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Neoliberal Globalisation and the Militarization of the European Union

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First, I would like to thank the KME for the invitation to take part in this conference. My presentation will focus on the military aspects of the European constitution. Furthermore, I will try to put them into the larger context of the military strategy of the European Union in the age of globalisation.

Yesterday, on October the 29th, the heads of the governments of the European Union gathered to sign the European constitution. In my opinion this constitution is a cornerstone on the path to the further militarization of the European Union.

Let's never forget the undemocratic formation of this European constitution. It was prepared by a so-called "convention" whose members were in no way elected or chosen by parliament but by the European Council. This is the constitution of the Europe of the governments, the companies and of the armies, it does not represent the social, plural and pacifist Europe we want!

Until 2009, all member countries have to approve the draft. But in some countries – especially in Ireland and Great Britain - where a national referendum has to accept the constitution, it is far from certain that the population will do so.

**SO WE STILL HAVE 5 YEARS LEFT TO
FIGHT AGAINST IT!**

The path to the Militarization of the European Union

At first, we should get straight that the militarization of the European Union has started many years ago. It gained a big boost in 1999 when the European governments agreed on creating a rapid reaction force of up to 60.000 soldiers in the field. The initial scope of this troop which shall be ready for use within 60 days was 4.000 km round Brussels. This army has been declared partially combat-ready in 2003.

Since the year 2000, a European Military Staff, a European Military Council as well as an autonomous European Headquarter to prepare for current and future European wars have been established.

In 2003, the first European combat-missions already took place: Concordia in Macedonia, Artemis in Congo and in December the Althea-mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina will take over NATO's role.

Especially the mission in Congo is highly interesting because of two aspects: First, Congo is more than 4.000 km away from Brussels. Therefore the original - and not very restricted - scope of the European forces has finally been rebuffed, underscoring Europe's ambitions to act as a global military player. Second, it was the first combat-mission being undertaken completely autonomous from NATO-assets and therefore from the United States which emphasizes the aspirations to act independently from Washington if interests clash.

So we already have travelled a long way on the road to a militarised European Union which will be further accelerated by the provisions in the constitution. So let's look at them a little bit more in detail.

Details of the Constitutional Draft

1. A Commitment to Armament is integral part of the constitution (by my knowledge a unique provision in a constitution).

The Member states, the constitution says, have to commit themselves to "Progressively Improve Their Military Capabilities." To enforce this demand, the constitution calls for the establishment of a "European Armament Research and Military Capabilities Agency," which has been already installed. According to the Constitution the agency's task is to "Take any measures needed to strengthen the military capabilities and to assist the Council of Ministers in evaluating the improvement of military capabilities." In some sort of Orwellian newspeak the agency has been renamed into "European Defence Agency" but nevertheless, its mission clearly is to speed up expenditures for military equipment and to enforce higher military budgets. This is particularly troubling in light of the parallel massive reductions in social security contributions across Europe.

2. Worldwide combat-missions

In the future, the European Constitution envisions the possibility that European Troops will be used in "crisis management", especially in the context of the so-called "war on terrorism". That could also mean supporting third countries to fight terrorists on their territories. This is an extremely broad mandate, you could call it a "free ride" to intervene in a Civil War on behalf of one side or the other. Additionally, as was underscored by the mission in Congo, the constitution offers NO LIMITATIONS for the territorial scope of European military operations.

3. The Question of war or peace will be decided by the executive branch

The Constitution says that only the European Council is responsible for military policy. The European Parliament has no part in the deci-

sion process. In the draft, we find the recommendation that the European Parliament should be consulted on the main aspects of military policy and that it should be "kept informed." So the leaders of Europe will be able to send troops into combat-missions without any democratic control in the crucial question of war or peace.

4. Manifestation of Core Europe

The constitution allows individual Member states to establish a so-called "structured cooperation" or "Closer Military Cooperation" to engage in combat-missions. Joschka Fischer, the German secretary of state, calls this closer military cooperation an "AVANTGARD EUROPE" but the term "Core Europe" seems more accurate!

Up to now it is totally unclear how such a Closer Military Cooperation could be slowed down or blocked by other member countries if they oppose the usage of European military assets for specific combat-missions. For those European countries who are officially still "neutral" this is surely a very problematic aspect.

Core Europe is already manifest in the decision of April 2004 to create so-called European battlegroups. They will constitute Europe's military avantgarde, being deployable on short notice and consisting of about 1.500 elite soldiers. The crucial aspect is, that currently it is planned that they will be exclusively composed of troops from Germany, France and Great Britain. Other countries that wanted to take part – Poland for example – where clearly signalled that this is an exclusive project of the big ones in Europe.

