SCI Switzerland
Volunteering for Peace

How we understand our pacifism

1. Introduction

In a world characterised by conflict and tension, the idea of pacifism appears as a source of hope and change. The following article examines various concepts of pacifism and their significance to Service Civil International Switzerland (hereafter SCI Switzerland), a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting peace through local and international volunteer work.

Pacifism is not only the rejection of violence, but also a comprehensive philosophy of peace based on ethical values and characterised by historical influences and social contexts. In this text we will present various facets of pacifism, from its ethical foundations to its concrete realisation on the individual and collective level. We will discuss various currents of pacifism including radical, religious, pragmatic, feminist and scientific perspectives.

Particular attention will be paid to the influences of pacifism throughout the history of SCI. Through international encounters, appreciation of diversity, active solidarity, criticism of capitalism and anti-militarist commitment, pacifism has strongly characterised the basic principles of SCI. This documentation is intended not only as a theoretical examination of the concept of pacifism, but also as a call to think, reflect and act.

What leads us to reflect on our basic pacifist stance right now?

There were two events in particular which led us, a working group on political statements, to critically reflect on the foundations of our pacifism and to write this discussion paper:

At its 2021 retreat, the committee of SCI Switzerland expressed the wish to sharpen the political profile of SCI Switzerland concerning peace. The resulting guidelines from 2021 - 2023 were supplemented with the following guideline: 'SCI presents itself to the public with a clearly recognisable peace policy profile. It participates in the discourse on peace policy with its own statements.' A 'Peace Policy' working group was also set up to examine the feasibility of these proposals and implement them. Shortly afterwards, an international seminar organised by SCI Switzerland entitled 'This house is on fire' took place in spring 2022 with the

same aim. SCI and committee members also took part in that seminar, which focused on political communication via social media and further shaped the desire for a political profile for SCI Switzerland concerning peace.

These developments ultimately gave rise to the working group for political statements. From mid-2022 to June 2023, this working group drafted six statements on peace policy proposals and current issues, which are published on the SCI Switzerland website. This concrete political work has prompted us to reflect on our values in this position paper, detached from the current events of the day.

These internal SCI reflections were also mirrored in global world events: The Russian invasion of the Ukraine in February 2022 shook the pacifist convictions of peace organisations in Western Europe. How is the demand for arms deliveries compatible with a pacifist stance? Can non-violent resistance be integrated into the military defence of a country? Can solidarity with a country under attack also be credibly demonstrated by non-violent means? These are all questions to which there is no simple answer from a pacifist point of view, and which also force us to rethink our basic values.

The results of this debate in the political statements working group are summarised in this discussion paper.

2. The ethical foundations of pacifism

We view pacifism as a philosophical and political conviction that rejects all forms of violence and seeks peaceful solutions to conflicts and problems. Pacifism rejects war and military intervention as a means of conflict and seeks non-violent methods of conflict resolution. This moral stance can be justified and reflected on using different ethical approaches. Max Weber (1926) distinguishes between two basic approaches.

2.1. Between ethics of conviction and ethics of responsibility

Ethics of conviction[1] is characterised by the intentions of actions, regardless of their consequences. Its yardstick is firm principles. Only the good

1 The Larousse definition of 'ethics': Part of philosophy which considers the foundations of morality. Synonym: morality. It would seem that in French, the terms are used interchangeably, as they are in German in everyday language.

will to do the morally right thing counts. This applies even if the consequences for the acting subject or other people are negative. Ethically motivated pacifists rule out any involvement in killing, even if this could save the lives of others. However, refusal alone is not enough; the ethics of conviction also demands that everything possible be done by non-violent means, for example, to save lives threatened by war. In extreme cases, even by risking one's own life (e.g. via a hunger strike). The ethics of conviction is often based on religious beliefs: 'The Christian does the right thing and leaves the assessment of its success to God'. But Kant's imperative: Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.' (Kant, 1785) primarily examines the intentions, the motives of the action or omission thereof and not its consequences.

Max Weber (1926) demands that political action must also stand up to an ethical evaluation of its effects. To this end, he contrasts the ethics of conviction with the **ethics of responsibility.** The ethics of responsibility judge actions not primarily by their intentions, but by their results. The subject is primarily responsible for the effects of their actions and omissions; they cannot absolve themselves of this responsibility by arguing that they only wanted the best. Pacifists who argue in favour of the ethics of responsibility can therefore certainly advocate war if it is to be feared that a barbaric power cannot be stopped in any other way. Even tyrannicide can be ethically justified in this way if it is possible to put a stop to mass murder.

The two categories of ethics, that of conviction and that of responsibility, are not mutually exclusive, but are poles of a field of tension in which pacifists must constantly reconsider their intentions and actions. An individual who bases their pacifist convictions primarily on ethical convictions will always want to measure the effects of their own actions or non-actions against their own values in practice. One reckons with the possibility that the right, well-intentioned thing can have negative consequences. If an individual fails to assess these consequences and bases their actions exclusively on 'beliefs', there is a risk that they will drift off into fanaticism.

Conversely, the same applies to the person who acts primarily in an ethically responsible manner: They primarily judge the consequences of their actions and inactions. As a pacifist, they will primarily weigh up whether their actions or refusal to act serve peace and thus whether conflicts can be resolved without violence. Similar to ethicists, they are guided by basic values that guide their actions but do not prescribe any specific behavior.

2.2. Between the logic of peace and the logic of security

When considering the promotion of international peace, two diametrically different approaches can be distinguished: The logic of security and the logic of peace. The logic of security seeks to reactively ward off potential threats and minimise damage. The logic of peace, on the other hand, looks for ways to recognise conflicts at an early stage and resolve them non-violently.

