

German political establishment calls for faster remilitarization

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4 January 2016

In the course of 2015, Germany had made significant strides in its return to great power politics and the rebuilding of its military. The German army is taking part in risky military provocations against Russia, undertaking new military deployments in Afghanistan and Mali, and is now also taking part in the war in Syria.

Recent comments by leading politicians, journalists and academics leave no room for doubt that the march to war will be continued in 2016. The demands raised extend from new weaponry for the armed forces to the expansion of the role of Germany in the Middle East and Africa, together with the deployment of German ground troops in Syria and the reintroduction of compulsory military service.

After Christmas, the president of the Armed Forces Alliance, André Wüstner, spoke in a long interview with *Deutschlandfunk* radio about the continuing revamping of the armed forces. He said: “We are absolutely in the red and it is important that the [defence] minister and parliament make adjustments because we have a change of situation. And all the things we have to do can no longer be accomplished with the personnel and materials at hand.”

Wüstner demanded immediate measures be taken to increase the personnel of the armed forces by up to 10,000. He insisted that the upper limit of personnel in the armed forces be made more “flexible”, at the very least. In the course of the “new orientation” of the army, beginning in 2010, an upper limit of 185,000 soldiers had been set.

Wüstner also proposed major changes with regard to equipment. If one wanted to “continue upwards starting in 2018” in the so-called NATO spearhead on the Russian border, as promised to NATO, it would be necessary to “give equipment provision a massive

push.”

With regard to the impending deployment in Mali, where 600 additional German soldiers are due to be sent into the fighting in the northern part of the country in 2016, “the classic issue is that we actually extremely urgently need ... a drone capable of bearing weapons.”

In Syria as well, one has “a new deployment scenario, but not everything that we need in terms of capability,” said Wüstner. Although the air force is only sending “six Tornados now to Turkey, in order to have them ready for full deployment starting in January,” this limited deployment is reaching its “limits”. And that ought “not to be the case in so large a country, such a strong country as Germany.”

In Eastern Europe, where “at least since the Russia-Ukraine crisis” there has been a “new emphasis” on “defending the alliance”, the armed forces also faced a great challenge, he said. “We have officers who are classically educated, very good upstanding women and men, who are winning people over in Afghanistan, but who have never carried out a larger campaign in the framework of the brigade ... which one, so to speak, should now practice in Poland or the Baltic states, with a view to the VJTF,” said Wüstner. The VJTF (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force) is a newly founded spearhead of NATO.

It would not work “if one said at the last minute: we should call up a brigade and deploy it in the Baltics and after nothing more than a march ... that we are already overextended.” The issue at the next NATO Defence Ministers meeting in February will be “whether Germany should even mobilise the equivalent of a division. All of this “is an enormous exertion of force.” The military is “on the way at the moment. But it is an enormous exertion and we need equipment for that.”

Behind the repeated claim that the armed forces will

not be able to fulfil the growing demands of NATO without a massive increase in personnel and equipment is the demand by the German elite for the development of Germany as an independent, aggressive great power. Wüstner advocates this openly at the end of the interview, demanding “a good and better white paper than before, with clearly formulated national interests.”

Wüstner’s demands correspond to the plans of the federal government. According to media reports, the defence minister is considering an expansion and more weapons for the armed forces in the spring at the latest.

In the most recent issue of the *Bild am Sonntag*, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble argued for “more deployments, more money for the armed forces and more soldiers” as well as the creation of a “European army.”

Schäuble said provocatively: “My prediction for the next year is that the insight will prevail that the refugee crisis can only be solved together. For Germany this means also, however, that the demands on us in foreign and security policy are greater than perhaps we would like. We will not stabilise the Middle East without a stronger European engagement. The same goes for Africa.”

An article by Dirk Kurbjuweit, entitled “The weapon of courage” in the current issue of *Spiegel* magazine reveals what concrete scenarios are being discussed in Berlin. As “courage”, Kurbjuweit understands the deployment of ground troops in Syria. He writes: “If this [the existing] coalition cannot defeat the IS, the west will have to end its empty strategy and help by means of ground troops. There can be no rational reason why the Germans should not fight as well.”

He added cynically: “It is not easy for me to write this, life is holy to me, but that also goes for the lives of the French, Americans, or British.” And it belongs to the professional duties of a soldier that he has to be ready to defer his individual security when fighting for the collective security of an alliance.”

Kurbjuweit says quite openly that the aim of the West is not to spread democracy. Instead, the purpose is the neocolonial carving up and long term occupation of the region. “If the IS were driven out of Syria and Iraq, that would not be the end of the campaign,” he wrote, adding “The west will also have to take care of the post war order, since new problems will arise, rivalries, disappointments. The goal can no longer be to

implement democracy. The experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown that this is not possible. The goal is to create a stable order. This will require many forces and will last a long time.”

Kurbjuweit played a central role in the return of German militarism. Only a few days after President Gauck, Foreign Minister Steinmeier and Defence Minister von der Leyen announced the end of German military restraint at the Munich Security Conference in 2014, he published an article titled “Culpability Question Divides Historians Today.” His aim was to present a revisionist interpretation of “German guilt” in the First and Second World Wars and downplay the crimes of National Socialism.

In addition to the notorious German apologist for National Socialism, Ernst Nolte, Kurbjuweit also quoted Professors Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski from Humboldt University in Berlin.

Kurbjuweit introduces Münkler as the prime mover for the re-evaluation of German responsibility in the outbreak of the First World War. The theses of the renowned German historian Fritz Fischer are “in principle outrageous,” Münkler declared. Fischer proved in his influential 1961 study, *Germany’s Aims in the First World War*, that German imperialism had a large share of the responsibility in the outbreak of World War I.

Kurbjuweit quotes Baberowski’s now infamous words: “Hitler was not a psychopath, he was not vicious. He did not want to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table.”

The political consequences of these comments are becoming ever clearer. A conspiratorial clique of military and intelligence agencies, warmongers in politics and the media, and war ideologists at the universities have made the decision to go on a war footing once again, despite the crimes of German imperialism in two world wars and widespread anti-militarist sentiments in the population.



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