



Faith, power and peace – in the European Union

In brief

This year, an important event for Quakers in Britain considered the relationship between faith, power, and peace. This article addresses European Union (EU) policy in light of these considerations.

At the annual gathering of Quakers in Britain in May 2015, Diana Francis delivered the most recent of the Swarthmore Lectures, which have been given every year since 1908. The lecture was entitled *Faith, Power and Peace* and is accompanied by a book of the same name.

Diana Francis has worked as a mediator and adviser in conflicts in Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East, and parts of South East Asia and Africa. Diana's lecture rejected militarism and called for the world to embrace the power of nonviolent transformation.

QCEA works with the EU, so we are faced with the challenge of exploring the relevance of her direct, faith-based message to EU policymakers. We might ask, for example: Does the EU have the tools to transform violent conflict?

Is the European Union a peace project?

The EU has achieved more than sixty years of cooperation between its Member States. For Diana

Francis, states are units of military control, and, as such, are inimical to peace and security (*Faith, power and peace*, p. 66). In her recommendations for transformation, Diana calls for truly international structures for the cooperative exercise of shared responsibility, and for non-violent forms of dispute resolution to be everyday tools (p. 69). These are the successes of the European Union, a model for what is possible in other parts of the world which have also suffered from inter-state conflict.



Diana Francis after her Swarthmore Lecture
Photo by Trish Carn
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However, in recent years EU governments have increasingly sought to create a 'Fortress Europe'. For example, EU policymakers approach organised crime (including people trafficking, drug trafficking, and terrorism) as if they were mainly external challenges. EU policy (as directed by heads of government at the European Council) focuses on securing borders, [at the expense of addressing the root causes](#) of problems and reducing the demand for organised crime within the EU.

Today the clearest expression of the 'Fortress Europe' approach is the EU's response to [migration](#). In April, the twenty-eight EU Member State heads of government (the European Council) gathered for an emergency summit following a series of large-scale tragedies in the Mediterranean. Together, they decided that the EU will launch a military [Common Security and Defence Policy \(CSDP\) mission to destroy the boats used to traffic migrants across the Mediterranean](#).

Inside this issue:

The green economy	p. 3
Actions that follow from our beliefs	p. 6
Introducing our new Policy Volunteer	p. 7
Quaker House Diary	p. 7
An ethics of sufficiency	p. 8



"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant." – Martin Luther King Jr

In her lecture, Diana Francis argued that we cannot create isolated havens of security in Europe, and that we should not want to: "We can be safe when other people are safe with us." However, the EU has not yet invested in tools to allow this to become a reality. Diana points out the significant potential for civilian peacemakers and peacekeepers. However, whilst vast resources are available for military intervention, they are not available for non-violent tools (p. 50). She reminded us: "If all you have is a hammer, then everything looks like a nail."

Nonviolent tools

The EU funds nonviolent peacebuilding in small amounts, but, as Diana noted, "the big agenda is military business as usual". Earlier this year QCEA was joined by 17 other European peace groups to call for a reduction in military spending in Europe, and for investment in civilian peacebuilding tools. In 2013 EU Member States spent 255 billion euro on the military, whilst even the larger international peacebuilding organisations operate on budgets in the low millions. It is amazing that if EU Member States want to undertake military activity, they are able to provide multi-billion euro budgets (such as European contributions to NATO's involvement in Afghanistan), but Europe's capacity for preventative, nonviolent and humanitarian activity is very limited.

The EU could expand its use of civilian peacemakers. This would build on three existing forms of civilian peacemaking. Firstly, the EU has already deployed civilian peacemakers successfully in Georgia. For the last seven years, unarmed monitors have been building the confidence of communities living on either side of the frozen conflict line between South Ossetia and Georgia proper.

Secondly, the EU contributes some funding to international non-governmental organisations who engage directly with the causes of conflict in order to build a sustainable peace. Some of QCEA's partners in the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office network do this, including Search for Common Ground and

Nonviolent Peaceforce. They employ mainly local civilians to promote dialogue to find shared solutions to conflict, as well as providing an unarmed protective presence for civilians.

Thirdly, the EU does a limited amount to encourage the peace activists who are already present within society, for example by ensuring that EU officials meet independently with civil society in conflict-affected countries. However, much more could be done to "build the peace constituency" (p. 46). These groups take many forms, such as local women's groups which find ways to resist violence. Those within the potential

*"We can be safe when other people are safe with us."
– Diana Francis*

peace constituency often have the quietest voices and can be amongst the most vulnerable during conflict. Their goal is to achieve peace, in contrast to armed forces, arms dealers, organised criminals, and other

social, economic or political elites who often benefit from continued warfare.