Both are extreme points on a continuum that have rarely occurred throughout history in their pure forms. In practice, the real policies of most states contain elements of both the logic of peace and the logic of security. In her article 'Thinking peace research in terms of peace - even in times of war?' Sabine Jaberg characterises the logic of peace as follows:

> *'Based on a flyer from the Platform for Civil Conflict Transformation (2017), it [the peace logic approach] can be ideally outlined as follows:*
>
> *(1.) For peace logic, the problem is the violence that is taking place or is imminent - regardless of who perpetrates it, who it affects and in what forms it manifests itself. It is therefore orientated towards the goal of preventing and reducing violence.*
>
> *(2.) Peace logic understands the problem as a consequence of complex conflicts. It therefore undertakes a multi-layered analysis of the conflict that includes its own elements.*
>
> *(3.) It also favours cooperative conflict management. It therefore strives for de-escalation, victim protection and non-violent (dialogue-compatible and process-oriented) conflict transformation.*
>
> *(4.) The logic of peace justifies its own actions with the universality of international law and human rights. Accordingly, one's own interests must be scrutinised in a value-oriented manner and modified in line with global norms.*
>
> *(5.) In the event of failure, peace logic relies on open, critical self-reflection. It therefore recognises its own mistakes and searches for (as far as possible) non-violent alternatives. With regard to peace research as an academic discipline, self-reflection also requires us to be aware of our own construction patterns as well as the fundamental limits of our own knowledge (cf. Weller 2017).'*

The following table provides a brief overview of the characteristics of both logics.

	Logic of Security	**Logic of Peace**
What is the problem?	Threat, Danger, Insecurity. *Actions are based on*: the rationale of security and defence.	Violence, already occurring or imminent. *Actions are based on*: prevention and reduction of violence.
What caused the problem?	It emanates from others / from outside actors. *Initiatives aim to:* assign blame, safeguard one's own interests.	It is the result of complex conflicts. *Initiatives aim to:* transform conflicts based on a complex analysis, including one's own share of responsibility.
How is the problem managed?	Through defence and personal protection. A*pproach of initiatives:* isolation, expansion of security apparatus, threats culminating in use of violent means.	Through cooperative conflict management. A*pproach of initiatives:* de-escalation, protection of victims, non-violent conflict handling - compatible with dialogue and procedure-oriented.
What justifies one's actions?	Priority given to own interests. *Justification leads to:* relativization, subjectification and adaptation of rules to one's own interests.	From the universality of international law and human rights. *Justification leads to:* value-orientated questioning of one's own interests and modification thereof in line with global norms.
How to respond to failure and lack of success?	With self-confirmation, without self-criticism. *Consequence of actions:* intensification of previously used means or a retreat into passivity.	With critical and open reflection. *Consequence of actions:* acknowledgment of problems, including errors, and a search for non-violent alternatives.

Source: Plattform zivile Konfliktberatung (2017): Friedenslogik auf einen Blick.

From a pacifist perspective, it is clear that the logic of peace as a model of thought has priority and must guide our actions. Although this does not make thinking in terms of threat scenarios and worst-case scenarios completely superfluous, the logic of peace sets other priorities: it is life-affirming and development-oriented.

3. Pacifist currents

Pacifist ideas and principles are widespread in many societies, cultures and religions and have a long history. However, they have only been able to characterise the peaceful, non-violent resolution of conflicts within a generally small community and in interactions with their social context in a few individual examples. (Baha'i, Quakers, Amish, Tolstoyans, Jainism, etc.). In the history of mankind, the violent resolution of conflicts and the struggle for land, goods and power have always been dominant. However, the resulting suffering and immense destruction have regularly fueled the longing for peace and led people to consider the possibilities of a non-violent social and world order.

There are various currents within pacifism which differ in their approaches and methods. In the following text, we present some of the most important currents of pacifism, which also influence the basic position of SCI:

3.1. Radical pacifism

Radical pacifism is based on the principle of absolute non-violence. Radical pacifists reject any form of violence, be it in inter-state conflicts, individual disputes or even regarding self-defence. They are convinced that violence is never justified and that all social problems must be solved by non-violent means.

In the view of radical pacifists, wars are immoral, ineffective and destructive. Military interventions trigger spirals of violence that only lead to further suffering and never offer sustainable solutions. Instead, radical pacifism favours alternative methods of conflict management and resolution, such as negotiation, diplomatic channels, mediation, non-violent action and civil disobedience.

Radical pacifists reject military force while being active in their endeavours to promote non-violence and bring about positive change. They believe in the power of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience to draw attention to grievances and bring about change.

Their pacifism is also radical in that it fights against the existence of war by all means, including unlawful ones (conscientious objection, revealing military secrets, occupying military training grounds, etc.). Pacifism is therefore militant and anti-militaristic, because 'soldiers are murderers' (Tucholksy 1932).

3.2. Religious pacifism

Many religions have pacifist currents based on their teachings and principles. For example, certain Christian, Buddhist and Hindu traditions emphasise the importance of peace and non-violence.

The holy scriptures of the three Abrahamic world religions all contain basic pacifist principles, e.g:

> - Do not repay evil with evil, but instead overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17-21), (Sura 41, verse 34).

There are numerous examples of religiously motivated pacifist movements in human history. They all have a vision of peaceful coexistence in this world, a rebellion against the exploitation of people by other people and a rejection of violence as an instrument of power, but also as a

means of struggle for liberation from existing conditions.

In South Africa and later in India, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi developed the concept of satyagraha (literally: adherence to the truth) as a political strategy for the realisation of civil rights in South Africa and later as the ideological basis of the Indian independence movement. The pursuit of truth is also understood in religious terms as the pursuit of God. This idea is rooted in Hinduism but is based on the equality of all religions. His close fellow campaigners (Satyagrahi) on the salt march against the British salt monopoly had committed themselves to the principles of truth, non-violence, chastity and non-possession by taking a vow. This movement had great influence in India and made a decisive contribution to the independence movement in India.

