German Chancellor promotes militarism and great-power politics at World Economic Forum

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The speech by German Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democrats, CDU) at the World Economic Forum in Davos made clear that the new coalition government being formed in Berlin will be dedicated to militarism and great-power politics. At a luxury resort in the Swiss Alps, the acting Chancellor sought to drum up support for a European defence policy that would enable Germany and Europe to enforce their economic and geostrategic interests around the world.

"If Europe, with its 27 future members, is incapable of sending a united message to major countries like China, India, the United States or Russia, and foreign policy is instead made nationally, the attempt to become a global player will fail," warned Merkel. "If we want to be taken seriously as Europeans, we have one further major task, specifically to cooperate in the area of foreign policy."

Seven decades after the end of World War II, German imperialism once again considers the United States, along with Russia and China, as a global rival. In her speech, Merkel railed against "isolation and protectionism," and although she did not mention US President Donald Trump by name, it was clear to everyone that her statements were aimed at Washington. "Merkel is the anti-Trump," was the headline of a piece in the Berlin-based *Tagesspiegel* on Thursday. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* commented, "There has never been so much dissension in the so-called West for some time."

Merkel explicitly advocated a foreign and military policy independent of the US. "The fact that Europe has not been the most active continent on foreign policy, and that we often depended on the United States, which is now concentrating more on itself, must compel us to say: we have to assume more responsibility; we have to take our fate into our hands." Merkel added, "We are doing this with the recent establishment of a common defence policy."

Merkel left no doubt about the fact that Europe is to rearm in order to play an independent role in the wars to redivide the world. "Why is there so much interest in a common foreign policy, the common defence policy and the common development policy?" asked Merkel, and answered, "If you look at Europe's surroundings, then you realise that a large number of global conflicts are taking place on our doorstep." Europe has not done enough about "the civil war in Syria" and "ISIS in Iraq."

Merkel also demanded a much more aggressive intervention in other parts of the Middle East and Africa by the European powers. She stated, "We bear joint responsibility for the development of the African continent. We bear joint responsibility on the issue of what comes next in Iraq. We bear joint responsibility on the issue of what comes next in Libya." On these issues, Europe has been too "hesitant" and there is "a huge amount of work before us."

The "work" referred to by Merkel is indicated in the report to this year's Munich Security Conference, which will be held in mid-February. It states that the 28 EU member states and Norway must invest a further $114 billion into defence spending if NATO's 2 percent goal is to be achieved. The majority of this must be borne by Germany, Italy and Spain, "because these countries have a large GDP but low levels of defence spending in relative terms."

The entire paper, which is subtitled "Building the European armed forces of the future," makes clear that

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the ruling class in Germany and Europe are again preparing for major military conflicts and wars between the great powers. The chapters of the document, which has only been published in English so far, have sub-headings such as, “Consolidate the European industrial base,“ “Address the readiness problem“ or “Prioritise investment in equipment in order to upgrade Europe’s armed forces.“

The German and European plans for war are being measured against the US military’s capabilities. The armed forces of the EU and NATO member states possess 1.38 million soldiers, somewhat more than the United States, the report noted. The challenge is the development of their “capabilities.” While the United States has invested an average of 26 percent of its defence budget in new equipment over the last ten years, Europe invested a mere 18 percent, the report added.

The task of the new German government will be to rapidly accelerate the return of Germany to a militarist great-power policy, which the previous government announced at the 2014 Munich Security Conference. “Germany has to get a move on,” demanded Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen (CDU) in a recent interview with *Wirtschaftswoche*. “For the army … the exploratory talks with the SPD [were] a good start. For the medium-term, we have at least agreed on an additional €10 billion for the army. That would not have been possible with a Jamaica coalition.”

Merkel recalled in her Davos speech that “in 1918, one hundred years ago, the First World War ended,” and raised the question, “Have we really learnt from history or have we not?” Her entire speech made clear that the ruling class has “learnt” nothing from their past crimes. In the face of the growing danger of world war and revolutionary upsurges of the working class–Merkel warned in her speech against “disruptive developments” and a return of the “Luddites”–the ruling elite is responding with its own recipes: militarism, war and dictatorship.

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