you can search for it; information is there online. It's not like nothing has been written about it. But I just felt now 20 years on from the invasion of Iraq, this is a great time to bring these stories to the fore, particularly in Ireland and particularly for church communities, for universities, for students, for anyone who is likely to have an interest in how religion and politics and peace intersect. It's just a fascinating story.

**KH:** It really is, and it is brilliantly told in the film. How has the response to the movie been?

**ES:** Yeah, really good. Firstly, to get it premiered at the Galway Film Fleadh was amazing. That was a significant achievement. I suppose that was a testament to the quality of the film. And there are always discussions after the film. The audiences have always been very positive.

In some ways, I've been preaching to the converted with it. A lot of people who come to screenings have an interest in anti-war activism. But I've had the experience of people who just came because they were interested in the title. They hadn't known anything about the stories of Pitstop Ploughshares or Colm and Dave. And we had fascinating discussions about Irish neutrality, about activism, and about the characters of these people. So yeah, it's been received very well.

But really now what I'm trying to do is just get it out there, get people watching it. I'd love to see universities use it; screen it as part of their lectures, or for it to be used by Peace and Justice groups here in Ireland, for it to be a resource to watch, to tear it apart, to disagree with it, to let it spark a discussion, you know?

**KH:** In terms of the discussion it sparks, the movie raises this contemporary question of Ireland's neutrality. With the alteration of the Triple Lock,<sup>4</sup> sending soldiers to train Ukrainians,<sup>5</sup> and the drumbeat calling on us to increase military expenditure,<sup>6</sup> I think people like Colm Roddy would say that neutrality is being eroded.

**ES:** There is an impact. The way I look at it is that the discussions of removing the Triple Lock have been preceded in a way – the ground has been prepared – by this allowance of the US military to have a de-facto operating based in Ireland. A lot of activists would warn us that we need to absolutely stop the Triple Lock being eroded because look what's happened already. We've been involved essentially as this cog in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Any furthering of this erosion would be massively detrimental.

But I think the core thing which comes into focus in these discussions is just how connected we are to the US. We bend over backwards for them and the erosion of the Triple Lock would be another nod to that. What has gone on at Shannon has been, for me, this blight for the past 20 years, allowing troops to come here and then to go across the world for a belligerent nation. We sometimes think that the US is this benevolent friend with a benevolent kind of power. You see this, this binary where "US = Good" and "Russia = bad". They're both awful! Like, in terms of what they're doing around the world in many respects. We must challenge this simplified

4 Paul Hosford, "Government to Begin Process of Changing 'triple Lock' Neutrality," *Irish Examiner*, April 30, 2024, sec. IE-Main/POLITICS, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/politics/arid-41384833.html>.

5 Paul Williams, "Irish Defence Forces Providing Vital Equipment and Training to Help Ukrainian Troops Clear Mines," *Irish Independent*, February 24, 2024, sec. Irish News, <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/irish-defence-forces-providing-vital-equipment-and-training-to-help-ukrainian-troops-clear-mines/a656377779.html>.

6 Eoin Drea, "Ireland's the Ultimate Defense Freeloader," *Politico*, May 28, 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/ireland-defense-freeloader-ukraine-work-royal-air-force/>.

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What has gone on at Shannon has been, for me, this blight for the past 20 years, allowing troops to come here and then to go across the world for a belligerent nation.

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idea that “US = good”. They can do good but we have to look at what they’re doing and have done in Iraq and Afghanistan and other places. The full facts are there for us to consider.

**KH:** Is there something to be said for this policy of, you know, looking the other way?

**ES:** Listen, I think it has been done with a kind of a slow creep. It’s a creeping erosion, you know? There’s no democratic deliberation. If there was democratic deliberation on it, would you not have a constitutional referendum on it? I think we know what the results would be! Instead, I think that a lot of this has been happening by degrees over time. It hasn’t really been being put to a democratic test, really.

Think even of how the conversation about the Triple Lock proceeds. It is creeping towards a conclusion, by degrees, without serious, open debate. It’s, “We need to change it now. We need to change it because the world has moved on.” But like, I don’t think that’s really fully being put to the test in terms of, well, “What’s changed from an Irish perspective here?” Do we want to see a closer military alignment with EU? Or with NATO? I don’t think so. And I would hazard that if it was put to a democratic test, the government wouldn’t be too happy with the outcome.

**KH:** After this very effective film, have you plans for your next project.

**ES:** I’m fascinated by the area of boycotting as a form of activism. So, I am working on something about that.. It is still in the early development stage, and I hope to approach some production companies with the concept. I’m also fascinated by the idea of Jesus as a refugee, so I’d like to work on that as a documentary concept.

*Who Would Jesus Bomb?* is freely available to watch at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUGOw\\_\\_o2uE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUGOw__o2uE)





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