

German industry, government planning for resource wars

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A year ago, leading German industrial companies launched the Resource Alliance (Rohstoffallianz) for the purpose of securing the supply of selected raw materials for its shareholders and corporate members. To achieve this goal, it is calling for the use of military assets.

In an interview with Reuters on Monday, the manager of the Resource Alliance, Dierk Paskert, called for “a strategically oriented foreign economic and security policy” to ensure the supply of raw materials for German business.

Although this policy should be guided by the “objective of free and transparent commodity markets,” Paskert said, “it would be naive to take this for granted in the near future.” Developments had moved in “exactly the opposite direction, unfortunately.” Therefore, Paskert concluded, “we [Germany], together with our partners in the EU and NATO, must take on more responsibility in foreign economic and security matters.”

“Taking responsibility in security matters” is a euphemism for military operations. This is indicated by the reference to NATO, a military alliance.

Paskert is calling for resource wars.

In response to a direct question posed by the business daily *Handelsblatt*—“Will we see resource wars?”—Paskert answered in the affirmative, citing historical precedent. “History shows,” he said, “that many conflicts have their origin in the fight for resources... The supply of raw materials is the basis for added value and the well-being of a country, and therefore has geo-political significance.” *Handelsblatt* openly presented the central issue. In a lengthy editorial on the Paskert interview, it wrote that industry would like to see “more government—and military—involvement in securing raw materials.” The

editorial was published under the revealing headline “Expedition Raw Materials: Germany's new course.”

In political circles, *Handelsblatt* explained, this demand by industry is finding a hearing. For the government, “the control of raw materials is a ‘strategic issue’ for German foreign policy.” One can imagine “that existing raw material partnerships are not sufficient. ‘Security and military instruments’ are also required.”

According to *Handelsblatt*, the chancellor wants to appoint a coordinator who will “better dovetail the interests of strategic industries with defence and security technology, contributing to the securing of raw material supplies.” Strategic partners of Germany, such as Saudi Arabia, should be supported with weapons technology before Germany is forced in a crisis to send its own soldiers. And the armed forces should be “better prepared for their new role as guardians of strategic interests.” *Handelsblatt* cited the 2011 Defence Policy Guidelines, which declare that the “security of and access to natural resources” is the “most important security and military policy interest.”

This focus is not entirely new. In the mid-1990s, the Defence Policy Guidelines defined the main tasks of the Bundeswehr (German armed forces) as the “maintenance of free world trade and access to strategic raw materials.” This orientation paved the way for the transformation of the German military from a territorial defence force into an international intervention force.

In official propaganda, the military missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan and elsewhere were justified on humanitarian grounds or as part of the “war on terror.” The government and big business now believe, however, that the time has come to bring public opinion into line with the real aims of such operations.

In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on

January 31, German Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière declared that in order to convey the need for direct military interventions in the future, a different sort of justification would have to be found. “International military operations have to be explained realistically,” he declared, “and the justifications should not sound too pathetic.”

Under the direction of de Maizière, the son of an army general and long-time chief of staff of the Bundeswehr, the transformation of the Bundeswehr is making rapid progress. Reconnaissance and transport capacities, as well as rapidly deployable combat troops, are being expanded. In addition, the Bundeswehr wants to acquire armed drones and two “joint support ships,” which, in the words of a senior officer, are suited to “demonstrating political will,” i.e., to intimidating opponents and rivals.

Germany is meanwhile becoming involved in imperialist wars with increasing aggressiveness. Whereas Berlin displayed certain reservations in Iraq in 2003 and even in the 2011 Libyan war, it now fully supports the French intervention in Mali and the preparations for war against Syria.

The background to this development is the intensified struggle for raw materials, especially with China. Last summer, Resource Alliance head Paskert declared in *BusinessWeek*: “When we consider that China consumes 40 percent of almost all commodities and its needs will continue to increase dramatically, I start to feel uncomfortable in the medium term. China is a giant vacuum cleaner that simply did not exist earlier. We should now give serious thought to the security of supplies for German industry.”

The call by German big business for resource wars recalls the darkest chapters of German history. German war aims in World War I—extensive annexations in France, the Benelux countries and Africa—were based on the requirements and plans of the “leading minds of business, politics and the military,” as the historian Fritz Fischer wrote in 1961 in his groundbreaking book *Germany’s Aims in the First World War*.

The same business circles then supported Hitler because his plans for world conquest and demand for “Lebensraum” in the East corresponded to their expansionist urge for raw materials and markets, and because he destroyed the organized labour movement.

Today, many companies, or their successors, that

supported World War I and World War II are among the sponsors and members of the Resource Alliance. These include the chemical companies BASF and Bayer, which emerged from the infamous IG Farben; the steel giant ThyssenKrupp, a fusion of Thyssen and Krupp, both among the early supporters of the Nazis; the Volkswagen Group, which was founded on Hitler's initiative; and the car company BMW, whose main shareholders, the Quandt family, owe a large portion of their assets to the Nazi policy of Arianisation, forced labour and other Nazi crimes.

As stated on its web site, the Resource Alliance was founded by the “president of the Federation of German Industries, Prof. Dr Hans-Peter Keitel, at the end of 2010 to investigate developments in raw materials markets and the possible responses of industry.” Its top official, Dierk Paskert, is a senior manager who previously served on the board of E.ON, one of Germany's largest energy companies.

The Resource Alliance has very close relations with the German government. On behalf of Economics Minister Philipp Rösler, it manages a support programme that provides conditionally repayable loans to companies for the worldwide development of critical raw materials such as antimony, beryllium, cobalt, fluorspar, gallium, germanium, graphite, indium, magnesium, niobium, platinum group metals, rare earths, tantalum and tungsten.

The fact that German industry once more dares to openly call for imperialist war to secure its raw material needs must be taken as a warning to working people in Germany and in every other part of the world. It is a sharp expression of the growth of global economic and geo-political conflicts that lead inexorably in the direction of world war—unless the imperialists are disarmed through the revolutionary mobilization of the working class.



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