

The Lisbon Treaty and the militarisation of the European Union

The military agenda of the European Union is advanced by a number of new and significant developments in the Lisbon Treaty/EU Constitution.

The EU President and Minister for Foreign Affairs

It creates the post of EU President, who can serve a five year term who will preside over the EU Summits. The current situation of each EU state, presiding over EU summits for a six month period is terminated. The EU President will, in effect, be the public face of the EU, the Leader of the EU to the outside world. The President will be assisted by an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs called the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The new EU Minister for Foreign Affairs will preside over a new EU Department of Foreign Affairs called the European External Action Service which will grow from hundreds to thousands of EU civil servants. The new EU Minister for Foreign and Security Policy shall preside over the meetings of the EU Foreign Affairs Ministers and will in effect be superior to the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the individual states. The new EU Minister for Foreign Affairs and Security will also be a Vice-President of the EU Commission and may be assuming a major role in the trade and development aspects of EU Foreign policy as well as security.

If the EU defines a common position on a particular foreign policy matter, the EU member states sitting on the Security Council of the United Nations shall request the new EU Minister for Foreign Affairs to present the EU's position to the Security Council. Since only sovereign states are represented at the UN this is a significant indication of the vision of the future of the EU.

Member states of the EU shall be legally obliged to support the EU's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall comply with the EU's action in these areas.

The new EU Minister shall be not only responsible for the EU's Foreign, Security and Defence Policy (defence is the nice word for war) but shall be assisted in pursuing that role by also having the European Defence Agency and the EU Battle Groups to implement the policy.

Common Defence & Solidarity

There is also a clear determination to transform a common defence policy into an actual common defence as article 28A(2) states; "The common security and defence policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides."

The new Mutual Defence and Solidarity Clauses are significant in that regard and are mutual defence clauses equivalent to those of the nuclear armed military alliances of NATO and the Western European Union.

The Rapporteur to the Foreign Affairs Committee on the Treaty of Lisbon in the EU Parliament, Andrew Duff MEP is a person who should know. In a letter he wrote to the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the EU Parliament on January 9, 2008, he proposed that the nuclear armed military alliance, the Western European Union be dissolved if the Lisbon Treaty was passed as the only surviving objective of the WEU which was to afford assistance to each other in resisting any policy of aggression, also known as collective self-defence was covered by Article 28 A(7) of the Lisbon Treaty thus taking the final step of transferring its last remaining function, that of collective self-defence to the EU.

That this is the case is clear by simply reading Article 28 A(7) which states:

"If a member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all means in their power, in accordance with Art.51 of the UN Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States. Commitments in this area shall be consistent with commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty, which, for those states which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence

and the forum for its implementation”

The EU has devised a mutual self-defence clause which NATO states say is consistent with and in cooperation with their commitments within the forum of NATO. States that are in the EU and not in NATO are left with a meaningless phrase of, “specific character” which in Ireland’s case includes refusing to search planes landing on Irish soil that could be carrying prisoners to torture chambers, and allowing US planes land in Shannon Airport carrying thousands and thousands of US troops to their Imperial wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq in total violation of international law as outlined in Hague Convention of 1907 which states the duties and responsibilities of a State that wishes to be regarded as neutral which includes the specific provision that such a State should not allow its territory to be so used.

Article 188R is also an issue for the Irish people. It states:

“The Union and its Member states shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or is the victim of a natural or man-made disaster. The Union shall mobilise all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States, to:

- a) prevent the terrorist threat in the territory of the Member States; protect democratic institutions and the civilian population from terrorist attack; assist a Member State in its territory at the request of its political authorities in the event of a terrorist attack;
- b) assist a Member State in its territory at the request of its political authorities in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.”

This is a very broad mandate for it covers the threat of terrorism as well as an actual terrorist attack, leaving the way open for pre-emptive military actions. Does preventing a terrorist attack include attacking a country outside the EU that is believed to be harbouring terrorists? How are terrorists defined? Are terrorists to be defined as anti-war protestors?

