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Women denounce NATO's 'bloc' logic

1. The NATO treaty has to be renewed.

Actions to highlight this could be useful, or at least we should get rid of the automatic mechanisms which permit of no knowledge or democratic control. (The 1999 revision of the treaty, with the "new strategic concept", was not ratified by the parliament in Italy). Some connected questions: the fact that often the treaties or military agreements are secret, or at least not made public, sometimes even to the parliament, deprives us - as citizens - of any possibility of intervention on decisions that concern our territory, and our civil life, emptying the concept of citizenship of all meaning and making us mere subjects.

2. We denounce **the 'bloc' logic** that is contained in the NATO story; we criticize it from the point of view of women and feminists. We do not recognize ourselves in the patriarchal membership and hierarchy (of nation, of "Atlantic alliance", of the "European Fortress", of "western civilization",...) and in the (cultural and/or blood) identities that are constructed against other supposed enemy identities. In this context women - and their bodies - become icons and objects to be used to support the obligatory identity.

3. We denounce the serious change made in 1999 (though started at the beginning of the '90s) to the text of the NATO treaty embodied in the **new strategic concept**: from a formulation based on the defence of territory to an offensive strategy, pre-emptive or otherwise, expanded to the whole world (even with "out of area" actions) and extended to "interests", as a right to defend them everywhere they are "threatened". The use of armed force, especially in an offensive way, is the only recognized instrument.

4. In the following ten years these interests have been invoked for questions of **energy, economy or imperial control**: the multiplication of the interests to be defended, that include questions that are of civil responsibility, enormously widens the geographic space and the pretexts on which military attacks can be started. Besides, it implies that the only way to intervene on such issues is the military method, and a dangerous confusion and overlap between military and civil affairs is generated. In foreign missions we see that both military control of humanitarian interventions, and the use of civil aid for military, repressive or controlling purposes; We also see that the presence of women soldiers is used by propaganda to strengthen the humanitarian image of the army, particularly in *peacekeeping* operations.

5. Maintaining NATO is simultaneously an effect and an instrument of **militarization** as the only perspective: this kind of response **becomes the pattern** for all relationships, between states, in society and also in personal relationships. We need to reconsider our anti-militarism taking into account how much militarism has widened in scope and in intensity, to become - like war itself - intrinsic to civil life and democracy: the "western way of life" to be defended all over the world is the culmination and the most evident element of a widespread violent imposition of good / justice / truth.

In Europe:

For eastern countries, participation in some form in the Alliance is an obligatory step for entry to the EU, which those countries take even if they don't need it: in fact NATO membership is costly, because it requires an alignment of army and armaments; it imposes adoption of the logic that divides the world into blocs; it proposes/imposes a military pattern of repression and exclusion, used also for domestic "security". In particular, because of the economic crisis, Europe is experiencing new failures and contradictions: for example the question of lost jobs, or jobs shifted to "cheaper" zones; responding to these events, in spite of the enlargement to the eastern countries, Europe resists the extension of workers rights and of environment protection to these countries, while allowing the exploitation of human and natural resources.

In Italy:

Despite the crisis, military expenditure is increasing; we recall Italian participation in the development and purchase of F-35 aircraft (*Joint Strike Fighter*), the maintenance and increase of Italian troops in Afghanistan, the extension of the U.S. base in Vicenza (and similar proposal for other bases, from Camp Darby to Sicily). Social resources are heavily cut (for education, health care, retirement, culture, research...) with loss of jobs that is very heavy in the current crisis. The militarization of our every day life is more and more evident and spread: we meet the army in the city market, with the task of maintaining public order; the places against whose use the local population is protesting are commandeered and garrisoned by military troops, as sites selected for waste dumps, for High Speed Railway construction, for the extension of military base in Vicenza, for the polluting firing ranges in Sardinia, etc. In particular the voices of women are silenced and their rights are cut: the rape of a girl has been used to create, again, a "domestic" enemy, even to justify the creation of *ronde* (groups of vigilantes) that carry out territorial control "in defence of our women" against the barbarous invaders; state decrees and laws and heavy interference by the Catholic Church try to impose control over the body, especially women's body, attacking their reproductive rights and self-determination; the general context that approves the use of force concurs in the maintenance of violence against women and children, who continue to be increasingly silenced and ignored.

6. Starting from us, as women and feminists and more generally starting from the conditions and the relationships experienced by women, we recognize that there is a problem of **insecurity and fear**: we feel that we are surrounded by a world of wolves, that we live in a hostile and unsafe environment. But the real reasons are different from those declared and used (at a global and local level) to justify the use of force, without intervening on the real motivation. The concept of security that we have has different contents: we do not accept that "security" be conceived as a military and repressive matter; we do not accept the representation of this as the only answer to the problem. On the contrary we think that the answer should be centred on relationship and mutual acquaintance, solidarity, ensuring the people the possibility of life, especially in this period of economic crisis.

7. Therefore, it is important for us, as citizens, to act so that **alternative possibilities be expressed** for a Europe not constrained by the power ratio between blocs (and inside each bloc, where the countries and Europe are subordinate to the US predominance on the whole "Alliance"). We would like a real autonomy for Europe to be expressed in diverse relationships with each part of the world. What prevents the world without wars that we want? The existing system cannot maintain itself without wars. But something is changing. The order that lasted till the latest Bush presidency, and seemed untouchable, is becoming uncertain and unstable: even in the economic crisis a feeling is spreading of rage of the world's poor people; that the western way of life is not sustainable and is even turning against us... This is a period of great destructuring, and everything can open up the possibility of alternatives.