

Europe's Imperial or Democratic Future

The Peace & Neutrality Alliance was established in 1996. Its objective is to establish a United Irish Republic with its own independent foreign policy, pursued primarily through a reformed United Nations, with positive neutrality as its key component.

It is open to all individuals and groups that accept our objectives. These currently include Afri, An Conradh Ceilteach, the Centre for Global Education, the Cuban Support Group Ireland, Comhlamh, the Communist Party of Ireland, the Cork Council of Trade Unions, the Dublin Council of Trade Unions, Eirigi, The Green Party, the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Irish CND, the Irish National Congress, the Irish Missionary Union, the Latin American Solidarity Campaign, the National Platform Research Group, Pax Christi, Sinn Fein, TSSA, Unite the Union and the Workers Party.

PANA is a profoundly pro-European organisation. Our vision for the future of Europe is a partnership Europe, a social Europe, a Europe of independent democratic states, legal equals, without a military dimension, in short, an anti-imperialist Europe.

PANA did not lick its values off the stones. It is part of a deeply rooted historical tradition. In 1790 Theobald Wolfe Tone wrote his first political pamphlet, "The Spanish War" when the British and Spanish Empires were preparing for war, in which he advocated that Ireland should remain neutral. Soon after, he also advocated equal rights for Catholics and Protestant and Dissenters and the establishment of an Irish Republic. Thus for over 220 years the struggle for Irish independence, democracy and neutrality have been intertwined.

In the treaty negotiations that established this state, the representatives of the Republic sought permanent neutrality. Its right to remain neutral in the event of war was agreed and it remained neutral in the 2nd World War and did not join NATO.

Yet while the tradition of Irish Independence, democracy and neutrality are deeply rooted in our history, so is the tradition of imperialism.

Throughout the 19th century, over 30% of the British Army was Irish and political leaders supported the imperial wars of the British Empire. Daniel O'Connell supported its war on the Chinese to force them to buy British heroin in the name of liberal economics, Isaac Butt supported the Crimean War and Carson and Redmond encouraged 180,000 Irishmen to volunteer to die for the British Union in the 1914-18 Imperialist War.

Northern Ireland continues to be part of the British Union. While its Empire is a pale shadow of its former self, an unyielding commitment to imperialism remains its core value. It spends £2 billion a year on maintaining its nuclear weapons, nearly £2 billion a year on its war on Afghanistan and its war on Libya so far has cost it £2 billion.

It was not until the emergence of the European Economic Community, now the European Union, that an opportunity arose for the emerging neo-Redmondite ruling elite in the 26 counties to destroy Irish independence, democracy and neutrality and restore imperialism as the dominate ideology throughout all of Ireland.

In EU treaty after treaty they advocated that more and more power be transferred away from the Irish people and their national democratic institutions to the EU and its institutions.

Their objective has been and remains to ensure all Ireland participation in the resource wars of the 21st century via the EU/US/NATO military axis. PANA argued that the only and absolutely inevitable consequence of this strategy would be the defeat of the axis and the collapse of the neo-liberal economic system on which their values were based. It would be fair to say that a good deal more people agree with our analysis now than did in 1996.

The EU is dominated by states such as Britain, Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Having lost their Empires in the anti-imperialist struggles of the 20th century, they seek by combining, to restore their global power via a European Empire dominated by a neo-liberal economic and militarist ideology. Chancellor Merkel, for example, has openly and regularly called for the creation of a European Army.

They seek to dominate in conjunction with the American Empire via the nuclear armed military alliance, NATO.

Not content with its wars on Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, NATO also decided to bomb Libya and install a puppet regime in power. The French newspaper, Liberation published a letter in which the TNC ratified an agreement which ceded France 35% of Libya's crude oil production. If ever there was a resource war, then the NATO conquest of Libya is an absolute text book case. The new EU Embassy established in Tripoli is the outward manifestation of the first major imperial war led by the European part of the EU/US/NATO axis.

Niger with its uranium resources could be their next target rather than Syria or Iran.

The direct costs for Ireland have been much less as there are only 8-10 Irish soldiers in Afghanistan. Irish military expenditure has now been reduced because of the economic crisis, but during the Celtic Tiger era, the military budget was €1 billion per annum, which meant that with about 10,000 soldiers, we were spending more money per soldier than any other country in Europe. Much of that expenditure was on new military equipment to ensure interoperability with troops from NATO countries.