EU Battle Groups & their Tasks

To fight these “terrorists” and other enemies, the EU has long sought to create its own military force. In December 1999 the leaders of the EU agreed to establish its own military force, a 60,000 strong force capable of being deployed outside the borders of the EU within 60 days called the European Rapid Reaction Force. By 2003 it had become clear that because there were major capability gaps they decided to establish smaller EU military units called EU Battle Groups, which were 1,500-2,500 sized military units capable of fighting small wars and able to go anywhere in the world within 5-10 days. The EU Battle Groups were to complement the similar NATO Response forces. They have now created about 15 such EU Battle Groups. An indication of the real size of the force can be estimated by the fact that each soldier in the field of battle needs a back up of 7-9 soldiers. The military tasks of these EU Battle Groups are outlined in the Petersberg Tasks outlined in previous EU Treaties which already allowed them to go to war. The tasks which included humanitarian, peace-keeping and peace-making (i.e. war-making) are to be expanded by the Lisbon Treaty to include joint disarmament operations, military advice and assistance tasks to other countries, all of which “contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting Third Countries in combating terrorism in their territories”. The EU based International Security Information Service publication European Security Review published in July 2004 stated that such joint operations’ “could include anything from providing personal security to UN inspectors to full scale invasions”.

The EU & NATO

The process of the militarisation of the EU as is stated in the Lisbon Treaty is expected to: “contribute to the vitality of a renewed Atlantic Alliance, in accordance with the Berlin Plus arrangements”. The Berlin Plus arrangements are the agreement by which the EU and NATO share their military resources. Just exactly why the people of an allegedly “neutral” country should be expected to sign up to a treaty that explicitly seeks to contribute to the vitality of a nuclear armed military alliance is not an unreasonable question. The only real answer is that the political/media caste in Ireland do not support Irish Neutrality and do want to revitalise a nuclear armed military alliance

One of the key reasons given by President Sarkozy in his decision to ensure France joined the NATO military structures was to ensure the acceleration of the process of the militarisation of the European Union. President Sarkozy made it clear that the Irish people would have to be forced to vote again last year.

The Irish people will also be expected to pay towards the militarisation of the EU by contributing to a military fund. As well as paying according to a GNP scale for operations that have a military dimension. The EU Council can also decide to add military costs to the EU budget. Not surprising as Ireland and all other states will have a legal obligation to progressively improve their military capacity.

The European Defence Agency

Core to that military capacity is the European Defence Agency. The Lisbon Treaty formally legalises this institution which has already established with an initial budget of €20 million and Chaired by Mr. Solana, the EU Minister for Foreign Security and Defence. The role of the EU arms manufacturing industry in its formation is documented in Ben Hayes pamphlet: Arming Big Brother.

Ireland joined the European Defence Agency in 2004 as a consequence of a decision of the Irish Government. It was not even discussed in the Dail (the Irish Parliament).

Mr. Nick Whitney the then CEO of the EPA told a meeting in Dublin in 2005 of the benefits of Irish membership of the EDA which would allow Ireland electronic sector to gain market share of the arms industry. Irish firms now provide component parts to the US drones used to bomb wedding feasts in Afghanistan in the US/EU/NATO's use of state terrorism in order to extend their military domination of the region.

In November 2007 at a meeting of EU Defence Ministers the EDA's annual budget was increased by 33% so that the EU military could be improved. At the meeting Javier Solana stated:

“It was an absolute requirement for us (the EU) to spend more, spend better, and spend more together”

Next time some intellectual mercenary claims the EDA is about pending less money on weapons, an idea which is continually repeated by the Irish Corporate Media, just quote Mr. Solana.

The EDA own long term vision statement released in 2006 stated:

“Today, Europe retains a widely capable defence technological and industrial base (DTBI). But the prognosis is not encouraging.

If Europe is to preserve a broadly based and globally competitive DTIB it must take to heart the fact that the US is outspending Europe six to one in defence R&D; that it devotes some 35% of its defence expenditure to investment as against the European level of about 20%; and that it is increasingly dominant in the global export market.

