

Humboldt University professor Herfried Münkler calls for German leadership in Europe

Johannes Stern
30 May 2015

In a long interview published last week in *Die Zeit*, Humboldt University professor Herfried Münkler accused students who document and criticize his lectures on the blog “Münkler-Watch” of Nazism and anti-Semitism as prevailed in Germany in the 1930s.

The WSWS sharply rejected these completely baseless slanders and explained, “If one wants to draw parallels to ‘political life at universities in 1933,’ they are the exact opposite of Münkler’s characterization. Münkler is the one who stands for dictatorship and militarism and wants to suppress every criticism, not the students. They are attacked and defamed because, among other things, they question the militarist positions of their professor.”

In the latest publication of *Die Zeit*, new comments by Münkler underscore the essential questions bound up with the conflict at Humboldt. Under the title “Grow or Break Apart,” he summarizes the demands he already elaborated in his book *Macht in der Mitte* (Power in the Center). He writes that Germany must again assume the role of leadership in Europe, to establish the continent as a “regional peacekeeping force” and “stabilize the major crisis regions in its neighborhood.”

According to Münkler, “political realism” requires firstly “that one understands this development and accept that: Against its political will the Federal Republic of Germany has become the ‘power in the center,’ and whether the European project continues or the EU falls apart depends upon its policies. The Brussels institutions will only play a subordinate role in this.”

Münkler made no secret in his book that, when necessary, Europe must be held together by force and

without democratic participation. In his own words, he wants Germany, as the “power in the center”, to become the “disciplinarian” of Europe and establish itself as “hegemon” in order to defend its geopolitical and economic interests.

He now affirms this demand for German leadership in Europe in *Die Zeit*: “Just when one is most dependent upon a secure Europe, the EU is least able to fulfill this role. The consequence is a dramatic increase in the significance of the ‘power in the center,’ whose task consists above all in counteracting centrifugal forces.”

He goes on: “At the same time, this ‘power in the center’ must ensure that the different challenges to the borders of Europe are understood and accepted as a shared responsibility.”

Above all, Münkler sees these “challenges” in Ukraine and in the Near and Middle East. While Russian President Vladimir Putin “has rudely awakened Europeans from their political slumber with the annexation of Crimea and massive military support for separatists in Donbass”, the “second post-imperial region on the periphery of Europe [the region between Mesopotamia and the Libyan desert, Levant and Yemen] is even more dangerous for Europe in the long run.”

Europe is beginning to learn “how best to safeguard its foreign policy interests,” he writes, and the crisis in Ukraine has shown “that when things get serious, the governments of the EU member states set the pace, and the Brussels institutions recede into the background.”

When Münkler calls for the “pace to be set” and the “stabilization of crisis regions,” he explicitly includes the use of military means. “To be able to play the role of a ‘power in the center,’ it is inevitable that the

portfolio of forms of power must constantly adapt itself to challenges,” he writes in his book. That applies to “military force, which is a sensitive topic in Germany and consists not only of the armed forces, but also a powerful arms industry.”

What Münkler proposes are not just the war and power fantasies of a megalomaniacal professor. They correspond to the plans of the ruling elite, 70 years after Germany’s defeat in the Second World War and the horrific crimes of National Socialism, to again establish the country as a political and military “peacekeeping force” in Europe and in the world.

Münkler is a significant participant in this project. As an outspoken proponent of combat drones and military deployments, he maintains close ties to the political and military elite, gives speeches before high-ranking military figures and authors political strategy papers for the Foreign Ministry.

As part of the “Review 2014” project initiated by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Münkler wrote one of the more than 50 commissioned “expert opinions” that urge Germany to once again take on the role of “leadership” and “responsibility” in Europe and throughout the world. Under the title “The Dangerous Gap between Appearance and Actions—it is all about the interests involved!” Münkler argues that “as a trading state, or rather an export nation” Germany must “orient itself less on its values and more on its interests.”

A further aspect of Münkler’s “scientific” work is the rewriting of history. His colleague Jörg Baberowski, the Humboldt University historian of Eastern Europe, openly rehabilitates the Nazi-apologist Ernst Nolte and downplays the war of annihilation waged by the Nazis against the Soviet Union in his work. Münkler specializes in the relativization of German responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War in order to justify the return of Germany to aggressive imperialist politics.

A prime example of this can be found in an interview which the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* conducted with Münkler at the “splendid Prussian” institute at Humboldt University he leads “in the center of Berlin.” Under the title, “Herfried Münkler on Guilt,” the professor instructs his readers: “There can hardly be a responsible policy operating in Europe when one has the idea: It was all our fault. With regard to 1914, that

is a legend ...”

Then he complains: “We tilt foreign policy toward the notion: Because we are historically guilty, we are not permitted to participate in foreign policy anywhere; we would rather pay a ransom when the task for Europe is to stabilize the crisis at its borders. One example? The foreign policy disaster of [former Foreign Minister] Guido Westerwelle in the intervention of NATO against the Libyan dictator Gaddafi in 2001.”

Seventy years after the Second World War, the German elite and, above all, the professorate, have gone so far that they call non-participation in a war in which tens of thousands were killed, an entire country ruined and millions turned into refugees a “disaster”! What makes them so furious now is the fact that the population holds a completely different view of these matters.

The ruling class used the abstention of the former coalition government of the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Free Democrats (FDP) in the Libyan war to prepare for a change of course in foreign policy and the return of German militarism. Now they find that opposition to this turn has only grown, despite the political and media barrage in recent years.

According to a report published by this year’s Munich Security Conference, 62 percent of the population held the opinion at the beginning of the year that Germany should exercise restraint in its foreign policy. In 2014, it was “only” 60 percent. When asked explicitly about military deployments, the picture is even clearer. Only 13 percent of those polled declared that the armed forces should be more actively engaged militarily. On the other hand, 82 percent were for fewer engagements.

Münkler’s offensive in *Die Zeit* and the campaign against “Münkler-Watch” is a warning. The ruling elite is determined to carry out its murderous project despite growing popular opposition. It intends to intimidate and silence anyone who dares to challenge this militarist project.



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