

German parties reach agreement on grand coalition for war and austerity

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Germany's Christian Democratic Union, Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD) announced Wednesday that they have reached a deal to form a new grand coalition government.

A third installment of the grand coalition will be the most right-wing German government since the downfall of the Nazi regime. It will seek to launch a massive military build-up, initiate a new round of social attacks, adopt the refugee policy of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), and establish a police state to carry out domestic repression.

A careful review of the 177-page coalition agreement makes this clear. The empty promises from leading Social Democrats, such as the incessant claims by current SPD leader Martin Schulz and his designated successor Andrea Nahles that more money will be available for education, housing and social spending, merely serve to conceal the reactionary plans they have put down on paper and will now proceed to implement in practice.

In a preview of the policies to be pursued by the new government, the announcement came just one day after the IG Metall Union, closely associated with the SPD, shut down strike actions by hundreds of thousands of industrial workers by imposing an effective wage freeze and dramatically undermining working conditions.

The central focus of the coalition agreement is Germany's return to a "great-power" foreign policy, which was announced by the previous grand coalition at the 2014 Munich Security Conference. The 20-page chapter on "Germany's responsibility for peace, freedom and security around the world" is the longest in the entire agreement and must be read as a blueprint for a massive expansion of German militarism.

The chapter identifies countries, regions and entire continents once again viewed by German imperialism as its spheres of influence: the Western Balkans, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America,

Asia and Afghanistan.

In the section entitled "A modern army," the SPD and conservative parties pledge to "make available the best possible equipment" and "training" so that the army can "expertly fulfill the tasks assigned to it in all of their dimensions."

The military will purchase "what it requires, and not what it is offered." It is necessary to have a military machine "that is effective." To this end, the "renewal, modernisation and expansion of the army begun during the last legislative period" will be "continued, while at the same time the acceleration of processes, particularly purchasing" will be ensured.

In monetary terms, this means an annual increase in Germany's military budget of at least €35 billion in the coming years. With the formulation "we want to achieve NATO's agreed upon capability goals and close capacity gaps," the conservative parties and SPD committed to increasing the defence budget to 2 percent of GDP by 2024.

Compared to these vast sums to be spent on the military, the €46 billion allegedly earmarked for additional social spending over the next four years is minuscule. However, it appears likely that this will be sacrificed for military spending, especially given that the coalition deal sticks to a balanced budget and avoids any tax increases for the rich or the introduction of a wealth tax.

The document also calls for advancing plans for Germany to develop nuclear weapons. "As long as nuclear weapons play a role as an instrument of deterrence in NATO's strategic concept, Germany has an interest in participating in the strategic discussions and planning procedures," the document states in the section "Disarmament and a restrictive arms export policy."

In the section on "the army's current foreign interventions," the coalition parties call for the extension and expansion of German military interventions. They

want to “further develop... the mandate for the comprehensive stabilisation and sustained combatting of ISIS terrorism,” “increase the number of soldiers” in northern Afghanistan, “continue” the military intervention in Mali, and “raise” the “upper limit” on the number of soldiers fighting there.

To advance German imperialism’s great power ambitions on the world stage, the conservative parties and SPD appeal for a joint European military and great-power policy in cooperation with France.

The agreement’s first chapter, entitled “A new beginning for Europe,” states, “The global balance of forces has changed fundamentally over recent years—politically, economically and militarily. New areas of interest for the US and the strengthening of China and Russia’s policy make clear that Europe must take its fate into its hands more than it has done in the past. Only together does the EU have an opportunity to assert itself in the world and enforce its common interests.”

The coalition’s declared goals include the development of “permanent security cooperation in the military area,” the use of the “European defence fund,” and the introduction of a “appropriately equipped EU headquarters to lead the civil and military missions.” In addition, further steps will be taken to develop an “army of Europeans.”

The other side of this “new beginning for Europe” is the intensification of austerity policies, which have already thrown millions of workers and young people into poverty and unemployment. The government’s goal is to “strengthen the EU’s competitiveness and growth potential in the context of globalization,” and “sustainably reform the EU in partnership with France.”

Domestically, the CDU/CSU and SPD are planning to establish a police state to suppress growing opposition to war and social cuts. “We are strengthening security in Germany,” they write, before turning to a call for a so-called “pact for the rule of law” including “15,000 new positions for the security forces at the state and federal level.”

In addition, there are plans for “better equipping the police,” the “expansion of DNA analyses,” the use of surveillance footage in areas of social conflict, and the centralisation of the security and intelligence agencies. “In addition, we want to unify the powers of the federal and state intelligence agencies, particularly in relation to data collection and storage,” the document declares.

This also includes an expansion of control over the Internet. “The security forces require the same powers

when dealing with the internet as they have offline.” The document calls for the expansion of the Network Enforcement Law, which seeks to censor left-wing and socialist political opinion on the Internet.

On refugee policy, the conservative parties and SPD have essentially adopted the positions of the far-right AfD. “A repetition of the situation in 2015” must be “avoided,” and it is therefore necessary to “undertake efforts to appropriately manage and restrict migrant movements,” the document states.

There are also plans to “create reception, decision-making and repatriation centres to accelerate asylum proceedings”—effectively concentration camps for migrants—the “strict deportation of individuals who have a proven obligation to leave,” the “effective protection of external borders,” and the “expansion of the European coastguard and border patrol (Frontex) to become a real European border police.”

While the SPD leadership is urging its members to vote for the right-wing coalition agreement, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) urges that it be opposed in the upcoming membership vote. There is no popular mandate for the installation of this far-right government. It is an outright conspiracy against the people, which was worked out behind the backs of the population.

In last September’s federal election, both the CDU/CSU and SPD achieved their worst ever results in the history of the Federal Republic. According to the latest polls, only 32 percent of the population backs a grand coalition government.

The SGP calls for new elections. In so doing, it bases itself on the global growth of opposition to social attacks, militarism and dictatorship. In the final analysis, the reactionary policies advanced by the conservative parties and SPD, which are supported by all parliamentary parties and large sections of the European bourgeoisie, can only be stopped by an independent movement of the working class on the basis of a socialist programme.



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