

German President Gauck calls for aggressive foreign policy

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President Joachim Gauck has made it clear in his October 3 speech at a ceremony marking German reunification what the ruling elite expects of the next government—a return to German power politics and other attacks on the working class.

At the heart of Gauck’s speech at the official ceremony in Stuttgart was the demand that Germany should once again play a role “in Europe and the world” that actually corresponds to its size and influence. “The question is posed: Does our engagement match the importance of our country?” asked the president. “Germany is populous, is located at the center of the continent and is the fourth largest economy in the world.”

“In a world full of crises and upheavals,” Gauck openly called for an active and military foreign policy. “Our country is not an island. We should not indulge in the illusion that we can be spared from the political and economic and military conflicts if we do not participate in their solution,” he warned.

It is therefore right to ask, “Is Germany taking its responsibilities seriously for its neighbors in the East, the Middle East and the southern Mediterranean? What contribution should Germany make to winning the emerging powers as partners in the international order? And if we seek a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, what role are we prepared to play in crises in far-off regions?”

Behind his myriad phrases about “freedom”, “peace” and “prosperity”, Gauck made his real concerns abundantly clear. In future, Germany should participate far more actively in military interventions. “Our main interest,” according to Gauck, is “to preserve the political and military order and make them fit for the future, especially in confusing times.”

Gauck’s speech emphasized that the next

government—regardless of its eventual composition—will pursue a much more aggressive foreign policy.

The fact that Gauck expressed his fantasies of a return to German great power politics in an official speech on the Day of German Unity reveals the consensus on these issues within the ruling elite. At the official ceremony, Gauck stood alongside Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) and the state premier of Baden-Württemberg, Winfried Kretschmann of the Green Party.

Immediately after the election, Gauck had invited the leaders of all the parliamentary parties to confidential talks at his official residence Schloss Bellevue. It was agreed not to reveal the content of the discussions, but it can be assumed that foreign policy formed part of the agenda.

In the election campaign, politicians had left it to the media to promote a belligerent foreign policy. Conservative, liberal, and nominally “left” media outlets banged the drum for a US military strike against Syria, and demanded Germany participate. *Die Zeit* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* or *taz* regularly criticised the federal government for its reticence in foreign policy matters. Again and again, Germany’s abstention in the NATO war against Libya was criticized as a serious error that must never reoccur.

After the elections, the head of state is now forging ahead and seeking to bind the next government to a new course. For some time, Germany’s partners, and above all the US, have been demanding a stronger German participation in military interventions in the Middle East. Gauck mentioned that, among other things, “a Polish foreign minister as well as professors from Oxford and Princeton” were “demanding more German engagement in international politics.”

What is the political significance of Gauck's speech?

It shows that the period of Germany's relative foreign policy reserve after the Second World War is over. Against the background of a return of the euro crisis and the intensification of class antagonisms in Germany and internationally, Gauck is committing the ruling elite to pursue Germany's geo-strategic and economic interests by military means once again.

In his speech, Gauck left no doubt that the plans of the ruling class for a more aggressive foreign policy will be linked to a heightening of the social attacks at home. In his incomparable arrogance, he turned directly to the assembled politicians and demanded: "Just as we profit today from the fact that we pushed through reforms a decade ago, we can profit in the future—my dear members of parliament—if we again demonstrate today the courage to implement far-sighted reforms."



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