

Global women for peace against Nato.

NATO's Northern expansion – encircling of Russia - consequences and threat

Dear friends

I am greeting you from the Arctic – and would at the same time like to express how very happy I am to be part of this initiative! My presentation is about NATO in the Arctic, primarily as seen from Norway, considered the “eyes and ears of NATO in the north”.

Half of the Arctic belongs to Russia, the rest belongs to the other circumpolar countries Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the USA. The Arctic is presently attracting huge international interest as the global warming and the melting of the ice now open up for more fisheries, more drilling of oil and gas and extractions of minerals from the sea bed, and, not least, allow for new and efficient transportation routes notably in the North-East passage with new possibilities for trading between the West and the far East.

The location of the Arctic and this new situation with access to valuable natural resources adds to the already quite heavy militarization of the area. The biggest fear to us right now is the effects of the new and extended agreement of military cooperation between USA and Norway involving also military bases, which nullifies Norway's previous official base policy. This escalation will certainly be seen as a serious and additional threat to Russia's security. This ongoing heavy militarization of the Arctic will provide not more security, as proclaimed by the government, but less! The situation can be compared to the dangerous tension that came out of the planned stationing of Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba in 1962.

If the Russian president's main security concern is to keep NATO away from the Russian border, he has indeed obtained the opposite, and instead have seen an implementation of the report of the Rand Corporation in 2019 on overstretching and destabilizing Russia. A poll in Norway in March 2022 showed that 96.4% were pro-NATO. Whilst Norway previously have been thinking that a friendly country supporting a strong UN would be the best security guarantee, now, with the strong “Stoltenberg-effect” on his native country, the majority, at least as expressed by politicians, media and many academics, seems to think that peace necessitates weapons, ever more lethal. The fact that most people in Norway are against nuclear weapons does not seem to stop their support for an oversized military alliance based on nuclear strategies and with a first use doctrine.

Of the five Nordic countries, Denmark, Iceland and Norway were among the founding countries of NATO, whilst Sweden and Finland have been non- allied countries, only seeking membership in NATO after that Russia attacked Ukraine 24.02.22. Both Sweden and Finland had, however, been so-called “partners in peace” for some years and with NATO becoming more and more global, they have also participated in different NATO exercises and so called NATO- “operations” out-of-area.

Membership in the North Atlantic Pact has until recently been a political divisive issue between the traditionally pro-military and capitalistic right wing parties and the socio democrats on one side and the more progressive left on the other. It was the Norwegian Labour party, which in a very clandestine and non-democratic way managed to get Norway into NATO in 1949 and according to historians also influenced Denmark.

In Iceland there were riots in the streets of Reykjavik 4. April 1949 when the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington, D.C. and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, (Bjarni Benediktsson,) said on behalf of his mostly pacifist country: "My people are unarmed and have been unarmed since the days of our Viking forefathers. We neither have nor can have an army...But our country is, under certain circumstances, of vital importance for the safety of the North Atlantic Area." The Security dilemma presented in few words – and US bases were established in Keflavik in Iceland and Thule in Greenland!

The Norwegian Prime Minister at the time, (Einar Gerhardsen), wanted to keep good relations also with the Soviet Union, having liberated the northern part of the country from Nazi reign, promised prior to entering NATO, that there would be "no foreign military bases in Norway in times of peace". At the time Norway was the only NATO country with a border with the Soviet Union. For many years it seemed important to Norway to keep a certain balance between deterrence and reassurance in the dialogue with the Soviet Union and later with Russia.

Recently, however, the US have been granted four new bases in Norway, so called "joint areas", but with almost full US control – breaking paragraph one of the Constitution guaranteeing Norwegian sovereignty. The Norwegian government had already for years allowed sophisticated military installations of surveillance and spy-facilities – in the air – on the land – in the sea. These decisions have to a very limited degree been available to the public, perhaps not even to the Parliamentarians. This is the black hole of democracy – also in our countries ranking on top of the global successful-democracy-list. The government has also allowed allied nuclear submarines in two Norwegian harbours, NATO and US military exercises are much more frequent, bigger and closer to the Russian border than ever before. The country is sending weapons to a country in war, which was unheard of previously and military budgets are skyrocketing and will reach the 2 % of GDP demand by NATO – whilst inflation, higher interests rates and diminishing welfare programs create difficulties for people with ordinary income and below – and solidarity with the south is diminishing.

Norway is through this process, which is already also affecting Denmark, and soon will reach both Finland and Sweden, a part of the global network of US foreign bases – considered to be around 800. For comparison, Russia is supposed to have 8 and China 1. These bases are environmentally disastrous, they may be harbouring nuclear weapons, they are not under Norwegian law and protection, but under US dominance. International law, as developed by the UN, is replaced by the so-called "rules based order" profiting the Western big powers – whether countries or multinationals.

With these bases USA is in fact able to attack Russia, next door, with nuclear weapons without Norway knowing, and perhaps also without the other countries of NATO knowing. The confusion created as to what is NATO and what is the US is probably deliberate.

Instead of the old patriarchal model of economic growth, militarism, competition and confrontation, with warfare over welfare, which risks leading ultimately to apocalypse, we acutely need to strengthen our peace- and disarmament processes, including eliminating nuclear arms, and in stead build trust and international solidarity. NATO must never replace the UN.

Friends, we have difficult and urgent tasks ahead of us in order to make our countries use NATO paragraph 13 which says Any body having been a member for a year, can leave the organisation by informing the US government who will then inform the others.

Thank you!