The militarisation of the EU is not new. It is a process that began with the Single European Act and accelerated with the Maastricht Treaty.

The Danish people had as a consequence of their defeat of the Maastricht Treaty, achieved a number of major concessions including the following legally binding Protocol which was added to the Amsterdam Treaty.

“With regard to the measures adopted by the Council in the relevant articles, Denmark does not participate in the elaboration and implementation of decisions and actions which have defence implications, but will not prevent the development of closer cooperation between member states in this area. Therefore Denmark shall not participate in their adoption. Denmark shall not contribute to the financing of the operational expenditure arising from such measures.”

In the campaigns on the Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon treaties PANA focused on seeking to ensure the same Protocol would apply to Ireland.

The German Constitutional Court in its ruling on the Lisbon Treaty stated that the deployment of German troops abroad needs the consent of the Bundestag, which like the Danish Protocol, limits the power of purely EU institutions to deploy German troops.

We are now lobbying parties in the Dail to seek to ensure that it is added to the Croatian Accession Treaty.

PANA also intends to contact other peace groups in the EU to seek to ensure that would also lobby their own national parliaments to seek a similar Protocol for their own countries.

However the commitment to the militarisation of the EU was total and the Irish elite opposed the introduction of this Protocol on every occasion.

Its response to the victory of the Irish democratic forces in the first referendum on the Lisbon Treaty/EU Constitution was to force the Irish people to vote again on exactly the same treaty, making sure that the second time round they spent €millions and abolished the Forum on Europe which had encouraged democratic debate. Their corporate media largely excluded PANA because of its focus on opposing the militarism of the emerging EU Empire which had a key factor in the 'No' vote in the first Lisbon referendum.

It was class war with a vengeance and they won.

The class nature of this victory is clearly evident in a survey which in the same week showed that 20% of the Irish people every month had a disposable income of only €70, while the CEO of AIB, on retirement, walked away with €3 million in his back pocket. The Bank of Ireland Asset Management Report of 2007 showed that 40% of the wealth in Ireland is owned by 5% of the population, yet the ruling elite would rather cut the wages of the people and sell off €2 billion Irish state assets to their rich friends than support a wealth tax on this 5%, which would raise the €2 billion.

It reflects the global reality where the number of billionaires rose by nearly one third between 2007 and 2010 and just over 1,000 individuals have a combined wealth of \$4,500 billion.

The passing of the EU Constitution/Lisbon treaty has had real and powerful consequences.

For the first time the EU has a distinct legal personality, separate from and superior to its member states including Britain and Ireland.

The EU has appointed an EU President and an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs who presides over a EU Department of Foreign Affairs.

It has established the right of a group of members states under structured cooperation, to form separate military blocks within EU structures for “more demanding” military missions “in accordance with the principle of a single set of forces”, i.e. a European Army.

It legalised the European Defence Agency, the purpose of which is to promote and develop the European Arms industry.

It has legalised the EU Battle Groups which are heavily armed 2,500 strong rapid reaction military units, specifically designed to go to war with a 5-10 days notice. Ireland participates in the Nordic Battle Group alongside Estonia, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

In 2011 it was made ready for action and the EU committee agreed that if requested by the UN it would invade Libya for “humanitarian” reasons. The cost to the Irish taxpayer for the participation was nearly €1 million.

In 2012 the Irish Government has agreed to allocate Irish soldiers to take part in the German/Austrian EU Battle Group, probably for the same cost and the same remit to invade Libya.

Of course, there is a “triple lock” of government, Dail and UN approval before Irish troops can take part in EU Battlegroups sent to war. But who can doubt that the Irish elite would agree to send them into battle, especially as the legislation was amended to allow Irish troops to go into an area as part of a Battlegroup without a UN mandate, but not actually fight until they get one. In practice

however, once there, they will have to fight back if attacked. It's called an Irish solution to an Irish problem.

The EU has agreed that its Battlegroups are mutually reinforcing with the NATO Response Force and the treaty ensures that "a more assertive Union role in security and defence policy will contribute to the vitality of a renewed NATO."

The EU commitment to renew NATO is reciprocated by NATO. At its Lisbon Conference last year it described the EU as a strategic partner in its NATO2020 agreed statement. For it, hunger, poverty and migratory movements were not to be eradicated but controlled. It seeks to create a NATO-EU Agency to make a "truly creative partnership-based on the principle of reciprocity and that encompasses the entire range of the institution's mutual activity".

