

German media calls for massive rearmament after US elections

Johannes Stern
9 November 2016

The German elites are using the US presidential election and the “dirtiest election campaign of modern times” (*Der Spiegel*) as an excuse to promote the return of German militarism.

In the past week, the *World Socialist Web Site* commented on a paper of the German government-connected think tank Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), titled “Even without Trump much will change.” It calls for a more aggressive German and European foreign policy that is ready, “whatever the election result” to pursue economic and geopolitical aims independently of the United States and, if necessary, against Washington.

Just before the election, a column on *Spiegel Online* provided a taste of what this means. Under the title, “How Trump could force Germany to rearm,” a certain Henrik Müller forecasts: “Should Donald Trump be elected US president on Tuesday, Germany will face a great debate regarding rearming. It could become the decisive theme of the [German] federal elections in 2017—an intense controversy with the potential to divide the country.”

But “also if Hillary Clinton wins,” Germany would face high costs. Germany would “not be able to continue as before, neither politically nor economically.” The US elections were “a turning point.” With a win for Trump, “the post-war era, when America’s nuclear shield and its European military presence initially provided protection for the West and later the Central European countries, ... is finally over.” Europe “would have to provide its own security” and “in particular, Germany, the continent’s largest economy.”

“This will be expensive,” states Müller, a professor of journalism who teaches at the University of Dortmund and has a doctorate from the University of the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces] Hamburg. Until now, Germany spent “comparatively little for the military: just 1.19 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).” That lies “well below” the NATO limit of 2 per cent, to which the

members of the military alliance had agreed in 2002. Britain “spends twice as much on arms and soldiers in relation to GDP, the United States three times as much.”

The scenario outlined by Müller recalls the German armaments madness on the eve of the First and Second World Wars: it ranges from the doubling of the military budget to the acquisition of nuclear weapons! “Instead of the current 37 billion euros per year, in future Germany must spend 80 billion, perhaps even more,” writes Müller. “In the event of NATO breaking apart and the complete elimination of the American security guarantee, a new arms race could be the result, as is happening elsewhere in the world already. Even a debate on Germany’s own nuclear weapons would be conceivable.”

Although this was “not desirable,” warns Müller, “Military instability and economic inefficiency would be the consequences. For Europe, it would be much better and cheaper if the United States remained involved.” But, “Given the isolationist mood across the Atlantic,” one must be “mentally prepared for such a scenario.”

Another reason for the armaments offensive cited by Müller is the deep crisis of the European Union. He writes: “Germany would be better prepared for the new situation if the EU was united and strong. But there can be no question of this. Europe is divided and threatened by decay. Accordingly, we must prepare ourselves for Germany facing high costs. One way or another.”

While the rearmament plans postulated by Müller are presented as being externally “imposed” by the deep crises in the US and the EU, in fact, they correspond to official government policy. At the 2014 Munich Security Conference, the Social Democratic Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, speaking for the entire ruling class, said, “Germany must be ready for earlier, more decisive and more substantive engagement in the foreign and security policy sphere.” It was simply “too big merely to comment on world affairs from the sidelines.”

At the time, the PSG warned in its resolution “The return of German militarism” that the post-war order had “resolved none of the problems that had led to war. The economic power of the US made possible a temporary stabilisation and the post-war boom. The Cold War not only kept the Soviet Union at bay, but also kept Germany under control. But with the reunification of Germany and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the period in which German business could conduct its affairs in the wake of the US and the German army could restrict itself to national defence was irrevocably over.”

It continued: “The revival of militarism is the response of the ruling class to the explosive social tensions, the deepening economic crisis and the growing conflicts between European powers. Its aim is the conquest of new spheres of influence, markets and raw materials upon which the export-dependent German economy relies; the prevention of a social explosion by deflecting social tensions onto an external enemy; and the militarization of society as a whole, including the development of an all embracing national surveillance apparatus, the suppression of social and political opposition, and the bringing into line of the media.”

This analysis has now been confirmed. But there is a social force that is capable of halting the return of German militarism and the risk of renewed war between the great powers: the international working class. Following the US elections, the struggle waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) for the establishment of an international anti-war movement of the working class against imperialism and capitalism takes on even greater urgency.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)