

Amongst the contentious issues under debate prior to the Lisbon referendum was the effect that it would have on Irish neutrality. Irish neutrality is at this stage a myth. Due to our governments cooperation with the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan there is no credible stance of neutrality. However there is a more dangerous move afoot that threatens what little guise of neutrality we have left. This is the increasingly aggressive nature of the roles adopted by Irish forces under EU led missions. The role that Irish troops will play in EU Battle Groups is also an uncomfortable development. First let us examine the changing nature of the Irish Defence Forces.

Whilst in years gone by the Irish army has served as a peace keeping force it was always a particularly haphazard affair. Poorly funded and armed the service that soldiers could provide was constrained by these limitations. Compare that to today when approximately 1 BILLION euros is spent by the government each year in maintaining the armed forces. Whilst recruitment has halted due to the recession the acquisition of new equipment has not. There are roughly 8,500 troops in the IDF, they are supplied with Israeli made helmets,



Austrian assault rifles, Swedish anti tank weapons and British artillery. The weaponry given to the Defence Forces does not reflect the true nature of its roles in reality. The armoured vehicles for example that are being purchased each year are expensive Swiss manufactured assault vehicles. They are more commonly seen in use with military being deployed to fight a war, rather than protect refugees etc. Likewise the Army Ranger wing a unit that is equivalent to the SAS is deployed to Chad in a rather dubious role. The mission in Chad is itself of questionable merit. The expenditure on the armed forces is neither sustainable nor sensible. Ireland does not require aggressive weaponry, large scale combat vehicles etc. if as we've so often hear, Irish soldiers are merely peacekeepers then why are they equipped as they are?

The answer is clear. The Irish Defence Forces are being changed into a force that is designed to participate in a more aggressive role. This is clear on the political scene as we have now seen Irish inclusion in the controversial EU "battle groups". These are seen by many to be the precursor to a European wide defence force akin to NATO. Ireland currently participates in the Nordic battle group. These groups under the Amsterdam treaty are described as peacemakers. We have seen the effects of armies deployed to bring "peace" in Iraq and Afghanistan. Peace is an admirable goal but more often than not it is a term used by politicians to describe their ideal circumstances in said countries. These battle groups can be up to 3000 strong as in the Nordic case. They are under the authority of the European Union. The hypothesis that these units will be for humanitarian purposes and peacekeeping is appealing but is hiding their true purpose. They are merely another step in the continuing solidification of a united states of Europe. We are told that

Irish participation will still be under the much vaunted triple lock system. However this is the same system that approved the Irish deployment of troops to Chad.

The mission to Chad is highly controversial coming as it does with the French governments long involvement with their former colony. This dubious element of the mission has been confirmed with suspicious movements of European troops often straying far outside their designated area of control into Sudanese territory. The corrupt and violent regime of French backed president Deby is being supported by European troops who are helping to stabilise his control over Chad and its oil supplies.



The involvement of Irish soldiers in this neo colonial adventurism has cast a pall over our supposed clean record of participating in humanitarian missions. Are Irish soldiers to risk their lives to ensure French influence in the region? Why, we must ask, are our troops involved in such missions? The answer is that they are increasingly becoming part of wider European military projects. This will only intensify under Lisbon. The treaty aims as we have seen to

increase European hegemony and influence. To do this there must be a military influence. This military project will most definitely entail Irish involvement despite repeated claims by politicians that they would never jeopardise the integrity of the armed forces. As we have seen they have already done so through their disastrous support of the mission in Chad and the European battle groups.

We must also question whether it is morally correct for Irish soldiers to fight alongside British troops when the same troops occupy the six counties. It is morally repugnant to suggest that there should be any alliance between the two. We have seen that the British army continues to recruit and dupe young Irish men to serve in their ranks. They on occasion even die in the service of the British Empire. There can never be a place for any Irishman or woman in the forces of the British Empire which has used its armies to wreak terror on the people of Ireland. Likewise we would urge all thinking Irish people to refrain from joining the forces of the free state as they are increasingly being used to implement a wider European imperial goal. Why should our brave young men and women die so that Brian Cowen and his cohorts will get a pat on the back from the French government.

So let us say No to the militarisation of the European union, let us ensure that no Irish soldier will ever lose their lives in service to a project that will only serve the bourgeoisie governments of Europe. Let us say no to the occupation of foreign nations and oppression of native people by Irish troops, say no to all of this, say no to Lisbon 2.