Having faith in nonviolent peacebuilding

Diana Francis' message is based on decades of supporting grassroots peacebuilding. *Faith, power and peace* includes many accounts of transformation in which courageous individuals have found nonviolent ways to resist an attacker or intervene in violence. The EU could be similarly courageous.

The strong connections between EU Member State governments and the arms trade mean that the European war machine will not be easy to dismantle. It is going in the wrong direction by promoting arms production in order to create jobs in Europe. The EU is increasingly failing to meet external challenges because it does not have appropriate tools. It has many hammers, but fewer and fewer problems that are in fact nails. For example, at the early stages of the Ukraine crisis, the world failed to provide unarmed peacemakers, except in very small numbers and far too late. This was the same failure as we saw 15 years earlier in Kosovo (p. 53). Europe's resources are spent preparing for war. Diana Francis' lecture challenges us to prepare the tools for peace.

Andrew Lane

The 2015 Swarthmore Lecture is online at www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/swarthmore-2015.html

The accompanying book is available in various formats online (ISBN-13: 978-1-907123-76-4).



The green economy: more than just green growth

In brief

European Union publications frequently refer to the “green economy” but there seems to be a lack of a comprehensive definition of the term. Rather than embracing the need to transform the economy to achieve sustainability, the European Union institutions have an understanding of the green economy based on growth of GDP per capita. In practice, the green economy refers to a sub-sector of the economy. This emphasis on growing the “green sector” of the economy is problematic as it does not recognise the environmental impact of growth, green or otherwise. The move towards a circular economy may reflect recognition of the need for systematic change, but it is often championed as a way to achieve economic growth. Ultimately the European Commission needs to adopt a transformational definition of the green economy, aiming for the well-being of all people, and the planet.

A review of references to the “green economy” in European Union publications in recent years, leaves the reader confused as to what the term actually means. The [European Commission Environment website](#) comes closest to defining the “green economy”, explaining that it would be based on a model “where wealth can be created without harming the environment.” The Commission website goes on to spell out that the green economy comprises more efficient resource management, economic instruments beneficial to the environment, support for innovation, and efforts to boost sustainable consumption and production. While these priorities are certainly important, are they enough to construct a truly green economy?



Image provided by [www.StockMonkeys.com](#) under Creative Commons licence CC BY 3.0

Two years ago, QCEA published an [article seeking to define the “green economy”](#), highlighting the lack of clarity around the definition of the green economy, and noting the UN's eight separate explanations (see *Around Europe* 349). Seven of those eight definitions, like that of the European Commission above, focus on wealth creation. [The eighth](#), however, offers a more complete vision:

“The Green Economy is... a process of Transformation... [that] does away with the systematic distortions and disfunctionalities of the current mainstream economy and results in human well-being and equitable access to opportunity for all people, while safeguarding environmental and economic integrity in order to remain within the planet’s finite carrying capacity. The Economy cannot be Green without being Equitable.” (The Danish 92 Group, *Building an Equitable Green Economy*, 2012)

Rather than accepting the challenge implicit in this definition, the European Union has chosen to follow the growth-centred definitions. However, this *de facto* agreement often results in politicians using the “green economy” in a vague manner that often amounts to empty rhetoric. The biggest risk is that a growth-focussed definition of the “green economy” will lead only to a slightly greener economy, falling far short of the transformative process described above.

The green sector

In practice, the phrase “green economy” is often used loosely to refer to a certain sector (or sectors) considered to be doing “green” work within the wider economy. Likewise, green industry and green business are phrases used to refer to industry and businesses in this sector – such as renewable energy companies, insulation firms, and recycling contractors. [Green jobs](#) are jobs within these businesses, and green investment is money invested in the sector. Thus, the version of the green economy used in European Union documents is a very simple concept: a sub-sector of the wider economy.

The aim of the European Union's green economy is to [increase economic activity](#) within this green sector, which is depicted as self-evidently beneficial to both [environment and economy](#). However, this green economy seems to exist in isolation from the wider economy and environment. As the green economy grows, surely non-green sectors should shrink, at least as much as the green sector has grown, in order to



“We cannot remain honest unless we are opposed to injustice wherever it occurs, first of all in ourselves.” – Bayard Rustin

make the overall economy greener? It is clearly not possible, or useful, to abstract the green economy from the wider economy. Without the whole economy undergoing transformation, a single sector will struggle to be truly green.

