

# German militarism on display at NATO summit

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At the 2014 Munich Security Conference, German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier declared that Germany was “too big merely to comment on world affairs from the side-lines,” and that “Germany must be ready for earlier, more decisive and more substantive engagement in the foreign and security policy sphere.” Last weekend’s NATO summit in Warsaw revealed the aggressiveness with which the German government has been pursuing this goal in the subsequent two years.

In a statement prior to the summit, German chancellor Angela Merkel provided an overview of German imperialism’s plans for rearmament and war. Along with a massive increase to the defence budget, the chancellor announced stepped-up engagement of the German army and NATO in Iraq, Syria, Libya, the Mediterranean Sea, Afghanistan, and eastern Europe.

Merkel praised these additional interventions, declaring, “The Bundeswehr’s whole posture now reflects Germany’s global responsibility.” At the end of her statement, to the applause of parliamentary deputies, she declared “a warm thank you to the soldiers...who are serving in many of these deployments and thus guarantee our security.”

The German media, which has been agitating for war for more than two years, is now openly acknowledging the return of German militarism. In an article entitled “From reliable partner to initiator,” the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) wrote, “Germany has been transformed in security policy” and has “abandoned the political-cultural and military restraint which for decades was an engrained trait of German political leaders.”

Visibly relieved, the mouthpiece of the German banks declared its satisfaction that Steinmeier’s declaration was now Germany’s official foreign policy doctrine. “While the previously applicable white paper,

formulated ten years ago, still stated that Germany intended to be a ‘reliable partner’ in the EU and NATO,” the “text of the future strategic principles confirms that Germany is ready to cooperate ‘actively’ in establishing global order, is willing ‘to intervene early, decisively and substantially as an initiator in global debates, live up to responsibilities and assume leadership’.”

Author Johannes Leithäuser then declared that “this change in role is not simply an announcement,” but is being “practiced in all directions by the German government.” Leithäuser went through the ever-growing list of German interventions: “Two years ago, the decision was taken to arm the Kurdish Peshmerga fighters in their struggle against the terror of ‘Islamic State’ with weapons; six months ago, Merkel, defence minister Ursula Von der Leyen and foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier responded quickly to French requests for assistance and sent ships, satellites and reconnaissance planes to combat IS.” Now, the chancellor had announced that “Germany would agree to the deployment of NATO AWACS reconnaissance aircraft over Iraq and Syria.”

A “German leadership role” in eastern Europe was emerging even more strongly than “in regard to the crises to the south of the NATO alliance area.” Already two years ago, when NATO “took the first steps in its new strategic orientation on the eastern flank,” the German government showed its readiness “to deploy German soldiers on a large scale to test the concept of the enlarged and accelerated NATO rapid response force.”

In addition, there was the “multi-national, but essentially German and Polish-supported, command centre in Stettin” which had been equipped over the past two years so “that it can lead all potential military

exercises and operations in NATO's eastern alliance area." And now, with the sending of German troops to the Baltic and Poland, the German government had "again [indicated] its readiness to lead one of these battalions permanently."

The rapid preparations for war against Russia are producing tensions within the German ruling elite, with sections of the SPD and Left Party pushing for greater independence from the United States. But regardless of the foreign policy differences, they all agree with military rearmament and a stronger role for the German army.

The extent to which the war conspiracy has advanced behind the backs of the population is made clear in the current edition of *Der Spiegel*. An article headlined "Eastern Flank Security: The Siren Song of NATO's Hawks" cites Danish NATO officer Jacob Larsen, who declared in early June, "We need to learn to fight total war again."

*Der Spiegel* itself recently urged for war against Russia. Now, it drew attention to the fact that "the last call for 'total war' was made in Germany during the infamous 1943 speech delivered in a Berlin sports stadium by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels."

Talk of "total war" is no accident, but rather describes the scenario for which NATO and the German elite are preparing, notwithstanding the catastrophes of the first two world wars. A further article in the FAZ entitled "Society must protect itself once again" reveals how systematically preparations for war are being carried out at every level of society.

The NATO states had agreed in a statement in Warsaw "that their armed forces could access the necessary civilian resources at any time, including energy, transport and communications." In other words, in parallel to military rearmament, all of civilian and social life is to be militarised and prepared for war.

The FAZ complains that Germany, like most of the other NATO states, has "made huge cuts to civil defence since the 1990s." While the German army has "at least been adjusted to face new challenges," civil defence has been "partially dissolved without replacement and reduced to a skeleton," according to Wolfgang Geier, department leader of risk management and head of the federal office for population protection and disaster relief.

A shift in course is now also under way in this area. Under the leadership of the Interior Ministry, the relevant ministries and authorities had for four years been drafting a "plan for civil defence," which would be adopted in the coming weeks by the cabinet. Germany's civil protection would "adjust in the coming years to the new risky situation, particularly on hybrid warfare. Our considerations are running in parallel with those of NATO," the FAZ cited Geier as saying.

"In recent years, the issue was only how the German army could support civil authorities in natural disasters. In the future, we must again think in the opposite direction: how civil authorities can assist the armed forces to fulfil their tasks."



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