

Germany: Coalition talks centre on increase in defence spending

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The reactionary and anti-working class character of the next German government is becoming ever clearer. Last week, the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), Greens and Free Democratic Party (FDP) discussed preserving the debt ceiling, further tax cuts for the rich and new privatisations. Now they are talking about massively increasing military expenditure and the powers of the state at home.

There are “many commonalities among the negotiators” concerning stronger European security and defence policy, FDP leader Christian Lindner told the *Rheinische Post*. “We should find a European solution for the armed forces.” He called the election of Emmanuel Macron as French president an opportunity that must be used exactly for this purpose. Brexit also had a positive side effect, as it would eliminate those putting a brake on increased security cooperation within the European Union (EU).

A week before the talks on a possible “Jamaica coalition” (after the party colours of the CDU/CSU, Greens and FDP), the CDU Economic Council increased its pressure on the party’s main negotiator and acting defence minister, Ursula von der Leyen, to push through a massive increase in defence spending. The Bundeswehr (armed forces) not only needed more materiel but also modern equipment, the working group on European Defence and Security Policy demanded in a position paper quoted by business daily *Handelsblatt* on Thursday.

“Defence industrial research programmes need to be developed and improved,” it says. The incoming government must ensure that technological military know-how is maintained in Germany. Two years ago, the grand coalition (Christian Democrats-Social Democrats) had decided to commit the areas of cryptology and sensor technology, as well as battle

tanks and submarines, as “particularly important and valuable” technologies for a modern Bundeswehr. The Economic Council is now promising closer European cooperation, acquisitions in larger numbers, which can lead to “national means being used more efficiently.”

The far-reaching “acquisitions” they have in mind are well known. At the last Franco-German Council of Ministers in July, Berlin and Paris decided to “develop a future fighter aircraft to replace their current fighter fleets in the long term.” In an official paper, it was also agreed “to create a framework for cooperation on the next generation of Tiger helicopters and a joint tactical air-to-ground missile programme.”

The European armaments initiatives being forced through by the ruling class in Germany are part of the return of German militarism. They go hand in hand with a comprehensive national armaments programme, whose scale recalls the massive rearmament of the Wehrmacht (German Army) in the 1930s, and which should again enable Germany to conduct large-scale wars.

The defence ministry is presently working on an upgrade plan, which is based on the so-called “provisional conceptual guidelines for the future capability profile of the Bundeswehr,” according to the responsible department head at the ministry, Lieutenant General Erhard Bühler.

Accordingly, Germany’s military should “grow strongly in the areas of the army, air force and navy...in order to meet the new requirements,” as reported by the German Bundeswehr Association (DBwV) on its web site. This concerns ensuring a “full defence capability on land, sea, air, outer space and cyberspace.” In order to achieve this, hundreds of tanks, new warships and fighter aircraft would have to be purchased.

To finance the massive rearmament programme,

under no circumstances should there be any cuts in the defence budget, political weekly *Die Zeit* warns in a recent commentary. “On the contrary. The exploratory coalition talks offer a great opportunity to develop a broader and more flexible understanding of defence in Germany.”

The “Jamaica” parties apparently take the warmongers in the media at their word. In their election programmes, the CDU/CSU and FDP had already openly declared their support for the NATO target of raising defence expenditure from its current 1.2 percent to 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2024. Now, sections of the CDU/CSU are pushing for even more defence spending. “It is clear that Germany must make a higher contribution than before. The increase in the defence budget to the NATO target of 2 percent of GDP should only be a first step here,” it says in a motion by the CDU’s youth section Junge Union at the beginning of October.

German-European war policy is supported by all the parties in the Bundestag (parliament), but above all by the Greens. Shortly before the general election, at an event at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) titled “Foreign and European Policy Challenges for Germany,” its lead candidate Cem Özdemir promised, “The Greens also believe the Bundeswehr must be decently equipped. And we owe it to ensure the security of the soldiers that we send on international missions, and we have to make sure that they can do their jobs properly there. That’s not for free, it has to be financed.”

The Socialist Equality Party (SGP) was the only party that put the fight against war and militarism at the centre of its election campaign, and warned what the ruling class is preparing for with its insane plans for increasing military spending. “Germany’s ruling elite is responding to this global crisis in the same way it did in the last century. It is returning to the militarist traditions that culminated in the most horrific crimes in history. It is responding to mounting tensions with the United States by seeking to rise to a predominant position within Europe so as to be able to act as a global power,” the SGP statement of September 21 said.

While there was barely any talk about these aims in the election campaign, *Handelsblatt* is now openly demanding “the emancipation of Europe from its big

brother America.” The reason: “Trump’s entire foreign, security and trade policy resembles a frontal attack on the German business model.” The American president was conducting an “economic war” and above all was hitting “Germany, which like no other country has an international network and therefore relies on open markets and borders.”

The ruling class knows that the return to an independent German great power policy has revolutionary implications. It is conscious that it can only impose its programme of militarism, rearmament and social cuts against the growing resistance of the population with an authoritarian regime, and is setting its course in this direction.

“New jobs for police officers and security officials are needed—the CDU dreams of implementing its campaign demands of 15,000 new jobs,” wrote *Die Zeit* about the exploratory coalition talks. “According to the state of play on Monday,” the CDU/CSU, FDP and Greens could “also imagine introducing video surveillance in future at crime hot-spots and strengthen and centralise the secret services.”



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