

Comment :

A CALL TO VOTE NO AGAINST THE MILITARISTIC TREATY OF LISBON



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The Treaty of Lisbon (also known as the Reform Treaty) was signed on December 13, 2007.¹ When ratified, this treaty will fundamentally alter the way the European Union works, especially in the area of the so called Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which will then become even more aggressive and militaristic.

The document, which has been hammered out in an extremely undemocratic way, is scheduled to be ratified in all Member States by the end of 2008. Therefore, as this article lays out, all progressive forces interested in a democratic and peaceful European Union are looking forward to the referendum in Ireland on the 12th of June, hoping that the population will forcefully reject this militaristic treaty.

UNDEMOCRATIC: CHANGING THE EUROPEAN UNION BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

The forerunner of the Treaty of Lisbon was the European Constitution which had been rejected by the populations of France and the Netherlands in 2005. After much disorientation on how to proceed, the German EU Council Presidency took the initiative in the

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first half of 2007. The final Reform Treaty was concluded behind closed doors in the summer and finally signed in December 2007 while the European public had absolutely no say in this process.

But this “new” Treaty of Lisbon is largely congruent with the European Constitution, as for example the former Irish prime minister Bertie Ahern made perfectly clear: “I think all the changes that we’ve made are all changes for the worse but thankfully they haven’t changed the substance - 90 per cent of it is still there.”

As the population in France and the Netherlands will not be asked once again, this is a heavily undemocratic way to ignore the referendums in 2005. Until May 8, 2008, thirteen countries had already concluded ratification, most of them without even having a consolidated version of the treaty, assembling the whole text in one document. Such a version - which would have been a prerequisite for anyone except the technocrats in Brussels and the responsible delegates of the national governments to be able to read the document - was not available before April 15, 2008. One can scarcely imagine a more direct way of

signalling to the European public that no discussion is desired. So Ireland will be the only country where the population has the option to say No to this undemocratic and militaristic treaty!

MILITARISM VIA TREATY

Over the last several years, the European Union embarked on a process of rapid militarization. The first major step in this context was the decision in 1999 to create a rapid reaction force of up to 60,000 soldiers on the field. This army was declared partially combat-ready in 2003. In addition to those troops, in the same year, the decision was taken to build up so called Battle Groups, highly flexible units consisting of 1500 soldiers each. The first of the 22 planned Battle Groups has been declared operational in 2007.

In 2003, the first European missions within the context of the CFSP took place: Concordia in Macedonia and Artemis in Congo and in December 2004 the mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Althea) has been taken over from NATO. Since then the European Union sends its troops ever more frequently into missions around the world: Up to now, more than 20 such missions have taken place, most recently in Chad, Guinea-Bissau and in Kosovo.

So, the militarization of the European Union is already proceeding with “lightning speed” (Javier Solana). But this process will gain another great boost with the Treaty of Lisbon because all the military aspects already previously criticised in the European Constitution have also been transferred into the Lisbon Treaty. The central points of the criticism were and still are:

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a) World-wide EU combat missions with an almost unlimited range of tasks

Article 43 (1) names among others “joint disarmament operations”, “tasks of combat forces in crisis management” and “post-conflict stabilisation” as well as “supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their countries” as potential tasks for future wars of the European Union, thereby substantially enlarging the range of possible military missions.

In order to conduct these wars, the Reform Treaty details the tasks of the Battle Groups in Protocol 10 (1b) where they are defined as units “either at national level or as a component of multinational force groups, targeted combat units for the missions planned, structured at a tactical level as a battle group, with support elements including transport and logistics, capable of carrying out the tasks referred to in Article 43 of the Treaty on European Union, within a period of five to 30 days, in particular in response to requests from the United Nations

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Organisation, and which can be sustained for an initial period of 30 days and be extended up to at least 120 days.”

b) Solidarity Clause: Europe as a military alliance acting within its territory

With article 222 (1), the Treaty introduces a so called Solidarity Clause obliging all member states to come to the assistance of any member state subject to a terrorist threat or attack by all means necessary, including military ones. Thereby, the European Union is turning into a military alliance. Furthermore, the solidarity clause for the first time opens the door for using the military within the territory of the European Union.

c) Collaborating with NATO: de-neutralizing the neutrals

The preamble to Protocol 10 calls for a more assertive role of the European Union in security and defence matters in order to “contribute to the vitality of a renewed Atlantic Alliance.” Furthermore, Protocol 11 underscores that “the policy of the Union [...] shall respect the obligations of certain Member States, which see their common defence realised in NATO, under the North Atlantic Treaty and be compatible with the common security and defence policy established within that framework.”

