

# Rethinking Security in Germany, Europe and Africa: From military to civilian security policy up to 2040

*The Rethinking Security initiative in Germany, Europe and Africa has developed from a scenario for shifting to a civilian security policy to an international network:*

## The scenario "Rethinking security – from military to civilian security policy"

On behalf of the Protestant Church in Baden, a nationwide working group since 2015 developed a far-reaching [peace scenario for Germany](#) by 2018. This is also intended as a stimulus for similar scenario developments in other countries. The "Rethinking Security" (*Sicherheit neu denken*) scenario received such a diverse positive response after its publication that its abridged version has since been published in [English, French, Dutch, Polish and Russian](#). Long versions are available in English and French:

[Download English version of German scenario Rethinking Security \(long version\)](#)

[Download English version of German scenario Rethinking Security \(abridged version\)](#)

The scenario is based on the German Federal Government's report on the implementation of the 2014 action plan "Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding". The scenario shows how the many existing approaches to a civilian security policy could be consistently expanded in the future – and describes five pillars of civilian security policy:

1. Fair economy and lifestyle;
2. Sustainable development of the EU's neighbouring countries;
3. Development of a global civilian security architecture;
4. Resilience Democracy;
5. Conversion of the military and the arms industry.

The scenario recommends up to 2030 the negotiation and implementation of an economic and security alliance with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and similar partnerships with the Arab League (LAS) and the African Union (AU).

An annual investment of EUR 17 billion is intended for the economic, environmental and social development of these countries. If the German military security policy were to be reduced beginning with the year 2026 up to 2040, the UN and the OSCE could receive annual contributions of €27 + €6 billion, respectively, from Germany – and thus become significantly strengthened and more capable of acting than today.

All churches and parties in Germany have long been in favour of strengthening the UN for global crisis prevention and peace mediation. However, in recent years UN peacekeeping operations have been reduced every year. The regular (core) annual budget of the UN is only about €3 billion.

For peace support operations (current annual budget of about €6 billion) and the care of refugees as well as for the World Climate and Food programmes, the UN always has to ask for higher financing contributions from its members – which regularly leads to much too slow reactions in the event of a crisis. The World Health Organization (WHO) is also suffering from a lack of funding, as the Covid-19 pandemic has shown.

## **The focus of our foreign and security policy on the military is unreasonable**

If Germany were to invest €33 billion annually in the UN and the OSCE and their institutions instead of actually €70 billion in the relatively ineffective Bundeswehr (German armed forces) as proposed in the scenario, our security and peace would be sustainably served. The UN would be four times as effective (in terms of budget) in one fell swoop; the neglected OSCE's capacity would increase six-fold.

In the meantime, numerous scientific studies have shown that the effectiveness of military operations to achieve political goals is relatively low – which every layman in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq can observe. Measured by their contribution to the achievement of political goals, the strong focus of Germany's foreign and security policy on the military is unreasonable, as shown by more and more [international studies collected on the website of our initiative](#).

On the other hand, international studies now prove the [double effectiveness of nonviolent resistance compared to violent uprisings and actions](#). Therefore, the scenario argues for Germany's continued membership in NATO, but as an increasingly civilian actor.

## **A broad-based initiative**

Since 2019, a nationwide initiative for a sustainable German peace policy has been formed on the basis of the Baden scenario. [150 organisations](#), including the German Peace Society United War Opponents, the Catholic peace initiative Pax Christi, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the biggest German unions and many others, actively demand a paradigm shift of German solidarity towards sustainable peacemaking. Beginning in autumn 2021 online kick-off meetings will start in some ten German catholic dioceses.

So far, more than 150 facilitators have been trained nationwide, who meet every month digitally in regional groups and annually in plenary for nationwide exchange and networking. Additionally, some 40 church multipliers are networking at the national level. More and more scientific research institutes are approaching us. In many places several organisations organise events on the scenario in cooperation. In the meantime, some [ten academies hold events on rethinking security](#) (see a [youtube event of autumn 2020](#)).

In total, the scenario has reached over 20,000 interested people in 400 public events by december 2024. [Numerous other events are planned](#). The national media organisations [FAZ reported](#) as well as the [rbb](#), the [FR](#) and Deutschlandfunk Kultur. The [Munich Security Conference is conducting a public dialogue with us](#). At the annual meeting of the Association of German Scientists we were able to present the scenario - as well as to over 40 defence and other members of the German Bundestag by various public and private meetings.

In 2022 we arranged some 15 special meetings with the leading speakers for security and foreign affairs of the three fractions in the German parliament building our current government. And we started a nationwide campaign for strenghtening the expenses for civil crisis prevention and intervention. Rethinking Security's virtual [Annual Meeting 2020](#) attracted 190 participants and was addressed by, among others, the Honorary President of the Club of Rome, Ernst U. von Weizsäcker, Roman Huber, the Managing Director of Mehr Demokratie, Beatrice Fihn, the Managing Director of ICAN International, Dr Martin Herrmann, Chairman of the German Climate Change and Health Alliance, and Hubert Heindl from the Peace University Africa.

