

Incoming German government plans massive military rearmament

Johannes Stern
3 January 2018

A few days before the official start of exploratory talks between the Christian Democratic (CDU/CSU) and Social Democratic (SPD) parties, a recent paper by the Bavarian Christian Social Union makes clear what the real questions are about forming the next government. In a draft resolution, which CSU members of parliament want to agree at their winter retreat in Kloster Seeon starting on Thursday, it states that a “strong, modern Bundeswehr (armed forces)” is necessary for “a secure Germany that lives up to its European and international responsibilities.”

The “best possible equipment, training and care of the soldiers,” as well as the modernization of the German army, costs money. Among other things, investments are “necessary in the areas of digitization, deployment and transport capability, unmanned reconnaissance and armed drones and mobile tactical communications.” Defence expenditure would therefore have to be massively increased. The CSU was basing itself “on the NATO target of 2 percent of gross domestic product.”

Even if deputy SPD leader Ralf Stegner rejected the CSU demand for such a rise, the Social Democrats have long since made clear that they too would aggressively promote the return of German militarism in a new edition of the grand coalition. “The fact our army must be better equipped, that is absolutely necessary,” said SPD chairman Martin Schulz a few days ago at a press conference in Berlin.

At the beginning of December, in a keynote address to the Körber Foundation in Berlin, Social Democrat Sigmar Gabriel demanded that after seven decades of relative foreign policy restraint, Germany return to an independent foreign and military policy—supported by a militarized European Union under German leadership. “Now we realize that even with great economic prosperity in our country there is no comfortable place

on the side-lines of international politics for us anymore. Neither for us Germans nor for us Europeans,” he declared provocatively.

The aggressive demands for rearmament and more German and European leadership are ushering in a new stage in the foreign policy turnaround initiated by the last German government four years ago. At that time, leading journalists, academics, military officials, business officials and representatives of all the Bundestag (parliamentary) parties had worked on the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for International and Security Affairs, SWP) paper “New Power—New Responsibility,” announcing Germany’s return to militarism and aggressive world power politics.

Significantly, the SWP, which is close to the government, has once again submitted a paper titled “Dissolution or Replacement? The International Order in Transition,” which openly makes the case for the establishment of a new world order under German-European leadership. Above all, it considers China and the US, with or without Trump, as international rivals.

“Neither the US nor the People’s Republic of China offer the guarantee that a multilateral global regulatory policy is being pursued, which is indispensable from a German and European point of view,” write the authors of the study. Germany must therefore “do everything in its power to establish Europe as an independent world political power factor in the sense of its regulatory conceptions.”

As at the time of the two world wars in the 20th century, tangible imperialist interests are once again of concern. German foreign policy is “burdened by the history of the country and its central position in Europe” and must “compensate for these historical and geopolitical burdens ... through a robust European

peace order,” the paper demands. “Because of its export orientation,” “Germany’s economy and its entire social prosperity depend heavily on an open, rules-based world economic order.”

The SWP also makes no secret of the extent of the planned military upgrade. All “available financial resources in all areas of foreign and security policy—foreign policy, defence policy, development policy—[must] be expanded not only absolutely, but also relatively: The total share of public expenditure for shaping German external relations is to be raised as quickly as possible from the present 15 to 20 percent of the federal budget.”

The gigantic sums of money involved are underlined by the recently published report on the Munich Security Conference 2018. It says that the 28 EU member states plus Norway would have to put an additional 114 billion US dollars into defence spending from 2024 in order to achieve the desired 2 percent goal. The largest part “would have to come from Germany, Italy, and Spain—as those countries have high GDPs and a relatively low defence budget in terms of percent of GDP.”

The entire paper makes clear that the ruling classes in Germany and Europe are again preparing for a new major war. The chapters of the document, previously published in English only, have headlines such as “Creating the Armed Forces of the Future,” “Consolidate the European Industrial Base,” “Address the Readiness Problem,” and “Prioritize Investment in Equipment in Order to Upgrade Europe’s Armed Forces.”

The measure of what is required is provided by the military clout of the US. “The forces of NATO-EU member states already include 1.38 million soldiers; slightly more than the United States. The challenge will be to upgrade their skill level,” the report insists. While the US had spent an average 26 percent of its defence budget on new military equipment over the past 10 years, in Europe it was only 18 percent.

The German elite no longer shy away from calling for nuclear weapons. In the *Tagesspiegel*, Thorsten Benner, director of the Berlin-based think tank Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), attacks Gabriel’s great power speech from the right, because he had not explained “how Germany would position itself without the US nuclear umbrella.”

“Little in Gabriel’s remarks” contributed to “conducting an honest debate today about the German position on nuclear weapons.” But the foreign minister must “come up with an answer to the German and European nuclear issue”; a country like Germany cannot “avoid uncomfortable questions about its nuclear-political positioning.” Benner ends with the prophecy that Germany in 2018 will “inevitably” face a “nuclear weapons debate.” Gabriel would then have to show if he was “really serious about ‘political-strategic thinking.’”

The insane rearmament and world power plans are a serious warning and confirm the call of the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) for new elections. The formation of an extremely right-wing and militaristic new federal government, behind the backs of the population—one that is upgrading Germany and the whole of Europe militarily without any democratic mandate and preparing for war—must not be permitted. The SGP and the *World Socialist Web Site* will intensify their work in the New Year, calling upon all their readers to actively support the construction of a socialist alternative to capitalism, militarism and war.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact