

Alliances, Power and Peace in a Changing World



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Ours is an era of change, change actual, change possible and change threatened. All of it brings challenge to Scots who want peace and are ready to work for it. In this pamphlet we will try to tease out the questions and suggest the principles on which we might base our responses.

The peace agenda is a key element in our thinking about what kind of country we want to live in. We want Scotland to be known for its contribution to peace, at home and abroad. Scottish CND supports Scottish independence, not least because it will provide the opportunity not only to rid Scotland of nuclear weapons but to make it practically impossible for one of the P5 nuclear weapon states, the remnant UK, to continue its nuclear role. The prospect of independence poses the “what kind of country” question especially sharply, but it is a question for the present as well as for the future. Working for peace now requires not only preparing for independence itself but should also mean exercising energetically the freedom to act that we already have, as individuals, as

communities and as a nation with devolved powers and a growing sense of national autonomy.

The link between future possibilities and present action is also based on our concept of security. The future of humanity depends on re-framing that term – shifting it from the the exclusive and one-dimensional idea of the use of force, defensive or otherwise, into a holistic understanding of human safety that focusses on fundamental issues such as access to food, health services, a clean and stable environment, a personal life and community and cultural values. A test question would be: What would make a single parent on universal credit in Wester Hailes or Lochboisdale feel secure, and why? Also, our safety depends on the safety of others, as is obvious when facing

threats like climate breakdown and global nuclear conflict. The issues of peace are pervasive through all our present concerns.

NATO, now 70 years old, is still a fundamentally about the establishment and spread of US military and economic power, its leadership of the western bloc and its search for new client states. NATO has extended its role far beyond the original concept of a defensive western military alliance in counterbalance to the Soviet Union to expansion into Eastern Europe and engaging in war beyond Europe, notably in Afghanistan and Libya. It is the major element in the fabric of the US empire, though there are also significant separate US military alliances with South Korea and with Japan, as well as direct US military activity in Africa under AFRICOM.

There are however new factors which are likely to affect NATO's future. One is the (at least perceived) decline in the status of the US itself which inevitably encourages states within its sphere of influence to consider their options anew. This may be one reason for the desire on the part

of powerful European nations, like Germany and France, to acquire (as permitted by the Lisbon Treaty) quasi-statehood and its own defence structure for the European Union. It also seems highly likely that Brexit will serve to accelerate that process, given that the UK has been resistant to a clear EU military identity on the grounds that it will undermine NATO and reliance on the US for military security. At present European defence project is presented as wholly collaborative with NATO but is likely to be linked to a wish for European autonomy.

Another fresh factor is the Nuclear Ban Treaty – the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The hateful NATO nuclear policy, which is currently central to the alliance, has the concept of “sharing”, whereby non-nuclear share in nuclear planning and in nuclear weapon delivery, as well as a horrifying first-strike option. Currently there are US nuclear weapons in Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany and Turkey. The UK's own nuclear arsenal is a part of the NATO nuclear force. The nuclear weapon policy is however not an article of the North Atlantic

Treaty itself. So a NATO member state can in fact sign and ratify the TPNW without breaching the terms of the NATO treaty. You might be uneasy about such pragmatism in regard to US hegemony but it is worth noting that this fine wedge might well be driven in further, to the point where some member states, in recoil from an ever more blatant domination of the alliance by the US, will seek a re-balancing or an exit.

Such wedge-driving is of course only rational for states which are already in NATO. It would make absolutely no sense for an independent Scotland to join such an aggressive alliance as NATO and align with the US bloc. The Partnership for Peace is also problematic since membership also involves clear alignment with and support for the US/Western bloc with collaboration on such matters as military intelligence gathering and, as in the case of Ireland, permitting the use of Shannon airport for US military transit. It also should go without saying that whatever the constitutional position of Scotland we ought to be highlighting and resisting NATO's role in driving

the arms trade and in militarising the world.

A network of sectional alliances can act like switchgear that overrides rationality and automatically pulls states into wars - a significant factor in the outbreak of WW1 as well as those in more recent history. A Scotland wishing to be free of alignment with a particular power bloc will also need to scrutinise its relationship with the EU, whether as a member or not. As a potential EU member Scotland could consider asking for an opt-out from European Union policies in relation to security and defence, as Denmark has done, and refusing to join without it. On the question of alignment we have to insist that in keeping our distance from NATO and EU militarisation we are in no way thereby signalling support for or a relaxed attitude towards an aggressive Russia or a China with global reach ambitions.

On the positive side, our connections, solidarities and alignments can be built on two interdependent strands. There should be a focus on active involvement in institutions, including the UN

and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. At the other extreme from its collusion with the US over Shannon Airport, Ireland, with its strong record of effective diplomacy on global issues such as disarmament, has shown what a small nation can achieve in this field. We should aim to emulate them and we should start on that now by increasing our presence at and contribution to international forums and structures. We can also play a part in and even lead on individual issues of global concern. The TPNW provides an excellent example of how this

might work. Scotland can be an “issue ally” with the TPNW supporting states on the basis of a shared perspective that nuclear weapons, with their potential for catastrophic harm on the global scale, are everyone’s business. The same should hold true for climate breakdown.

We swim in a vast pool of interactions, solidarities, dependencies, cross-border identities, economic chains and possibilities. In this age gated communities cannot exist. We have no choice but to widen our horizons.

Scottish CND is opposed to and campaigns against NATO membership for an independent Scotland and is in fa-vour of the withdrawal of the UK from the alliance. When independent Scotland should be free of exclusive military alliances and covert military collaborations with other states, and should make its contribution to true security by engaging with inclusive institutions.



Scottish CND

77 Southpark Avenue, Glasgow, G12 8LE, Scotland
www.banthebomb.org scnd@banthebomb.org