

# VetoWar- The Vision

## **The Problem**

The vast majority of people do not want war at home, nor do they want war for people elsewhere. Those who work towards war are usually a small minority, motivated by ideological, nationalistic or religious feelings of superiority, hatred or delusion, in association with actors who make a lot of money from war.

Unfortunately, even in democratic states, decisions to go to war are generally not democratically legitimized: the suggestion of military intervention in another country is never included in an election manifesto. Decisions to go to war are made by a small elite (typically older male heads of state) who happen to be in power. Hence, even if this small elite were democratically elected, their decisions to go to war are not democratically legitimized. In this respect, *bona fide* democracies are no different from autocracies and dictatorships.

However, the particular gravity of a decision to go to war, with potentially hundreds of thousands of dead and injured, millions of displaced people, brutal violations of basic human rights and unspeakable suffering and destruction, requires the population to have a direct right to participate in decision-making - in all forms of state and government.

The problem becomes particularly clear in war in its most extreme form: nuclear war. Humanity has given the power over its own extinction to a handful of old men - without any control mechanism! This is completely absurd and must be changed urgently if humanity wants to survive.

## **The central goal of VetoWar**

is to create a legal framework that allows people worldwide to veto their governments' decisions to go to war: If the government of country A decides to intervene militarily in another country B, the citizens of country A should have the right to demand a referendum in which this decision to go to war is voted on. If a majority votes against it, the government's decision to go to war is void.

## **How does that help?**

Under the premise that most people do not want war, it is unlikely that a broad majority of a country's population will agree to attack another country militarily. In any case, the right of veto creates an additional hurdle for a war of aggression. Moreover, political research shows that democratic states are generally perceived as less threatening than non-democratic ones. A right of veto anchored in a country's national law therefore also reduces the likelihood that this country will be attacked militarily: the right of veto in itself, and especially if it has already been exercised, creates trust and allows humanity to move in the long term from the current state of confrontation between blocks based on deterrence and an arms race to a more trusting coexistence and cooperation.

## **How can the goal be achieved?**

It is important that the right of veto is anchored in national law in as many countries as possible. Only then can people effectively demand it and, if necessary, sue for it. The experience of the civil rights movement in the USA and elsewhere shows how important it is to guarantee rights by law. To achieve this, we will work together with many other peace organizations, diplomats, committed governments and with the help of the United Nations to create an international treaty that obliges the signatory states to include the right of veto in national legislation, similar to the Ottawa process that led to the "International ban on landmines".

Prof. Dr. Daniel Braun, founder of VetoWar

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