

Germany: The coalition agreement and the return of militarism

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If the grand coalition between the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats comes to pass, Germany's military leadership will exert a degree of political influence on its policies unlike in any other government since the end of World War II. Important elements of the coalition contract agreed by the CDU/CSU and SPD last week bear the hallmark of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) brass.

At the Berlin Security Conference at the end of November, leading military officials had already presented a comprehensive catalogue of demands for upgrading Germany's military capabilities. In his summation to the conference, Luftwaffe Inspector Karl Müllner said, "We have stated that as the Federal Republic of Germany, we want to take on more responsibility in the world, and I think it is important that we all realize that this is not to be had for free." He hoped that "politicians recognize this and provide the appropriate means."

In the exploratory coalition paper, which the CDU/CSU and SPD presented in mid-January after lengthy talks, the comprehensive armaments upgrade plans were only mentioned in the margins. Above all, the SPD leadership feared that the party would otherwise reject the continuation of the grand coalition.

The chairman of the Bundeswehr Association, Lieutenant Colonel André Wüstner, all but burst a blood vessel, according to some media reports. He attacked the political agreement with extraordinary sharpness. He said he was "shocked" that the exploratory paper dedicated only a few dry sentences to the army.

The increase of the defence budget by €2 billion for each of the next four years and the combination of this increase with development aid were completely unacceptable, he continued, declaring: "If this is actually decided, then it is an agreement at the expense of the Bundeswehr, at the expense of our reliability and alliance ability—and thus at the expense of the security of Germany. That is irresponsible."

Instead of holding the officer accountable for his attack on elected politicians and parliamentary deputies, party officials all stood firm and deepened their collaboration with the

military brass. The coalition agreement now clearly bears its signature.

A comparison with previous coalition agreements makes this clear. In the agreement to form a government between the Christian Democrats and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) in 2009, the word "Bundeswehr" appears nine times. At the time, chapter 5 was headed, "For a powerful and modern Bundeswehr" and began with the words, "The Bundeswehr is an essential instrument of German peace policy." Then followed a few paragraphs about the abolition of military conscription and the importance of the Bundeswehr as a parliamentary army.

Four years later, the formation of a grand coalition with the SPD already stood under the auspices of a major foreign policy offensive and intensive military rearmament. The pro-government Science and Politics Foundation (SWP), in collaboration with representatives of all parties, leading journalists and professors, had published the strategy paper "New Power—New Responsibility," and former President Joachim Gauck had called for more German responsibility in all the world's crisis regions, speaking on the 2013 Day of German Unity. Gauck had explicitly emphasized that this also meant taking military responsibility.

At that time, the word "Bundeswehr" appeared 24 times in the coalition agreement. The chapter "Realignment of the Bundeswehr" said, "We are committed to a strong defence with modern and efficient armed forces." This was followed by agreements about the modernization and upgrading of the army.

In the current coalition agreement, the word "Bundeswehr" appears 38 times and the decision on military rearmament permeates all areas of the document. Government policy as a whole is now geared towards returning Germany to an aggressive foreign and great power policy.

The core of the current coalition agreement, the chapter, "Germany's Responsibility for Peace, Freedom and Security in the World," is 20 pages long and reads like a strategy paper for a third German grab for world power. The list of

areas of interest includes the Western Balkans, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Armaments production is to be massively expanded and specifically promoted. The agreement states, “The Bundeswehr will procure what it needs, not what it is offered.” What is needed is “a transparent, effective and an optimized armaments processes.”

In this context, the coalition paper completely redefines the concept of the “parliamentary army.” Where this was previously understood as meaning the strict subordination of the military to parliament and the elected government, it is now said that the Bundestag assumes a “special responsibility for our soldiers.” Parliamentary control is thus transformed into a duty of care.

In order for the Bundeswehr to be able to properly fulfil “orders given to it in all dimensions, we will provide the soldiers with the best possible equipment, training and support,” the paper states.

To this end, the “trend reversals in personnel, materiel and finances” initiated are to be systematically continued and “in addition to ensuring the sustainable financing of the Bundeswehr, the necessary conditions are to be guaranteed for planning and financing security investments over the years.” In the future, “parliamentary army” means that parliament must ensure the implementation of the requirements of the army brass.

An important role in this reversal of parliamentary control of the army into parliamentary support for the military leadership is being played by the Bundestag defence committee. It is therefore not surprising when the *Bundeswehr Journal* rejoices that the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD), with five members in the committee, now has a weighty voice.

The AfD parliamentary group in the committee is led by Rüdiger Lucassen, who leaves the Bundeswehr after 34 years of service as Colonel iG (General Staff) and, according to Wikipedia, has set up a training and procurement services company for military and police organizations.

Another AfD committee member, Gerold Otten, was also a professional soldier. He left the Luftwaffe (air force) in 1997 as a major and worked for the armaments sector of the Airbus Group, most recently as sales manager for the Eurofighter.

Another member of the AfD group on the committee, Berengar Elsner von Gronow, is a member of the Bundeswehr Reserve.

Together with the AfD, four members of the Left Party sit in the defence committee: Christine Buchholz, a leading member of Marx21 (the German sister organisation of Britain’s Socialist Workers Party), who regularly visits

troops with Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU); Matthias Höhn, until recently federal managing director of the Left Party; Alexander Neu, a former OSCE employee who has represented the Left Party in the parliamentary defence committee for a long time and who “discusses controversially” but supports all its decisions; and Tobias Pflüger, who has previously posed as an opponent of militarism but now acts as a left fig leaf in the defence committee.

None of these reactionary lackeys dare to expose what was really agreed in the coalition negotiations. Which Bundeswehr organs, military leaders and intelligence agents participated in drafting the government agreement? What additional talks and agreements have been held with the Bundeswehr?

Anyone who wants to fight seriously against war and rearmament must ask these questions and support the struggle of the Socialist Equality Party against the coalition agreement and for new elections.

The military caste has played a devastating role in German history. It formed the backbone of the empire and survived defeat in the First World War and the November Revolution of 1918 only because the right-wing SPD leadership allied itself with the Army Supreme Command to quell the revolutionary uprising of the working class, culminating in the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. In the Weimar Republic, it acted as an anti-democratic state within the state and contributed significantly to the rise of National Socialism (Nazism).

In the 1950s, there were massive protests against German rearmament. These could only be broken because the SPD spoke in favour of the Bundeswehr and because civilian control of the military was guaranteed. Now, the grand coalition is returning to aggressive great power politics and is helping the reactionary military caste regain power and influence. This must not be allowed.



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