The impact of growth

The current [European Commission's](#) central goal is to create jobs and growth. In this context, the desire to “green” the economy by also generating wealth in the green sector comes across as greenwashing, intentional or otherwise. Traditional wealth creation, measured by increased gross domestic product (GDP) – [green or not](#) – is based on additional production. The idea is that economic activity is stimulated by the added value that comes from the processing or sale of a product, when money changes hands. The production process behind that economic activity generates an environmental impact even if the product is environmentally friendly, as in the case of an electric vehicle or a solar panel.

[Green growth](#) is often linked to the idea of [immaterial growth](#), in which growth would come from the service and knowledge economy. But even something without direct material costs, like a service, has an impact, even if it is a [green service](#). Take, for example, a company that installs insulation. In order for the company to insulate a building, it must undertake incidental journeys, which have an environmental impact, whilst performing that service. In addition, the insulation material used will have a certain carbon footprint, and [water, land and resources](#) will have been used to produce it. Equally, the company's buildings and tools will have carbon, land, material, and water footprints, which can be considerable for something like a computer. For the insulation business to have zero environmental impact, not only would the company's work need to have no impact, but any profit coming from that work could not be spent on something with an environmental impact – be it a sofa, a solar panel or a car. This is not to say that we should never buy or use anything that has impacted

the environment, but simply to make the point that increased economic activity will always have an increased environmental impact overall.

Thus the EU's policy of encouraging investment in the green sector of the economy in order to create wealth without causing environmental damage, does not fit with the holistic vision of a green economy described above. Neither does it fit with the [European Union goal](#) to “live well, within the planet's ecological limits” by 2050. The desire for everything to feed into the European Commission's over-arching growth-and-jobs agenda, means that the need for a wider transition is overlooked. Any changes made are only plasters for an ailing system.

Without the whole economy undergoing transformation, a single sector will struggle to be truly green.

The [European Environment Agency](#) (EEA) [recently observed](#) that the unsustainable production and consumption systems which put pressure on the environment, also provide

diverse benefits, such as jobs and income. Inevitably, gaining benefits from the system results in reluctance to change that system. Growth is to some extent correlated with improved living standards, which may account for why many look for increased GDP as the catch-all indicator of social well-being. However, GDP per capita cannot adequately measure our well-being, and obscures the gap between rich and poor. There are alternative indicators, such as the [Gross National Happiness](#) (GNH) index which is based on sustainable development, the preservation of cultural values, environmental conservation, and the establishment of good governance. Another possibility is the [Genuine Progress Indicator](#) (GPI) which uses 26 indicators to consolidate economic, environmental, and social factors into a single measure. As GNH and GPI show, a number of indicators are needed to measure different aspects of the economy, environment, and society, and give us a more accurate and comprehensive picture.

Ultimately, admitting that GDP per capita often does not reflect our well-being seems to be rather more difficult than simply developing the green sector of the

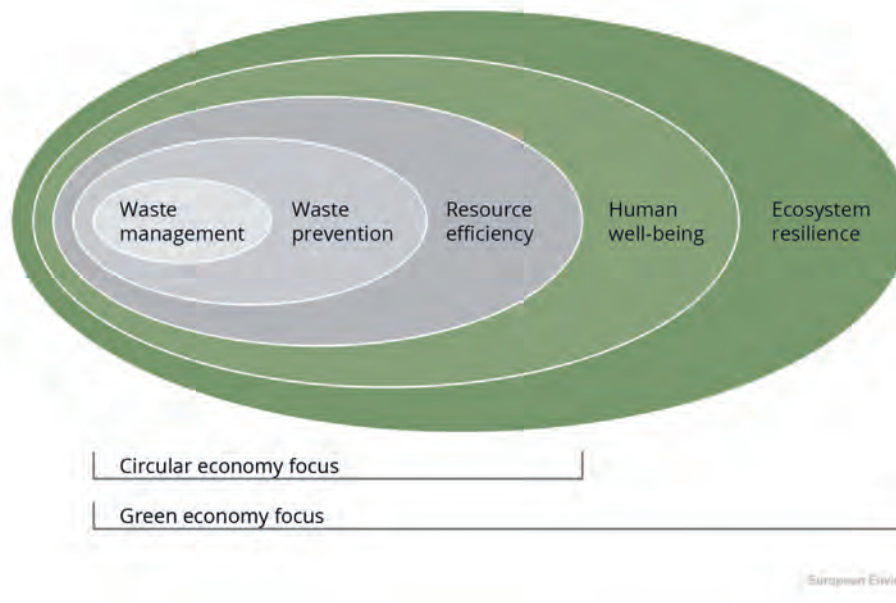


Diagram courtesy of the European Environment Agency

existing economy. Fundamental changes in our global systems may be intimidating, but they are necessary to meet the **systemic, transboundary, and long-term** environmental challenges we are facing, and for us to ensure well-being for people as well as the planet.

