

Germany: Joschka Fischer supports Merkel's call for an independent foreign policy

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Ever since Joschka Fischer assumed the office of foreign minister in 1998 with the remark that there was no Green foreign policy, but only a German one, he has been regarded as a reliable pillar of German imperialist interests. The Green Party politician was responsible for the first foreign military engagement of the Bundeswehr (armed forces), in Yugoslavia, and developed a close friendship with the then US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, with whom he still operates a joint policy consulting company.

The articles which Fischer writes in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* to improve his considerable wealth are therefore always of interest. Not because he says something new, but because he expresses the foreign policy consensus under dispute within ruling circles, and brings it to the point.

In his latest contribution, “The Spirit of Trudering,” Fischer praises a speech that Chancellor Angela Merkel delivered in a beer tent in the Trudering suburb of Munich. She said, “The times when we could completely rely on others are, to an extent, over, and therefore I can only say that we Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands.”

Fischer's enthusiasm knows no bounds. One wonders, he writes, “if Merkel had been inspired by the Holy Spirit.” Or whether it was only the “many hours in the company of US President Donald Trump.”

Merkel's beer tent speech was generally understood as heralding a turning point in foreign policy—as a departure from the political and military alliance with the US in favour of a German and European great power policy, which pursues its goals independently and also against the US.

This is how Fischer also interpreted the speech. He denies that the Trudering speech means “Germany is turning away from the transatlantic alliance, pursuing a

strategic realignment,” only then to confirm exactly that in the following sentences.

The chancellor was not “questioning the future of the transatlantic alliance,” he writes, “rather she was calling for a stronger Europe.” If the “US sacrifices its place at the top of the international order,” no other leading power could take its place. Rather, it creates “a power vacuum, marked by chaos.” This would force the Europeans “to come together to defend our interests. ... So, Merkel's speech was first and foremost about strengthening Europe”.

According to Fischer, with the election of Emmanuel Macron as French president, Merkel has found a partner to “stabilize the eurozone, restore economic growth, and strengthen Europe's security with a joint border force and a new refugee policy”—in other words, to arm the state for action abroad and at home.

Not everything Donald Trump says was wrong, Fischer concludes. “Germany, and Europe generally, will have to do far more to ensure its own security.” He adds: “And as we pursue that project, we must stick firmly to the liberal values that make us the envy of aspiring democrats, and the *bête noire* of authoritarians, around the world.”

It is significant that Fischer is now also advocating an independent European foreign policy that will inevitably bring it into conflict with the US, even if he tries to deny this. Fischer has long been one of the most consistent Atlanticists in German foreign policy. The SPD-Green federal government had not least failed prematurely in 2005 because Fischer, as foreign minister, did not agree with the orientation of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD), who had close political and personal relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Merkel, too, has previously advocated an

emphatically pro-American course. In 2003, as CDU chair, she even supported the Iraq War of President George W. Bush, which Fischer, as foreign minister, had rejected. That both now vehemently advocate a more aggressive European foreign policy shows that this is a fundamental development for which Trump's "America first" policy only provides the occasion.

This is not about "liberal values," about climate protection or the other fine things with which Merkel and Fischer promote their policies, but about naked economic and power-political interests.

Between the NATO and G7 summits, where she clashed with Trump, and her speech in Trudering, Merkel met with Indian President Narendra Modi and Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang, with whom she agreed on close economic and political cooperation.

When Fischer's commentary was published, she was speaking in Buenos Aires with Argentinean President Mauricio Macri, a wealthy entrepreneur, who since taking office 18 months ago has driven 1.5 million Argentinians into poverty. Since South America urgently needs new trade partners to fend off Trump's protectionist trade policy, she travelled with a huge delegation of business representatives "to ensure that these partners are not only found in China," as a report says.

From Argentina, Merkel flew to Mexico, where she met President Enrique Peña Nieto for the same reason. In Berlin, it was emphasized that this was by no means an anti-Trump trip. But "the long shadow of Donald Trump undoubtedly accompanied her," writes the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

The real reason for the return of German militarism and the growing transatlantic tensions is the deep global crisis of the capitalist system. The struggle for markets, raw materials and influence is once again leading to conflicts like those that heralded the First and Second World Wars.

Fischer, the former anarchist and street fighter, speaks for those sections of the better-off middle classes who long ago abandoned their pacifism and now enthusiastically support German imperialism.

In 1999, he justified the war that destroyed Yugoslavia and ruined the Balkans economically with the perfidious argument that "Auschwitz"—i.e., the crimes committed by the Nazis—obligated Germany to prevent an alleged genocide of Kosovans. In this, he

worked closely with the Kosovan UCK militia, which in turn committed massacres and was closely linked to organized crime. Now he is trying to justify a further escalation of German militarism with reference to "liberal values."



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