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flemish
peaceInstitute

*‘We want to learn from our troubled history, but how can we best do this?
An important guideline: our best starting point is from a critical knowledge of the past, no matter how unruly and complex it is. Only in this way can we prepare young people for their role in our unruly and multi-faceted present.,*

Maarten Van Alstein,
Researcher

*Speech during the ceremony for
the armistice commemoration in Antwerp*

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FOREWORD

**TINE DESTROOPER,***director of the Flemish Peace Institute*

A debate about peace and safety is a debate about what a society considers to be important. What are our values? What do we find indispensable? Where are we willing to compromise?

Carrying out research within this domain is not straightforward. The aim of such research is to provide insights into the preconditions for sustainable peace and security. The past year was more important than ever for better understanding global and regional events and dynamics, and for placing their relevance for Flanders into context.

2017 was a year of change in terms of peace and security. It can be described as both a year of hope and a year of uncertainty. These uncertainties occasionally put the existing (inter)national peace and security architecture under pressure, but often also led to new initiatives for greater peace and security.

A few examples clearly demonstrate this. In Belgium, for example, a concern over the fact that terrorists could relatively easily obtain magazines for automatic firearms was one of the elements leading to a revision of the Weapons Act. Initially, there was hope for an improved legislative and regulatory framework, but it soon turned out that the revision offered little assurance that the intended aim would be achieved.

On 7 July 2017 global concerns about the availability of weapons of mass destruction led to the adoption of an international treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. This offered hope for a transition towards a world free of such weapons. But it also led to uncertainty when it appeared that, despite the great acclaim, many countries would ultimately not sign the treaty.

In the fall of 2017 the last stronghold of the non-state group known as Islamic State (IS) Raqqa fell, and with it the IS-proclaimed caliphate. Again, this offered hope for the local population that this would be the end of the brutal human rights violations that took place under the caliphate, but it also resulted in uncertainty in Europe about the feared large-scale return of IS fighters from Iraq and Syria – which has not happened so far.

Furthermore, 2017 was also the year in which the concept of *alternative facts* saw the light of day, and a year of increasingly explicit criticism of the media and others who are involved in serious political journalism, resulting in more uncertainty. At the same

time, the repeated attacks strengthened many actors in their determination to bring the facts to the surface, resulting in further hope.

In this context, the Flemish Peace Institute continued to pursue its mission to collect data, carry out analyses and provide policymakers, researchers, the media and citizens alike with insights that can nurture their quest for sustainable peace and just security.

In this annual report we look back on how we did this in 2017, but we also venture to take a look into the future. We reflect on how the work we carried out strengthens us in our mission for the future. The financial operations of the Institute are laid out in a separate parliamentary document (no. 48).

2017 was also a year of change within the Flemish Peace Institute, because it was the last year in which the Institute was led by Tomas Baum. The Institute looks back on a period of 12 years in which he, together with the staff of the Scientific Secretariat, and supported by the Board of Directors and a Scientific Council, oversaw the development of the Institute from a parliamentary institution with limited scope to an internationally recognised centre of expertise on arms export controls and broader peace and security issues.

In 2017 the Flemish Peace Institute developed significant expertise in a number of new, pressing social issues. For example, a research project on (de-)radicalisation led to a book that translates scientific insights on this topic for the Flemish context. The work found immediate acceptance and appreciation among a broad range of policymakers and practitioners. This led to a new request to analyse the Flemish deradicalisation policy from the Flemish Parliament in December 2017.

The Institute also expanded its expertise on the subject of arms issues, with a mapping of the illegal firearms market in Belgium, a major European research project about access to illegal firearms markets in Europe, and various comparative studies on (the harmonisation of) arms export controls in Europe and within Belgium.

The Institute explored new ways of sharing this knowledge broadly with various stakeholders. We held lectures in a variety of contexts, organised events, initiated a proactive (social) media strategy, and carried out close consultations with policymakers and administrations. In this way we ensured that the knowledge and insights we had collected were widely communicated to the relevant audiences.

We will continue our efforts to further broaden and deepen our existing knowledge in 2018. We will also continue to ambitiously analyse Flemish peace and security issues, focussing on the broader (European and international) environment in which they are developing. In addition, we aim to further consolidate our profile as an independent research institute and to continue to inform members of the Flemish parliament and other political and social players, in order to facilitate an informed social and political debate – because access to relevant and solid information is more crucial than ever in these times of uncertainty and transition.

A glance back and a look ahead, with Tomas Baum and Tine Destrooper

Tomas Baum has been the director of the Flemish Peace Institute since its inception 12 years ago. Tine Destrooper took over the helm from him at the beginning of 2018.

Tine, who is a political scientist, has a background in human rights, and primarily carried out research into transitional justice. With her experience as the director of the New York Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ), she has now returned to Brussels to lead the Flemish Peace Institute. Tomas, for his part, is a philosopher and an ethicist, with a particular interest in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, peaceful politics and the regulation of the arms trade. What does the change of directors mean for the Institute? How does Tomas look back on his directorship, and how will Tine handle his heritage?



**INTERVIEW BY
DIDIER VERBRUGGEN**



Tine, you come from the world of peace research, albeit from a different tradition.

Tine: Indeed, we carried out research at the CHRGI in three fields: extreme poverty and inequality, transitional justice, and data visualisation for policymakers and human rights practitioners.

This last programme, for example, led to very interesting partnerships. It is not always easy to build bridges towards disciplines such as computer science, or to work together with statisticians on the topic of human rights research. Human rights are often seen as a matter for lawyers and political scientists. But big data is a fact, and can mean a lot for human rights research and practice. You must know how to use it and question it, however. I considered it to be a necessary broadening of our horizon to explore this.

Did your own research also fall under the pillar of big data?

Tine: No, I supported the work in that field, but mainly carried out research into transitional justice myself. This deals with the question of how communities that have recently emerged from a conflict can deal with the legacy of that conflict: legally, institutionally and socially. I also see parts of this – for example, the dimension of peace-building, reflected in a research project of the Flemish Peace Institute in 2015. This project mapped out the academic and other expertise in Flanders with regard to peace-building and conflict prevention. This expertise is very substantial in Flemish universities, by the way. It continues to be relevant to see how we can use this expertise to help policymakers make informed choices – for example, with regard to foreign policy.

Should the Institute explore transitional justice and broader topics that touch on international peace-building in more depth?

Tine: I believe that it is in any case relevant to see how we can make as much use as possible of the research that has been carried out in order to continue to inform the social debate and political process. With regard to peace-building in particular, you can see that Flanders is actually quite ambitious to profile itself as a peace region. The question then is: how can you reflect this in your policy? Moreover, you cannot ignore the influence that conflicts in other parts of the world have on our Flemish society. I am thinking, for example, of Flemish people who have left to fight in Syria and Iraq, but also of how our foreign policy might have an impact on extremism and polarisation here in Flanders. The latter is also a topic on which the Institute is now conducting research. And this debate too, one cannot understand by only looking at Flanders.

CLOSENESS TO CURRENT EVENTS

Will you not be giving up your freedom as an academic researcher in an institute that is embedded in a parliamentary context?

Tine: I don't think things are so black-and-white. When I look at the research of the Institute, I primarily see solid scientific work. There is also no question of steering research in a specific direction – for example, a political direction. But our research is, of course, generally geared towards parliamentary information needs and takes the policy cycle into account. One result of this is the fast pace of the research here. An academic research project may well take five years, while we at the Institute are following current events

much more closely. I do believe, however, that we should ensure that we are not sucked into this fast pace too much: we must safeguard the space in which to conduct solid research that meets scientific standards.

The Institute was founded by a decree that also defined its mandate. How did you start?

Tomas: We very soon had a workable and objectifiable starting point. The legislation on arms trade existed: but how was this law translated into practice? We looked at how this was done abroad: in the Netherlands they did it like this; in France they had a different approach. With regard to the policy, we raised the question: why couldn't Flanders become *best in class* in this and that area? Perhaps Flanders could even outpace Europe in certain aspects?

This is how we developed our expertise, which is quite unique, and is increasingly recognised. In the meantime we are also carrying out research at the European Union (EU) level, and we find that our experience with regard to 'multi-layered government' is very much appreciated. Belgium is the only EU country that has regionalised authority over the arms trade, and this challenges the other EU member states with their tenacious 'sovereignty mindset' about the arms trade.

Have there been tense moments in those 12 years?

Tomas: I'm reminded of a hellish week in which it seemed for a brief moment that our existence was threatened. Through the president of the Flemish Parliament we had received a request for advice about a draft for an arms trade decree from Minister-President Kris Peeters, which

was a recognition of our work at the highest level. A few days later, in *De Morgen*, I read a scenario for abolishing the Institute. You can well imagine that I found these two things hard to reconcile. In retrospect, it turned out to be a coincidental combination of circumstances. We emerged from this crisis stronger. Another time was after the attacks of 22 March 2016. In the aftermath of the events someone from the Board of Directors criticised us for not having been more present in the media. But this had been a deliberate choice. Our telephone had been red hot, and we had received interview requests from just about all the media, even CNN. In that hyper-emotional atmosphere, where terror had struck just around the corner, we, as a research institute, could not give an interpretation or explanation. The staff and myself decided to abstain from any comment.

What do you consider to be your major achievement?

Tomas: That we succeeded in introducing our model of an independent parliamentary advisory body in the Flemish context. This is not at all obvious – several similar institutions have already failed. Political parties accept our research, and thereby *de facto* give up some of their room for manoeuvre. This demonstrates courage and openness on the part of those involved in the political system. We could have become a stuffy documentation centre, but that did not happen. We have built up considerable research capacity ourselves, for which there is support across party lines. And over the years we also gained recognition for our research at the federal and EU levels.

ELIMINATING BLURRED MARGINS

How do the achievements of the Institute translate into (Flemish) policy?