St Francis and Gandhi are two well-known examples of pacifist thought and action based on religious motives. Less well known in the West is the Islamic Sufi tradition, which has inspired numerous non-violent resistance movements against colonialism, e.g. through the Sufi sheikh Amadou Bamba (1850-1927) in Senegal and West Africa or the Egyptian revolution.

Nevertheless, pacifism and religion are in a constant state of tension. Practically all warmongers appeal to religious sentiments and denominational affiliation, and in theocracies they are, in fact, an important part of the political power apparatus.

Unfortunately, pacifist religious movements often only have a minor role in the acute phase of a war and thereby cannot generally significantly influence the course of wars. Nevertheless, they have saved the lives of persecuted people and helped them to escape from peril. Following wars, many religious-pacifist movements have played an important role in the processes of reconciliation and reconstruction.

To summarise: religion and religious writings have been and continue to be an important source of inspiration for pacifism. Nevertheless, organised religion is not a reliable partner for pacifism; religious communities are all too much part of the power apparatus as an ideological superstructure that can be used to condition people for war or even to enforce the clergy's own claims to power by force.

Today, there are still a handful of organisations in Switzerland that are closely linked to the pacifist movement and are explicitly based on religious foundations: The International Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Centre pour l'Action non-violente CENAC, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the Religious Socialist Association. The Christian Peace Service CFD (since 2023 under the name 'Frieda') has emphasised the feminist approach in its peace work since the 1980s.

3.3. Pragmatic pacifism

Pragmatic pacifism is based on the conviction that non-violence is the best strategy for achieving one's own goal in a conflict with a government, be it with one's own or a foreign one. It is therefore a strategic decision and rooted in the ethics of responsibility. It is not one's own values and principles (ethics of conviction) that are decisive for the choice of means, but the degree to which the goal can be achieved.

Pacifism is rooted in the conviction that leadership cannot exist without a base; it would be powerless. This means that the power of the leaders depends on the support or the toleration of the population. If the population withdraws its support, the leadership loses its power.

The power of leadership is based on six main sources of power (see Gene Sharp 1973):

• Human labour,
• Skills and knowledge,
• Natural resources,
• Intangible factors (ideology, tradition of obedience...)
• Legitimacy/authority
• and possible sanctions.

Each of these sources of power depends on the cooperation of the people. Through this cooperation, the people decide the future which they aspire to. In contrast to strategies organised around violence, pragmatic pacifism allows each person to engage according to their own desires and abilities. No one needs to be physically able to fight. Refusing to participate as a labourer, consumer, taxpayer, or service member is a tool accessible to all who participate in the economic life of a society.

The strength of pragmatic pacifism lies in its inclusivity. There is no need to be morally convinced that violence is wrong, but it is enough to be aware that this strategy is a better and more effective option than violent strategies.

3.4. Feminist pacifism

One hundred years ago, Lida Gustava Heymann postulated *'that the modern civilised states are male states. States of men, in which everything: family, school, prisons, legal system, politics, etc. is built and organised on the male principle, i.e. the principle of violence, authority, the struggle of all against all, the fear of one over the other'.* (Heymann, 1917).

Heymann argues that this masculine principle repeatedly leads to wars, civil wars and revolutions. It has a corrosive effect and, if continued, will

lead to the complete destruction of humanity. She contrasts this masculine principle with its destructive effect with the feminine, constructive one: a principle of 'mutual help, the kindness of understanding and accommodation'.

Lida Heymann (1868 - 1943) was a contemporary of Bertha von Suttner ("Lay down your arms! ' Suttner, 1887'), Kropotkin ('Mutual Aid in the Human and Animal World' Kropotkin 1902), Rosa Luxemburg (1871 - 1919), the Bernese women Gertrud Woker (1878 - 1968) and Gertrud Kurz (1890 - 1972) and many other women and some men with a comprehensive positive concept of peace that goes beyond the absence of war and necessarily includes the equal participation of women in politics and society.

This is still the core of feminist pacifism today. The Christian Peace Service cfd, (now 'Frieda - the feminist peace organisation'[5]), states that

> *'Switzerland is far from being able to guarantee positive peace within its own borders. Structural discrimination, such as the unequal gender ratio in un(ter)paid care work, sexualised and gender-specific violence, racism and violence against minorities, is anchored in society. This not only makes life less secure for women and marginalised groups, but also excludes them from political participation.'[6]*

3.5. Scientific pacifism

In 1905, Alfred Fried developed scientific, rational pacifism as a counter-current to idealistic pacifism based on moral principles. Its proponents researched the emergence and development of wars and conflicts using scientific methods from the then still young fields of sociology and political science (Marx, Engels, Comte, Spencer, Simmel, Durkheim, etc.). From these findings, they developed the idea of a global supranational organisation for the prevention and resolution of international conflicts. These were the theoretical foundations for the League of Nations (1920 - 1946) and later the UN (from 1945) and its sub-organisations.

Scientific pacifism draws on research methods from various fields such as sociology, psychology, political science and economics to investigate how non-violent conflict resolution strategies and diplomatic strategies work and whether they can achieve better results than military interventions and wars.

Today, the research of peace and conflict continues to cultivate and deve-

4 Olive Schreiner ; Gisela Brinker-Gabler : Frauen gegen den Krieg (Women Against War). p. 65.
5 https://www.cfd-ch.org/de/news/der-cfd-heisst-ab-november-2023-frieda-623.html, downloaded on 29.07.2023.
6 The Swiss Peacebuilding Platform KOFF, FriedensFrauen Weltweit, the feminist peace organisation Frieda: No peace without care work, Leporello, 2021.

lop this scientific approach. Well-known representatives include Johann Galtung, Dieter Senghaas, Ekkehart Krippendorf, Theodor Ebert, Gene Sharp, Erica Chenoweth and Christine Schweitzer.

