

Germany on a war footing

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The decision to be taken today by the parliament to participate in the Syrian war marks a turning point in German foreign policy with terrible consequences.

Following the war in Afghanistan, which continues to this day, Germany has only indirectly taken part in the wars in Iraq, Libya and other countries, which have destroyed large areas of the region, killing and displacing millions. Now it is rushing headlong into a criminal war, which threatens to provoke a global conflict between nuclear-armed powers.

Everyone knows full well that the sending of reconnaissance aircraft, a frigate and up to 1,200 troops is only the beginning. Foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has spoken of military engagement lasting more than a decade, while the editor of *Die Welt*, Stefan Aust, spoke of “a thirty-year war”.

The claim that the intervention’s goal is the destruction of the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist militia is a bare-faced lie.

ISIS, like Al Qaeda before it, only emerged as a result of the wars in the region. Al Qaeda originally served as proxy forces for the US in their conflict with the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan, and ISIS served the same purpose in the wars against Muammar Gaddafi in Libya and Bashar al-Assad in Syria. These Islamist groups were, or continue to be, supported by the CIA, as well as Pakistani, Saudi and Turkish intelligence agencies.

Like Frankenstein’s monster, these forces have partially escaped the control of their creator. But without the bombardment of entire regions, the systematic destruction of physical and social infrastructure, and the political competition between the major and regional powers, the flow of fighters, money and weapons would quickly stop, and ISIS would rapidly disappear. It is certainly absurd to present ISIS as a serious military competitor, which would require a decades-long conflict to defeat.

There are very different motives behind Germany’s

intervention into the war. The ruling elite has come to the conclusion that the global struggle for raw materials, markets and strategic influence must once again be fought with military means to defend the national interests, i.e., the interests of Germany’s big banks and corporations. Some experts admit this openly.

“The key is for Germany, through the military intervention over the coming years, to exert itself as a power with influence in the Middle East,” said the security expert with the government-aligned Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Markus Kaim, in an interview with *Die Zeit*. “This is new for German politics. We haven’t been familiar with it thus far.”

The head of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*’s foreign affairs desk, Stefan Kornelius, wrote, “The German government has now decided that it also intends to pursue its goals by military means.” It is doing this “not only out of solidarity for France (which is no soft, moral consideration, but rather calculated in hard-headed political terms),” but instead “out of national self-interest.”

A strategy paper from the Christian Democratic Union-aligned Konrad Adenauer Foundation already defined this German “national self-interest” in 2001 as follows, “The fundamental German interest in the region can be summarised briefly. It is directed towards the stabilisation of the affected states and countries so as to prevent the endangering of its security and that of its partner European countries, secure an unfettered supply of raw materials and create export opportunities for German business.”

The study remarked on the significance of the “export markets of the region’s core states (Egypt, Turkey, Iran), but above all the solvent Gulf states” for Germany’s export economy. It was appropriate “to therefore make a contribution to secure sales markets, obtain as far as possible unhindered access to markets,

and to take on the competitors, the US, Eastern Europe states and also the East Asian industrial states.”

These goals are now being pursued by warplanes, frigates and soldiers. In so doing, the German ruling elite is drawing on criminal historical traditions. Professor Oskar von Niedermeyer, who at the request of Hitler led the “Institute of General military education” at Berlin University, said at the outbreak of World War II, “the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean” were critical for the “decisive struggle which will take place sooner or later.”

Herfried Münkler, who today teaches political science at the same university, wrote in his recent book *Kriegssplinter*, “Order in the Middle East is among the urgent issues which has remained open since the end of the First World War, and the Europeans will have to ‘invest’ in the stability of this region.”

The latest intervention in Syria will result in horrendous war crimes. Already the destruction in this war, which has been systematically promoted by the major and regional powers for years, has surpassed in many respects what occurred in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya.

A comment by daily *Tagesspiegel* described Syria as a “swamp” and went on, “Whoever has two good and valid reasons to intervene there nonetheless—terrorism and refugees—cannot afford to have any illusions and not block their options for bringing about change by excessive moral ideals.” The abandonment of “excessive moral ideals” is nothing other than a euphemism for war crimes.

The government knows that due to Germany’s past crimes in the First and above all the Second World War, there is deep-rooted opposition to war and militarism in the population. They have therefore rushed the decision for war through parliament within three days to suppress any public discussion about the real aims, risks, consequences, and the lack of any justification for the action under the constitution or international law.

In so doing they enjoy the full support of parliament. The deputies who support the military intervention are personally responsible for the crimes which will result.

The governing parties of CDU, CSU and SPD, which control over four-fifths of the seats in parliament, will vote for the war by a large majority.

The Greens are criticising the intervention from the

right. ISIS must be militarily combatted, said Green parliamentary leader Katrin Göring-Eckardt during the first reading on Wednesday. She regretted merely that the government had not distanced itself from Vladimir Putin and the “mass murderer.” She accused the government of failing to prioritise, as the US is doing, the overthrow of the Assad regime.

Dietmar Bartsch from the Left Party also supports the goal of “destroying” ISIS, but described bombs as the “wrong answer”. Instead, he called for more weapons to be sent to Kurdish proxies and better controls on the Turkish-Syrian border to prevent the flow of support to ISIS.

This is not a principled opposition to German imperialism. If their votes were decisive, the Left Party would vote in favour of military intervention. With its “no” vote, the Left Party is trying to maintain the illusion that there is an opposition party in parliament, when in reality all parties are in agreement on the fundamental issues.

The building of an antiwar movement to prevent the impending catastrophe can only be carried out outside of parliament and the parties represented therein. It must be based on an international socialist program that unites the working class and youth of all countries in the struggle against war and capitalism. This is the aim of the Fourth International, the Socialist Equality Party and its youth organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.



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