

Europe as a force for peace: From the peace movement at the beginning of the 20th century to the role of the EU in international crisis prevention

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At the beginning of the 20th century, the bourgeois and socialist peace movements pursued different strategies to avert the threat of war. These included education about the reality of modern warfare, strengthening international law, mobilising opposition to war on ethical grounds, and appealing to workers' solidarity as a buttress against capitalism and militarism. All of these endeavours failed in the first half of the 20th century with the catastrophes of the two world wars. However, key positions of these unsuccessful war prevention strategies as they were discussed at the Basel Congress survived, becoming part of the European political culture in the second half of the century. The initial aim of the European project was to bring economic benefits. On the way to the European Union, it gradually developed into a principle of conflict prevention and the peaceful balance of interests. The EU enlargement processes attest to the appeal of this principle. With the bloody Balkan wars of the 1990s, a tragic failure of European policy once again became the point of departure for new learning processes. The experience of the indispensability of a forward-looking policy of peace and crisis prevention carried over to the strategies with which 'Europe as a force for peace' increasingly assumed responsibility outside Europe and in global issues at the turn of the century.