**Denmark has an opt out from the EU militarization**

Denmark is the only EU member state that has rejected to support the EU militarisation. The reason for this is not a peace policy by the Danish government. It is because of the Danish people. In 1992 a majority of the Danes voted no to the Maastricht Treaty. After the Danish people’s no to the Maastricht treaty Denmark got several opt outs from the EU. One of the opt outs is a Danish no to participation in the EU’s defense policy. It has been part of the EU treaties since the Maastricht Treaty entered into force.

The Danish defense opt out in the EU is not a simple declaration from Denmark like the Irish statements on neutrality that have no real content in relation to the EU.

Denmark is because of the opt out not a member of the EU Defense Agency - an agency that actively supports and cooperates with the EU weapon industry. Furthermore Denmark does not participate in the EU Battle Groups or in any other parts of EU’s defense policy.

The Danish government would have liked Denmark to join the EU defense policy but it is only possible if the Danish people will support such a decision in a referendum. But after failing twice to get rid of two other opt outs in referendums (the euro in 2000 and the supranational justice policy in 2015) as well as Brexit I doubt that the Danish government will dare to ask the people in the near future. However the increased effort to militarize the EU is also a challenge for Denmark because when military matters are moved to the EU budget there is a risk that Denmark will have to pay and also indirectly be responsible for the EU policies that we are not part of. Despite this I will recommend Ireland also to get an opt out from the EU defense policy. The German and French governments are working on making EU into a new military super power and our nations do not have an interest in being part of such a project. We need instead to work for the respect of international law and collective security in the world through the United Nations.

The Danish government and different pro EU parties are sometimes criticising the defense opt out and claiming that it prevents Denmark from participating in EU peace missions for instance in removing land mines or fighting pirates in the sea close to Somalia. But their arguments are not very strong. It is only the EU missions that we are prevented from participating in. Denmark can participate in all the UN missions that we like and the UN wants us to help more. We can even join UN peace missions together with the EU or EU countries. But our soldiers cannot participate in EU missions and have EU flags on their uniforms. I think that is great. Just like our soldiers should not have a German, American or Chinese flag on their uniform.

So why does not the Danish government do more to help the UN in its peace missions? The only thing that is blocking that is themselves. Well I can only guess and one guess would be that some of our politicians have lost traditional Scandinavian values and want us to build a world order together with the EU and the US. Today most Danish political parties support military missions without a clear UN mandate. They think they are progressive. But they do not see the big problem in such a world order where the US, NATO and the EU start its own wars. Because they claim that there must be good reasons for such wars. But if that is what we will do then other big states like China, Russia, India or Brazil can also start wars with the same set of arguments. The world will and to some degree already is getting more dangerous for all of us due to illegal wars.

Of all the EU countries that have joined the EU battle groups only two countries seem to have had rules about only going to war when there is a UN mandate (or for defense). Those were Ireland and Finland. However Finland changed its law when it was joining the EU battle groups and it was clear that the reason for changing the law was that there could be situations where the EU will use military force with no UN mandate and then Finland must be able to participate in the EU military actions. This development is the total wrong way to go. We must strengthen the respect for the UN charter and international law. Not undermine it.

My vision for Denmark is that we must make a change back to what used to be a Nordic way of looking at security policy. Denmark could together with the other Nordic countries and likeminded nations like Ireland present a security policy built on the UN charter, international law and human rights. We must of course also be able to defend ourselves but we must never and shall never make the world more insecure.

The development in the EU is going the wrong way and the EU defense policy is also about supporting the weapon industry through for instance the EU defense agency. I cannot understand how a neutral state as Ireland can support this. Using tax money to support the weapon industry - that sells weapons to governments that have a record of violating human rights - does not seem to be a peace project.

What Ireland chooses to do must be up to the Irish people but I hope sincerely that the Irish people will make the decision with open eyes and after a serious public debate about the militarization of the EU, the EU support of the weapon industry and alternatives to that development.

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