



Final Statement of the Workshop on "Pacem in Terris: War and Other Obstacles to Peace"



Sixty years have passed since the publication of Pope John XXIII's encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). Written in the wake of the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, war is today no less an urgent moral problem than when *Pacem in Terris* appeared in April 1963. In the last sixty years numerous armed conflicts have been fought, including the war in Ukraine that continues unabated. Nuclear weapons, once tragically detonated over Japan, have since been silent in actual warfare, but their production, stockpiling, and modernization continue at a fast pace. Explicit threats of using nuclear weapons have reemerged. The risks of intentional or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons as well as proliferation are today higher than in decades. Research in artificial intelligence has enabled the integration of AI into weaponry, while digital technologies are increasingly used in connection with conflict. Even the long-standing norm against the use of chemical weapons is coming under strain, while advances in bioengineering could be abused for malicious purposes. Potent forms of digital disinformation are on the rise, and multidimensional conflict – mixing military, cyber, and economic measures – has intensified the growing sense of insecurity that permeates our world.

Pope John XXIII's famous statement, "In this age which boasts of its atomic power, it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice" bears ample repetition today. It is imperative that leaders with responsibility for decision-making about military force recognize that disagreements between states should be resolved by negotiation and other nonviolent means. Under today's conditions – when many states have enormously powerful arms at their disposal – resorting to war to settle disputes is not a moral

option. War is not a given of nature like an earthquake or tsunami; it results from human decisions.

When military force is used as a matter of defense this must happen according to strict and broadly accepted rules of ethics and law. National security cannot justify defensive actions that would be inconsistent with the basic demands of morality that have been incorporated into international humanitarian law. Political and military leaders must acknowledge that morality is inherent to our universal common good. This good is the fruit of a collaboration that cuts across national boundaries and requires a global perspective on humanity. In their decision-making, political leaders within individual states have an obligation to have this global perspective constantly in view and to take steps to strengthen it. Peace between nations can never have force, threats, coercion, or fear as its ultimate foundation. The promotion of amity should be the fundamental driver of inter-state relations.

We recognize that for millennia thinkers the world over – East and West, North and South – have wrestled with the moral conundrum of war. Theories have been proposed to limit and eliminate war, to explain when war can be waged and when not. We must build on their wisdom, yet never fear to depart from it in the interests of our shared humanity. We must be prepared “to examine war in an entirely new frame of mind”[1] as was well noted by the Second Vatican Council, especially given the immense dangers that have arisen from the application of advanced scientific knowledge to the design of weaponry. These issues concern humanity as a whole; all have a responsibility to foster a culture of peace.

With these principles in mind, we affirm that:

Collective human security in a spirit of fraternity must be the primary objective. This can only be achieved through international cooperation, diplomacy, mutual trust, and effective multilateralism on the basis of international law and ethical norms. The international system of governance needs to be made more effective. The statutes of many international organizations were written almost eighty years ago and require updating to meet the challenges of our contemporary world.

We reaffirm with Pope Francis that nonviolence can offer a guide for our actions “both in daily life and in international relations” and concur that “a more widespread culture of nonviolence” will progress when countries and citizens alike resort less and less to the use of arms.”[2] Throughout history, non-violent resistance has played a critical role in toppling autocratic regimes and fostering democratic change. In numerous instances, members of religious organizations have played a pivotal role by aligning themselves with these movements. In so doing, they have contributed to steering these nations towards a more peaceful and democratic path. A culture of nonviolence is possible with greater awareness of and commitment to the nonviolent alternatives for peaceful change and dispute settlement; this will do much to foster integral human development.

Reducing nuclear risks is a key responsibility and is in the vital interest of all humanity.

Multistakeholder initiatives to raise society-wide awareness about these risks are crucial and very much needed. Nuclear-armed states should move beyond a security paradigm that is based on nuclear deterrence. These states and their allies should commence multilateral negotiations toward eliminating nuclear weapons, as promised in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and renewed in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Related measures must focus on crisis communication, limiting the scope for misunderstanding, miscalculations, and technical or human errors in conjunction with nuclear weapons. In light of the potential for global catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons and the current high level of nuclear risks, it is of utmost importance that the taboo against any use of nuclear weapons is maintained. Moreover, all states should refrain from issuing nuclear threats.