Some institutes have dedicated themselves entirely to the issue of conflict and peace research: the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Berghof Foundation, swisspeace and many others. An important platform for scientific pacifism in the German-speaking world is the journal 'Wissenschaft und Frieden'.

3.6. Libertarian pacifism

Non-violent anarchism or libertarian pacifism is a philosophy and political movement that strives to establish an anarchist society without violent means. It is based on mutual listening and respect for all people in society. It is based on the decision to not use violence and on the ethics of social responsibility. Empathy and the unconditional acceptance of others are of great importance here.

The enforcement of an egalitarian society by means of violence is a contradiction in terms. The assassinations carried out by Anarchy in Action at the end of the 19th century proved to be 'counterproductive and inefficient' (Peter Kropotkin). They also contradict the anarchist ethic. The non-violent anarchist argument is based on the conviction that the ends (self-determined, peaceful coexistence) never justify the violent means (violence).

Thus, even today, non-violent anarchism appears in the course of history as a current of thought and tradition with its own identity within the heterogeneous movement of anarchism. The roots of this approach reach far back into the history of this movement, with contributions from Thoreau, Bakunin and Tolstoy.

3.7. Pacifist thought and action

The previous sections have shown that pacifism is not a uniform doctrine. It encompasses a multitude of different tendencies that are in dialogue with each other and are often mutually inspiring, but also often reveal contradictions. These debates may contribute to a critical appraisal and sharpening of the intellectual concepts, but they do little to change social reality.

Only pacifist practice can achieve this - active resistance against injustice and violence. The concepts must prove themselves in practice, and impulses for the further development of theory arise from analysing practical experience: 'There is nothing more practical than a good theory' (Kurt Lewin, 1955).

This practice is based on the one hand on the theoretical foundations and on the other hand on the social, societal and political circumstances: Pacifist action in a democracy is different from that in a dictatorship; pacifist campaigns in a war zone must be conducted differently from those in not directly involved third countries. This realisation should lead us to refrain from giving advice and instead to learn from the experiences of the pacifists directly involved through information and sympathy. We will also look at how pacifism is practised individually or collectively.

3.7.1. Individual pacifism

Individual pacifism refers to a person's personal values, beliefs and lifestyle, in which the use of violence and aggression are rejected. It is a form of pacifism that is practised on an individual level, independent of political or social contexts.

Individual pacifists are committed to resolving conflicts and disputes in their own social environment without violence and to practise non-violence in general on the personal level. They reject physical violence, verbal abuse and other forms of aggression. They therefore do not carry or use weapons and are not prepared to join organisations that use armed force to enforce or defend their interests. They counter this rejection of armed violence by actively endeavouring to resolve conflicts without violence. Individual pacifists believe that violence is neither morally justified nor effective and that non-violent communication and behaviour lead to a more peaceful and harmonious society.

This individual pacifist attitude affects various aspects of personal life. For example, many individual pacifists choose not to own weapons or participate in physical conflict. They practice non-violent communication, respectful behaviour and seek peaceful solutions to conflicts in their own lives.

Individual pacifism should not be confused with passivity. Individual pacifists actively advocate non-violent solutions in their social environment, for example by promoting non-violent communication (e.g. according to Rosenberg 2013), practising conflict mediation or working in humanitarian organisations. Other individual pacifists choose to withdraw from a society characterised by inequality, injustice and violence, remain politically abstinent and do not take part in collective, militant actions in resistance to militarisation and war.
Representatives of individual pacifism argue ethically, basing their convictions on fundamental values, ethical principles, religious beliefs or a combination thereof.

3.7.2. Collectively organised pacifism

If pacifism desires to be more than a peaceful individual life practice, then it must organise itself and exert influence on politics and society.

As a countervailing power to oppression, coercion and destruction, pacifism has neither weapons nor money to pursue its goals. It works through the power of conviction and the unity of many who strive for the same goal: comprehensive, sustainable peace. This was already clear to one of the pioneers of pacifism when she called for the first peace conference in Rome in 1892:

> *'It is therefore necessary that wherever peace supporters exist, they should publicly declare themselves as such and contribute to the work according to the measure of their strength.'* Bertha von Suttner: The next peace congress in Rome (1891).

For this reason peace activists have united in peace organisations. They all pursue the same overarching goal but differ in the fundamental values they invoke and in their choice of means. This reveals a dilemma for the peace movement: The more the individual organisations emphasise the ideological basis, the greater the fragmentation of the movement becomes as a whole.

In the relatively free civil society of Switzerland, the peace movement is organised in various pacifist groups, associations and federations. This diversity is partly an expression of different value backgrounds (religious, humanist, socialist, etc.). However, it is also an expression of task sharing within the peace movement and a specialisation in one of the many facets of peace work (conflict prevention, peace education, anti-imperialism, fair trade relations, conscientious objection, anti-militarism, disarmament, criticism of and overcoming gender stereotypes, reconciliation work, multilateralism, civil resistance, etc.).

A pacifist organisation must therefore be judged, among other things, by whether it is able to implement in practice its theoretical foundations laid down in statutes, mission statements and other documents. In the following sections, we intend to work out which central elements make up the pacifism of SCI Switzerland and thus also reveal the values to which our practice is to be measured.

4. Pacifist influences in the history of the SCI

Pierre Cérésole, the founder of SCI, was a religiously motivated pacifist who nevertheless did not shy away from denouncing the Church as a supporter of patriotism and militarism during the First World War (Monastier 1950: 13). His reservations about the Swiss Evangelical Church led him to the religious socialists, and early on he sought cooperation with the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Quakers, whom he joined in 1936.

He had a strong spiritual motivation for his peace work, but at the same time was very sceptical of the state-affiliated church structures and remained open to religious socialism and the critical, anti-clerical religious movements. An encounter with Mahatma Gandhi in 1931 and the management of work camps after the earthquakes in Bihar (Marcussen, 2019) also brought him into contact with Hindu approaches (Ahimsa) and the practice of non-violent resistance (Satyagraha[8]).