Tomas: Policymaking is not part of our mandate: it is and remains a matter for the political sphere. But we did make a meaningful contribution to the quality of the debate, often in response to questions from Parliament. We outline the contours of a problem and we try to do this as sharply as possible in order to remove the ‘blurred margin’. Our Board of Directors issues recommendations that are validated by all members: a diversified group of stakeholders who represent various groups. You will therefore never see us taking an extreme view, even if this would lead to more media coverage.

Tine: It is also true, of course, that the media are often looking for messages that are catchy – and thereby do not always tolerate too much nuance. It is tempting to follow that logic in order to enhance the visibility of the Institute. But we must keep in mind that the parliamentary community is a key target group. Being embedded in Parliament also ensures us a privileged access to politics. We cannot put that at risk by aiming to score in the press. It is sometimes more useful therefore to specifically identify other target groups, in addition to members of Parliament, which we can then reach and adequately inform in other ways: through lecturers or public administrations, for example.

But you did have an impact on the policy on arms export controls, for example.

Tomas: That is true, but not by advocating a prohibition of arms trading, but by

stating in a factually accurate manner what is needed to control this trade. We have also played our role in the field of war commemoration. Following the commemoration of the First World War, the government came up with the concept of Tourism+, a framework for ethical and multifaceted remembrance tourism. Our supporting research was clearly incorporated into this concept. Meanwhile, we are also being heard on the highly ideologically charged topic of radicalisation. Our book on this, which we have already had to reprint, brings scientific expertise together in such a way that it is useful for all stakeholders, regardless of their political colour and affiliation.

Tomas, did you and the Flemish Peace Institute maintain an ethical framework, perhaps unspoken?

Tomas: In my opinion, ethics belongs more in the area of personal action. Politics moves at the level of the collective, which is more complex and more ambiguous. I find this ambiguity fascinating, and, over time, I started to feel less and less inclined towards the patronising position of people who take the moral high ground. As a result, the peace movement may believe that we are too close to the establishment, while the arms industry probably doesn’t find us establishment enough. I believe that stating matters as they are in order to be able to conduct a proper debate, and thereby fulfilling our mandate as an advisory body, is in itself a considerable added value. I find inspiration from the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant: even as a philosopher, you are a servant of the powers that be. But you still have a choice: you can walk ahead with a torch to point the way, or you

can walk behind to carry the train. We have never carried anyone's train. We were the messenger, but not to proclaim that we are always right. And we also didn't remain quiet: you see, impartiality is not the same as neutrality.

NOT JUST A PRINCIPLE

Tine, are human rights the ethical framework for the way you look at the arms trade?

Tine: Human rights are not merely an ethical or normative principle. I really have difficulties with this framing, which we see more and more often. Considering human rights merely as an ethical or normative point of reference renders invisible the obligations arising from the human rights framework. Human rights are a matter of international law, which is binding. Also at the European level, for example, you can see that human rights are completely embedded in various regulations. For example, in the assessment criteria for arms exports from the EU it is stipulated that the exporting country must verify whether there is a real risk that the weapons being exported could be used for human rights violations.

Tomas: But there is still a lot of room for interpretation in practice. Who assesses this risk, and how? Is it NGOs or governments? This is where the discussion – and therefore the ambiguity – starts.

Tine: I fully agree with that. We must recognise and map out this ambiguity. But asking the question of how we inter-

pret human rights is different from questioning the validity of the existing human rights instruments as such. Moreover, you see some hopeful signs at the European level that human rights are being taken more seriously. The latest COARM report, for example, indicates that there have never before been so many rejections of arms export licences to Saudi Arabia from EU countries as in 2016, mainly for fear that the military equipment could be used for human rights violations there.

Does someone with a human rights background have a different sensitivity towards the arms trade than a security expert or an economist?

Tine: In principle, you can consider weapons both as instruments for violating human rights, or as a means to protect civilian populations. But, in reality, we see that weapons are involved in three-quarters of all civil and political human rights violations. In addition, weapons are also often exported to weak democracies and to countries with a high risk of diversion, making it easy for the weapons to enter uncontrollable or illegal circuits. Consequently, from a human rights perspective, the arms trade will usually be approached very cautiously. Also from a gender perspective there are good reasons to be cautious about arms exports to (post-)conflict areas, because you see these weapons emerging on a large scale in domestic violence in post-conflict countries.

How can your views on the arms trade translate into further research by the Institute?

Tine: In mainstream thinking about foreign policy it is assumed that there should be a balance between economic interests, security interests and ethical principles. The overriding question for me in this context is: how can you make security sustainable? Imagine that, for economic reasons or on the basis of a short-term safety consideration, you make a decision that has disastrous consequences for human rights elsewhere. The chances are that this will turn against you at some point and that you actually create a long-term security risk – i.e. the security that you think you have created is not sustainable. Thinking in terms of sustainable security requires us to think about security and peace at a more systemic level. We must look beyond the symptoms – the use of weapons – towards the broader picture. What are the causes and drivers of conflict? What dynamics and social structures lie at its roots? Increasing inequality, for example, and rivalry with regard to scarce natural resources can be seen as root causes of conflict. Only looking into the instruments that could resolve this conflict is not sufficient in this case.

Research on arms trade is considered to be the core business of the Institute. With good reason?

Tomas: We also occupy a unique place in the research landscape with our other research pillar, but I understand this per-

ception. After all, we were founded in response to the regionalisation of authority over the arms trade. Weapons also trigger the imagination and are a media-genic subject. Our expertise in this context is unique in Flanders. On the contrary on topics such as war commemoration and radicalisation, the academic world is also involved in meaningful research. But our book on radicalisation, for example, brings a lot of expertise together. And our assessment of the Yser Tower as a memorial to Flemish emancipation and peace has found widespread appreciation in the Flemish Parliament.

The impression is that the research on peace and society is strongly driven by current events. Is this a problem for an academic?

Tine: I'm not sure that this is entirely correct, and, moreover, given our mandate, it's quite normal that the research agenda is determined by the information needs of politicians. As a result, we will always work on current issues to a certain extent, rather than putting our own interests on the agenda. But we have already sufficiently demonstrated that we can respond to current debates without becoming loudmouths – in other words, with the necessary critical distance and always based on our expertise. Moreover I have absolutely no issue with academic research that does not envision an immediate societal impact. There should also be a place for that – *l'art pour l'art* – but that's not what we are doing here.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Which topics in the research pillar 'Dealing with conflict and violence in society' have priority?

Tine: The Institute has built up a great deal of expertise in connection with the commemoration of the First World War. This expertise may also be relevant to analysing how we deal with other points of our history, such as our colonial past or labour migration. How we deal with such a past is of special importance for certain groups in society. In addition, I don't consider the research into peace-building and conflict prevention in Flemish foreign policy as being finished. Flanders will soon celebrate 25 years of its own foreign policy. This could be an opportunity to think about a more ambitious policy – an exercise to which I would like to contribute. Furthermore, we will also strongly focus on the topic of violent radicalisation in the coming year: we were recently asked to assess the local approach to this issue.

Tomas, I'm asking you this again in your capacity as an ethicist: your long journey with the Institute – was it valuable?

Tomas: Without any doubt. The author and politician Jan Terlouw said that poli-

tics deals with two things: the creation of a just world, and understanding social developments. We have been working on the second aspect, with the financial support of the community. As a small institute, we have proved to be very efficient at this. Our impact is limited, but it is there. I myself have never posed as a perfectly objective scientist. And I have increasingly become aware of the fact that being proved right is much more difficult than being right.

Tine, what do you want to be able to say about the achievements of the Institute at the end of your mandate?

Tine: I have both feet firmly on the ground: I realise that, in a political context, six years is an eternity. That being said, I would consider broadening the research into a systemic approach to peace and conflict, and creating more cross-fertilisation between our two programmes as a success. Furthermore, the success of an institution largely depends on its resilience. How can we adapt ourselves to changing conditions without sacrificing our fundamental value? That value is first and foremost reflected in the high scientific standard that I have found in the Institute that I will have the pleasure to lead in the years to come.



Autonomous weapons systems and civil technology: challenges for Flemish policy

‘Stop the research into, and the development of autonomous weapon systems.’ This message was distributed by more than a hundred leaders of inter-

nationally renowned technology companies, including Elon Musk, via an open letter in 2017. They pointed out the great dangers of recent developments in artificial intelligence and robotics. The authors of the letter argued that, once developed, autonomous weapons systems would enable ‘wars to be fought on a larger scale than ever before, and this within a shorter time span than human beings can understand. They can also be used against innocent civilians by despots or terrorist groups, or be hacked.’ But what is an autonomous weapons system? How does this issue fit in with concerns about the dual use of technologies? And what are the implications for the Flemish government?



DIEDERIK COPS & GREGORY GOURDIN

Autonomous weapons systems: high on the agenda

Autonomous weapons systems are self-controlled robots that can be used in war situations as a means of inflicting violence without human control. The

fear of such systems is intense. In addition to international business leaders, also academics, an international NGO coalition ('Stop Killer Robots') and many governments are calling for a preventive ban on research into and the development of autonomous weapons systems. These are conventional weapons systems – drones, missiles, air defences, submarines, warships, armoured vehicles, etc. – that, once activated, can fulfil a mission without further interaction between human operators and these systems. Artificial intelligence allows the systems to autonomously decide how to execute the job and how to solve unexpected problems. 'Autonomy', in that sense, refers to the capacity of a weapons system to be self-controlling. This is not the same as remotely controlled systems, such as armed drones.

