

German Green Party leader demands Europe “grow up in terms of power politics”

Peter Schwarz
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Former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer has added his voice to those demanding a massive rearmament of Germany and Europe in response to the nationalist policies of US President Donald Trump. “The right response to Trump,” the Green Party politician writes in a guest contribution for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, is for Europeans to “grow up and reinforce their geopolitical power and position” and for Germany to “resolutely invest in the EU and NATO.”

Fischer leaves no doubt that what he has in mind is a massive increase in military spending. “Germany’s strength is based on its financial and economic might, and it will now have to leverage that strength on the EU’s and NATO’s behalf,” he writes.

Germany’s strength lies “in its financial and economic capacity” and this strength “will now have to be deployed to an extent” unprecedented for the EU and NATO. “Thrift is undoubtedly a virtue; but other considerations should take priority when one’s house is on fire and about to collapse.”

Like the new Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (Social Democratic Party, SPD), Fischer regards Trump’s presidency not merely as a risk and challenge. “[T]he new US administration has furnished Europeans with a chance finally to close ranks, grow up, and reinforce their geopolitical power and position.”

Trump’s “motto, ‘America first,’ signals the renunciation, and possible destruction, of the US-led world order,” he writes. “The alliances, multilateral institutions, security guarantees, international agreements, and shared values underlying the current global order might soon be called into question, or rejected altogether. If that happens, the old Pax Americana will have been needlessly destroyed by America itself,” he writes.

“America’s two former enemies, Germany and

Japan, will be among the biggest losers” of this change. “Both countries experienced total defeat in 1945, and ever since they have rejected all forms of the *Machtstaat*, or ‘power state.’ With their security guaranteed by the US, they transformed themselves into trading countries.” Now “these two major economic powers will have a serious security problem on their hands.”

Fischer wants to solve this “serious security problem” by means of the European Union. If Germany would go it alone, if it would “re-nationalize its defense capacities,” it would, in Fischer’s opinion, “tear apart the continent. Lest we forget, the post-war global and regional order’s purpose was to integrate the former enemy powers so that they posed no danger to one another.”

For this reason, he is relying on the EU to revive Germany’s great power politics—or, as he puts it, “grow up and reinforce its geopolitical power.” “Owing to its geopolitical weight, Germany’s perspective is now synonymous with that of the European Union,” Fischer writes.

He stresses that “the EU’s outlook is not that of a hegemon; rather, it is concerned with the rule of law, integration, and peaceful reconciliation of member states’ interests.” However, this is just window dressing—great power politics and rearmament are incompatible with the “peaceful reconciliation of interests.” When one considers the enormous economic and social imbalances within Europe, the brutality with which austerity is imposed on weaker states, or the blunt way in which Berlin speaks about Germany’s role as the “task master” of Europe, it is quite clear what Fischer really intends.

The German Empire (*Kaiserreich*) already tried to “organize” Europe, i.e., to unite the continent

economically under its leadership. The result was the First World War. Hitler's attempt to forcibly achieve the same aim led to the Second World War. It was only under the conditions of the Cold War and US predominance that the ruling elites of Western Europe felt compelled to place their opposing interests on the back burner and work together.

This set of conditions disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet Union 25 years ago, the global financial crisis of 2008, and the transition of the US to a nationalist foreign policy. The notion of a united capitalist Europe is exposed once again as an illusion. The only way that Europe can be "united" on a capitalist basis is by the strongest country (or group of countries) imposing its will on the others.

Fischer is a pioneer of this policy. He had already set the course for the revival of German militarism as foreign minister in the Social Democratic-Green coalition government headed by Gerhard Schröder (SPD). In 1998 the Greens campaigned for the federal election on the basis of a pacifist program, but as soon as they were in power they sent the German army to its first ever post-war military engagement in Yugoslavia. Fischer now regards the crisis, triggered by Trump's aggressive policy towards Europe, as an opportunity to line up other states behind Germany and develop the EU into a military power capable of carrying out war against Russia and, if necessary, the US.



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