'Actions not words' was the SCI's motto for a long time. This expressed that working 'with pick and shovel' was more important than endless philosophical discussions on pacifism. Based on this practice of practical solidarity, SCI has campaigned for a civil service for conscientious objectors as an alternative to military service ever since it was founded.

SCI Switzerland was involved in all the referendum campaigns for the introduction of a civil service and also organised model civil service projects which demonstrated the practicability and usefulness of a civil service.[9] Since the adoption of civil service in 1992 (which was implemented in 1996), this anti-militaristic orientation of SCI-Switzerland has declined, and its activities have shifted to international volunteer exchanges.

In the orchestra of peace organisations, SCI today sees itself as a specialised organisation for intercultural understanding, the reduction of prejudices, reconciliation, post-conflict reconstruction and non-violent conflict management. A specific feature of our peace work is that many of our work camps also involve physical labour and thus active assistance in the local community. In addition to its core activities, SCI Switzerland aims to contribute to the peace policy debate in Switzerland and to motivate its members to actively participate in politics.

---

8 https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyagraha, downloaded on 29.7.2023.
9 cf. Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse (2021): Service civil. https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/fr/articles/008691/2021-02-24/, downloaded on 29.7.2023.

4.1. International encounters

'SCI Switzerland organises volunteer projects around the world that contribute to peace in a broad sense: to social justice, sustainable development, equality, solidarity and non-violent conflict resolution. [...] By working together, [the volunteers] experience mutual respect and understanding - without prejudice. In this way, volunteering becomes a symbol of a peaceful and cooperative world.'[10]

In work camps, seminars and volunteer activities, people from different generations, cultures and language regions come together and spend two to three weeks and discuss their collaboration in a non-commercial project and decide how they will live together in their accommodations. In doing so, they overcome language barriers, gain an understanding of cultural differences and agree on a common culture of living together.

In addition to the short work camps, SCI Switzerland also organises long-term volunteer placements of between 1 and 12 months. Here, the focus is less on living and working together with other volunteers and more on immersion in a new culture. This is undoubtedly a great added value for the individual volunteer, but it is always important to assess the extent of the benefit the volunteers bring to the community they are working for. And how successful is the transfer of experience back to Switzerland or the volunteer's country of origin?

4.2. Lived solidarity

In SCI work camps, volunteers perform work that benefits a population that could not afford to pay for this labour. In Switzerland, this is primarily the mountain population, who need our support in maintaining the alpine pastures, protective forests and alpine trails. Carrying out this type of work also gives volunteers, mostly from urban areas, a greater understanding of the problems of the mountain population, and also of the benefits they bring to us all by continuing to enable the habitation of the cultivated mountain valley regions.

Active solidarity is also practised in work camps for disadvantaged people, refugees and people with disabilities. Through the use of volunteers, the institutions' scarce human resources are temporarily expanded somewhat, allowing them to offer a holiday programme, for example, that would otherwise not be possible. By performing this type of work, participants also gain an insight into the living conditions of people on the margins of our consumer society and, in addition, have a good opportunity to reflect on their own lifestyles.

---

10 cf. https://scich.org/fr/vision-mission-et-valeurs/, downloaded on 29.7.2023.

4.3. Diversity as a resource

We view the diversity of people as a resource and a source of enrichment to us all. SCI Switzerland's work camps, seminars and other projects bring people together from different cultures, language regions, age groups and gender identities. People who would otherwise rarely meet in every-day life.

In this intercultural environment, participants learn to question stereotypes. Their openness and curiosity to get to know other ways of life help them to understand and overcome prejudices and develop a common culture of understanding and co-operation. This does not always happen without the emergence of conflict. This in turn often provides good opportunities to practise non-violent forms of conflict resolution.

4.4. Education for peace

For SCI Switzerland, education for peace is an instrument of social change based on non-violence and the active construction of alternatives that are rooted in the local context and have a global vision.

We view education for peace as a participatory process that builds on conscious learning and critical thinking in order to promote a more just and politically engaged society

4.5. Commitment to peace policy

SCI Switzerland views itself as part of the international and Swiss peace movements, consisting of a large number of pacifist organisations with different focuses, and is involved in the political debate on security policy and peacebuilding.

In particular, the creation of a civil service as an alternative to compulsory military service was a central concern of SCI Switzerland. This commitment is still required today because the existing civil service is repeatedly called into question. In addition, the creation of working groups on political issues is an attempt to reposition SCI Switzerland more strongly as a politically active peace organisation.

4.6. Sustainable action - climate justice

Many SCI-Switzerland work camps have an explicit ecological benefit. They promote the preservation of biodiversity, traditional mountain far-

ming or the fight against neophytes.

In all work camps, seminars and long-term activities, SCI pays attention to the sustainable use of natural resources: participants are encouraged to use public transport and avoid travelling by air, and meals are cooked with as little processed food as possible and usually without meat. The climate crisis is a topic in most work camps and seminars, as a further cause of conflict between industrialised nations and the global South, but also as a - last - chance to turn away from consumerism and improve the quality of life.

4.7. Weak points of SCI Switzerland with regard to pacifism

To be honest, we should also name our gaps and weaknesses - at least for our internal discussion:

• We have little presence at the local level in Switzerland. We hardly manage to implement the guiding principle 'Think globally, act locally' within SCI. The once active local groups have disintegrated, and we are barely able to rebuild an active volunteer network and thus carry out active peace work in everyday life. This lack of presence at the local level also impedes the promotion of intellectual engagement concerning issues of peace.

• Most volunteers do not remain active in the SCI after participating in an international project. This means that their experience hardly flows back into our organisation.

As we see peace as a very broad concept, it is difficult to focus on one topic. We run the risk of touching on too many topics and at the same time fail to go much into depth and put our ideas into practice.