The military application of technologies developed primarily for civilian purposes could therefore (in the longer run) lead to military systems that function without any human intervention. This leads to a dystopian vision of weapons systems (on land, at sea and in the air) that can kill people (both soldiers and civilians) without such a decision requiring a human intervention necessarily. Military-operational and economic motives explain why work is still being carried out on the development of autonomous weapons systems. At the operational level, autonomy can provide military forces with more speed, agility, accuracy, reach, coordination and scope. From an economic perspective, fewer personnel resources are needed for autonomous systems and the financial costs of warfare are thereby reduced.

However the question remains whether fully autonomous systems can ever become so advanced that they can act in line with international humanitarian law; more generally, a meaningful human involvement in the deployment of weapons seems to be ethically necessary: decisions about life or death should not be taken by machines. Moreover, in practice, there are also large thresholds for full autonomy. War situations are, by definition, very complex. The question is whether the technology will ever evolve so far that fully autonomous weapons systems can be practically and reliably deployed during armed conflicts. The vision of armed conflicts being fought with or by fully autonomous 'killer robots', (armed) drones or firing systems is therefore not a likely vision of the near future.

At first glance, it seems quite unlikely that any fully autonomous weapons systems will be operational in the next few decades (if they ever will be). But a one-sided focus on fully autonomous weapons systems should not conceal another reality that is already in existence. After all, 'autonomy' is to be understood as a continuum, and not as something binary that a system has or does not have. There is a continuum from a weapons system that is completely under human control to a system that can act without meaningful human intervention. This is a continuum in which the degree of autonomy grad-

ually expands, while the role of humans decreases in inverse proportion. In other words, autonomy does not only apply to the entire system, but rather to the extent to which weapons systems have autonomous *functions*. Viewed in this way, autonomy already exists, and, as such, is not even difficult to achieve. Particularly in terms of mobility and target selection, many weapons systems can already function fully autonomously. Well-known examples are the Patriot defence system and the Goalkeeper, a defence system against anti-ship missiles that is currently installed on Belgian frigates.

Evolutions in artificial intelligence and robotics are taking place at breathtaking speed, are widespread in the civilian world, and have already led to weapons systems in which certain functions are completely autonomous. In addition, countries like China and the United States are investing substantial budgets in research into the development of autonomy in conventional weapons systems. It is therefore inevitable that conventional weapons systems will be increasingly equipped with autonomous functions in the coming years. More political awareness and a clear legal framework are needed for the question of how we deal with these new technologies. This is certainly true of the military application of original civil technologies, such as artificial intelligence and robotics, in order to make conventional weapons systems autonomous.

‘Dual-use Goods versus ‘the dual use of goods’

The challenge is therefore to assess the potential use of civil technologies, such as artificial intelligence and robotics, for the autonomization of weapons systems. This is linked to a broader issue: how to deal

with the possible application of civil technologies in military systems? The civil sector has taken a technological lead in many areas, whereby products are developed that are later adapted for military use in conventional weapons systems. For a long time the exact opposite was true: military innovations sometimes obtained a civilian application after a period of time – the ‘spin-off’ phenomenon. Today, however, innovative technologies are mainly the result of civil investment in research and development (R&D). The result is the emergence of ‘spin-in’: technologies and goods developed for civil purposes that, possibly after further modifications, can be used in/for military applications. As a result, there are more and more goods with a potential dual use: in addition to the original civil application, it is also possible to use these goods for military purposes.

It is important, however, that the ‘dual-use’ of technology or goods means something other than the legal concept of ‘dual-use goods’. The latter, are goods that are used in the civil industry, but which can also have a military

RESEARCH INTO EXPORT CONTROL IN 2017

The research of the Flemish Peace Institute regarding the thematic pillar 'Arms trade and use' dealt, among other aspects, with legislation and policy on arms exports in Flanders, Belgium and Europe. It also closely monitored export control of 'dual-use' products. The following are our publications and advisory notes in 2017.



Arms export control in Belgium: similarities and differences

20/04/2017

This study was commissioned by the Flemish Parliament. The report provides an overview of the licensing systems in Belgium, and of the similarities and differences between federal and regional legislations and policies.

Towards Europeanised arms export controls? Comparing control systems in EU member states

15/06/2017

This study examined the regulation of international trade in military equipment, both in the EU and with non-EU countries. To what extent have European regulatory initiatives succeeded in harmonising national systems for arms exports?

Flemish practices in arms export controls. Identifying elements of an explicit arms export policy. Analysis

3/10/2017

Flemish Foreign Arms Trade in 2016. Factsheet

3/10/2017

Advisory note on existing good practices regarding regulations and licensing policy for trade in military equipment from EU member states

10/01/2017

This was based on our research report published at the end of 2016 on *Flemish arms export control in Europe*, which dealt with the legislative framework, the licensing policy and the implementation of this policy in Flanders.

Advisory note on the proposal for resolution with a view to revising Belgian foreign policy towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

01/06/2017

The President of the Flemish Parliament requested the advice of the Flemish Peace Institute regarding amendments to a resolution that was being discussed in the federal parliament. The resolution was aimed at a review of foreign policy with regard to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Advisory note on the annual report of the Flemish government on the arms trade in 2016

31/08/2017

This annual advice is a task of the Peace Institute by decree. The advice in 2017 specifically dealt with the further clarification and development of the Flemish arms export policy as a component of a broader Flemish foreign policy.

PEACE INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS VIA EXTERNAL CHANNELS

Diederik Cops, **Where is Flanders heading with its arms export policy?**
Opinion on Knack.be

Diederik Cops and Nils Duquet, **Arms export: 'What may be logical in other countries is not necessarily so in Belgium'**. Opinion on Knack.be

Diederik Cops, Nils Duquet and Gregory Gourdin, **Scrutinising arms exports in Europe: the reciprocal relationship between transparency and parliamentary control**, Sicherheit & Frieden (Security and Peace)

Diederik Cops and Nils Duquet, **France: dual-use export controls in international transit and transshipment**, World ECR

PEACE INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES IN 2017

10/01/2017

Presentation of the report on Flemish arms export control in Europe: the complex issue of European harmonisation in the Committee for Foreign Policy, European Affairs, International Cooperation, Tourism and the Immovable Heritage of the Flemish Parliament

26/01/2017

Lecture on 'The Belgian arms trade' for UPV vzw and the Humanistic Liberal Association of Denderleeuw

18/02/2017

Presentation on 'The Belgian arms trade' at the Prikkel 17, Oxfam Wereldwinkels and Broederlijk Delen youth meeting (Ghent)

use in the production of weapons of mass destruction. It is a comprehensive, but also very specific category of products. In Flanders, the international trade in these dual-use goods is carried out within a specific dual-use control regime regulated by a European Union (EU) regulation; the processing and distribution of export licences is carried out by the Flemish government (the Department for the Control of Strategic Goods). Therefore, in this text, the possible double use of technologies or goods refers to civil technologies that can also be used for military applications, not necessarily to the legal category of 'dual-use goods'.

Recent technological evolutions also make it increasingly difficult to draw a simple border between civil research and innovation, on the one hand, and military R&D, on the other. Flanders is a region with a high-tech industrial base. In many cases, investments in R&D can therefore lead to civil innovations that could also have a military application. In Flemish practice this will not relate to finished weapons systems, but to technology that, possibly after further adaptations, could be integrated into conventional military systems as components.

The need for political awareness and a clear legal framework is great. How should we deal with new technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics? And what about the use of these technologies in conventional weapons systems?

Controlling the trade in strategic goods

In practice, the technology that is necessary to make (the functions of) conventional weapons systems autonomous is often developed by the civilian sector and for civilian applications. This is therefore a concrete example of the previously described trends in the dual use – civil and military – of technology. The blurring of the boundary between civil and military applications requires a thorough reflection on the question: when are certain technologies or goods ‘specifically developed or adapted for military use’ and thus fall under the control system for conventional weapons, and when are we purely dealing with civil products, whose international trade is (in principle) free?

Since the 1990s, arms export control regimes have been struggling to determine when certain components should be considered as ‘specifically adapted or developed for military use’. In Flanders in particular, which mainly produces high-tech parts, this question is traditionally very important. Evolutions in artificial intelligence and robotics make the discussion even more difficult, and open the question about the scope of the control regimes even more. There are, in fact, many civil technological developments that could be converted into military applications. The growing number of companies and research institutions involved (and increased international competition) presents governments with a dilemma. If they control their own exports more rigorously than other governments,

PEACE INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES IN 2017

20/03/2017

Contribution on transparency and parliamentary involvement in the arms export policy at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung conference (Berlin)

02/05/2017

Presentation and discussion on the report “Arms export control in Belgium: similarities and differences” in the Committee for Foreign Affairs in the Flemish Parliament

09/05/2017

Presentation in the Hearing on the draft decree for optimization of the Arms Trade Decree in the Committee for Foreign Affairs in the Flemish Parliament

15/06/2017

Hosting of the annual COARM-NGO conference, a European consultation platform for arms trade control (Brussels)

15/06/2017

Presentation of the European arms export control report *Towards Europeanised arms export controls?* at the COARM-NGO conference

22/06/2017

Presentation on the EU-wide harmonization of arms export controls at the Economics and Security conference of the VUB and the Royal Military Academy (Brussels)

03/10/2017

Presentation of the findings of the *Arms trade annual report* of the Flemish government

26/10/2017

‘Trade in strategic goods’ round table with regional and federal administrations, parliamentarians, the defence-related industry and NGOs

this will potentially threaten the international competitive position of their countries' companies. If they focus unilaterally on guaranteeing an international 'level playing field' (where all players follow the same rules), there will be the threat of a 'race to the bottom' and an undermining of their own principles and starting points in terms of export controls.

Export control regimes traditionally focus on the trade in clearly identifiable, physical goods. A second challenge arises from this. Technological evolutions entail that most transactions in the future will be carried out via an online transfer of (mainly) software. An important part of government control will therefore cover 'intangible goods', for which transactions are much more volatile and are therefore much more difficult to control.