The green and the circular economy

The recent movement towards a circular economy, currently one of the biggest buzzwords at the EU level, perhaps reflects the recognition of a need for systems change. It is probably also stimulated by recognition that our current level of resource use, driven by the need for continual growth, cannot be sustained. Perhaps one of the great advantages of the circular economy is that it includes more concrete and practicable proposals than the nebulous green economy. However, the circular economy is a less holistic vision than the transformational definition of the green economy. The circular economy focusses on the more efficient use of materials throughout the economy, whereas the EEA defines the green economy as encompassing the circular economy as an addition to human well-being and ecosystem reliance. One of the principal arguments for the circular economy is its economic benefits. This is based on the principle that being more resource efficient will cut costs, and result in more economic growth. While this is true, economic growth should not be our main objective for improving our material management – particularly if continued

growth means that the amount of resources we use continues to increase, regardless of the use of secondary or recycled materials.

The current use of the term “green economy” amounts to a simplification at best, and green-washing at worst. To achieve its long-term vision of living well within the planet's limits the EU should adopt the transformational definition of the green economy. While the circular economy represents a significant step towards transformational change of the economy, it is necessary to ensure that increased resource efficiency does not go hand in hand with increased resource consumption. In order for the EU to have the greatest possible impact in creating a holistic green economy, across 28 Member States, it must move beyond only promoting a green sector within a wider business-as-usual economy. Instead, now is the time for the EU to embrace the green economy that “does away with... [the] systematic distortions” of the current economy, prioritising human well-being and environmental integrity above economic growth.

George Thurley

Conference

Castle or Community? Quakers' role in building the new Europe
4-6 December 2015

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“But the Lord showed me, so that I did see clearly, that He did not dwell in these temples which men had commanded and set up, but in people’s hearts....” – George Fox

Actions that follow from our beliefs

Quakers today have inherited a reputation for fair dealing and honesty thanks to Quakers in times gone by who were committed to doing right even when it was not easy. Their testimony to integrity arose from the conviction that each of us should do as she or he says; that we should take responsibility for our actions.

Of course, there are many people from all faiths, not only Quakers, who adhere to principles of honest dealing and acting in line with their values – and there are very many people of all faiths – including Quakers – who do not manage to act in accordance with their own values.

Integrity is the foundation of one of the themes in QCEA’s advocacy: we are very interested in promoting the EU doing as it says. For example, we are currently advocating for EU consumers to be able to [choose between products from the settlements built by Israel in occupied Palestine, and products from Israel.](#)

The reasoning goes as follows: [the EU does not recognize the legality of Israel’s occupation](#) of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights; [nor does it recognize the legality of the Israeli settlements being built](#) in these occupied areas. International humanitarian law outlines [important obligations](#) that any country should

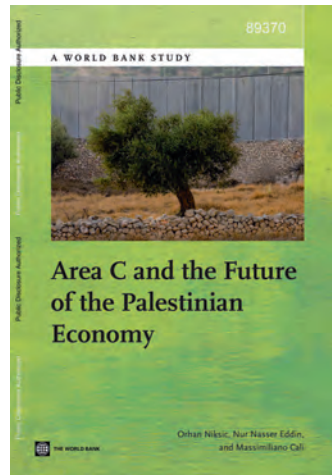
fulfil when occupying a territory. Occupying powers are prohibited from making permanent changes in infrastructure, for example, or interfering with use of natural resources. We as EU citizens should be able to choose to decline to give financial support to the occupation. For this reason, [foreign ministers of sixteen EU Member States](#) have called for the EU to

publish guidelines on the labelling of settlement products. QCEA has also recently written to a number of European Commissioners to encourage the publication of guidelines. Labelling as to product origin can be complex depending on how and where products are processed, and how distribution centres are organised. This is one reason why EU-wide guidelines would be helpful.

Such labelling guidelines would allow the EU to show integrity in at least two ways. One would be to avoid giving the

appearance of legitimacy to settlements that the EU has identified as illegal. The other would be to uphold EU standards of consumer protection by prohibiting misleading indications of origin. [The European Court of Justice made it clear in 2010](#) that products originating in the settlements are not of “Israeli origin”. Labelling guidelines of the kind proposed would help EU consumers to choose to put their values into action through the use of their purchasing power.

Alexandra Bosbeer



The World Bank has assessed the impact of economic restrictions on the future of the Palestinian economy.