5. Pacifism of the future

The two conflicts in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine are currently dominating discussions about war and peace in Switzerland and Europe. For many, war seems to be the only possible response to violence and terror. Even countries that are not directly involved are arming themselves, and the warmongers are not ruling out the use of nuclear weapons. Nationalist and therefore xenophobic ideologies are gaining more and more support in society, populists receive increasingly more votes and national interests are often prioritised. Multilateral institutions such as the UN, EU and OSCE appear outdated, weakened and helpless. The hope for a more peaceful world, or at least for a more peaceful Europe, which emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, has been shattered and has given way to resignation and hopelessness.

This conflict-ridden environment has also influenced and paralysed pacifism. As pacifists, we must free ourselves from this paralysis and develop new strategies and responses to the new situations. Since the 1990s, the pacifist debate has focused strongly on the prevention of violence and on non-violent conflict resolution. Valuable approaches to action have been developed, but these have not been disseminated widely enough and have therefore only had a local impact. The question of reaching a sufficient scale remains: how can such concepts be applied globally and in particular in the context of war? Do we need further developed concepts that respond better to local circumstances and activists? Are there forms of practice from the global South that already exemplify this pacifism?

As we assess the situation, we must expect that the current wars will not be ended by negotiations or victories in the foreseeable future. It would be a success if they do not spread any further. In addition to this depressing prospect, there are all the conflicts that have not been highlighted in the west, the permanent threat of war emanating from various local conflict hotspots and the increasing tensions between major powers. This harbours great potential for violence and war in the foreseeable future.

It would be presumptuous to outline here what answers pacifism should give to the situation described. As a first step, it must suffice to describe the questions and challenges that pacifism must face:

5.1. Pacifism in the war zones

What can pacifist organisations contribute to non-violent resistance against an aggressor during a war? How much preparation does such non-violent resistance require, and if this preparation is lacking, how can it be improvised under wartime conditions? How can non-violent resis-

tance activists be prevented from being vilified as defeatists or, worse still, persecuted as collaborators? Is cooperation with the military resistance of the army or partisan groups legitimate and practicable? Is co-operation with the occupying forces conceivable, e.g. in the provision of basic services to the population? To what extent is it possible and sensible to work towards achieving understanding and reconciliation among opposing ethnic groups during the acute conflict?

These are all questions to which the Ukrainian, Russian, Palestinian and Israeli peace movements, each a small minority, have had to find an answer in recent years (Wintersteiner 2022). These efforts are hardly reported on in the media. There is therefore a major information gap that needs to be addressed in the future. After all, these experiences and local forms of pacifist resistance will be of great importance for the further development of pacifist concepts.

5.2. Pacifist solidarity

Pacifists in countries that are not directly involved in a war are also challenged. What stand do they take on the war to which they are passively exposed as media consumers? Should they take a stand on the conflict, condemn the aggressor and thus take sides? Do they have enough information and historical knowledge to clearly identify and condemn the aggressor? Or should they maintain 'neutrality' and condemn and deplore the war as such and call for the protection of the civilian population? Or should they not take a position at all because they are unable to form a judgement in the flood of information and disinformation? Another option would be to not take a position in favour of one party or the other, but to demand that all parties respect human rights, international law and international law of war.

Such statements are particularly important for influencing public opinion. However, this is not enough. What else can be done to improve the situation in war zones? What opportunities are there to support local peace organisations in war zones? How effective are volunteer missions in pacifist or humanitarian projects? By collecting donations for such projects? By delivering humanitarian aid supplies? Through public relations work in Switzerland? By organising exchanges at the grassroots level between members of hostile ethnic groups who are willing to engage in dialogue? By using the instruments of direct democracy and demonstrations to exert political influence on the national government with the aim of persuading it to adopt a proactive, peace-oriented foreign policy?

The pressure of upheaval in a world that is moving ever faster is a major obstacle to peace. Differentiation is necessary to resolve conflicts without violence. A binary vision tends to caricature each party and portray disputes as insurmountable, which can easily become a self-fulfilling

prophecy. The polarization that results from a lack of nuance makes it difficult to find a common solution. It is easier to describe the world by depicting it schematically and to block out the voices that promote peace, dialog, nuance and efforts to improve the situation. As SCI Switzerland, we must be careful not to give in to demands for simplification and schematisation in our communications. This would make us complicit in the polarisation of the world. We must endure the complexity of the situation, try to understand it and propose alternative solutions based on this understanding.

5.3. Pacifism in the face of terrorism

Unfortunately, armed violence does not only emanate from states, but also from individuals and organizations that use terror as a means to make their concerns heard. Terrorism is by definition sudden and unexpected. A pacifist stance during an attack is unlikely to influence events.

It is somewhat different when the civilian population is repeatedly subjected to minor harassment and attacks with the aim of wearing them down and driving them off their land. This type of violence below the threshold of war is on the increase.

There is the possibility of protective accompaniment, as used by Swiss NGOs (Peace Watch, Peace Brigades Switzerland PBS) in Palestine, Guatemala, Honduras and Colombia. The projects are still small, but they have great potential and a considerable benefit, not only for the victimised population, but also for the volunteers involved, who learn non-violent intervention in practice and spread the stance and methods of non-violent conflict management as multipliers after their return.

5.4. Pacifist responses to the new unstable balance of terror

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, there was hope in Europe that the leaden period of confrontation between the US and USSR power blocs had been overcome and that a new pluralistic and more peaceful world order could develop. Since the turn of the millennium, we have realised that although the balance of power has shifted, the basic features have remained constant: imperialism and hegemonism. From the bipolar world order of the Cold War years, a new, more complex world disorder has emerged, in which not only three power blocs are in permanent conflict, but also unpredictable regimes such as North Korea or Iran and violent parastate organisations pose a major potential threat to stability in most parts of the world.

