

Author: Heidi Meinzolt.

< heidi@meinzolt.de>

THE EUROPEAN UNION IN A MULTI-POLAR WORLD

In 2001 extremists from Saudi Arabia with connections to Al-Qaida, used civilian airplanes to attack the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in New York USA. If such an attack had happened in London or Madrid the culprits would have been brought to a civilian court and tried and sentenced there. The attack on 9/11 was not a military attack, but the US government considered a declaration of war against Afghanistan to be sanctioned by the UN according to the principle of self-defence. NATO supported the US interpretation of self-defence and regarded the attack as one on all NATO member states (Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty). In 2003 the USA and UK declared war on Iraq without a decision by the UN Security Council to use violence against Iraq (Chapter VII of the UN Charter).

The unilateral interpretation of self-defence and threats to peace is dangerous. It contravenes the "prohibition of violence" which states are obliged to follow under the UN Charter and clearly undermines the authority of the UN. The war on Iraq is a clear violation of International Law. The EU's military infrastructure is used for wars even if not all EU countries are directly involved. For example in the recent Iraq war, military supplies, food, munitions, and soldiers were flown to the Gulf, planes took off from airbases in many EU countries, and the global surveillance systems of the US and NATO were used to guide the air strikes on Iraq. In addition, troops replaced those troops of countries participating in the war on missions elsewhere, such as in Afghanistan and the Balkans. The solidarity clause in the Lisbon Treaty and the so-called 'structured cooperation' obliges EU member States to participate in all military actions. The only way out is through a difficult "constructive abstention."

Cooperation with NATO is also part of the Lisbon Treaty. The Lisbon Treaty and later the EU-NATO declaration of 2007 formulated a strategic partnership between EU/ESDP and NATO: "NATO and the European Union are working together to prevent and resolve crises and armed conflicts in Europe and beyond, they share common strategic interests and cooperate in a spirit of complementarity and partnership". Twenty one EU countries are members of NATO and four EU countries are partners. That means that the operations of NATO and the EU are very close to each other. NATO has a nuclear weapon strategy stating that NATO needs a mix of conventional and nuclear weapons to keep peace and stability in Europe. WILPF opposes this position. Nuclear weapons are a threat to the whole world and should disappear from the globe. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) also has stipulated this goal. The nuclear weapon states have agreed to this.

In 2010 there will be an NPT-review conference to look at the treaty and plan on how to abolish all nuclear weapons. We demand that EU countries at this conference act in accordance with the NPT treaty and plan for how to abolish all nuclear weapons. The EU should also oppose the nuclear weapon strategy of NATO. This job-share of EU and NATO is unacceptable. NATO acts with purely military means and methods. The new NATO strategy includes deterrence and pre-emptive strikes which contradict any "peacekeeping mission". NATO still has a preventive nuclear war agreement as a last wayout. The EU and NATO missions are more and more integrated, and additionally EU troops are acting under the NATO flag, for example the EU took over from NATO in Kosovo, in effect legitimizing the earlier NATO action.

NATO must be dismantled! The UN Charter and the political will to avoid wars must be brought back to the centre of the international agenda. Peace needs more!

Strengthening cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Since 1993, this regional organisation brings together 54 European states with the United States, Canada, and the countries of Central Asia, who are supposed to participate on equal terms. The OSCE is a primary instrument for working with early warning, conflict prevention, civil crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation from a long-term perspective. The OSCE has 19 (2008) missions or field operations in South- Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The organisation was developed through the Conference on Security in Europe (CSE), which acted as a forum for political discussions between the West and the East until 1975 when the OSCE took over the role. The OSCE cannot engage in operations which are undertaken against the will of the parties concerned, as this privilege rests with the UN Security Council.

According to its statute, the OSCE includes three dimensions: political, economic and environmental, as well as human dimensions (democracy, human rights and the rule of law). The main topic has shifted from military confidence-building to civil conflict prevention and reconstruction. The OSCE therefore addresses a wide range of security related concerns, including arms control, confidence and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities (HCNM- High Commissioner for National Minorities), democratization, electoral observation (ODIHR – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human rights), economic and environmental activities. The organisation seeks to enhance human security by promoting greater openness, transparency and co-operation which is done by diplomatic agreements at a political level and by civilian methods on a practical level. The OSCE has a well-developed cooperation with the UN, the Council of Europe, the EU and sometimes also NATO. The ambassadors of the EU countries meet at the OSCE headquarters in Vienna every week for consultation meetings in order to act jointly in the Permanent Council. In European realpolitik the OSCE is too marginalised and its crisis management potential is totally underestimated. The OSCE has a lot of potential and it could be strengthened and seen as more central to EU security policy.

WILPF urges Political Parties and Politicians:

1. To systematically reduce cooperation between EU-NATO;
2. To close all foreign military bases in EU countries;
3. Not to permit new endeavours for stationing US arms in the EU;
4. To urge the EU to create and support nuclear free zones (for example in the Middle East), but also to dismantle its own nuclear arsenals and all weapons of mass destruction;
5. To recognize and support the OSCE, which offers a highly effective contribution to peace and security and is capable of dealing effectively with conflict prevention and during post-conflict reconstruction with civilian means;
6. To support and strengthen local involvement and participation of civil society organisations with the OSCE;
7. To support the implementation of the OSCE action plan on SCR 1325;
8. To support the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in its support of gender projects carried out by field operations.