## SECURITY AND VULNERABILITY
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Being in Germany, I will start by a strophe from Hölderlin's "An die Deutschen."

Oder kömmt, wie der Strahl aus dem Gewölke kömmt,
Aus Gedanken die Tat?

Or does it come, like lightning comes from the clouds,
From thoughts the deed?



Heinrich Heine, the early historian of German thought, probably using Hölderlin's poem as his point of departure, takes this image one step further: "The thought comes before the deed, like the lightning before the thunder."

Heine's image is the clearest, I think: The idea, the conceptualization, the spark that surprisingly and suddenly lights up a whole terrain that used to lie in darkness, necessarily precedes the work that has to be done in that area. In order to do a coherent work, to act responsibly and with a clear purpose, we will have to apprehend, to seize in one comprehensive grasp or concept the challenges, the values, and the main strategy in order to take on these challenges. If lightning is this conceptualization, and the thunder represents the rolling out of the strategy, then the lightning will have to precede the thunder.

The concept of the Responsibility to Protect, the R2P, taking the equal worth of all humans as its basic value, and connecting the legitimacy of the sovereign state to the protection of concrete humans, is such a flash. The P2R illuminates the problem area of how and when to use international force in order to meet the grave and troubling challenges that arise when states are no longer willing or able to protect their populations from dangers of eradication.

The Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) "The Responsibility to Protect," was published in December, 2001. Almost six years later, on United Nations Day, October 24, 2007, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated: "I will work with Member States and civil society to translate the concept of the responsibility to protect *from word to deed*, so as to ensure timely action when populations face genocide, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity."

Six years, and we are still counting the seconds from lightning to thunder, from words to deed, from the concept to its becoming operational. The distance covered till this day, however, has not been characterized by darkness. The great shadow from the so-called War against Terrorism almost over-shadowed the clear light that broke through when the R2P document was issued at the end of that fatal year 2001. It is a sign of the strength of the R2P conceptualization that it has been able to make its way through. Its application in the *High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change* in 2004, and its partial application in the World Summit Outcome Document the following year, and not at least the increasing use of the concept in statements from

governments, organizations, political scientists, the UN General Secretary, and also the Security Council, all these are signs of a slow but necessary development of a necessary re-conceptualization of global security politics. Words are slowly being transformed to deeds. Gradually, R2P is becoming operational. Whatever our starting point is, we have to support the international community when it acts with a clear purpose to protect endangered populations.

So, what is the role of the churches in this development? This, we will have to discuss the coming days. My contribution will be to introduce yet another conceptualization process, a process that happened at the same time as the R2P process, but on a much smaller scale. In year 2000, the Commission of International Affairs in Church of Norway issued a small booklet called "Vulnerability and Security." It was meant as a resource document for the Church in its dealings with questions concerning so-called "humanitarian interventions." In the preparations for the study, we found it necessary to look into the ruling security-concept. More specifically, we had to ask the question: "How do we understand human security?" In this way we connected our work with the important work that had been going on all through the 90s with regard to balancing state security with human security in high politics. It should be noted that this work on human security from the 90s, led by small and medium sized powers (e.g. Canada, South Africa, Slovenia, Norway, and Thailand), also represents the maybe most important precondition for the R2P process.

The part of V&S working on the security-concept became the most important part of the booklet, and we found that it was applicable not only to questions around humanitarian interventions, but to questions ranging from the raising of children, social justice, the understanding of baptism, to the so-called "War on Terror." The document, which was translated into English in 2001, in fact, played an important role in the resistance that Church of Norway put up against the war against Iraq. When the ideas of "Vulnerability and Security" in this consultation again are brought to bear on questions relating to intervening in sovereign states for humanitarian reasons, these ideas are somehow coming home.

The idea carrying the argument in "Vulnerability and Security" is a very simple one and it is not original. What it says is that security and vulnerability are not opposites. To be secure in a human sense is not the same as being invulnerable. To be invulnerable would in fact mean to be inhuman. Vulnerability is, as a matter of fact, a more fundamental, general, and shared characteristic of being human, than security. Security arises, and here a certain influence from the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas can be ascertained, as an ethical and political demand when encountering human vulnerability, my own vulnerability, our shared vulnerability, and the vulnerability of the other person. If then vulnerability then belongs to the essence of being human, as the precondition not only of being hurt, but more essentially as the possibility to be loved and taken care of, security can not mean the eradication of vulnerability, it would have to mean protection of vulnerable human beings.

