

# NATO & EU: End the militarisation of Europe

European United Left • Nordic Green Left

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP



**GUE/NGL**  
[www.guengl.eu](http://www.guengl.eu)



# **NATO & the EU: End the militarisation of Europe**

## **A civil Europe?**

**It is often claimed that the European Union should be a union of peace, but if it ever was, it is no longer. Strong evidence for this is the European Union's close cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO); a purely military alliance. The intensified relationship between NATO and the EU primarily strengthens the EU's relationship with the United States and the military protection of the global neoliberal agenda which is the 'cement' that binds these 'brothers in arms' together.**

## **A military alliance in transition**

Founded in 1949, NATO played a significant role in the Cold War period. This military alliance was supposed to bring the Western forces into line against the Soviet Union during this period when the arms race was underway and the possible escalation of the Cold War was imminent.

When the decline of the Soviet Union became apparent in the early 1990s, however, NATO needed a new project in order to avoid becoming irrelevant. Faced with the new geopolitical situation, NATO was strategically rebuilt in two ways during the 1990s with the aim to secure and expand the West's newly acquired global dominance. On the one hand, former Eastern bloc countries were quickly integrated into the Western sphere of influence when Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary joined the alliance in 1999. On the other hand, NATO shifted its operational priority from defence of its members to offensive global military interventions.

This strategy continued when seven more Eastern and Central European countries joined NATO. Around the same time, the European Union was expanding to include more and more Eastern and Central European countries among its member states. Brought together by the US-dominated NATO and the increasingly German-dominated EU, this effectively drew many Eastern European

countries into close cooperation with Western interests.

The next major step in this strategy – which exposes Europe’s superpower fantasies – was the formulation of the EU’s Neighborhood Policy in 2004. Instead of building a ‘ring of stable and friendly states’ around the EU as claimed by the European Commission\*, the main objective was, and remains, to consolidate the EU as an order-preserving regional power.

When Russia had recovered from the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, it started to respond more vigorously to this strategy. When NATO members indicated that they would accept Georgia as a new member in 2008, this resulted in the war between Georgia, Russia and the Russian-backed territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Similarly, the military escalation that occurred in Ukraine in 2014 amidst the negotiations for the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine should also be seen in this context.

***“The Union must be able to act decisively through CSDP as a security provider, in partnership when possible but autonomously when necessary, in its neighbourhood, including through direct intervention. Strategic autonomy must materialise first in the EU’s neighbourhood.”***

– Catherine Ashton, October 15, 2014, during her time as the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy



## **Civil-military cooperation**

The cooperation between NATO and the EU also aims to increase the military intervention capacity of the West throughout world. One example is the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), under which so called 'civilian' missions, that have partly been planned and conducted in cooperation with NATO, are carried out. In most cases, these 'civilian' missions are in fact training for police and even military forces. Yet they are considered in EU jargon to be civilian missions! Civil-military cooperation does not happen by chance. It is at the core of the cooperation between the EU and NATO.

The EU's purely military operations, such as EU-NAVFOR-ATALANTA off the coast of Somalia, are also partly planned and conducted in close cooperation with NATO. The protection and defence of human rights are often used as a pretext for military intervention in other countries that conceals the economic and geopolitical interests of the EU and the US.

## **EU Battlegroups and Spearhead**

Another element of the increased military cooperation among EU member states and with NATO is the deployment and organisation of multinational rapidly-deployable, highly-flexible military units. The German-French Brigade was established in 1987 and placed under the command of Eurocorps in 1993 with 60,000 troops.

Another prominent example is the 'EU-Battlegroups', established in 2004. These multinational rapid-reaction forces are each comprised of around 1,500 troops which are only deployed for 6 months. Since January 2007, there are always two EU-Battlegroups available on demand, deployable within five to 30 days.

In addition, NATO created similar battlegroups and increasingly cooperates closely with the EU concerning the rapid-reaction forces. In September 2014, at the NATO Summit in Wales the creation of an ultra-rapid-reaction force called 'Spearhead' was decided, primarily intended for use in the immediate vicinity of Russia. It will consist

of between 5,000 and 7,000 soldiers, who can be deployed within two to five days.

