

German Green Party-affiliated think tank calls for renewed offensive against Russia

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A report issued in September by the Democratization Policy Council (DPC), a US-EU think tank with close links to the German Green Party, criticizes European policy as too “soft” towards Russia and calls for an intensified intervention by the US and EU in the Balkan states to isolate and weaken Moscow.

The report entitled, *The Western Balkans and the Ukraine crisis – a changed game for EU and US policies?*, was drawn up with the support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Serbia. The Heinrich Böll Foundation is the official policy think tank of the German Green Party, and has been one of the most vociferous advocates of a more aggressive German foreign policy directed against Russia.

The DPC report claims that European powers have demonstrated “strategic weakness” and “indecision” in the Ukraine crisis. Europe must overcome its weaknesses and, in collaboration with the US, intensify its efforts to integrate Balkan countries to “reduce Russian influence in the region.”

The report makes absolutely clear that the Western intervention in Ukraine and its aggression against Russia has nothing to do with the much touted slogans of “defending democracy” and “European values.”

What is at stake are definite geo-political interests.

Echoing the line of German Green Party leaders, who have repeatedly accused the Kremlin of playing the role of the aggressor in Ukraine, the report states “... (Russian) influence has been exercised through Moscow’s playing a spoiler role, capitalizing on Western weakness, stoking ethnic conflicts and political instability in the region with the aim of enhancing its overall geopolitical influence.”

The report concludes: “In order to tackle the regional challenges arising from the current geopolitical confrontation with Russia, the EU and the US should assemble behind a joint strategy to limit Moscow’s capacity to create mischief and undermine Western interests.”

At the center of such “Western interests” is control over the energy resources of the region. The report details the various energy supply routes linking Europe to Russia. It

argues that the EU effectively sabotage the proposed South Stream pipeline project, which is due to supply gas from Russia to Europe while bypassing Ukraine. The EU could only approve such a project, the report states, after the conflict in the east of the country has been resolved in accordance with European interests.

The report declares that many European states, including those in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, are dependent on Russian gas supplies. This situation must be transformed.

Noting that the shooting down of the Malaysian plane MH17 had played a key role in precipitating a change in Germany’s foreign policy towards Russia the report cynically implies that other states can be pressured to develop new energy supplies and change their policy toward Russia.

The report states: “Convincing countries like Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia that have a 100 percent dependency on Russian gas has proved especially difficult. But larger members with close economic ties to Russia, such as Germany, Britain, France and Italy, were also torn. Germany was finally forced by events – including the downing of Malaysian Airlines MH17 – in Ukraine to give up its remaining illusions in a possible revival of a ‘modernization partnership’ with Russia and to jump-start a completely new Russia policy – at a point in time when Berlin had just begun discussing a redefinition of its foreign and security policy.”

In fact, the full circumstances surrounding the shooting down of airline MH17 have never been fully clarified due to obstruction and delaying tactics from the Ukrainian authorities and their European allies. While Western governments and media immediately pinned the blame on a missile allegedly fired by anti-Kiev rebels in the east of Ukraine, this has yet to be proven. It has also been charged that the plane was brought down an air-to-air missile and machine-gun fire from a Ukrainian government fighter jet, an hypothesis embraced by the New Straits Times, a newspaper that reflects the views of the Malaysian government, which runs the airlines and lost 43 of its citizens in the crash.

The DPC report goes on to identify Serbia as a key partner of Russia in the South Stream project. It advises pressure be applied to Serbia to diversify its energy sources in order to free the country "from its current unhealthy relationship with Russia based on economic-political dependency." To this end, the report declares, Brussels should encourage Belgrade to join the Trans Adriatic TAP-IAP project, which is a rival source of gas to South Stream.

Having argued for concrete economic measures to undermine the Russian energy industry, the document then calls for stepping up NATO's military presence in the Balkans.

Beginning in October, NATO troops are due to be stationed in the Baltic states and a number of Eastern European countries, notably Poland. The deployment is part of the operation to establish a cordon of NATO troops along Russia's eastern border and create the most favorable balance of forces for a Western military confrontation with Moscow.

The report demands that this strategy be enhanced by stationing additional NATO forces in the Balkans. In particular, the report calls for the European Eufor soldiers currently stationed in Bosnia to be replaced by NATO troops. In addition, the report declares that NATO should accelerate the procedure to ensure the rapid acceptance into membership of those Balkan countries which still remain outside its ranks. This would then enable any one of these countries to stage a provocation against Moscow, which would then enable the NATO alliance, on the basis of its mutual defense clause, to undertake military action against Russia.

It is no accident that the Green Party's Heinrich Böll Foundation has given its stamp of approval to the DPC document. The Böll Foundation, headed by Green Party veteran, Ralf Fücks, played a decisive role in the events in Ukraine from a very early stage. The foundation runs its own office in Kiev and was intimately involved in the preparation of the February 22 coup that overthrew President Viktor Yanukovich and brought a right-wing, pro-Western government to power.

German Green Party leaders have consistently glossed over the role of neo-fascist organizations such as Svoboda and Right Sector in the February putsch and uniformly presented Russia as the aggressor in Ukraine. Green Party leader Werner Schulz has variously described Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "criminal," "aggressor," and "war-monger," representing an "expansionist nationalism."

In a paper published in June this year by the Böll Foundation, one of the authors of the latest Balkan report, Bodo Weber, had already criticised "Germany's refusal to take on its international responsibilities" The solution,

according to Weber, rests with "Berlin's already small circle of foreign policy makers and its foreign policy community" who should close ranks regardless of party affiliations and develop common concepts and initiatives."

Germany, Weber continues, must "take the lead in the revival of a common European foreign and security policy." Stressing that the United Nations had failed to meet the challenges of the 21st century's global disorder", Weber concludes... "it may become necessary to take action outside the current international legal framework."

Now the party has sponsored a report which goes so far as to accuse the same EU, which fully supported the far right coup in Kiev, of indecision and weakness with regard to Russia. There is absolutely nothing progressive in the attempts by Russian President Vladimir Putin to utilize Russian chauvinism against the offensive of the EU and US, but any serious analysis of the developments in Ukraine make clear that it was Western powers, with Germany in the lead, which instigated the events leading to the current civil war.

It was the German Green Party which played the decisive role in opening the way for Germany's first foreign military intervention since the Second World War. Former Foreign Minister and Green Party leader Joschka Fischer argued that a German military intervention in the Balkans was necessary to "prevent another Auschwitz".

In fact Germany's intervention in former Yugoslavia was always based on its geo-political interests. Now two decades later, this latest report baldly states that German and Western European countries, in alliance with American imperialism, must advance their interests by building up their forces in the Balkans to prepare for new wars and, in particular, renewed military aggression against Russia.

On two occasions in the last century the attempt by Germany to establish its control over Mittel-Europa and secure *Lebensraum* ("living space") in the east ended in disaster for millions. Now, 70 years on, the Green Party and the Heinrich Böll Foundation are urging the German bourgeoisie to take this same path once again.

See also:

German Greens incite conflict with Russia

<http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2014/05/08/gree-m08.html>



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