In short, the EDA is about increasing military expenditure to compete more effectively with the US in the global arms market.

Enhanced cooperation

Enhanced cooperation is a mechanism which allows a group of member states with the EU structures forge ahead in an aspect of EU development that other states may not wish to join, such as the Euro. Up to the Nice Treaty this did not apply to defence matters.

The Lisbon Treaty changes that and the article which excluded enhanced cooperation in the field of defence is dropped and member states may establish Structured Cooperation among themselves on military matters, especially those that have the military capability to fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to each other with a view to the most demanding military missions. President Sarkozy has called for the six largest states form such a structured cooperation group and agree to spend more money on weapons and create a separate army. A state of the EU that did not wish to join could not stop one being created. Once such a military group was established the use of its military force would be subject to unanimity only be the states that are in group. The EU Council of Ministers can entrust the implementation of a Petersberg Task. If such a military group undertakes a Petersberg task it shall do so in accordance with the principle of a single set of forces, that is an Army.

There can be no doubt that the Irish political/media elite that constantly state that they want Ireland to be at the “heart of Europe” will seek to ensure that Ireland becomes a member of this military structured cooperation group which in plain speech means a European Army.

The Peace & Neutrality Alliance

The Peace & Neutrality Alliance is a broad based alliance, advocating that Ireland should have its own Independent Foreign Policy and that neutrality should be restored as a key component of that policy which should be pursued through a reformed United Nations.

Established in 1996 while open to individual members it is primarily an alliance of groups from political parties like the Green Party and Sinn Fein, trade unions like Unite and TSSA, peace groups like Irish CND and Pax Christi and solidarity groups like the Latin American Solidarity Group.

It was established because we were convinced that the Irish political/media elite intended to support the transformation of the EU into a centralised militarised neo-liberal superstate by destroying the power of the national democracies of the states of the EU

and transferring power to the EU institutions in which they, unencumbered by national democratic controls could rule.

Our first campaign was against the Amsterdam Treaty, and we were the only broad based group to campaign for a no vote. We sought a new treaty that would include a Protocol similar that already achieved by the Danish people that would exclude Ireland from the militarisation of the EU. We adopted a similar position in our campaigns against the Nice and Lisbon Treaties.

However in 2004 in preparation for then coming referendum on the EU Constitution PANA organised a major conference with brought together all the progressive forces that were intending to campaign for a no vote on the basis of the neo-liberal agenda and lack of democracy that are were at the heart of the EU Constitution out of which grew the Campaign Against the EU Constitution. PANA operated within the structures of CAECU during the campaign.

CAECU/PANA played a crucial role in defeating the Lisbon Treaty which campaigned as a group while at the same time all the affiliated groups organised their own campaigns. The combined effort was far more effective than any other grouping that campaigned for a no vote such as Libertas.

The sovereign will of the Irish people has been rejected by the Irish political elite and their bosses in the EU elite. They now intend to force the Irish people to vote again on exactly the same treaty and doing so in the year that marks the 90th anniversary of the foundation of the Irish Republic in the autumn.

Their core message is that the massive economic and social crisis for which they, the advocates of a yes vote, are directly responsible will get a great deal worse if we do not vote yes. Since the no vote there has been no debate on the treaty, only a constant demand for a 2nd vote in the corporate media with dire threats to the people if they do not surrender.

We can win the 2nd referendum only if it becomes a European battle fought on Irish soil.

We can win it only if all those people and political forces who believe in democracy give substantial support to those of us in Ireland who are committed to the sovereign will of the Irish people. A 2nd victory by the Irish people will be a major defeat for the Imperialists. It will allow all democrats throughout the EU to build a Partnership Europe of Independent Democratic States, legal equals without a military dimension.

Make this 2nd Battle of Lisbon your battle. A victory will not be a victory just for the Irish people; it will be a victory for all the people of Europe.

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