Success in Strasbourg

In April we asked those of you who have signed up for QCEA Action Alerts to take action on the issue of armed drones (remote-controlled flying robots that carry weapons). We made this request in the run-up to an important debate in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

As you may recall, PACE consists of representatives of the national parliaments of 47 European countries, who meet together in Strasbourg. We are pleased to report that these national parliamentarians voted by an overwhelming majority to hold European national governments to account on the issue of armed drones.

A full report of the debate can be found online at qceablog.wordpress.com/2015/05/12/pace/

For information on how to sign up for QCEA Action Alerts, see www.qcea.org/home/involved/action-alerts/



Introducing our new Policy Volunteer



My name is Elizabeth Payne and I have a lifelong interest in issues of peace and reconciliation. I'm particularly interested in collaborative work to advocate for the peaceful transformation of conflict, and in the ways in which reconciliation processes can start to tackle root causes and build positive community relations.

In 2010 I graduated from the Peace Studies department at the University of Bradford. I went on to work as an English language teacher in Tbilisi, Georgia. Most recently I spent two years working at Corrymeela, a centre for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and in January I started working at Friends House, London. I'm volunteering here at QCEA to work on a new series of short briefing papers on the UK's place in Europe, starting with one looking at issues of peace.

QUAKER HOUSE DIARY

2 April: QCEA staff developed a model of our Theory of Change with Ali Freeman.

4-8 April: George went to Georgia for the annual spring gathering of European and Middle East Young Friends, for whom he acts as secretary.

10-11 April: The QCEA Council gathered at Quaker House Brussels for their semi-annual meeting.

18-25 April: QCEA welcomed 23 people to Brussels for the QCEA study tour, during which they visited the EU institutions and spoke with a judge at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

1-4 May: Alexandra and Andrew presented the work of QCEA at Britain Yearly Meeting in London.

22 May: Gordon attended a meeting with a Syrian Orthodox bishop from Damascus. The meeting was organised by the Conference of European Churches (CEC).

30-31 May: Alexandra joined Dutch Friends at their annual gathering, where she spoke about the work of QCEA.

Staff at QCEA: Alexandra Bosbeer, Tim Harman, Dora Klountzou Heath, Andrew Lane, Gordon Matthews, George Thurley.

Have you read QCEA's recent publications?

- *The Israeli-Palestinian conflict: what the EU can do*
- *The four guiding pillars for a circular economy*
- *Hate crime in the EU: prevention and restoration*
- *EU militarism: an update for the European Council*

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An ethics of sufficiency

One of the famous images associated with Quakers is simplicity of clothing, the famous 'Quaker grey'. Simplicity of dress and ornament served initially to avoid showing wealth and getting caught up in indications of difference in social status. This went with the refusal of men to lift their hats to their 'social betters'. In more recent times, some Quakers have come to link the tradition (or 'testimony') of simplicity with concern for sustainability.

It is clear that unnecessary consumption is part of the reason why we are exhausting the earth's resources at a rapid speed. We humans quite like our luxury; even small changes that don't stretch our patience are not attractive. How many of us have taken to wearing warmer clothes indoors and turning down the central heating? We don't like our earth's atmosphere being altered by the effects of our fuel use, but still simplicity has not become popular. It is so very hard for us these days to separate necessity from luxury: we all need shelter, but how much space does one person need? We all need food, but how much and what kind?

One interesting concern regarding free trade with the US (and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, TTIP) is expressed in the [Opinion of the European Parliament Committee on the Environment](#),

[Public Health and Food Safety](#) reported to the International Trade Committee. The report notes that increased direct investment in food companies is associated with increasing diet-related health problems. The removal of trade barriers regarding local food production, may affect our public health. We risk putting profit before life. Surely this indicates that our focus on profit-making is carrying us along the wrong path!

A recent lecture by German theologian Margot Kässmann brought up some interesting points for reflection. As she put it, we do have to work with money; the question is, how do we work with money? In what do we put our trust? Margot Kässmann postulates that what we need is **an ethics of sufficiency**.

It is time to question the assumptions in our economic model. The economic crisis indicates that there are major flaws in our current system. Economic disparity between rich and poor is growing: inequality is one of the drivers of social conflict. Surely 'more of the same' will not bring us to greater economic equality. Surely a crisis provides an excellent opportunity to analyse the causes of problems and find solutions.

Alexandra Bosbeer

Coming soon.... As the UK prepares for a referendum on its EU membership, QCEA will be producing a new series of short briefing papers on the UK's place in Europe. All new briefing papers will be published at www.qcea.org.



Around Europe

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