This leads to four immediate consequences that I hope will be able to inform our discussions:

1. The vulnerability of the other human lies at the bottom of the legitimacy of political authority. The origin of political power, authority and sovereignty is the right and responsibility to protect the vulnerable other. This anchoring of political authority also sets limits to its tools and ways of execution.
2. The responsibility to protect is not to delete human vulnerability, but to protect indelibly vulnerable humans from the abuse of their vulnerability. Any politics that has as its only goal simply to remove human vulnerability is at the same time reducing the humanity of the human. The dream of invulnerability is a dangerous dream that can very soon turn into a

nightmare. A politics following the dream of invulnerability stands at the risk of reaching the opposite of its intentions: rather than establishing security, it risks making human interaction colder, harder and more violent.

3. The third consequence is that the right to protection is asymmetrically distributed. As vulnerability and the misuse of this vulnerability are not equally distributed, so is neither the right to protection. The right to protection resides primarily with the ones who are threatened the most.

4. The fourth and positive consequence is that the indelibility of vulnerability is not a lamentable fact, but the basic precondition of a good and meaningful life – of joy, proximity and community. It means the possibility of openness to the surroundings, to nature, to fellow human beings, and some would say, to God.

The question now becomes how this informs us with regard to the concrete role of the churches in the process leading to the full implementation of re-conceptualization and becoming operational of a comprehensive security politics built on R2P. Let us resume what R2P means: It means the implementation of an approach that both secures the integrity of all states, and which at the same time binds their legitimacy to the responsibility to protect their populations, and, it gives the international community the right to intervene, in extreme situations even with military force, when states show themselves as either unwilling or unable to carry out this responsibility. It should be noted that it is assumed that the implementation of P2R principles would lead not to more, but to less use of military force than what has been the case since the end of the cold war.

The conceptualization of the same problem area in "Vulnerability and Security" could enhance the role of the churches in the following ways, and because of the time limit, I will have to limit myself to only give general points.

1. "Vulnerability and Security" reconnects these issues to basic theological points. This gives the engagement of the churches in these questions a specific theological foundation. Put pointedly: The mystery of the concurrence of power and powerlessness on the cross is transferred to the human level, i.e. as the mystery of human vulnerability as a precondition for, and not as the opposite of, human security. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 27-28: "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are."

2. Added to that, and at the same time, I will claim that the approach in "V&S" builds on a general and shared human experience. It constitutes a phenomenological and generally recognizable approach, were some of the deepest and most fundamental characteristics of human life can be used as a point of departure. We all have experiences of how the encounter with vulnerability, in ourselves, in others, of a child, of someone whose hopes are crushed, bring us closer to responsibility and truth.

3. V&S gives support to the social and political engagement of the churches on the local, national, and global levels. It represents an argument that supports the foundation of the legitimacy of political authority on its responsibility to protect human beings. On this point R2P and V&S are in close agreement. As I have already pointed out, the origin and legitimacy of political power, authority and sovereignty rest in the right and responsibility to protect the vulnerable other.

4. Finally, V&S makes up an approach that supports the conceptual framework of R2P from all these angles mentioned; from the general and shared experiences of human life, from the core teachings of the gospel, and from the legitimacy of good governance. From an ethical viewpoint, the use of force today, including that of military force, appears arbitrary. It looks as it is only by chance that the might of the strongest sometimes is

counterbalanced by the rights of the powerless. V&S constitutes a re-conceptualization that can place these rights on a theological, phenomenological, ethical, and political basis. In this way it goes a long way to provide the churches with a faith-based and conceptual foundation for their engagement in the R2P process.

The misguided so-called War on Terror has put many important developments in suspense, including the R2P, which the V&S supports. There are now, not at least with the US elections coming closer, signs and hopes that this suspense will be substituted by a period of great opportunities. The churches should therefore continue their work, placing it inside comprehensive frameworks. There was truth in those clouds that ignited the initial lightning. Let us be prepared to take on the challenges as the thunder rolls in:

"The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook." (Psalm 77,18)