

After Brussels attacks, German politicians and media demand increased state powers

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German politicians and the establishment media are using the terrorist attacks Tuesday in Brussels to justify moving further to the right. Above all, Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière is beating the drum for the systematic buildup of state powers in Germany and Europe.

“The most important preventative is information. We must exchange the information that exists”, de Maizière told broadcaster ZDF. There were still “separate databases of immigration authorities, visa authorities, police authorities, the intelligence services”, which should be better networked. “Data silos should not hinder preventative action”, the interior minister concluded.

He repeated his demands on the ARD “Tagesthemen” news programme: “There are too many holes on the external borders of the Schengen area. We need registers for incoming and outgoing travel in the Schengen area.” He then added, “Data protection is all well and good, but in times of crises like these, security takes precedence.” According to de Maizière, Europe faces a common threat, therefore a common struggle against terrorism is now necessary.

The leader of the conservative European People’s Party grouping in the European Parliament, Manfred Weber of Germany’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) pleaded for a re-organisation of European security architecture. “No state alone can solve this challenge”, he told *Die Welt* on Thursday. There must be “an end to national egoism, with looking away and accusations”.

The offensive by Christian Democratic politicians is being fully supported by the Social Democratic Party (SPD). For example, in the *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* SPD parliamentary deputy Burkhard Lischka called the “lack of networking by the security authorities at a

European level” the “greatest open flank at European level, which should be closed as rapidly as possible.” His demand: “We need better data exchange between ourselves, and a European Terrorist Defence Centre.”

The SPD representative on the Parliamentary Budget Committee, Johannes Kahrs, demanded a considerable increase in the security services. The 3,000 new positions in the Federal Police could only be a start, he told *Die Welt*, and put the additional requirement at 11,000 positions. To better secure the borders, 3,000 additional officers were needed, to secure air travel it was 5,000 and for Customs an additional 2,500 officers were needed.

The German government’s anti-terrorism plans, which were discussed at a special summit of EU interior ministers in Brussels on Thursday, are an attack on elementary constitutional and legal norms. They abrogate the separation of the police and the secret services, which was anchored in the post-war German constitution following the terrible experiences of the Nazi dictatorship, and establish the foundations for a European police apparatus under German leadership.

The Left Party and the Greens support this course of action and if their representatives criticise the government, as a rule it comes from the right.

For example, in the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*, Green Party leader Cem Özdemir made de Maizière jointly responsible for the deficit in European security collaboration. Özdemir argued that as a member of the EU’s Justice and Home Affairs Council de Maizière could have pushed for a functioning data exchange a long time ago. He insisted that this should now happen decisively, as terrorists and criminals were active across all borders.

Left Party parliamentary deputy Martina Renner, a member of the Parliamentary Domestic Affairs

Committee, complained on broadcaster *Deutschlandfunk* that the demand for more data exchange “fell short in many places”. Often this was “subject to reservations and that doesn’t help the police very much”. What was also necessary Renner argued was “classic police work,” stating further, “And if there are shortages of personnel or technical know-how ... then there should be a conversation in Germany with the BKA [Federal Criminal Police] about what would be necessary to be able to conduct this intelligence work successfully.”

The claim that terrorist attacks can be “solved” or even prevented by increasing the powers of the German and European security authorities is pure propaganda. According to a report by the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz* on Wednesday, it was “highly probable” that “not only the perpetrators in Brussels but also their targets” were “known to the Belgian and other European secret services”.

The first response by the WSWS to the Brussels terror attacks warned: “Despite the horrifying character of the Brussels attacks, it is essential that people not allow themselves to be stampeded into new wars and police state measures by the propaganda of the media and a thoroughly degraded political establishment.”

Everything bourgeois politicians say about the terrorist violence is hypocritical and misleading. The series of attacks by IS in Europe—from those at Charlie Hebdo and the November 13 events in Paris last year up to this week’s bombings in Brussels—cannot be separated from the decades of wars and military interventions, which have destroyed vast tracts of the Middle East and destabilised the rest.

Anyone reading the editorials in the bourgeois press could only conclude that the terrorist attacks have come at a very opportune time for some representatives of the German elite.

In an editorial titled “Terrorism demands uncompromising answers”, Ulf Poschardt, deputy editor of *Die Welt*, called for “barbarism” to be met “calmly and mercilessly”. This included “raising the budgets for domestic security throughout Europe”. Germany too must “examine whether—burdened by the refugee crisis—there were enough police officers at airports and rail stations. Our security forces must be supported in order to guarantee the security that only makes freedom possible.”

In a guest contribution for the *New York Times*, Jochen Bittner, political editor of weekly *Die Zeit*, combines the demand for stepping up state powers at home with a right-wing tirade against Islam. “For the sake of social peace, after the Sept. 11 attacks, and later after the Madrid and London bombings, we told ourselves that Islam and Islamism had nothing to do with each other. But sadly, they do.”

The result was that there were “too few police and intelligence officers”. Europe had “a common European currency, but we still do not have a common European terrorism database.” As a result, the “Islamists in Western Europe seem better coordinated than the European authorities hunting them”. Bittner pins his hopes on German Chancellor Angela Merkel. She should “lead” Europe out of this dilemma and “push for coordination among security services”.

Bittner using the attacks in Brussels to call for a European-wide increase in state powers under “German leadership” says a lot about the real background of the campaign. Bittner enjoys close links to foreign policy think tanks and pro-government foundations, and advocates an aggressive German foreign policy.

In 2013, Bittner was a member of the working group consisting of leading German journalists, academics, military, business representatives and politicians from all the establishment parties who produced a paper titled “New Power—New Responsibility: Elements of German foreign and security policy for a changing world”, which prepared the return of German militarism.

Shortly after this paper was released, he wrote a programmatic article for the *New York Times* titled “Rethinking German Pacifism”, which advocated Germany’s new war policy. He criticized the “too deeply ingrained pacifism” of the Germans and called for more “military action”. Under conditions of growing opposition among workers to social inequality and war, the creation of a European police state pursues this objective.



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