The 'intangible' (immaterial) nature of the technology involved therefore makes it more difficult to obtain comprehensive picture of the transactions. But obtaining a good overview of the effective end-users of this technology will also be a major challenge. It must always be ensured that certain actors (such as terrorist groups) are prevented from making use of civil technologies for armament purposes. The balance between efficiency and effectiveness will be crucial: avoiding technologies falling into the wrong hands as much as possible, without drastically curtailing international trade and civil innovation, precisely because they are products with an initially civilian character.

Good co-operation between government and private stakeholders is needed to deal with these challenges efficiently and effectively. The government can then proactively make the developers of such technologies aware of their potential military implications. This ensures that, where necessary, these actors apply for permits themselves in order to trade in these technologies. A good relationship between government and the world of business and research can also increase the technical expertise of the government in understanding the military implications of new civilian technologies. And, more generally, a structural relation between government and societal stakeholders can create a broad social support for the most efficient and effective export control regime.

Government support for R&D: what about the dual use of technologies and goods?

A second aspect for which this context has implications, in addition to export control, is the Flemish innovation and research policy. In 2016 the Flemish government bundled its visions together in the policy paper 'Vision

2050: a long-term strategy for Flanders'. In this paper it took the decision to maintain and strengthen Flanders' leading position as a knowledge region. It is therefore committed to actively supporting the transition of Flemish industry towards new technologies such as 3D printing, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, robotics and other innovations.

The Flemish government therefore intends to use a major part of the available government funding to actively support the research into and development of these technologies via its education, research and innovation policies but what about government funding for R&D that could produce all sorts of (unintended) outputs that could further increase the autonomy of conventional weapons systems? These concerns do not only apply to these specific technologies. More generally, the increasingly blurred boundary between civil and military applications is forcing the Flemish government to reflect on its position: how does it want to deal with the potential double use of the research and innovation that is supported by Flanders?

This challenge has become more pertinent and urgent due to the evolutions in government support for military R&D. More and more governments, including the Belgian one, are currently using a changed safety situation to justify increases in defence budgets. The Belgian Ministry of Defence therefore intends to substantially increase the budget for military R&D. In addition, the EU also wants to play a more proactive role in European defence integration, and in the support of military R&D in particular. The European Commission is developing a European Defence Fund with an annual budget of EUR 1.5 billion for the research and development of military systems. The Commission is thereby working towards a structural cooperation with EU member states: in particular, the European Defence Fund will only provide a co-financing of 20% for the development of new systems, while member states are required to provide the remaining 80% of the budget.

In this context, a synergy between European, Belgian and regional government support would be necessary in practice: a multinational cooperation between companies and administrations, aimed at the research and development of military applications. Flanders should therefore first of all determine whether and in what form it finds government support for (potentially) militarily oriented R&D desirable. In the second instance, the Flemish govern-



ment, together with all stakeholders involved, is facing the challenge of developing a coherent and comprehensive policy framework in which the problems of the dual use of research and innovation are explicitly addressed.

2018: the need for more political awareness

Artificial intelligence and robotics are here, and they will have an influence on human society in the (near) future. Opinions differ on how great this impact will be. But it is certain that these technologies entail

both great opportunities and fundamental dangers. A political-social awareness and a regulatory framework are therefore necessary. The challenge is to achieve effective regulation without limiting the scope for civil innovation. This requires a greater understanding of the phenomenon, the benefits and the side effects.

Flanders, which, as a knowledge region, has many companies that are developing this kind of technology, will therefore benefit from, and needs, a regulatory framework, both to guarantee legal predictability for all stakeholders and to clearly anchor its own ethical principles. The (dystopian) image of a battlefield populated by robots and computer-controlled weapons without any human intervention is admittedly a (far-off) vision of the future, but certain evolutions require the Flemish government to consider how it wants to position itself in this regard. New civil technologies for artificial intelligence and robotics are already being used to autonomize existing the functions of weapons systems. More specifically, Flanders will have to determine how it intends to deal with government support for the research and development of goods and technologies that may have a dual use (civil and military), and how it will conceptualize the control of international trade in these products.

A broad societal debate with all stakeholders – universities and other research institutions, private companies, umbrella and advocacy organisations, the defence-related industry and civil society – is needed to shape this policy. As a focal point in a democratic society, the Flemish Parliament would be a suitable forum for the establishment of such a public debate. Parliament plays a central role in the political system as a representation of society, and integrates both the public debate and the formal space for political decision-making.



Polarisation

Polarisation – in our opinion this is the ‘Word of the Year 2017’. Polarisation has been in the spotlight, internationally, nationally as well as locally. Internationally, for example, there were worries over unrest regarding the fierce tensions between the United States and North Korea, between Catalans who were for and against independence, and between liberals and conservatives in the ‘Divided States of America’. But also in Belgium polarisation became more prominent in 2017. In response to extreme opinions on social media, the Dutch expert Bart Brandsma stated that ‘polarisation is increasing to a worrying extent’.¹

**LORE COLAERT &
MAARTEN VAN ALSTEIN**

In 2017 ‘polarisation’ also became a policy term. The word is increasingly appearing in written questions in the Flemish Parliament. In the Flemish Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation, radicalisation and polarisation have been ‘tackled together’ since 2017, as is the case in the Netherlands, which already had a Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan

¹ Translation of quotations are our own.

in 2007. Within the framework of the Flemish action plan, the Education Department supports initiatives that teach teachers how to deal with polarisation. In the same action plan, polarisation is seen as both a 'fertile breeding ground' for 'radical ideologies' and a result of radicalisation.

At the local level, policymakers express concern about negative attitudes and aggression towards people of non-European origin, as well as about confrontations between Turkish and Kurdish communities, tensions between Erdogan and Gülen supporters, and tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims, for example.

In the end, polarisation has also become something you can accuse an opponent of. For example, citizens accuse politicians of 'polarising' the country, or politicians complain that their proposals sometimes ended up in a 'storm of polarisation' in the (social) media.

It's time to reflect on what polarisation is and how we can cope with it.

What is polarisation?

Polarisation is a form of social or political conflict; it therefore transcends interpersonal conflicts. Policymakers in Belgium use a Dutch definition of polarisation: 'The intensification of the opposition between groups in society, which results or can result in [an increase of] tensions between these groups and in risks to social security.'

Polarisation expert Bart Brandsma defines the phenomenon as 'us-ver-

RESEARCH INTO CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN SOCIETY

In the research pillar 'Dealing with conflict and violence in society', the Flemish Peace Institute examines the social processes that affect the conditions for peace.

In 2017 we published a book report bundling research into violent extremism.



'De-radicalisation': scientific insights for a Flemish policy aims to translate research findings into policy and practice in Flanders.

In the **advisory note relating to the Flemish policy on violent radicalisation and polarisation** we focussed on those elements that fall within the Flemish authority, which lie mainly in the area of prevention. A follow-up study in 2018 will assess how the Flemish Action Plan on Radicalisation and Polarisation is being implemented in local practice. In 2017 we also carried out research into 'Dealing with controversy', which will lead to a publication on 'Controversy in the classroom' in 2018.

We have published the book **The past will not go away: remembrance education as a pedagogic practice** in collaboration with Kazerne Dossin and the Special Committee for Remembrance Education. This book makes the reader think about the question: how can we learn from the past? Another landmark was the Armistice Day Lecture by the British-Indian author Pankaj Mishra, which was given on 10 November 2017 in the Flemish Parliament. The text of his lecture **'The Great War: a view from Asia'** can be downloaded from our website.

**PEACE INSTITUTE
PUBLICATIONS
VIA EXTERNAL CHANNELS:**

Maarten Van Alstein, **'The memory of peace'**, in D. Praet (ed.), *Philosophy of war and peace*, Brussels: VUBPress

Tomas Baum, **'Kant's conditions for Peace'**, in D. Praet (ed.), *Philosophy of War and Peace*, Brussels: VUBPress

Maarten Van Alstein, **'Challenged by history: the Yser Tower in the year 2017'**, *Scientific Tidings about the History of the Flemish Movement*, 76(2).

Marjan Verplancke, Ann Dejaeghere, Simon Schepers & Maarten Van Alstein (eds), **The past will not go away: remembrance education as a pedagogic practice**, Leuven: Lannoo Campus

Maarten Van Alstein, **'Learning from history?'**, in M. Verplancke et al. (eds), *The past will not go away: remembrance education as a pedagogic practice*, Leuven: Lannoo Campus, p. 71-82.

Maarten Van Alstein, **'On site learning about remembrance – visiting historic sites'**, in M. Verplancke et al. (eds), *The past will not go away: remembrance education as a pedagogic practice*, Leuven: Lannoo Campus, p. 97-107

sus-them' thinking or 'black-and-white' thinking. In polarisation, large groups of people feel drawn to wide-ranging divisions, such as 'secular Europe' versus 'the Muslims'. The word 'polarisation' does not appear so often in discussions about corporate tax or government nutrition advice. In fact, this term mostly applies to discussions that deeply divide society, discussions in which values and beliefs are central. Since 11 September 2001 it has mainly been issues of identity that divide society. This is why the term regularly appears whenever there is talk of the super diverse society or of contradictions between 'the West' and 'the Muslim world'. It is also striking that this 'cultural struggle' is often fought out over symbols, where things such as a headscarf or 'Black Pete'² are seen as representative of broader phenomena, such as Islamisation or racism.

Brandsma perceives polarisation as a dynamic between two poles: 'us' against 'them': 'them, the establishment', 'them, the ignorant', 'them, the West'. A thought pattern created in which opposites are named. All kinds of meanings are attached to these poles, such as 'Flemings are racist', or 'Muslims don't respect women'. 'Pushers' are active at the extremes, providing fuel through very simple, generalising, morally charged statements about the 'others'. 'They' allegedly have a completely different identity than 'us', and they 'are completely wrong': 'the Left are naive'; 'the Right are egoistic'. Together with their *joiners*, *pushers* form their own self-righteous echo chambers. And, in this way, 'our political-social universe visibly shrinks ... until only one's own ideology is the truth', says Rob Wijnberg, a Dutch journalist.

