

White Paper 2016: Another step in the revival of German militarism

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On Wednesday, the German federal cabinet adopted the long announced “White Paper 2016 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr.” The 144-page text replaces the white paper of 2006 as Germany’s official foreign policy doctrine and marks a new milestone in the country’s return to aggressive foreign and military policies.

The new white paper sets itself far-reaching goals: the domestic deployment of the Bundeswehr (German military), the expansion of foreign operations independent of Germany’s postwar allies, a European foreign and defence policy dominated by Germany, and a massive build-up of the Bundeswehr.

In the section “Deployment and Role of the Bundeswehr in Germany,” it states that “in order to assist the police in effectively managing emergency situations, the armed forces may, in certain conditions, perform sovereign tasks and exercise powers of intervention and enforcement.”

In other words, the ban on military operations within Germany as well as the separation between the police and the army, embedded in the constitution after the experiences of the German Empire, the Weimar Republic and the Nazi dictatorship, is effectively repealed. These principles had been repeatedly softened since the adoption of emergency laws in May 1968, but the use of the army in police operations has until now been illegal in Germany.

Parliamentary consent, also established by the constitution, will be further undermined. In chapter 8 of the white paper, the section “Legal Framework” states, “the number of deployments and missions necessitating immediate and resolute action has grown.” The “practice of parliamentary consent has stood the test of time,” the paper goes on, but “in view of Germany’s increased responsibility for security, we must be in a position to meet these challenges, if necessary by deploying armed German forces.”

The foreword from the pen of Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) makes clear that after suffering defeats in two world wars followed by years of foreign policy restraint, Germany is once again preparing itself for worldwide military operations free from constraints and for military conflicts

within Europe itself.

Merkel writes: “The world of 2016 is unsettled. We in Germany and Europe are seeing and feeling the impact of a lack of freedom and of crises and conflicts. We are experiencing that peace and stability are not a matter of course even in Europe.”

The Chancellor’s conclusion: “Germany’s economic and political weight means that it is our duty to take on responsibility for Europe’s security in association with our European and transatlantic partners [...] We must stand up even more for our shared values and demonstrate even greater commitment to security, peace and a rules-based order than we have done to date.”

The invocation of Germany’s greatness and the call for more German “responsibility” and “leadership” in Europe and in the world is a recurring theme of the white paper.

In the very first chapter, the section “Germany’s Role in the World and Approach to Security,” states, “Germany is highly interconnected with the rest of the world and—due to its economic, political and military significance, but also as a result of its vulnerabilities—has a responsibility to actively participate in shaping the global order.”

“Germany is increasingly regarded as a key player in Europe,” the section continues, and is “prepared to provide a substantial, decisive and early stimulus to the international debate, to accept responsibility, and to assume leadership.” This includes “a willingness to contribute to the management of current and future security and humanitarian challenges.”

The third chapter is entitled “Germany’s Strategic Priorities” and leaves no doubt that in reality “security and humanitarian challenges” means the geopolitical and economic interests of German imperialism.

“Our economy relies as much on the secure supply of raw materials and on secure international transportation routes as it does on functioning information and communication systems. Securing maritime supply routes and ensuring freedom of the high seas is of significant importance for an exporting nation like Germany.” The country must therefore

“work towards ensuring the unhindered use of ground, air and sea lines of communication as well as of space and the cyber and information domain.”

A central point of the paper is the pursuit of greater foreign policy independence for Germany. While the white paper speaks of “deepening European integration and strengthening transatlantic partnership,” it also says: “At the same time, our ability to respond in an international—and particularly European and transatlantic—context is based on a clear national position.”

In particular, “Ad hoc cooperation” will continue to “gain significance as an instrument of international crisis and conflict management.” Germany will “take account of this development and, in cases where it can protect its interests in this way, will participate in ad hoc cooperation and initiate it with its partners.”

Wherever Germany works together “with its partners” in NATO or in the realm of a joint European defence policy, it lays claim to more leadership. “NATO’s European pillar is growing in significance,” says the paper. The European member states are “called upon to assume greater responsibility, also in terms of a more balanced form of burden sharing. Germany in particular has taken on a special responsibility in this regard.”

The white paper explicitly welcomes “the European Union’s new global foreign and security policy strategy” which was introduced by EU High Commissioner for Foreign Policy Federica Mogherini at the first EU summit without British participation on July 4 in Brussels. It will “make a significant contribution to strengthening the EU’s capacity to act in the domain of foreign and security policy.” “From the very beginning, Germany has played an active role in supporting the development of this new strategy,” boasts the paper.

As a “long-term goal,” Germany is striving to achieve “a common European Security and Defence Union.” In the medium term, a “permanent civil-military operational headquarters” is required with “civil-military planning and command and control capability.” Only in this way could the “political weight of the countries of Europe” be maintained in the long term along with the “security interests of the EU” in view of “geopolitical shifts and global demographic developments.”

As the central instrument of German foreign policy, the Bundeswehr will see its personnel and budget significantly upgraded. In addition to the increase in the military budget for 2016 and 2017, a “reliable continuation of this direction in funding will be required in the years ahead in order to take into account capability maintenance, increases in equipment in line with tasks and structures, and the necessity of establishing new capabilities, while ensuring the staffing

and running of the Bundeswehr.”

Running parallel to the militarization of foreign policy, civil and social life are again being prepared for war. In the section “Promoting Security and Resilience: A Whole-of-Society Endeavour,” the paper explains: “National security is not only a task of the state, but increasingly a joint task of the state, industry, the scientific community, and society. A common understanding of potential risks is the basis on which to build whole-of-society resilience.”

The German government will “render its approach to national security more comprehensive by continuously identifying and adapting areas requiring protection; further developing civil defence planning (maintenance of state and government functions, civil protection, supply, support of the armed forces) with the goal of harmonising crisis management procedures; institutionalising a whole-of-society discussion on future security requirements at the Federal Academy for Security Policy.”

The White Paper 2016 marks a new high point in a real conspiracy to revive German militarism, which was initiated by President Gauck, Foreign Minister Steinmeier (SPD) and Defence Minister Von der Leyen (CDU) at the 2014 Munich Security Conference. As in the earlier strategy paper, “New power, new responsibility: Elements of a German foreign and security policy for a changing world,” the original template for the new German foreign and great power politics, leading German journalists, academics, military figures, business representatives and politicians of all parties in the German parliament had a hand in preparing it.

An official publication from the Ministry of Defence entitled “Path to the White Paper,” states that “especially noteworthy are the numerous events hosted by political parties, churches, trade unions and organizations under the auspices of the white paper and whose results were a cornerstone in the process of its formation.”



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