What answers does pacifism have to this complex and potentially explosive world situation? How can we understand the overlapping conflicts? What attitudes and stances prevent us from resigning ourselves to our own, seemingly more peaceful little world of Switzerland? What contribution can we make to overcome the ideological rifts between the power blocs? How can we reach people on the grassroots level who long for peace on the other side, in Russia, North Korea, China, Israel and many other places?

5.5. Pacifist responses to populist and nationalist tendencies

The political situation in Europe is characterised by the strengthening of nationalist currents. This can be observed in the still young democracies of the post-Soviet states as well as in the founding members of the EU. It seems that a growing part of the population is demanding simple answers in an increasingly complex world. Autocrats such as Orban, Erdogan and Duda were democratically elected and are now working to dismantle democracy in their countries. A similar trend can be observed in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany and also in Switzerland, where the Swiss People's Party, with its bold election promises, is the largest party.

How can we achieve peacebuilding in this domestic political climate with a shift to the right? How do we avoid polarisation between left and right, democratic and authoritarian? Will we succeed in promoting dialogue between the political camps? Are we aware of the fears of those sections of the population that tend to favour authoritarian responses? Can we contribute to raising awareness of a democracy that not only works well in formal terms, but is also useful and practiced by citizens?

5.6. Pacifism cannot be neutral

Pacifists are never neutral in a conflict; they take sides for the protection of the civilian population, for the protection of human rights and for respect for the UN Charter and international law. When these fundamental values are violated, they take a clear stand, regardless of their sympathies for one party or the other. Equally important, if not more so, is their solidarity with peace activists in all camps. In the media hype surrounding an acute military conflict in which war is in the foreground, it is important that these groups that stand up for understanding, reconstruction and peace are also heard.

6. Conclusion

The exploration of pacifism in this document underscores the multifaceted nature of this philosophy and its relevance in addressing the complex challenges of our time. From its ethical foundations to its diverse currents, pacifism emerges as a framework for understanding and responding to violence, conflict, and injustice. Through SCI Switzerland's historical commitment and forward-looking vision, we see the potential of pacifist ideals to inspire action rooted in solidarity, education, and sustainable practices. However, as we confront emerging threats—from war zones and terrorism to rising populism and nationalism—it is clear that pacifism cannot remain neutral or passive. It calls for active engagement, innovative strategies, and unwavering dedication to a world built on justice, equity, and peace. Let this document serve as both a reflection on that and a call to action, reaffirming our shared responsibility to keep pacifism at the heart of our collective endeavours.

7. References

Reference books:

Bekaert, Xavier. 2000. *Anarchisme, violence et non-violence.* Paris: Éditions du Monde Libertaire.

Borchert, Wolfgang. 1960. *Draussen vor der Tür.* Leipzig: Insel Verlag.

Chenoweth, Erica and Maria Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict.* Boston: Columbia University Press.

Defrasne, Jean. 1983. *Le pacifisme.* Paris: PUF.

Barros, Izabel , Leandra Bias, Andrea Filippi, Natalina Haller, Joana Salvadé. *Kein Frieden ohne Care-Arbeit.* Die Schweizer Plattform für Friedensförderung KOFF, FriedensFrauen Weltweit, die feministische Friedensorganisation cfd, 2021.

Doran, Chantal, Heinz Gabathuler, and Philipp Rodriguez. 2019. *Words about Deeds. One hundred years of international service for peace.* Brussels: Service Civil International.

Ebert, Theodor. 1981. *Gewaltfreier Aufstand. Alternative zum Bürgerkrieg.* Waldkirch im Breisgau: Waldkircher Verlagsgesellschaft.

Fiala, Andrew. 2022. "Religious and Secular Visions of Peace and Pacifism." *Religions 13*, no. 11: 1121.

Fried, Alfred. 1905. *Handbuch der Friedensbewegung.* Wien: Österreichische Friedensgesellschaft.

Fried, Alfred. 1916. *Die Forderungen des Pazifismus.* Zürich: Orell Füssli.

Galtung, Johan. 1998. *Die andere Globalisierung. Perspektiven für eine zivilisierte Weltgesellschaft im 21. Jahrhundert.* Münster: Agenda.

Galtung, Johan. 1998. "Konflikttransformation mit friedlichen Mitteln. Die Methode der Transzendenz." *Wissenschaft und Frieden 3*, no. 98.

Heymann, Lida Gustava. 1917. "Weiblicher Pazifismus." In *Frauen gegen den Krieg*, edited by Gisela Brinker-Gabler, 65 – 70. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag.

Fuhrer, Hans Rudolf. 2021. "Zivildienst." Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz. Updated 24.02.2021. https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/008691/2021-02-24/.

Jaberg, Sabine. 2023. "Friedensforschung vom Frieden her denken – auch in Kriegszeiten?" In *Quo Vadis, Friedensforschung?* edited by Malte Albrecht, Sabine Jaberg, Christiane Lammers, Werner Ruf, and Jürgen Scheffran. Köln: Wissenschaft und Frieden.

Kästner, Erich. 1949. *Die Konferenz der Tiere*. Zürich: Europa Verlag.

Krippendorff, Ekkehart. 1968. *Friedensforschung*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.

Kropotkin, Peter. 1902. *Gegenseitige Hilfe in der Tier- und Menschenwelt.* Leipzig: Verlag von Theodor Thomas.

Lewin, Kurt. 1951. *Field Theory in Social Science.* New York: Harper.

Marcusson, Eleonor. 2019. "Pacifism and colonialism. Earthquake relief in Bihar (India) 1934-37." In *Words about Deeds: One hundred years of international voluntary service for peace. Service Civil International 1920-2020*, edited by Chantal Doran, Heinz Gabathuler, Philipp Rodriguez, 33-35. Antwerpen/La Chaux-de-Fonds: SCI International Secretariat

Monastier, Hélène. 1950. *Pierre Ceresole: Ein Kämpfer für den Frieden*. Wien: Sensen Verlag.