2 Zwarte Piet is St Nicholas's black companion in Low Countries' folklore

Above all, polarisation is also an emotion-driven dynamic that thrives on gut feeling, rather than on reason. Belonging to one of the two poles gives you an emotional identification with a group. According to Belgian journalist Tom Naegels, it is precisely this emotional component that makes people hostile to each other, especially if they also have the impression that the other group ('the West', 'the Left', 'the Right') is looking down upon them.

Is polarisation threatening, or enriching?

If we only consider mediatized discourse, the dangers of polarisation seems obvious. Some nuance is required however. Several authors point to the potentially constructive nature of polarisation for a democracy. Martin Luther King, the suffragettes and Nelson Mandela, for example, were all powerful *pushers*. The Dutch Council for Social Development called polarisation the 'core business' of the political domain. Some polarisation in politics helps us to identify ourselves with a certain group, creates clarity between the various interests, and brings unpleasant truths to light. Some researchers in the United States, for example, suggest that polarisation can also lead to more political engagement. In this vision, polarisation between democratic opponents focusses the public debate, so that it can become the driver behind positive social dynamics.

Despite this nuance the dangers of polarisation should not be ignored. Polarisation focuses all the attention on what separates us. Some experts therefore describe the phenomenon as 'the mutual rejection by groups that have different cultural or political ideals' – and that is not without risk. 'The other' becomes trapped in the group identity and is considered as inferior. This leads to exclusion. Many Americans today find it increasingly difficult to trust people 'from the other side' or to consider their beliefs as legitimate. This endangers democracy, which exists by the grace of respect for different views. This impoverishes the debate: the content is pushed into the background, making sustainable decisions difficult, and citizens lose their confidence in politics.

Is polarisation increasing in Flanders?

For those who follow the news mainly on Twitter, public opinion in Flanders might seem very divided. But the fact that the traditional media frequently report about heated discussions on Twitter does not mean that the overall Flemish public opinion is polarised. Only 11% of Flemish people tweet, and heated discussions often take place among a few dozen people.

We should therefore look at research to find more informed statements about the degree of societal polarization. A lot of recent research in the United States shows that both the political system and public opinion are deeply divided between liberals and conservatives. Unfortunately, less research is available about Flanders. We do not really know whether, and to what extent, public opinion has become more or less polarized in recent years. It is clear, however, that the temperature of certain debates, particularly

PEACE INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES IN 2017

03/03/2017

Work seminar on international research into radicalisation, with Flemish practitioners and international academics (Brussels)

12/03/2017

Participation in the debate 'Why is it still relevant to learn about WWI?' at the Klasse teachers' day in West Flanders

30/04/2017

Participation in the debate '14-18 #darktourism' about commemoration tourism in Ypres, organised by Jong Groen Ieper-Poperinge (Young Green Youth Party of Ypres-Poperinge)

05/05/2017

Book launch of *The past will not go away* in the Flemish Parliament, in collaboration with the Special Committee for Remembrance Education and Kazerne Dossin

11/05/2017

Seminar on civic education with Claudia Ruitenberg (Brussels)

22/05/2017

Guest lecture 'About violence' at the Sint-Leo Hemelsdaele college in Bruges

28/06/2017

Participation in the debate on radicalisation at Voxpop deBuren (Brussels)

04/07/2017

Book presentation of *De-radicalisation: scientific insights for a Flemish policy*, in the Flemish Parliament

01/09/2017

Opening of the photo exhibition 'The graves are nice this time of year' by Jimmy Kets in Zoersel

11/10/2017 and 8/11/2017

'Class in turmoil' webinars on controversies in the classroom and at school, with the Special Committee for Remembrance Education

23/10/2017

Book presentation *The past will not go away* during the seminar on civic education by Go! and the Auschwitz Foundation (Brussels)

about diversity, has increased. The issue of headscarves, the attacks in Paris and Brussels, and the discussions about radicalisation have exacerbated the contradictions between 'Muslims' and 'secular society' in Flanders. Some years ago, sociological research showed that a large group of Flemish people had some degree of negative feelings about Muslims. This group sees Islam as a cultural threat or as a source of violence. Other research suggests that fundamentalism and 'us-versus-them' thinking is also rather widespread among European Muslims, although it is certainly not generally shared. Also young people in Flanders are not free from negative feelings towards other groups, and the social distance between young people from different cultural backgrounds is still large in our cities.

There are also other signals, however. For example, several studies showed that Europeans today are less negative towards migrants than they used to be; in December 2017 Tom Naegels was surprised by this 'slow increase in acceptance'. Despite incidents such as attacks that threatened the social fabric, and with 'almost a million more people of foreign origin' in Belgium than at the turn of the century, he does not see a tipping point where society cannot cope with migration. Society adapts. Sociologists speculate that this adaptation is because we now have more contact with people with a migration background in daily life in the city: at the school gate or on the tram.

A link between polarisation and radicalisation?

In Flanders, the focus on polarisation has mainly arisen in the slipstream of the focus on radicalisation. In the beginning, the emphasis was placed on the threat posed by violent jihadism, but these concerns gradually widened to include extreme right 'mirror radicalisation' and 'polarisation'.

And polarisation and extremism are indeed linked. The extremist violence displayed by various ideologies can be seen as a far-reaching expression of us-versus-them feelings. Security services therefore fear that today's polarisation will produce tomorrow's terrorism. And also vice versa: British researchers mapped a stream of hostile us-versus-them expressions against Muslims on social media following attacks by violent jihadists.

But mentioning polarisation in the same breath as radicalisation is not always opportune. Firstly, the two are not necessarily related: political polarisation regarding urban mobility, for example, will not easily lead to violent extremism.

Moreover, the links between radicalisation and polarisation are not sufficiently clear in policy plans. For example, it is not clear whether the word 'violent' in the Flemish Action Plan to Prevent Violent Radicalisation and Polarisation only relates to radicalisation, or also to polarisation. And it is also not yet clear how exactly the government wants to counter polarisation. For the same reasons, the Council for Social Development in the Netherlands recommended in 2009 that polarisation should be regarded as an independent phenomenon.

PEACE INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES IN 2017

10/11/2017

2017 Armistice Day Lecture by Pankaj Mishra and concert by guitarist Jan Depreter in the Flemish Parliament, in collaboration with the In Flanders Fields Museum and the City of Ypres

10/11/2017

Lecture on radicalisation for pupils of the Sint-Leo Hemelsdaele college in Bruges

09/11/2017 tot 10/11/2017

Conflict Matters conference in London (in collaboration with the Evens Foundation), on conflict management in education
Chairmanship of the jury for the Evens Award for Peace Education (London)

11/11/2017

Speech during the ceremony for the armistice commemoration in the Antwerp city park

12/6/2017, 21/11/2017 and 14/12/2017

EXIT Extremism conferences (in collaboration with the Ufungu network), on de-radicalisation and disengagement projects

05/12/2017

Participation in the 'SS or IS, what can we learn from the past?' debate following the Canvas series 'Children of the collaboration'



Another reason why we should not automatically link radicalisation and polarisation, is that the link with radicalisation often leads to a focus on Muslim extremism, combined with a connotation of threat. This can actually strengthen the polarisation between Muslims and non-Muslims, since, among other things, it drives feelings of distrust. Many anti-radicalisation measures are aimed at Muslims, because of the current threat of violent jihadism. Some preventive measures may inadvertently arouse the impression that the whole Muslim community is a risk group for radicalisation or polarisation. The feelings of suspicion that result from this can be counterproductive. But polarisation is pre-eminently a phenomenon that is maintained by several camps. *Pushers* can be found among Flemings with and without a migration background, from both left and right. For this reason, Ikrame Kastit, coordinator of a youth work organisation, felt that further training for Islamic teachers on polarisation could potentially be seen by Muslims as a sign of distrust. According to her, Muslims nowadays often have to answer for the violence of a few Muslim extremists. Kastit advocates teaching *all* teachers how to deal with diversity: 'Polarisation is a problem of our society, not of our Muslims', she writes. Researchers also advocate wide-ranging training on diversity, conflict management and citizenship education. The philosopher Patrick Loobuyck, for example, points out that *all* children are 'newcomers' to democracy, while urban sociologist Stijn Oosterlynck argues that integration and coexistence are challenges for all the various groups in our currently super-diverse cities.

In the current climate it is therefore difficult to say that someone or a group is polarising without having a polarising effect yourself. Some caution in the use of the term is therefore warranted.

What can be done?

According to experts such as Bart Brandsma, polarisation has been treated for too long as a form of conflict that can best be addressed with rational dialogue. But in doing so, *pushers* are given a bigger stage for their monologues, he states, without having to engage in a dialogue with the other side. Moreover, psychological research shows that reasonableness and *fact checks* generally do not outweigh the emotional identification with a group.

Another method that is often suggested as a way to counter polarisation is by supporting *bridge builders*. But, according to Brandsma, even they seldom succeed in making *pushers* talk to each other. Furthermore, they run the risk of becoming the first scapegoats in cases of extreme polarisation.

Brandsma therefore proposes a different approach. According to his model, we must give more positive attention to the 'silent middle'. This group is also implied in the dynamic of polarisation, albeit in a different way. Many people actually crave less 'black-and-white' thinking. This was confirmed recently by a report in a Flemish newspaper about 'news avoiders' who try to avoid listening to the news because of the hardening of society.

