

# Merkel calls for German rearmament ahead of NATO summit

**Johannes Stern****9 July 2016**

On the eve of this weekend's NATO summit in Warsaw, Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) delivered a government statement to the Bundestag (parliament) demanding the acceleration of German re-armament. In addition to expanding the military budget by almost two billion euros in the next year, and "more than an additional 2.5 billion euros" after 2018, Merkel announced that the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) would engage more actively alongside NATO in Iraq, Syria, Libya, the Mediterranean and Afghanistan.

At the heart of the chancellor's speech was a justification for war preparations against Russia, which NATO plans to announce in Warsaw. Right at the start, Merkel praised the so-called "Readiness Action Plan," which NATO had already adopted in 2014 at its last summit in Wales. In particular, Merkel praised the "nine NATO rapid intervention forces, deployable throughout the alliance territory, the so-called Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, and the building up of Force Integration Units in our Eastern NATO partners."

Germany is making "a substantial contribution to these measures," said Merkel. In Warsaw, the "alliance's adaptive measures agreed in Wales would be extended." Essentially, this involves enabling "NATO to increase its presence in the Baltic States and in Poland." This so-called "enhanced forward presence" is important because it is not enough "to be able to move troops quickly." Rather, there must "already be a sufficient local presence."

The plans foresee "a multilateral composite presence," Merkel stated. "For each of the three Baltic countries and for Poland ... one ally would take the lead to ensure the continued NATO presence there." The ally assigned to Germany would likely be Lithuania.

Merkel made it clear that the new battalions would be used if need be. The approach "expressly included the response to so-called hybrid threats, that is, scenarios similar to those that Russia has followed in Ukraine," she stressed.

Ever since Berlin and Washington supported the putsch in Kiev against the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych, German politicians and media representatives have religiously repeated the mantra of NATO's responsibility to protect against the "Russian aggressor" in order to justify a military push into the East and the encirclement of Russia.

In her speech, Merkel expressly welcomed the fact that Montenegro will soon join NATO as its 29th member state. Moreover, there would be "meetings of the NATO-Georgia Commission and the NATO-Ukraine Commission" in Warsaw with representatives of these two states, which are already in a de facto state of military conflict with Russia and have the declared aim of joining NATO.

Merkel voiced support for the new missile defence system that the US is currently building in Poland and Romania. She called it a "further important step ... to better protect the people in the alliance area."

Absurdly, Merkel described NATO's deterrence strategy "as a deeply defensive concept." "Deterrence and dialogue" are "not mutually exclusive," but are "inseparable," she claimed. Within NATO there is "agreement" on this. In addition, there is agreement "that lasting security in Europe can only be achieved with and not against Russia."

In reality, sections of the NATO establishment are already discussing a possible war of aggression against Russia. For example, American military strategist Harlan Ullman reported in a recent article for the UPI news agency entitled "Is the US planning for a war

with Russia?” that at a military conference in Britain a US general had said it was the US Army’s highest priority “to deter and if necessary defeat Russia in a war.”

In the latest issue of *Die Zeit*, in an article based on internal NATO documents, Matthias Nass writes that the military alliance is returning “to nuclear deterrence” and wants to “set a nuclear tripwire against Russia in the Baltic States.” It is already clear that “the decisions in Warsaw will trigger violent reactions in Russia—from the stationing of nuclear capable Iskander missiles in the Kaliningrad area, up to the termination of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty.”

While Merkel stands fully behind NATO’s war policies, differences within the grand coalition were also visible in the Bundestag debate. Above all, representatives of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) increasingly regard the aggressive actions of the US against Russia as a threat to Germany’s geostrategic and economic interests in Eastern Europe and other regions of the world.

SPD parliamentary leader Thomas Oppermann demanded “clear answers” to “large-scale Russian military manoeuvres with up to 100,000 soldiers.” At the same time, he warned against slipping “back into the logic of the Cold War.” Everything should be done to ensure “that we never again fall into this disastrous spiral,” he declared. An arms race “would be the last thing Russia and Europe need.”

Oppermann pleaded “for a gradual approach to Russia.” In the event there were “real concessions from Vladimir Putin,” Oppermann held out the prospect of lifting the sanctions that had only just been extended last week by the EU. These were “not an end in themselves,” he said. In addition, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) was “absolutely right” that “you cannot win security with military parades and manoeuvres alone.” He was “grateful that he had pointed out that peace cannot be secured solely by military strength.”

Oppermann knows very well that Steinmeier is not advocating a “peace policy.” For years, he has been urging a greater foreign policy and military role for Germany throughout the world. On June 13, the German foreign minister published an article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled, “Germany’s new global role,” which describes Germany as a “major European

power,” distanced Germany from the US and questioned Washington’s claim to sole leadership in world politics.

We commented at the time, “Steinmeier’s foray makes clear that the wars for the redivision of the Middle East and Africa, together with the encirclement of Russia and China, lead to conflicts between the imperialist powers themselves. Although allies, the US and Germany have competing economic and political interests. The disintegration of the European Union, which will accelerate if Britain leaves, and the rise of Donald Trump in the US will exacerbate these conflicts.”

Sarah Wagenknecht, the parliamentary leader of the Left Party, took the greatest distance from the US and advocated an alliance with Russia. She spoke as opposition leader directly following Merkel.

Wagenknecht sharply criticized NATO’s war preparations against Russia and pleaded that Germany regard the US as a potential adversary. She said former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (SPD), who died in November 2015, was of the view that “today, more risk emanates from the US than from Russia. Things would not be much different following the next presidential election, when the White House was occupied by either a semi-lunatic or a puppet of the US arms lobby.”



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