Mottu, Henry. 2023. *Artisans de paix : Entre pacifisme et résistance.* Genève: Labor et Fides.

Müller, Jean-Marie. 2005. *Dictionnaire de la non-violence*. Du Relie Eds.

Rolland, Romain. 2013. *Au-dessus de la mêlée*. Lausanne: Payot.

Rosenberg, Marshall. 2013. *Gewaltfreie Kommunikation.* Paderborn: Junfermann.

Schreiner, Olive. 1911. "Frauen zahlen die Hauptkosten." In *Frauen gegen den Krieg*, edited by Gisela Brinkler-Gabler. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

Schweitzer, Christine, and Jørgen Johansen. 2016. *To Prevent or Stop Wars: What Can Peace Movements Do?* Sweden: Irene Publishing.

SCI Schweiz. "Vision, Mission und Werte." SCI Schweiz. Accessed 29.07.2023. https://scich.org/vision-werte/.

Sémelin, Jacques. 2011. *Face au totalitarisme, la résistance civile*. André Versaille éditeur.
Sémelin, Jacques. 1998. S*ans armes face à Hitler – la résistance civile en Europe 1939-45.* Lausanne: Payot.

Senghaas, Dieter. 2004. *Zum irdischen Frieden: Erkenntnisse und Vermu-tungen.* Frankfurt am Main: Edition Suhrkamp.

Sharp, Gene. 1973; 1985. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Boston: Extending Horizon Books.
    Band 1. 1973. *Power and Struggle.*
    Band 2. 1973. *The Methods of Nonviolent Action.*
    Band 3. 1985. *The Dynamics of Nonviolent Action.*

Simmel, Georg. 1922. "Der Streit." In *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, edited by Georg Simmel, 197 – 266. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

Thoreau, Henry David. 1849. "Resistance to Civil Government." In *Aesthetic Papers*, edited by Elizabeth P. Peabody, 189. Boston: The editor/ New York: G.P. Putnam.

Thorau, Henry David. 2010. *Über die Pflicht zum Ungehorsam gegen den Staat und andere Essays*. Zürich: Diogenes.

von Suttner, Bertha. 1891. "Der nächste Friedenskongress in Rom." *Die Neue Freie Presse* (03.09.1891, Teil 2).

von Suttner, Bertha. 2008. *Die Waffen nieder!* Berlin: Deutsche Literaturgesellschaft.

Vian, Boris. 1954. "Monsieur le Président." Youtube. Accessed 02.10.2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjndTXyk3mw.

Wintersteiner, Werner. 2022. "Der unterschätzte Widerstand - Gewaltfreie Aktionen in der Ukraine." Wissenschaft und Frieden Blog. Published 06.04.2022. https://wissenschaft-und-frieden.de/blog/meinungen-und-positionen/der-unterschaetzte-widerstand-ein-ueberblick/.

Weber, Max 1926. Politik als Beruf. München: Duncker & Humblot.

Wrobel, Ignaz. 1931. "Der bewachte Kriegsschauplatz." *Die Weltbühne*, 31 (04.08.1931): 191.

List of illustrations:

Plattform zivile Konfliktberatung 2017. Friedenslogik auf einen Blick. Accessed 29.04.2025. http://pzkb.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/friedenslogik_d-8s-web.pdf

Specific Swiss sources:

Bein, Thomas, and Rudolf Epple. 1986. "Die Friedensbewegung heute. Rahmenbedingungen und Tendenzen." In *Handbuch Frieden Schweiz*, edited by Forum für praxisbezogene Friedensforschung. Basel: Z-Verlag.

Blanc, Jean-Daniel and Christine Luchsinger. 1994. *achtung: die 50er Jahre.* Zürich: Chronos. Forum für praxisbezogene Friedensforschung. 1986.

Brassel, Ruedi, and Jakob Tanner. 1986. "Zur Geschichte der Friedens-bewegung in der Schweiz." In *Handbuch Frieden Schweiz*, edited by Forum für praxisbezogene Friedensforschung. Basel: Z-Verlag.

Degen, Bernhard. 1990. *Krieg dem Kriege! Der Basler Friedenskongress der Sozialistischen Internationale von 1912*. Basel: Sozialdemokratische Partei Basel-Stadt.

Epple-Gass Rudolf. 1994. "Zur Friedensbewegung in den 50iger Jahren". In *achtung: die 50er Jahre*, edited by Jean-Daniel Blanc and Christine Luchsinger. Zürich: Chronos.

Herz, Ulrich. 1969. *Das internationale Friedensbüro. Geschichte. Ziele. Tätigkeit.* Genf: Internationales Friedensbüro.

Van den Dungen, Peter. 1981. "The international Museum of War and Peace at Lucern." *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 31.

Specialised NGOs online/ Magazine with information material:

Fondation Non-violence XXI:
https://nonviolence21.org/non-violence-xxi/notre-definition-de-la-desobeissance-civile/.

Centre pour l'action non-violente CENAC:
https://non-violence.ch/le-cenac/la-non-violence-en-bref/.

Institut de recherches sur la résolution non-violente des conflits IRNC:
https://www.irnc.org/IRNC/Textes.

Alternatives non-violentes:
https://www.alternatives-non-violentes.org/.

SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute):
https://www.sipri.org/.

International Institute for Non-Violent Action, NOVACT, Barcelona:

https://novact.org/en/.

Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung:
https://bundesstiftung-friedensforschung.de.

W & F: Wissenschaft und Frieden:
https://wissenschaft-und-frieden.de/.

Library catalogues on pacifism and non-violence:

Centre pour l'Action Non-Violente: https://catalogue.non-violence.ch/
catalogue/.

Nonviolence International: https://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/
resources.

Berghof Foundation: https://berghof-foundation.org/library.