NATO is committed to retaining its nuclear weapons and its first strike option, to building an anti-ballistic missile shield to protect Europe and to building a unified command via a Euro-Atlantic General staff with a commitment to use its military anywhere in the world.

To quote Admiral Di Paola, Chair of the NATO Military Committee:

"Today we're in Asia, tomorrow I don't know, Africa or, one day South America or the Southern pole. We decide where there is a challenge to our security".

So it is no surprise that all EU states now have a legal obligation to build up their military capacities.

The tasks of the EU military are expanded to include pre-emptive military action against any perceived "threats".

The EU now has mutual solidarity and mutual defence clauses which obliges all member states to come to the assistance of any other member state subject to armed aggression, terrorist threat or attack. Article 28a (7) states:

"If a member state is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the 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 and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with the commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which, for those states which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation.”

The nuclear armed military alliance, the Western European Union’s last remaining competence, all its assets having already previously been transferred to the EU, was collective self defence.

Since this last remaining competence was transferred to the EU as a consequence of the Lisbon Treaty, the WEU was abolished in June 2011.

Ireland’s integration into the EU/US/NATO axis cannot be separated from the war on terror.

Throughout the Cold War the NATO economies especially that of the US, were developed to a great degree on the basis of massive military expenditure. Jobs were created by the growing military industrial complex especially in regions of low wealth creation. Their economy became dependent on perpetual war. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the Communist enemy needed to be replaced by a new enemy. Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilization” ideology provided the military industrial complex with the enemy it needed; Muslim Fundamentalists.

This is not to suggest there are no Muslim Fundamentalists, or that some of them do not commit acts of terrorism on a massive scale like 9/11. They do.

Nor is to suggest that those of us whose Republicanism is based on Irish democracy and the separation of Church and State are not also seen by some Muslim Fundamentalists as opponents, because they do, and we are.

We do not however support perpetual war. We opposed the conquests of Afghanistan and Iraq, imperial wars which was supported by virtually all the EU states. PANA held its first anti war demonstration in 2002 at Shannon Airport. The war on Iraq

was not just to seek to gain control of their oil, but to weaken an enemy of Israel. After all, the General Secretary of NATO, Solana, on a visit to that state, described Israel as a de facto member of NATO.

The latest decision of the states of the EU to refuse to back the right of the people of Palestine to their own state with full representation at the UN is a reflection of the power of the EU/US/NATO axis and Israel's part in that axis.

In May 2007, a survey by Lansdowne Market Research commissioned by PANA showed 58% of the Irish people opposed the use of Shannon Airport by NATO troops. A similar survey is now being carried out and the results will be known before the end of the current campaign for the presidency.

Yet as these US/EU/NATO wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan and Palestine, to name but a few, drag on and on, the ruling elite is having to pay for them by ensuring massive cuts on the living standards of their own people.

They have cost NATO between \$3-4 trillion so far or currently \$12 million dollars per hour.

So despite their virtual total control of the corporate media via their intellectual mercenaries, know as political and financial journalists, their use of actual mercenaries, high tech weapons such as drones, and full time professional armies rather than conscripts, they are losing the support of their own people.

The axis just cannot continue their doctrine of perpetual war and survive. The EU/US/NATO share of world trade has declined massively since it was established. It just no longer has the taxable base to sustain these wars nor the currencies strong enough from which to borrow.

The axis offers nothing but perpetual war abroad and mass poverty at home. Its era is coming to an end with the Bush/Obama wars.

The American people believed Obama would extricate them from these wars. Instead he not only continued them, but expanded them. The Bush/Obama wars which are supported by the political leaders

of the EU, leading to the disintegration of the American Empire and the EU.

What the people of the states of the EU and the US want is jobs at home, not war abroad. The latest CBS poll in the US showed that 57% of the people in the US want their troops to come home and similar polls in Europe show that even more people have the same views.

The peace movements in the US and the states of the EU needs to work together to put pressure on the axis to terminate its support for Israel until it withdraws to its 1967 borders, withdraw from Afghanistan and Iraq and close down their 700 plus military bases throughout the world. It needs pressure the political parties to start focusing on nation building at home rather than abroad.

Finally, PANA as an organisation makes sense only as part of the global peace movement. If the productive forces in the world were directed away from war to the real challenges of global warming and massive poverty then we all have a future. Cliché, it might be, but turning weapons into ploughshares is more valid now than it ever was.

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