In the work of the Flemish Peace Institute on dealing with controversies and polarisation in the classroom, we also recommend Brandma's model. In real situations of polarisation, where the us-versus-them gap is so great that mutual respect is no longer possible, the teacher is best advised to focus on the pupils in the 'silent middle', to open up the conversation topic, or even change the subject. It is of crucial importance to recognise situations of polarisation in the classroom. After all, these pose a threat to the open classroom climate, which, in turn, has negative effects on the political attitudes of young people. Tensions are fuelled and the confidence of young people in politics and society decreases.

But there is another reason why we should learn to properly recognise polarising dynamics in the classroom, and this is that it is important to distinguish between real polarisation on the one hand, and fierce discussions on the other. Although the latter can be very vehement, they require a different approach. Discussions do not necessarily involve pushers driving groups to more extreme positions. Therefore not every fierce discussion, controversy or radical statement should be labelled as polarisation. A connotation of threat is always associated with 'polarisation', which delegitimises the person who makes the controversial statement and threatens to even widen the gap between 'us' and 'them'. If we unjustifiably call a fierce debate 'polarisation', we run the risk of making the space for diverse opinions and debate unnecessarily narrow. As a result, some problems can no longer be discussed. If young people feel that their opinion does not count and that they are powerless, this threatens the open classroom climate and creates a breeding ground for frustrations and feelings of exclusion. In the case of fierce statements that do not necessarily imply a polarisation dynamic – for example, about refugees or the theory of evolution – a teacher can best use conversation and questioning techniques that make it possible for pupils to enter into dialogue with each other – and keep the dialogue going.

The classroom can certainly be quite political, within certain limits. In our work on dealing with controversies and polarisation, we find inspiration from the political philosopher Chantal Mouffe. She indicates that there is no problem if social discussions are quite heated, and that there must be room for different people to democratically express opinions or grievances in various ways – even if they question existing power relations. The condition is that we agree on some shared principles (such as democracy, freedom and equality); that we agree that we may disagree with each other; and that we agree about where the boundaries lie; for example, in the use of violence or *hate speech*. In discussions in a classroom, this translates into clear agreements about how we speak to each other (such as listening, no generalisations and no swearing).

According to Chantal Mouffe, us-versus-them thinking is a characteristic of living together, and it would be best to simply give it a place in democracy. Or as Rob Wijnberg writes: 'It's not possible to ignore political contradictions, and it is perhaps not even desirable ... in a sense, politics are, by definition, a form of herd behaviour: which group do you belong to?' But it must remain a debate between political opponents, not a rant between groups that see each other as moral enemies or threats. It then tends to become antagonising or a dangerous form of polarisation. An overarching 'we' must remain possible, such as 'we who look for ways to live together', at school, in the city, in the media. But much is possible within these limits.



How terrorists obtain firearms in Europe

Europe has been shaken several times in recent years by deadly terrorist attacks on its

territory. Recent terrorist shooting incidents in various places in Europe have shown that the possession and use of firearms by terrorists is not an exception. On the contrary, terrorist networks within the European Union (EU) are increasingly using firearms. At the level of the EU and several of its member states, this has led to more policy attention to illicit firearms and terrorist access to these arms. But the question of how terrorist actors manage to obtain weapons has remained unanswered for a long time. In this essay, we will highlight the main results of project SAFTE, an international research project coordinated by the Flemish Peace Institute, on terrorist access to firearms.

NILS DUQUET & KEVIN GORIS

The rather limited scientific research into illegal firearms markets in Europe stands in stark contrast to the potential pernicious impact on the security situation in Flanders and Europe of these illicit firearms and terrorist access to them. The Flemish Peace Institute has taken a leading role in addressing this problem. We conducted a study on the Belgian illicit firearms market in 2017, in which we exposed bottlenecks that prevent official bodies from obtaining a reliable picture of illegal arms trafficking. This is crucial, because a good understanding of the phenomenon is a prerequisite for the enforcement of, among other things, the Flemish Arms Trade Decree (*Vlaams Wapenhandeldecreet*).

In 2017 the Peace Institute set up a large-scale research project on the acquisition of firearms by terrorists at the European level. The study, was entitled project SAFTE, which stands for *Studying the Acquisition of Firearms by Terrorists in Europe*. Funds were acquired through the European Commission. For the implementation of this project, the Peace Institute coordinated a network of specialised and internationally renowned partners: the *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)*, the *Scuola Superiore di Studi Universitari e di Perfezionamento Sant'Anna*, *Arquebus Solutions*, *Small Arms Survey* and *Bureau Bruinsma*.

The use of firearms by terrorists in Europe

According to Europol, firearms have become the most widely used instruments of terrorist groups in Europe. In 2015, the European police service recorded 57 terrorist incidents in which firearms were used. The *Global Terrorism Database*, which uses a somewhat different methodology, reports 98 terrorist attacks with firearms in the EU between 2012 and 2016.

The possession and use of firearms by terrorists is not a new phenomenon in the EU, however. Separatist groups such as ETA and the IRA have often used firearms in the recent past. But also within the religiously-inspired terrorist environment illegal firearm possession is not a new phenomenon. For example, Belgian law enforcement services found an Uzi machine gun during a house search of Nizar Trabelsi a few days after 9/11. Trabelsi was associated with Al-Qaeda, and intended to attack the military base of Kleine Brogel.

In recent years, the link between terrorism and illicit arms trafficking has been high on the European security agenda. Due to the high death toll, a number of terrorist shooting incidents on European soil received a lot of policy attention. Examples of this are the shooting incidents in Toulouse and Montauban (March 2012), in the Jewish Museum in Brussels (May 2014), in Copenhagen (February 2015) and in Paris (January and November 2015). These last attacks placed the use of firearms by terrorists on the agenda. In addition, European law enforcement services have thwarted various plans for firearms attacks, or, as in Verviers (January 2015) and Vorst (March 2016) ended up in a gunfight between police and terrorists.

In addition to violent expressions of Islamic extremism, there have been numerous attacks in Europe related to separatist, extreme left and extreme right ideologies over the past decade. For example, the shooting spree in which the extreme right-winger Anders Breivik carried out a massacre at the summer camp of the Youth Wing of the Social Democratic Norwegian Workers' Party on the island of Utøya in 2011 is still fresh in the collective memory. Also in Belgium extreme rightist individuals and groups have access to illicit firearms. Leaders of 'Bloed, Bodem, Eer en Trouw' (*blood, soil, honour and loyalty*) were found guilty of membership of a terrorist organisation and of the illegal possession of weapons at the beginning of 2014.

Differences between terrorist groupings

If we zoom in on the types of firearms that terrorist groups possess in Europe, we see a very broad spectrum. The way in which firearms end up in terrorist hands is also very different. We found, for example, that networks of contemporary religious-inspired terrorism often acquire their firearms through the criminal market, unlike other types of terrorist groups.

A striking example of the differences in acquisition patterns can be seen in the republican and loyalist groups in Northern Ireland, who were battling each other from the start of *the Troubles* in the late 1960s. Republican groups, such as the IRA, were heavily dependent on illegal, politically motivated, international arms transfers – mainly from the US and Libya. Groups on the loyalist side tended to rely on local sources such as theft, illegal production and the reactivation of firearms. This illustrates how terrorist actors can have very different supply mechanisms, even within the same region.

Availability of firearms on criminal weapon markets

Weapons of war are over-represented in the firearms that have been used by, and seized from, terrorist networks in Europe in recent years. This indicates their preference for these – usually automatic – weapons. The possibilities for legal possession of such weapons are very limited, however. This means that terrorists have to look for them on the illicit firearms market.

Our research shows that there is no 'unified' criminal illicit firearms market in Europe, but that there are many different markets, with strong differences from country to country. What these illicit firearms markets have in common is that they almost always have a closed character: criminal firearms markets are, in principle, only accessible to persons with the right criminal connections and with a certain relationship of trust between buyer and seller. The

RESEARCH INTO FIREARMS IN 2017

Firearms are an important topic in the 'Arms trade and use' research pillar of the Flemish Peace Institute.



The Belgian illicit firearms market In 2017 we published the results of a study into the characteristics of and our knowledge about the illegal firearms market in Belgium.

23/06/2017

Advisory note on draft law 2709/1 amending the law of 8 June 2006 on the regulation of economic and individual activities with weapons

13/11/2017

The Flemish Peace Institute was approached by the Commission for Justice of the Chamber of Representatives to provide advice on draft law 2709/1 amending the law of 8 June 2006 on the regulation of economic and individual activities with weapons.

In 2017 the Flemish Peace Institute coordinated a European research project into the way terrorists obtain firearms in Europe: **the Project SAFTE**. The results of this research were announced in 2018.

Project SAFTE consisted of high-quality in-depth research in Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Croatia, the Netherlands, Romania and the United Kingdom. For each country, the national teams mapped out the characteristics of the illegal firearms market, the way in which terrorists enter this market and national policy to combat these phenomena. In total, more than a hundred specialists were interviewed.

In addition, Project SAFTE resulted in an analysis of the European policy framework; an overview of the illegal firearms market and terrorism in the other 20 EU member states; and a study into illegal arms trafficking in the (post-)conflict zones of North Africa, the Ukraine and the Western Balkans. All this resulted in two international publications

Firearms acquisition by terrorists in Europe: research findings and policy recommendations of Project SAFTE: a synthesis report with recommendations for European and national governments

Triggering terror: illicit gun markets and firearms acquisition of terrorist networks in Europe: a collection of studies from various countries

**PEACE INSTITUTE
PUBLICATIONS
VIA EXTERNAL CHANNELS**

Nils Duquet, 'Measuring illicit Arms Flow in Non-Conflict Contexts', Small Arms Survey Podcast #40

result is that it is usually easier for serious criminals to obtain a broader range of firearms than for smaller offenders.