***“The value of Europe’s armed forces is less in countering specific ‘threats’ than as necessary instruments of power and influence in a rapidly changing world, where militaries still matter.”***

Nick Witney: ‘How to stop the demilitarization of Europe’, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), Policy Brief 40, November 2011, p. 1.

## **Military armament**

The Treaty on European Union contains an obligation for armament and to invest more money in the defence sector in Article 42 (3) which states: “Member States shall undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities.” The European Defence Agency (EDA) which was established in 2004 monitors compliance with these requirements.

Even though it is constantly stressed that military spending has decreased as a result of the ongoing economic crisis and military budgets of EU member states have been reduced, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) calculates that the total expenditure of all EU member states in 2013 (279.4 billion euros) is still higher than the level in 2000 (270.2 billion euros), although notably, the EU has gained new members since 2000. NATO also continues to promote the build-up of military armament. At the NATO summit in September 2014, the goal

**GUE/NGL Peace Conference**  
**There is an alternative - No to NATO**



**2 & 3 June 2016**  
**ASP 1G2**  
**European Parliament**  
**Brussels**

<b>Thursday 02/06</b> 15h00-18h30 ASP1G2	<b>Friday 03/06</b> 09h30-12h30 ASP1G2
--	--

European United Left • Nordic Green Left  
www.guengl.eu

**GUE/NGL**  
www.guengl.eu

Interpretation will be provided  
Registration: [sabine.loesing@ep.europa.eu](mailto:sabine.loesing@ep.europa.eu)

Live stream - [guengl.eu](http://guengl.eu)

for member states to increase their defence budgets up to 2 per cent of their GDP was re-confirmed. In the case of Germany, for example, that would mean an increase from the current level of 33 billion euros to 53 billion euros.

### **Misappropriation of European Union funds into military initiatives**

In line with the interests of NATO, the EU is working to increase the militarisation of Europe. The European Commission is working with the European Defence Agency on specific projects and research plans for that purpose. These plans are to be financed by European Union funding, despite the fact that this is prohibited under Article 41(2) of the Lisbon Treaty. Moreover, this is happening under the pressure and demands of the majority of Members of the European Parliament.

A truly scandalous element of the militarisation of the European Union is the misappropriation of development aid funding for military purposes. For example, the European Development Fund (EDF) provides funding for the African Peace Facility to promote ‘peacekeeping’ missions. These are military operations of the African Union which provide training for military staff. Between 2004 and 2014, these operations received a cumulative total of more than 1.3 billion euros in funding from the European Union.

The prestigious ‘Galileo’ satellite navigation system project provides another example of questionable use of civilian funds from the European Union. Over 7 billion euros from the EU’s multi-annual budget have been allocated to this project during the period from 2014 to 2020, even though Galileo is for military purposes.

### **An EU army and the dismantling of parliamentary scrutiny**

In addition to the EU budget lines that are already financing military-related actions, the ‘ATHENA mechanism’ was created in 2004 to promote joint financing of European Union military operations. Member states contribute to the ATHENA mechanism according to their size and GDP. The ATHENA funds are not subject to any parliamentary scrutiny.



So far, no troops can be funded by this mechanism, only so-called operational costs, such as food for the troops and fuel. Yet, the principle of 'the costs lie where they fall' also applies, which means that if one country sends two soldiers to a conflict zone, it pays for those two soldiers only, while if it sends 500 soldiers, it pays for 500. If that principle was changed or doubted, every EU member state would be automatically involved in every EU military mission regardless of whether they want to support it or not.

In 2014, 36.6 million euros were distributed to various EU military missions under the ATHENA mechanism. While the cost of this mechanism to date is relatively low compared to other military expenditure, it represents another step in the wrong direction. European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, has recently proposed the (old) idea of establishing an EU army to increase the military force of the European Union. Another idea is the proposal for member states to pool and

share troops, special military equipment and highly-qualified personnel for common use. A similar concept exists under NATO's Smart Defence programme. An especially problematic element of the shared military resources proposal is that national parliamentary control and/or veto rights are more difficult to implement or could even be eliminated. Soldiers and equipment of a member state could be used even though the country did not officially participate in the military mission or action.