AI-enabled weapon systems that select and apply force without meaningful human intervention raise profound legal and ethical issues. Comprehensive regulation of these systems is needed, with bans on some applications and restrictions on others. The integration of AI into weapon systems – whether for decision-support or targeting – presents distinctive risks that must be addressed by any military force that includes these weapons in its arsenals. To minimize such risks, we should engage in rigorous testing, evaluation, validation, and verification (TEVV) of AI-enabled weapons. Such testing should be a) cradle to grave, b) modular and principled, and should be followed by c) gradual fielding in d) clearly defined operational envelopes, with e) appropriate explainability; this should take place in parallel with the legal review of these weapons.

The urgency of efforts to protect the safety and security of cyberspace has grown over the past decade, with a proliferation of malicious cyber incidents impacting infrastructure and services that are critical to the functioning of society. States should take concrete measures to prevent the extension of conflict to the cyber domain, especially to protect human life from harmful effects of cyberactivity. Escalatory behavior in cyberspace is a true concern, which could have cascading consequences, including harm to civilian infrastructure. States should agree on measures to preserve the integrity of civilian infrastructure that increasingly depends on digital connections.

Disinformation attacks on democratic processes should be universally condemned. States should commit to prohibiting such activity. Any technology that is intended to obfuscate reality, undermine trust in truth, or turn the human mind into a battlefield – such as tools for memory or reality manipulation via neural implants, sensory substitution, or dream manipulation – should likewise be prohibited.

Outer space is an increasingly contested domain. There is a fierce competition for technological superiority that, if unmitigated, could put at risk resources and capabilities essential to global peace and security. Multilateral space governance affirming shared norms, rules, and principles for responsible behavior, including legally-binding obligations, is a high priority. Space should be an arena for collaborative activity that benefits all of humankind.

States should counter any attempt to erode the international norms and architecture against biological weapons, including by providing swift and strong rebuttals of baseless non-compliance claims in meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention, the UN General Assembly, and the UN Security Council. Such claims erode confidence in essential public and animal health infrastructure and significantly undermine international cooperation and global biosafety and biosecurity efforts. Frameworks and capacity should be developed to address harms of using biology for surveillance, tracking, and suppression. Stakeholders should foster bold ideas for re-envisioning responsible bio-innovation for the future.

We devote a lot of our attention to thinking about what technology and weapons can do, but we should spend more time thinking about what they cannot do. Too often, in the last thirty years, we have seen states launch conflicts after believing they possess capabilities that will help them to ensure quick victories. In almost every case, following these conflicts, there have been years, if not decades, of ensuing instability and destabilization. And yet, we return to the belief that these new situations will be solved with newer and more sophisticated technology and weapons. States must learn to break this cycle.

A new commitment to military and community education that emphasizes the ancient normative foundations of natural law, positive law, and contemporary ethics is paramount. Within all levels of the military establishment, a strengthening of ethics education is needed. New military technologies cannot be addressed merely with technical, short-term "training" programs but must be addressed through education in the ethics and laws of armed conflict. To achieve this, a proper dialogue between technology specialists and non-specialists is required, so that the former appreciate the limits entailed by ethics and law, and the latter have the necessary technical and moral understanding of the technologies being introduced.

Normative reflection on contemporary technologies of warfare – the restrictions that should be placed on them, the prohibitions that are in order, and the grave impact on civilians and affected communities – is an imperative of our age. *Pacem in Terris* provides a valuable roadmap for addressing these issues in the years ahead.

Prepared by Prof. Gregory M. Reichberg and Sr. Helen Alford, in consultation with the conference participants.

[1] Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), § 80. .

[2] <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-03/pope-francis-april-prayer-intention->

