Irish government moves to abolish ‘triple lock’ on Irish neutrality

The Workers’ Party condemns the recent move by the Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Green Party coalition to abolish the Triple Lock mechanism. This is the culmination of a long process of watering down Irish neutrality, and is evidence of the desire of the political elite to draw Ireland closer to NATO membership and to further undermine the authority and influence of the United Nations.

The Triple Lock goes back to the 1960s, but was formalised by the Seville Declaration of the Nice Treaty. This states that members of the Irish Defence Forces shall not serve abroad without the agreement of the Dáil, the government and the Security Council of the United Nations or UN General Assembly.

Announcing his plan to scrap the Triple Lock, Micheál Martin has stated that “the abolition of the Triple Lock would allow Ireland to take part in missions organised by other bodies such as the EU or African Union.” We must remember that both the EU and the African Union are mere regional bodies with no international status or remit outside their own borders. The UN, on the other hand, has a global membership and global legitimacy.

Any move away from the Triple Lock would, in reality, constitute a political realignment towards NATO and a move away from multilateralism to unilateralism in international affairs. NATO is effectively an instrument of U.S. foreign policy globally with a long history of rogue actions in contravention of international law.

While former defence Minister Simon Coveney has previously stated that we will not be joining NATO “any time soon,” what he describes as a necessary redefinition of our neutrality has taken the form of increased partnership and cooperation with NATO through the inappropriately named NATO Partnership for Peace. Some of the implications of this have included increased interoperability of our defence forces and military equipment and conducting joint military exercises. If we add to this the fact that Shannon airport has long been used by the United States military as a re-fuelling base for their illegal interventions in the Middle East, it would seem that there is, in practice, very little of our neutrality left for Coveney and Co. to redefine.

It is patently ridiculous that once again Micheál Martin has used the need to protect Ireland from international cyber-attacks as an excuse to cosy up to NATO. One would hope that the Tánaiste would be aware that cyber-security is a matter for the gardaí and not the army. And if Minister Martin thinks we can protect against future cyber attacks with tanks or advanced artillery, he really should not hold the position of Minister for Defence.

In January, a joint declaration on EU – NATO cooperation was issued explicitly designating the EU as the junior partner. Further, it called for the strengthening of European military capacities and increased interoperability between their respective militaries. The outbreak of the war in Ukraine increased military cooperation between NATO and the EU and offered a golden opportunity to the government parties to move decisively to undermine the Triple Lock and neutrality. Government approval for the participation of up to thirty defence forces personnel as party of the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) is symbolic of this shift.

It is important to stress that NATO is not a defensive alliance but is rather an aggressive, expansionist military force. It is directly responsible for disastrous wars across the globe from Yugoslavia to Iraq and Libya. Furthermore, it was NATO expansionism, and EU/NATO interference that set-in motion the chain of events that led to the current war in Ukraine which has claimed thousands of lives. NATO has also actively interfered to prevent any ceasefire or peace negotiations in Ukraine. NATO has a long history of sponsoring and supporting reactionary regimes and is no friend of democracy or the working class.

Opinion polls taken in 2022 indicate that a majority of Irish citizens (somewhere between 60 – 70%) support Irish neutrality and the retention of the Triple Lock. We have no doubt that, if put to the popular vote, any motion to abolish the triple-lock would suffer a comprehensive defeat. It is not surprising that the government is reluctant to let this happen given their craven subservience to U.S. imperialism. The government represent the interests of globalised financial capital, as opposed to the independent economic and social development of Ireland based on mutual cooperation and peace between nations.

The Triple Lock is, at present, the most significant legislative bulwark supporting Irish neutrality and cannot be given up without a fight. It is incumbent on all progressively minded people who value the principles of peace, sovereignty and social and economic development to oppose this move by the Irish government to go against the wishes and the interests of the Irish people. The Workers’ Party will resolutely oppose any attempt to undermine Ireland’s neutrality.

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The Workers’ Party of Ireland (Official)

24th November, 2023