An EU army would cement the failed approach of EU foreign policy and further dismantle the role of national parliaments in the question of war and peace. Past experiences have repeatedly shown that military interventions do escalate conflicts and prolong – rather than end – them. Moreover, such an emphasis on military 'solutions' is further marginalising civil and peaceful conflict solutions. A horse trade like exchanging democracy for efficiency should never apply to the question of war and peace. The more a European army becomes a reality, the more veto and control rights of parliaments and society are disappearing.





## **Another Europe is possible!**

The GUE/NGL group commits to an exclusively civilian and peaceful EU foreign policy and rejects the deployment of European military forces. We are convinced that crisis situations and conflicts cannot be solved by military means. Sustainable solutions can only be found if the root causes of the crises or conflicts are resolved. If the amount of money that is currently spent on wars would be used for economic reconstruction, the eradication of poverty, free education and health care, our world would be more just and safe.

We call for the dissolution of NATO and all types of civil-military cooperation. Civil engagement should not be subject to the dictates of a military strategy.

Accordingly, GUE/NGL calls for the abolishment of all NATO and other military bases and the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and other international conflicts. Instead of wasting money on battlegroups and militarisation of civil sectors, the EU member states should finally deliver on their commitment to devote a minimum of 0.7 per cent of their GNP to development aid.

Disarmament and the reduction of armed forces must be put on the agenda in all EU countries. The enormous arms exports of EU countries must be stopped as they contribute to repression, violent escalation of conflicts and increased poverty worldwide. Total nuclear disarmament must finally be implemented. The money saved should be used to address the social inequalities in large parts of Europe and the rest of the world.

**GUE/NGL demands and struggles for a Europe of peace, social justice and solidarity!**

### ***References:***

\* European Commission, Communication to the Council and the European Parliament, March 11, 2003, [http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com03\\_104\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf); and European Commission, Press Release, March 11, 2003, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-03-358\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-03-358_en.htm)

## **GUE/NGL MEPs on the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET):**

Javier Couso Permuy – Member (Vice Chair of AFET), Spain  
Sabine Lösing – Member (Coordinator), Germany  
Jean-Luc Mélenchon – Member, France  
Miguel Urbán – Member, Spain  
Sofia Sakorafa – Member, Greece  
Takis Hadjigeorgiou – Substitute, Cyprus  
Helmut Scholz – Substitute, Germany  
Marie-Christine Vergiat – Substitute, France  
Malin Björk – Substitute, Sweden

## **GUE/NGL MEPs on the European Parliament's Security and Defence Sub-Committee (SEDE)**

Sabine Lösing – Member (Vice Chair of SEDE) + (Coordinator), Germany  
Javier Couso Permuy – Member, Spain  
Miguel Urbán – Substitute, Spain

For more details about the information contained in this leaflet, please contact:

*[karin.schuttpelz@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:karin.schuttpelz@europarl.europa.eu)*

*or*

*[stelios.christodoulou@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:stelios.christodoulou@europarl.europa.eu)*



Javier Couso Permuy

Miguel Urbán



Sofia Sakorafa



Helmut Scholz



Jean-Luc Mélenchon

Sabine Lösing



Malin Björk



Takis Hadjigeorgiou

Marie-Christine Vergiat



The GUE/NGL group in the European Parliament is made up of 52 MEPs from 23 different political delegations and 13 member states who are working for peace, solidarity, social justice, equality, democracy and human rights in Europe and beyond.

European United Left • Nordic Green Left



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

**GUE/NGL**  
[www.guengl.eu](http://www.guengl.eu)



Produced by GUE/NGL Communications Unit:  
GUENGL-Communications@europarl.europa.eu  
Photos: GUE/NGL  
Design: Charli Aron  
© GUE/NGL - Brussels 2016  
Printed on recycled paper

European United Left/Nordic Green Left  
European Parliament  
Rue Wiertz 43  
1047 Brussels  
T +32-(0)228-42683