Laudato Si and its implications in armed conflicts, the question is: do we need an update of Gaudium et Spes; „Just war is possible“?

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Pope Francis, Laudato si
On Care for Our Common Home

- Pope Francis’ 2nd Encyclical letter, 24 May 2015
- Does it mention “armed conflicts”, “war”, “peace”?
- Environment <-> war?
- “everything is interconnected”
• The **violence present in our hearts**, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. (LS 2)
Laudato si

• Some studies warn that an acute water shortage may occur within a few decades unless urgent action is taken. The environmental repercussions could affect billions of people; it is also conceivable that the control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century. (LS 31)
Laudato si

- It is foreseeable that, once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars, albeit under the guise of noble claims. War always does grave harm to the environment and to the cultural riches of peoples, risks which are magnified when one considers nuclear arms and biological weapons. [...] Politics must pay greater attention to foreseeing new conflicts and addressing the causes which can lead to them. (LS 57)
Saint Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence. This is a far cry from our situation today, where sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars, the various forms of violence and abuse, the abandonment of the most vulnerable, and attacks on nature. (LS 66)
Laudato si

- **Cain and Abel:**
  
  [...] envy led Cain to commit the ultimate injustice against his brother, which in turn ruptured the relationship between Cain and God, and between Cain and the earth from which he was banished. (LS 70)

- **Noah:**
  
  “I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them” (Gen 6:13) (LS 70)

- **Sabbatical year**
  
  “complete rest for the land” (LS 71)
Laudato si

• These ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others. (LS 70)
Laudato si

• When *nature* is viewed *solely as a source of profit and gain*, this has serious consequences for society. This vision of “might is right” has engendered immense *inequality, injustice* and acts of *violence* against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all. Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus. (LS 82)
Laudato si

• Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society. Moreover, when our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings. [...] “Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism” (LS 91f.; citing the Conference of Dominican Bishops)

• “Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment”. (LS 142, citing Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate)
Laudato si

• “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:19-20). This leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father, so that “God may be everything to every one” (1 Cor 15:28). Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence. (LS 100)
Laudato si

- On the other hand, no one can cultivate a sober and satisfying life without being at peace with him or herself. An adequate understanding of spirituality consists in filling out what we mean by peace, which is much more than the absence of war. *Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good* because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. Nature is filled with words of love (LS 225)
New perspectives?

1. “everything is interconnected“: „conviction which we today share“ (LS 70) ...
2. (Old) theological perspective: sin as a general root of violence and war – and its impact on our natural environment
3. War and natural environment in humanitarian law
4. When wars are seen so negative → what about the very traditional „just war theory“?
„Everything is interconnected“

– Multifactorial analysis
– Global perspective (both e.g. in Security strategies)
– Environmentalist movement
– New age!
Sin as general root of violence and war and its impact on our natural environment

**Bible**

- Theology of creation
  - Adam – Eve in the garden;
  - Cain – Abel
  - Noah

- Eschatology
  - Visions of peace and life in abundance (including plants, animals)
  - War, destruction and renewal of the world as a whole (sky and earth)
War and natural environment in humanitarian law

- 70s: Vietnam War, Environmental Protection Initiatives on the global scale
- Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (1976)
- Protocol I additional to the Geneva Conventions (1977)

“It is prohibited to employ methods and means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause such damage to the environment and thereby to prejudice the health or survival of the population” (35, 3)

“Care shall be taken in warfare to protect the natural environment against widespread, long-term and severe damage. This protection includes a prohibition of the use of methods or means of warfare which are intended or may be expected to cause such damage to the natural environment and thereby to prejudice the health or survival of the population. Attacks against the natural environment by way of reprisals are prohibited.” (55, 1-2)
War and natural environment in humanitarian law

- Statute of Rome 1998, International Criminal Court

[War crime means...]

„Intentionally launching an attack in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment which would be clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated“
War and natural environment in humanitarian law

• **Problems** (according to Bothe/Bruch/Diamond/Jensen):
  – 1. The **definition** of impermissible damage is both **too restrictive** and **too unclear**
  – 2. legal uncertainties regarding the protection of **elements of the environment as civilian objects**
  – 3. application of the principle of **proportionality** is problematic concerning collateral damage of environment
What about Just War Theory, (Gaudium et spes)?

• **Gaudium et spes (1965):**
  - Does not talk about „just war“, but „legitimate defense“ or „just defense of the people“ (79)
  - „horror and perversity of war“, especially concerning weapons of mass destruction (80)
  - „the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which ensnares the poor to an intolerable degree.“ (81)

• **Laudato si (2015):**
  - Condemnation of war and violence (as in GS 80)
  - Its especially the poor who pay the bill for the exploitation/destruction of natural environment (cf. GS 81)
  - Does not talk about „just war“, about just defence or humanitarian intervention: no affirmation, no condemnation of these issues in LS!
Positions

• In the last decades when referring to armed conflicts the Popes frequently talked about
  – building peace, preparing peace, global perspective
  – soldiers‘ (and chaplains‘) service for peace
  – war as a defeat for humanity
  – justice and commemoration, healing and forgiveness
  – (nuclear) disarmament; → world free from WMD!
  – the right to defend oneself and
  – the enforcement of law in case of genocide or crimes against humanity:
Positions

• „Clearly, when a civilian population risks being overcome by the attacks of an unjust aggressor and political efforts and non-violent defence prove to be of no avail, it is legitimate and even obligatory to take concrete measures to disarm the aggressor. These measures however must be limited in time and precise in their aims. They must be carried out in full respect for international law, guaranteed by an authority that is internationally recognized and, in any event, never left to the outcome of armed intervention alone.”

(John Paul, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 2000)
Conclusion

- Pope Francis‘ positions on armed conflicts, war, peace and the role of the military seem to be quite in line with those of his predecessors and of Vatican II.
- And they are probably also not so far away from those of „just war theorists“ like Augustine or Vitoria, who pointed out military action always had to foster peace and justice and should be limited by clear and rigorous restrictions developed after deep analysis of the respective political, military, cultural, economic and societal challenges.