As Susan George pointed out, this will have serious implications for the neutral states such as Ireland: “There is a special Protocol which makes clear that the European Union will never have a security policy that is different from NATO. That to me is very worrying; signing on to the policies of NATO which we don’t know will be in the future.”ⁱⁱⁱ So the fact is that the militarization of the European Union goes on with this treaty and the treaty brings the EU closer to NATO.

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d) Armament obligation by Treaty

Article 42 (3) contains the - up to now inconceivable - obligation to invest more money in the armament sector: "Member states shall undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities." The European Defence Agency, which was established in 2004, is tasked by the Treaty of Lisbon to supervise the observance for this instruction.

Moreover, according to the treaty (Article 45), the European Defence Agency is tasked to "support defence technology research" as well as to "contribute to identifying and, if necessary, implementing any useful measure for strengthening the industrial and technological base of the defence sector."

e) Final institution of an own EU military budget

The currently valid Nice Treaty prohibits the institution of an EU military budget. This has up to now proved to be a considerable impediment for Europe's militarists. Therefore, the Lisbon Treaty (Article 41) for the first time opens the door to establishing a defence budget, called "start-up fund". The European Parliament will have no control over this budget. To make it clear: Should the treaty be ratified, then this will be the first time that the EU budget can be used for military purposes.

f) No parliamentary or juridical control option of EU interventions

Only the heads of state and government can decide to undertake EU combat missions. The European Parliament in the Lisbon Treaty has only the right to be "heard" and "briefed" (Article 36), it may not participate in the decision. Since the European Court of Justice (Article 275) also has no influence in this area, the separation of powers in this decisive question of war and peace is de facto eliminated.

POWER SHIFT FROM THE SMALLER TO THE STRONGER STATES

The Treaty of Lisbon will dramatically change the distribution of power within the European Union in favour of the big countries. For this purpose,



two aspects of the treaty are of utmost importance.

First, member states who are willing and militarily capable to build an avant-garde group within the realm of the CFSP, are enabled by the Lisbon Treaty to establish a so called "permanent structured cooperation" leaving all others behind closed doors. Thereby, the consensus principle currently holding for this area can be leveraged out: "Unanimity shall be constituted by the votes of the representatives of the participating Member States only" (Article 46). As Protocol 10 clarifies that only those Member States which are participating in the main European equipment programmes and contributing Battle Groups to combat missions are allowed to enter this exclusive club, countries unwilling to pursue these policies could end up being completely sidelined in most parts of the European security policy.

The second major "innovation" in this context is the introduction of double majority voting in the most important EU body, the Council of the Heads of State and Government. Thereby, Germany will nearly double its share of vote in the Council from 8.4% to 16.73% (the other winners are France, Great Britain and Italy) while all other states will significantly lose influence. The Lisbon Treaty (Article 9C) is aimed to introduce this dramatic power shift as normal practice starting in 2014.

CONCLUSION

It is in light of the dramatic effects that the Treaty of Lisbon would have on the further militarization of the

European Union, that the progressive forces all over the continent are hoping that the Irish population will reject this treaty.

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Footnotes

iii Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union, Brussels, 15 April 2008, 6655/08. References in the text are referring to this version document.

iv Purcell, Bernard: Ahern makes light of latest concessions on EU treaty, *The Independent*, 24.06.2007.

v Treaty of Lisbon changes to the EU institutions - Good or bad for small Member States?, URL:

<http://www.forumoneurope.ie/index.asp?locID=366&docID=1599>

i Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union, Brussels, 15 April 2008, 6655/08. References in the text are referring to this version document.

ii Purcell, Bernard: Ahern makes light of latest concessions on EU treaty, *The Independent*, 24.06.2007.

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