

Germany: “Jamaica coalition” on a course towards war

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Defence policy was one of the issues on the agenda in the fifth round of exploratory talks on Thursday between representatives of the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), the Greens and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). The parties are discussing the formation of a “Jamaica coalition” (named after the colours of the respective parties and the Jamaican flag). The CDU, CSU, FDP and Greens have yet to announce agreement, but it is clear that they plan to massively increase military spending.

This is the most important task of the future German government, as far as the leading figures in government, business and politics are concerned. The German army (Bundeswehr) must be able to defend the country’s economic and strategic interests all over the world and receive the necessary means.

A number of studies had been published along these lines prior to the election. On August 25 the *Handelsblatt* newspaper published a long background article that described the “rescuing of the free world economy” as the “most important task for the next federal government.” According to Germany’s leading business paper this is primarily a military, not an economic, task.

Differences between the Jamaica parties are about wording, not about content. The CDU, CSU and FDP want to raise military spending from €37 billion to more than €60 billion by 2024 in order to reach the NATO target of 2 percent of GDP, while the Greens have so far rejected this target.

Nevertheless, the Greens also support increased military spending. At a meeting of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) shortly before the federal election, the party’s leading candidate Cem Özdemir assured his audience: “Greens are also of the opinion

that the Bundeswehr be adequately equipped. We owe it to the safety of the soldiers we send on international missions, and we have to make sure that they can do their jobs properly there. That does not come free, it has to be financed.”

The leading FDP negotiator in the talks, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, has already proposed a compromise formula to overcome the verbal dispute with the Greens. He wants to combine military spending with spending on diplomacy, on development policy, on stopping refugees from fleeing their country and on security—raising it to 3 percent of GDP in the process. “There could be more for the German army one year, and more for development policy in another year,” Lambsdorff declared. Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) had already made a similar proposal.

Such a policy would not only increase military spending much more than NATO demands. Development aid and diplomacy would also be directly subordinated to a military-based foreign policy.

Lambsdorff justified his proposal with almost the same words used by Özdemir: “We send soldiers into life-threatening missions. They have the right to be properly equipped.” He demanded the purchase of more drones and demanded that US nuclear weapons remain in Germany, otherwise German influence inside NATO would decrease.

The most pressure for massive rearmament comes not from the Jamaica parties, but rather from the Social Democrats, the SPD. The parliamentary commissioner for the armed forces, Hans-Peter Bartels, who has sat in the Bundestag for the SPD for 19 years, called on the Jamaica alliance to invest significantly more funding in the Bundeswehr. “The change of direction must go on. It cannot start again from zero,” he told the dpa news agency. The initial increase in personnel and the new

equipping of the Bundeswehr must be continued.

Former SPD chairman and current foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel has expressed similar views. In his book *Realignments*, Gabriel advocates more independence from the US and concludes: “This means we need to expand our defence capabilities and invest more in the modernization of the Bundeswehr in Germany.”

The chairman of the Bundeswehr Association, André Wüstner, a career officer, sang the same tune. In the *Bild* newspaper he warned that “without a proper increase in the defence budget,” the consequences for our security would be incalculable. ... If savings in the defence budget are the result of the exploratory talks, then new elections are preferable!”

In the election campaign itself, the issue of militarism was barely discussed due to broad popular opposition. Despite spending millions in advertising campaigns the Bundeswehr has had great difficulty winning recruits. Nevertheless, the entire political establishment, from the Left Party to the far-right Alternative for Germany, all agree that building a powerful army and its deployment in crisis regions all over the globe is the central political task of the next government.

Only the Socialist Equality Party placed the fight against war and militarism at the centre of its election campaign. It took part in the federal election on the basis of a socialist program directed against war and the capitalist system. In its election program it warned: “As is the case in the US, the ruling class in Germany is determined to go to war again to defend its imperialist interests. On this there is agreement between all the major parties.”



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