These battlegroups are designed for rapid-reaction combat missions especially in Africa and are the direct result of a general strategy laid down in the other central document dealing with the militarization of the European Union: The European Security Strategy (ESS) which has been adopted by the European Council in December 2003. Since then, it is the most important strategy document guiding European foreign and military policy.

The European Security Strategy

Although the American doctrine of preventive war laid out by the Bush-doctrine and officially put forward in the American National Security Strategy (NSS) has been heavily criticized by many European countries, we can hardly find any meaningful differences in its European counterpart. It primarily deals with Europe's role in the world and how to deal with the threats of the 21st century.

At first the document underscores Europe's ambition to act as a global heavyweight:

"As a union of 25 states with over 450 million people producing a quarter of the world's Gross National Product (GNP), the European Union is inevitably a global player."

Beyond the obligatory danger of an interruption of energy supplies, the prime threats for Europe, the document says, are coming from a mutual reinforcing triad consisting of

- 1) Terrorism
- 2) The Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- 3) The failure of state systems

Interestingly the ESS puts these threats in a direct context to capitalist globalisation:

"In an era of globalisation, distant threats may be as much a concern as those that are near at hand...The first line of defence will be often be abroad. The new threats are dynamic... Conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early."

In addition, the document also makes perfectly clear that the military will be the prime instrument to deal with these threats. Therefore, similar to its American counterpart, the EU has definitely adopted a strategy of preventive war!

The ESS also demands more "flexible" and "mobile" forces which is reflected in the already undertaken decision to build up the European battlegroups.

But what the ESS effectively does is to provide a strategy and rationalization for the military protection of neoliberal globalisation.

The military component of neoliberal globalisation

To those of you who know the writings of Robert Cooper, a senior advisor to Javier Solana and one of the closest bodies of Tony Blair, this should not be very surprising.

As he authored a draft for the ESS that was widely adopted in the final document his writings are of tremendous interest if we want to get insights of the worldview behind the ESS.

Cooper is one of the most important proponents of an openly imperialistic European foreign policy. In an article he demanded the European Union to pursue "liberal imperialism" which should serve as a guidance for the future European foreign policy:

"Postmodern imperialism takes two forms. First there is the voluntary imperialism of the global economy. This is usually operated by an international consortium through International Financial Institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank..."

This commitment to neoliberal globalisation is accompanied by a more ruth second component. It's goal is to militarily oppress those who doesn't share his enthusiasm about the "voluntary imperialism of the economy." As neoliberal globalisation leads to the impoverishment of large parts of the world population it breeds violence, both internal in the form of conflicts about scarce resources but also external by ever rising - and justified - hostility against the exploitative policy of the West. The blowbacks of neoliberal globalisation are the reasons why Cooper's liberal imperialism appears much less voluntarily in its integral second form:

"Among ourselves we operate on the basis of laws and open cooperative security. But when dealing with more old-fashioned kinds of states outside the postmodern continent of Europe, we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era – force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the nineteenth century world of every state for itself. Among ourselves, we keep the law, but when we are operating in the jungle, we must also use the laws of the jungle."

The essence of Cooper's words is that the western states will enforce the rules of the game: The rules of neoliberal globalisation have to be honored, if not, their acceptance will be enforced by brute force if necessary. Not surprisingly, we can find this "postmodern imperialistic" approach in the ESS, too:

"A number of countries have placed themselves outside the bounds of international society. Some have sought isolation; others persistently violate international norms. It is desirable that such countries should rejoin the international community, and the EU should be ready to provide assistance. Those who are unwilling to do so should understand that there is a price to be paid, including in their relationship with the European Union."

The ever widening contradictions and conflicts produced by the neoliberal capitalist order are the driving force behind the militarization of the European Union put forward by the ESS and the European constitution. The capitalist globalisation and the global militarization are two sides of the same medal. We are against the capitalist way of economy and against the global war policy! It is necessary to articulate protest and resistance against this Janus-head of a military and economic "Superpower European Union", as Javier Solana called it.

While it remains to be seen whether the transatlantic rift will deepen in the years ahead due to the clashing interests in many parts of the world, neither a militarised Europe acting together with Washington, nor a European Union as a rival imperial block are encouraging prospects.

But, as the upholding of the exploitative capitalist order is the primary focus, these are currently the only two options discussed by the political mainstream in Europe. In contrast, we have to form a strong opposition that has to effectively attack these developments and put forward the vision of a social, plural and pacifist Europe that has much more appeal to the population than has the militarised exploitative demon that is currently in the making.

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