Our expertise was also [sought by the Citizens' Council on Germany's Role in the World](#), which was [created by the German Bundestag in beginning of 2021](#).

## Regional contacts and prominent support

In the meantime, the initiative has developed a [nationwide network of regional contact persons](#) and [Youtube films of various lengths](#). Along with the honorary president of the Club of Rome, Ernst U. von Weizsäcker, retired bishop Bärbel Warttemberg-Potter, Franz Alt and several well-known artists, [numerous celebrities are now supporting our initiative](#).

The former German Trade Union Confederation Chairman Reiner Hoffmann has [provided the following quote for our initiative](#):

"What we need is a fundamental rethinking. What we need is an expanded understanding of security. An understanding of security that focuses on the socially just transition to a climate-neutral economy, that focuses on social rather than military security, that focuses on conflict prevention and crisis prevention, that does not always generate new causes of flight, but aims to combat the causes of flight. This also means that we need a multiple of today's spending on development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Disarmament instead of upgrading – there is no way around it."

## International network

Since autumn 2020 we are building up a strong connection with the [African university of peace](#), whose alumni formed a [Panafrican Union of Peace Builders](#), out of which teams join local activities of deescalation, conflict management, mediation in direct intervention for several months at selected African communities ([INOVAR](#)).

Meanwhile several African organizations established the [Rethinking African Security Initiative](#), which steering committee is chaired by the former defense minister of CAR, Marie-Noelle Koyara and Sylvain Koffi from Kenia. The RAS Initiative starts with the development of Rethinking Security Scenarios for West and Central Africa.

The Austrian Rethinking Security network published 2023 the [Rethinking Security Austrian Peace Strategy](#). In the Netherlands, a [Rethinking Security network](#) published 2024 the [Rethinking Security Scenario for the Netherlands](#) based on the German model.

In the UK, "[Rethinking Security](#)" has a similar enlightening effect as our German initiative. Their "[Rethinking European Security](#)" project includes a trinity of traditional or hard, human and climate/ecological security. And there are [similar departures in the USA](#) as well.

Since summer 2021 we are building up connections to similar [Italian networks](#).

The [SwissPeace Council presented Rethinking Security's scenario](#) at the heart of its 75th anniversary event in April 2021.

## Political strategy

Meanwhile, we have become well known by German academic and political peace and security policy actors.

We are well connected to key political actors of several parties including the conservatives at the national level. We try to influence key politicians to strengthen instruments for civil crisis prevention and -intervention, which we could achieve through contacts with about 130 constituency and 20 leading MPs in Berlin at least for the national budget 2022.

As well we are inviting leading politicians and science actors to a national study event concerning a rule based international order with Russia and China: Which active offer can and do we want to present Russia and China to achieve long lasting nonviolent agreements?

### **Impulse papers**

The initiative responded to the Security Report of the Munich Security Conference 2022 with a ["Rethinking Security Report 2022" \(Impulse Paper No. 1\)](#). In March 2022, the initiative responded to the war in Ukraine with ["For a determined and level headed response to Putin's war" \(No. 2\)](#). In April 2022, ["Key Points for Improving and Strengthening the Existing German International Police Engagement"](#) were published (No. 3).

In November 2023, the initiative published the impulse paper (No. 4) ["Rethinking security strategically - Stop and overcome violence! In Israel and Palestine. In the Ukraine. Globally"](#), which reflects the wars in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine, the growing climate crisis, as well as the National Security Strategy published in 2023 and other developments.

### **Book Publication "World Domestic Policy and International Police"**

In order to be able to make concrete proposals for replacing national armies with international police, Sicherheit neu denken has reflected on the experiences of police forces in international missions, but also of peace experts and peace science in several expert retreats and a public academy conference.

### **Positive Scenario „Europe's role for peace in the world“**

In January 2025 the initiative published the [Rethinking Security Scenario "Europe's role for peace in the world"](#), which proposes a possible sustainable European conflict and peace order and embeds it in sovereign partnership relations with the various regions of the world.

Concrete milestones of the scenario include peace negotiations for Ukraine and for a new UN Charter.

Ralf Becker

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**Ralf Becker** coordinates the nationwide civil society initiative "Rethinking Security – from Military to Civil Security Policy", which is administrated by the European ecumenical peace network [Church and Peace](#).

Previously, from 2012 to 2019, he coordinated the association [www.gewaltfreihandeln.org](http://www.gewaltfreihandeln.org), which trains civilian peace specialists nationwide and networks them in their worldwide work.

From March 2020 to April 2022 Ralf Becker was a member of the Speaker's Council of the [Platform for Civil Conflict Management](#), the network of German organisations and individuals for the promotion of civil conflict management.