

Militarising Europe Again

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We are currently witnessing two deeply interconnected and highly worrying developments. On the one hand, since the activation of the “Permanent Structured Cooperation” (PESCO) in December 2017, we have moved much closer to the formation of a “European Defence Union”. And on the other hand, we are witnessing skyrocketing military budgets.

PESCO

Until recently, all decisions in the “Common Security and Defense Policy” – or CSDP – had to be taken unanimously. This gave the small and middle sized Member States much influence over the European military policy. Yet with the activation of PESCO, several crucial decisions now have to be taken by qualified majority voting. This enormously benefits the larger Member States, especially Germany and France. Before its activation, and despite widespread scepticism, twenty five Member States signalled a willingness to participate in PESCO.

The reason for this is simple: if they hadn’t jumped into the PESCO-boat from the very beginning, a future admission would have depended on a decision taken by qualified majority voting. And given the fact that Germany and France have a *de facto* blocking minority, not participating would have meant being subject to the goodwill of France and Germany in order to be able to take part in an institution that is supposed to develop into the new heart of Europe’s military policy.

But participating in PESCO literally comes with a steep price. Every country had

to accept to fulfil 20 criteria, which had been set in advance by Germany and France. Among them are the commitments to provide “substantial support within means and capabilities to CSDP operations” and to substantially contribute to the EU’s battle groups. Furthermore, the countries pledged to “overcome capability shortcomings” by taking part in – quote – “at least one project under the PESCO which develops or provides capabilities identified as strategically relevant by Member States”.

On 6 March 2018, the first 17 PESCO-projects were decided upon. They range from plans to establish a European Medical Command, to building an Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicle. The crucial point here is that the European Defense Agency has been tasked to evaluate whether PESCO members have fulfilled those criteria. And if it comes to the conclusion that this is not the case, it is possible to throw a country out of PESCO via qualified majority voting.

This is meant to be a strong motivation to invest huge sums in the armament sector in the future, especially as one criterion demands each country dedicate a share of military procurement of twenty per cent of its overall military budget. Even more important, another criterion obliged the states to – quote – “Regularly increasing defence budgets in real terms”.

National Budgets, Defense Funds and the ‘Peace Facility’

We are currently seeing skyrocketing national budgets. For example in Germany, the defence budget was roughly 23 billion Euro in 2000 and it rose to 38.5 bn this year (2018). According to current plans it shall further rise to over 60 bn in 2024! And in France budgets are projected to rise from 32.4 bn Euro in 2017 to 44 bn in 2023. And, to make matters worse, on top of that will come the new funds in the European Union that are explicitly dedicated to military spending.

In May, the European Commission presented its budget proposal for the next multiannual financial framework from 2021 to 2027. For the first time, there will be a European Defence Fund included in the budget that can consist of up to 48.6 bn Euro (4.1 bn for military research and 8.9 bn for military development with contributions of the Member States totalling 48.6 bn). In addition there are 6.5 bn earmarked for “military mobility”.

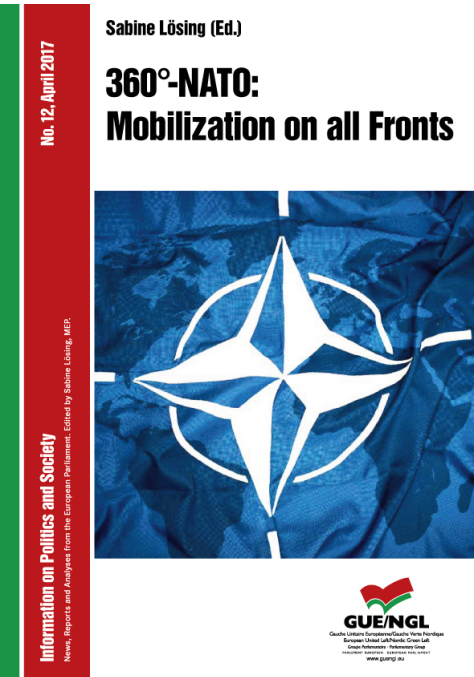
These are deeply troubling developments, as up to now there had been a consensus that military spending must not be taken from the EU budget. Now there seems to be a new interpretation of the Treaty of Lisbon that everything can be financed from the EU budget besides direct military

operations.

And to address the question of how military operations can be financed in the future, the Commission proposed the establishment of a “European Peace Facility” that is not officially part of the EU budget. This facility can spend 10.5 bn euros between 2021 and 2027 for European military operations and the training and equipment of the forces of third countries.

All in all, I think it is not an exaggeration that we have witnessed a dangerous and wide reaching militarization of the European Union within a short period of time. A militarization we have to oppose with all our means.

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360°-NATO: Mobilization on all Fronts

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“It was former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who, already in 2010, brought forward the argument that the Western military alliance was in the process of transition into NATO 3.0. As a matter of fact, the development of NATO from its foundation in 1949 until now can be roughly classified into three stages: Initially, the conflict with the Soviet Union was pivotal (NATO 1.0). Following the end of East-

West confrontation NATO was focussed on the transformation towards a worldwide alliance for military interventions as well as on the expansion of its sphere of influence (NATO 2.0). For several years now, conflicts with Russia and an arms build-up at the Eastern flank have gained considerable importance again.” *NATO’s 360 Degree Approach: Heading Towards Confrontation with Russia and the Rest of the World*, Jürgen Wagner.

<http://www.guengl.eu/policy/publication/nato-eu-end-the-militarisation-of-europe>