

<http://divergences.be/spip.php?article976>



Tobias Pflüger*

60 years of NATO are enough!

- Archives - Archives Générales 2006 - 2022 - 2008 - N°15 Octobre 2008 - International - OTAN -

Date de mise en ligne : Monday 29 September 2008

Copyright © Divergences Revue libertaire en ligne - All rights reserved

Confronting the war alliance with mass protests

In spite of all predictions of its imminent dissolution, in recent years NATO has developed a frightening war dynamic. On all levels, the alliance is preparing itself for future wars.

From a nuclear first strike strategy, the escalation of counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan and the intensification of NATO-EU cooperation, through to a institutional renewal: there are more than enough reasons to confront the 60th jubilee of the war alliance, due to be celebrated on 3 and 4 April 2009 in Kehl and Strasbourg, with mass protests.

Nuclear first strike strategy and missile defence shield

In a position paper by five high-level NATO strategists, published in early 2008 ("Towards a new Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World"), the nuclear first strike strategy is being promoted openly. "The first use of nuclear weapons must remain in the quiver of escalation as the ultimate instrument to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction". Such nuclear first strikes should also and especially be possible against states which themselves don't possess nuclear weapons "such as Iran.

Because to the nuclear sword a matching shield is to be developed, it was decided at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2007 to intensify the planning for a comprehensive NATO missile defence shield. This shield should be created in addition to the already planned US installations in Poland and the Czech Republic. The decision is based on a secret feasibility study which NATO contracted out to several armaments companies. According to the estimates of these arms companies, it will cost, in total, 20 billion Euros. The German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), which advises the German government, estimates the costs of this destabilising project to be twice as high.

Afghanistan: prototype for civil military counter-insurgency operations

The NATO military operation in Afghanistan set into motion a cruel escalation. Since NATO's ISAF troops act more and more in an offensive manner, the armed skirmishes and deaths among the civilian Afghan population increase dramatically.

Under the military occupation, the structures of a liberal market economy have been created, which completely fail to reduce blatant poverty in Afghanistan. According to the UN Development Programme (UNDP) the humanitarian situation has changed for the worse since the NATO operation began: 61% of the population are chronically undernourished, 68% do not have access to drinking water. Even when it comes to women's rights, improvements are minimal according to UNDP.

NATO's occupation of Afghanistan is the problem and not the solution for this oppressed country. Therefore immediate withdrawal from Afghanistan is badly needed. Instead, NATO wants to send more troops to the country. Also the German government has decided to "put more robust measures at the centre", as Minister of Defence Franz-Josef-Jung announced in March 2008.

Via the civil-military cooperation as it is practised in Afghanistan, even development aid is being integrated into the NATO war efforts. Caritas International criticised NATO in June 2008, saying that "the distribution of aid money is not linked to the real need for aid, but oriented towards the need of counter-insurgency". At the NATO summit in Bucharest it was decided to implement an "also kept secret" "action plan", which will make civil-military counter-insurgency generally the focus of present and future NATO missions.

Brothers in spirit: intensification of NATO-EU cooperation

Shortly after he took office, the newly elected French president Nicolas Sarkozy started a real NATO charm offensive. He announced that France would fully re-integrate itself into NATO's military structures after being absent for more than 40 years.

Already both organisations co-operate closely, for example within the framework of the Berlin Plus agreement, which allows the EU to use NATO resources for its operations. But France, which until the end of 2008 has the EU Council presidency, will now intensify co-operation at all levels. For this, the Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) proposes a stronger interlinking of both organisations by creating a "civil-military planning and conduct capability within NATO", which would "co-ordinate the civilian and military capabilities of the EU and the military capabilities of NATO in one place [...] [U]nder the motto of 'Berlin Plus Reversed' NATO could be granted the opportunity to draw on the EU's civilian capacities."

Institutional renewal

Just in time for the 60th jubilee in 2009 NATO, want to agree, or at least set in motion, a new NATO Strategic Concept.

The position paper "Towards a New Grand Strategy", referred to earlier, proposes a wide range of measures, among them that a UN mandate should no longer be a prerequisite for future NATO wars. Another demand that stands out is that the alliance in the future "should abandon the consensus principle at all levels below the NATO Council, and introduce at the committee and working-group levels a majority voting rule". In addition, the authors propose that countries, which do not want to be part of a certain mission, would in future not have any right to take part in decisions "only those who take part in the combat should take part in decisions: "It has always been left to individual nations to contribute what capabilities or forces they can. But nations that do not contribute forces should also not have a say in the conduct of military operations. We therefore propose [...] that only those nations that contribute to a mission "that is, military forces in a military operation" should have the right to a say in the process of the operation."

How much of these and other demands will be part of a new Strategic Concept is at present unclear, but they will play an important role in the upcoming debate.

60th NATO jubilee " call for protests in Strasbourg and Kehl

NATO will "presumably" on 3 and 4 April 2009 in Strasbourg and Kehl celebrate its 60 years of existence. This is also an invitation to us, the peace and anti-war movement. NATO stands for the military enforcement of Western interests, and it is and more and more an alliance to fight wars. We should start a campaign to deligitimise NATO "it is superfluous and should be dissolved. A highlight of this campaign could be international actions against the 60 years of NATO summit in Strasbourg and Kehl.

* WRI Council member and member of the European Parliament