In recent years, however, national police forces in several countries have found that firearms, including weapons of war, are becoming more readily available. This mainly seems to be the result of increased arms smuggling from the Balkan countries and the increased traffic in poorly-deactivated firearms from other EU member states.

The importance of criminal connections

Good criminal connections are therefore crucial for

access to illicit arms markets in Europe and for obtaining the desired firearms. Our analyses show that terrorists who want to obtain access to criminal firearms markets do not normally make new contacts, but rather rely on existing criminal connections. Quite a number of terrorists in Europe today were previously involved in all kinds of criminal activities, from drug trafficking and armed robberies to membership of youth gangs. Some of them have been convicted for the illegal possession of weapons or for involvement in firearms-related criminal activities. It is therefore no surprise that they are making use of criminal connections that date back to before their radicalisation for the purchase of firearms. Terrorists who do not have the right connections sometimes have to content themselves with weapons that are less suitable for terrorist use, such as hunting rifles and fake weapons.



A typical example of the fading boundaries between the criminal and terrorist underworld are the El Bakraoui brothers, who were part of the group of suicide terrorists responsible for the attacks in Brussels on 22 March 2016. No firearms were used in these attacks, but photographs indicate that their network did have access to them. In addition, there is agreement among police services that the brothers were responsible for the delivery of – at least a part of – the firearms used in the attacks in Paris in November 2015. In all likelihood, the brothers were able to fall back on their existing criminal networks for the purchase of these weapons, as both brothers had a record of criminal activities in which Kalashnikovs and other guns were used. A similar pattern was also established, for example, for Mohammed Merah, the perpetrator of the series of attacks in Toulouse-Montauban in March 2012, and for Mehdi Nemmouche, the perpetrator of the attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014. A (criminally active) childhood friend of Merah has recently been convicted of supplying the Uzi machine gun used in the first series of attacks. And the police and the prosecutor suspect that Nemmouche obtained his weapons via a convicted criminal with whom he had been in jail for a while.

The boundaries between criminal and terrorist networks seem to be particularly blurred in countries with a rather fragmented and chaotic criminal landscape, such as Belgium, the Netherlands or France. We see it much less in a country like Italy, where a limited number of very organised crime groups rule the roost. This is an interesting finding of our comparative analysis.

Direct diversion of firearms from the legal milieu

Terrorists do not always acquire their firearms on the criminal market. Our research shows that a number of terrorists obtained these weapons directly from the legal firearms circuit through, for example, targeted thefts from legal firearms owners. This kind of robbery by terrorists is not a new phenomenon. Groups such as ETA have been able to access firearms stolen from authorised arms traders or from the depositories of army or police units for many years.

Targeted thefts by terrorists are significantly less common today, but they can have fatal consequences. For example, the perpetrator of the attacks in Copenhagen in February 2015 stole an assault rifle from a member of the *Hjemmeværnet*, a regulated civilian militia in Denmark. Perpetrators can opt for such ‘direct acquisition’ because they do not have good, reliable criminal connections, or because the desired weapons are limited on the local illicit

firearms market. In some countries, the legal possession of firearms by members of (mainly rightist) extremist networks has also been established.

Necessity for constant pressure on illegal weapon markets

The acquisition of firearms by terrorists constitutes a complex and multifaceted crime phenome-

non, but this does not mean that law enforcement services are powerless. Terrorists who obtain firearms are also at greater risk of being discovered. In particular in countries where the availability of firearms on illegal markets is more restricted, obtaining a weapon is a difficult and risky undertaking. In the United Kingdom, for example, the access threshold for terrorists is high as a result of a proactive 'investigate the gun' approach by the police and the constant pressure on the illicit arms market associated with this. Terrorists are therefore often forced to resort to less suitable firearms or to 'everyday' items, such as vehicles or knives, in order to carry out their attacks. Those who nevertheless try to acquire firearms often run into problems. In 2016, a high-ranking British police officer specialising in counter-terrorism stated that in half the terrorist attacks that had been thwarted, the involved persons were trying to acquire firearms.

There is a need for proactive and constant pressure on illicit firearms markets in order to curb illegal firearms trafficking and to limit the opportunities for terrorists to acquire firearms. In 2016, the Flemish Peace Institute pointed out three crucial work

PEACE INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES IN 2017

24/01/2017

Contribution about illegal firearms and terrorism at the *Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques* conference on arms trafficking and post-conflict situations (Paris)

16/03/2017

Presentations during the one-day seminar on 'Illegal possession of weapons in Belgium' by *Die Keure* for lawyers, the judiciary, local authorities and the police (Ghent)

23/06/2017

Presentation of the research report *The Belgian illicit firearms market in the picture* to professionals and policymakers (Brussels)

14/08/2017

Presentation of the study into the illicit firearms market in Belgium at the annual conference of the Society for Terrorism Research (New York)

07/09/2017

'Researching terrorist access to illicit gun markets in Europe' presentation at the general conference of the European Consortium for Political Research (Oslo)

06/10/2017

Presentation of the report *The Belgian illicit firearms market* at the Interfederal Consultative Committee on the Illegal Arms Trade (Brussels)

14/11/2017

Lecture on the illegal arms trade and the UN Sustainable Development Goals for students of the VIVES University College during their international and intercultural week (Kortrijk)

18/11/2017

Lecture on the global proliferation of small and light weapons at the High Studies for Security and Defence (Brussels)

12/12/2017

Presentation on the illicit arms trade in the EU at the sixth EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference (Brussels)

areas for creating this kind of pressure in Belgium. These areas of work also apply at the European level.

Firstly, an improvement in the imaging of illegal firearms traffic. This means that the relevant information should be better collected, shared and analysed, both nationally and internationally. A reliable picture of the problems will enable trends to be identified, problem areas to be identified and appropriate, coordinated policy and operational actions to be developed.

Secondly, an improvement of the regulatory and policy frameworks. Among other things, this means that loopholes in legislation should be closed as far as possible. For example, the traffic in poorly deactivated firearms between EU member states has painfully shown that legislation is not sufficiently harmonised at the European level. In the political context of the European Union, national loopholes also mean, in practice, European loopholes.

Thirdly, an investment in the operational capacity of the involved services. The fight against illegal arms traffic and a proactive '*investigate the gun*' approach obviously require manpower, expertise and resources. In other words, adequately developed and specialised law enforcement services are a must in every EU member state.

Only by working in these three areas at the same time is an effective response to the illicit arms traffic and gun-acquisition by terrorists possible. This kind of response helps to prevent violence in general, and firearm violence in particular. With its research, the Flemish Peace Institute aims to contribute to a safer society in Flanders and beyond.

'In the past, only high-level criminals had access to assault rifles, but now also petty criminals are increasingly trying to obtain such weapons. The less experience the criminal has, the easier he will pull the trigger. And if he has such a weapon, his rivals will want one as well. This way you end up in a vicious circle of gun violence.,

Nils Duquet
Researcher

In Humo, 18 July 2017

FLEMISH PEACE INSTITUTE 2017 IN NUMBER

8

Publications about our own research

5

Advisory notes based on research

13

Activities with more than 1000 participants

35

Contributions on Flemish and International forums

12

Newsletters and other messages to more than 1600 contacts

14.963

Visits on www.vlaamsvredesinstituut.eu
and www.flemishpeaceinstitute.eu

83

Mentions in the media

OVERVIEW ADVISORY NOTES IN 2017

Advisory note on existing good practices regarding regulations and licensing policy for trade in military equipment from EU member states 10/01/2017

Advisory note on the proposal for resolution with a view to revising Belgian foreign policy towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 01/06/2017

Advisory note relating to the Flemish policy on violent radicalisation and polarisation 04/07/2017

Advisory note on the annual report of the Flemish government on the arms trade in 2016 31/08/2017

Advisory note on draft law 2709/1 amending the law of 8 June 2006 on the regulation of economic and individual activities with weapons 13/11/2017

YEARLY EVALUATION REPORT 2017

The Scientific Council evaluates the quality of the research performed by the Flemish Peace Institute and gives the Board of Directors and the Scientific Secretariat advice on important research trends in the domain of peace and security.

To ensure the highest possible scientific standards, the Scientific Council recently revised its review procedure. The Council now reviews individual publications before publication so that the author(s) can take the detailed comments into account for the final revision. In addition, the Council provides an annual review that focuses less on individual publications or projects, and more on their overall relevance. This annual review pays special attention to the broader context within which the Institute carries out its research. The Scientific Council observes that this two-tier procedure has been working well and allowed the Institute to further improve the quality of its work.

The Scientific Council continues to encourage publications in external forums, but does not evaluate these, as these are subject to other external review procedures aimed at producing high quality research outputs. Nevertheless, the Scientific Council took note of the general high-quality of the publications by staff members of the Flemish Peace Institute.

While this evaluation report relies on the Institute's own publications as the core indicator of quality, the Scientific Council also applauds the Institute's numerous additional activities, including seminars, lectures and contributions by researchers at academic and policy-oriented events. Highlights in the period under review include Nils Duquet's contribution to the conference 'Trafic d'armes en situation post-conflits: étude de cas et enjeux' organised by IRIS & GRIP, Paris, 24 January 2017 and his lecture at the Society for Terrorism Research in New York, 14-15 August 2017; Diederik Cops' presentations at the conference 'Arms export policies: Germany and Europe towards more global responsibility', organised by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Berlin on 20 March 2017 and at the annual COARM-NGO conference on 15 June 2017; Kevin Goris' presentation at the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) General Conference, Oslo, 7 September 2017; and Maarten van Alstein's participation in a panel discussion on remembrance and memory politics at the teachers' day Province of West-Flanders on 12 March 2017.

The Scientific Council notes that the positive development of increasing and broadening the range of research subjects continues. The assessment of the Scientific Council is structured along the main thematic clusters of the Institute.

ARMS TRADE AND THE USE OF ARMS

Research on the arms trade and on arms production has been the Institute's core concern since its establishment. This is reflected in a high number of publications in this area, also in 2017.

In 2016, the Scientific Council noted and welcomed the Institute's plans to replace the existing annual report on Flemish arms exports with a factsheet on the same topic, as well as an analysis and report on aspects thereof of particular relevance: 'Flemish practices in arms export controls' and 'Arms export control in Belgium: similarities and differences'.

The first factsheet was published in 2017, reporting on developments in 2016. The factsheet provides a succinct overview of the number of licences, the value and type of military products licensed and the destination of exports. In the Scientific Council's view, the first factsheet demonstrates that the new format works well and confirms that it was wise to switch from the annual reports to a factsheet. Also the accompanying publications are of high quality and stand in the Institute's tradition to provide in-depth comparative analysis of Flemish arms export policy.

The Scientific Council is happy to see the English translation of the large benchmark study that compares arms export policies as well as licencing and reporting procedures in Flanders, Germany, France, the UK, the Netherlands, Hungary, Portugal and Sweden. The Scientific Council congratulated the Institute on this unique collection of highly valuable data and a comprehensive, methodologically sound and highly informative report in its last review and welcomed the decision to translate the report because it is relevant to a broader audience than Flanders alone.

In addition, the Flemish parliament had asked the Institute to advise on amendments to a resolution on arms exports to Saudi Arabia. Within a week, the Institute published an advisory note that helped to clarify the terminology used and thus to reduce uncertainties about the precise impact of the amendments.

Also research on firearms has become firmly established in the Institute over the last years. In 2017, the Institute published a major report on the illegal firearms market in Belgium. The Scientific Council congratulates the authors on having mapped this market diligently while being transparent about the uncertainties and shortcomings in the available data.

The Institute has also published an advisory note on the reform of the federal firearms legislation. Taken together, the research line on firearms has developed very well and emulates the one on arms control by covering the full spectrum of data collection, anal-

ysis of data, legislation and administrative practice as well as policy advice. The recent amendment of the EU firearms directive and the necessary implementation into national law guarantees that the demand for this line of research will remain high.

DEALING WITH CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN SOCIETY

There have been some fluctuations in the clusters not dealing with arms trade and use, but overall this cluster is picking up speed. In the view of the Scientific Council, it is crucial for the Institute to have a second leg next to the very successful and established one on the trade in and use of arms. The precise profile of this second leg is one of the most important strategic choices the Institute has to make and the Scientific Council is happy to follow up on this issue.

In the research line on commemoration, attention is shifting more and more to questions of education. The reception of the co-authored book about commemoration education demonstrates that there is demand for this and that the Institute is well connected into a broader network of experts and stakeholders.

In the Institute's research on (de)radicalization, the edited volume 'De-radicalisation: scientific insights for a Flemish policy' marks the first milestone in the development of this research line. The Scientific Council finds it a wise decision to start this line of research with a collection of views and contributions from international experts in the field and to apply these to the Flemish context. The edited volume assesses the publication as solidly structured and argued, well-documented and thorough. It notes that various chapters, also in line with research done elsewhere, find radicalisation processes to be to a high degree socially determined, contextual and local. This line of research would thus be strengthened by asking, in addition, in a comparative spirit, what the conditions and facts of radicalisation in other social settings are and what the particularly Flemish conditions of production of radicalisation are. The Scientific Council supports the choice of the Institute to make this publication available in Dutch and English.

*Dr. Wolfgang Wagner,
Chair of the Scientific Council of the Flemish Peace Institute*





The Flemish Peace Institute in 2017: organisation and people

The decree: the guidelines for the Flemish Peace Institute

In the Founding Act of the Flemish Peace Institute (7 May 2004) the Flemish Parliament set out four tasks for this para-parliamentary institution: carrying out fundamental and topical peace research, collecting and opening up sources of information, providing information, and advising Parliament and the government.

Carrying out peace research, including both fundamental scientific research and research that relates to current events, is the core assignment of the Flemish Peace Institute. This research should contribute to the promotion of peaceful and just resolutions of conflicts, and to the establishment of conditions for sustainable peace. The Flemish Peace Institute also has the task of informing the Flemish Parliament, civil society, and the general public about peace and the prevention of violence, and about the results of the research that it has carried out. The Institute also creates forums in which experts, policymakers, and civil society meet and interact on peace-related issues.

Finally, the Flemish Peace Institute also formulates general or specific advice, either at the request of the Flemish

Parliament or on its own initiative. The decree specifically defines the advisory function to the Flemish Parliament in terms of the annual report of the Flemish government on the arms trade, but Parliament can also call in the expertise of the Flemish Peace Institute in other cases. The Institute itself can formulate advice on the basis of its research at any time.

Assignments and target audience

The fourfold mission of the Flemish Peace Institute focuses on a broad target audience. As a para-parliamentary institution, the Institute primarily serves the Flemish Parliament and provides support in the implementation of its core duties. Among other tasks, it supports the Flemish Parliament in the preparation of decrees and in the effective monitoring and control of the executive power with regard to its powers relating to the import, export and transit of arms, which were transferred in 2003.

The Flemish Peace Institute also focusses on civil society and the general public. Through its Board of Directors, among others, the Institute keeps a finger on the pulse of the broader social environment in Flanders: employers, employees, academics, peace movements and political parties.

The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the Flemish Peace Institute consists of 19 voting members from various parts of civil society in Flanders. Members have a mandate of five years and are appointed by the Flemish Parliament. In order to ensure that the Institute remains an independent institution with a broad basis and the required expertise, the decree stipulates a balanced representation: six members serving in their own name and nominated by the parties in the Flemish Parliament, three members recommended by the Flemish Inter-University Council, three members recommended by a voluntary cooperative partnership of Dutch-speaking peace organisations, and four members recommended by the Flanders Social and Economic Council. Once it has been formed in this way, the Board of Directors co-opts another three additional members. The composition of the Board of Directors follows the principle of balanced representation between men and women in advisory and administrative bodies. Ms Mieke Van Hecke is the chairperson and Mr Dirk Rochtsus the vice-chairperson of the Board of Directors. The composition of the Board of Directors in 2017 was as follows:

For the political parties:

Raf Burm
Annemie Charlier
Axel Delvoie
Dirk Rochtsus (vice-chairperson)
Reinilde Van Moer
Diane Verstraeten

For the Flemish Inter-University Council (VLIR):

Prof. Dr Berber Bevernage
Prof. Dr Ann Pauwels
Prof. Dr Tom Sauer

For the peace movements:

Philippe Haeyaert (*up to June 2017*)
Kristin De Winter (*as of July 2017*)
Brigitte Herremans (*up to June 2017*)
Georges Spriet (*as of July 2017*)
Bram Vranken

For the Socio-Economic Council of Flanders (SERV):

Jan Boulogne
Patrick Develtere (*up to August 2017*)
Peter Wouters (*as of September 2017*)
Els Dirix
Steven Luys

Co-opted members:

Khalid Benhaddou
Filip Reyniers
Mieke Van Hecke (chairperson)

*'It is important
to condemn
the ideology and actions
of extremists,
not their person.,*

Tina Wilchen Christensen,

Lecturer on radicalization and exit processes
University of Roskilde, Denmark

*Lecture at UFUNGU conference 'EXIT extremism'
Flemish Parliament*

The Scientific Council

Because scientific work is one of the basic pillars of the operations of the Flemish Peace Institute, the decree stipulates the formation of a Scientific Council that substantively assists the Board of Directors and the Scientific Secretariat in the Institute's research activities. As an internationally composed advisory body, the Scientific Council assesses the quality of the research carried out by the Flemish Peace Institute; provides advice to the Board of Directors and the Scientific Secretariat on significant trends in research on peace and security; and, in light of its expertise, can be consulted in the course of ongoing research.

The Scientific Council is composed of the chairperson of the Board of Directors, eight national and international specialists from academic circles and non-governmental organisations, and the Director of the Flemish Peace Institute. The Board of Directors appoints the members of the Scientific Council for a term of five years, and the Scientific Council usually meets twice a year.

The Scientific Council was composed of the following members in 2017:

Dr Sybille Bauer – Director of the SIPRI Dual-use and Arms Trade Control Programme

Prof. Dr J. Peter Burgess – Professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris and Adjunct Professor at the University of Copenhagen

Prof. Dr Huub Dijstelbloem – Professor of Philosophy of Science and Politics at the University of Amsterdam

Dr Elise Féron – University Researcher and Lecturer at the University of Tampere (Tampere Peace Research Institute)

Prof. Dr Keith Krause – Professor at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva

Dr Marcel Maussen – Assistant Professor at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies at the University of Amsterdam

Prof. Dr Antoon Vandevelde – Professor at the Centre for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy at the KU Leuven

Prof. Dr Wolfgang Wagner – Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)

The Scientific Secretariat

The Scientific Secretariat is the operational centre of the Flemish Peace Institute. Based in the Flemish Parliament, a multi-disciplinary team of researchers carries out projects of direct relevance to policy makers and society.

The Secretariat consisted of the following staff members in 2017:

Director

Tomas Baum (until December 2017)

Tine Destrooper (as of January 2018)

Researchers

Lore Colaert

Diederik Cops

Nils Duquet

Kevin Goris

Gregory Gourdin

Maarten Van Alstein

Communications

Els Roger

Office managers

Margarida Ferro

Micky Ryckaert

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design: Karakters

‘Our complex task during the centenary of the war is to identify the ways in which the grim past to which it belongs has infiltrated our present, and threatens to shape the future.,

Pankaj Mishra,
Essayist and novelist

Armistice Day Lecture

flemish
peaceInstitute

The Flemish Peace Institute is an independent institute dedicated
to peace research and hosted by the Flemish Parliament.