

# German defence minister delivers war-mongering speech at Munich Security Conference

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19 February 2018

German Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen's (Christian Democrats, CDU) opening address to the 54th Munich Security Conference made clear what the incoming German government's central task will be. A new grand coalition would accelerate and escalate Germany's return to an aggressive imperialist foreign policy, as Von der Leyen and other government representatives already announced at the 2014 Security Conference.

At the beginning of her speech, Von der Leyen recalled that four years earlier, she delivered together with then German President Joachim Gauck, and his successor and then Foreign Minister, the Social Democrat Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the message that "Germany must take more responsibility on issues of foreign and security policy." Since then, Germany has participated in rearmament in Eastern Europe and "the fight against the Islamic State," she continued, "strengthened German engagement in the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan" and "constantly expanded engagement in Mali."

With the coalition agreement between the SPD, CDU and Christian Social Union (CSU), the parties have "taken a new, unprecedented step," added Von der Leyen. They have "confirmed that additional budgetary resources will flow in equal amounts into two priority areas in the coming four years: the defence sector and development policy—by which I mean the NATO goal and the ODA quota." This means that "Germany for the first time [has] agreed to a binding 'interconnected pact for security' in hard currency." Germany stands by "its promises in the United Nations" and "its agreements in NATO."

Germany's commitment to the 2 percent goal, which

was confirmed both by Von der Leyen in her speech and the coalition agreement, sets the stage for a rearmament offensive comparable only to the rearmament of Hitler's Wehrmacht in the 1930s. It will entail a military spending increase of at least €35 billion per year in the coming years.

"As German Defence Minister," this is "a decisive road map," noted Von der Leyen. "Because with that we can continue the army's turnaround. We will give the army strong personnel. We will continue to invest and modernise. And we can ambitiously take forward the strategy for a digital army."

Von der Leyen's French counterpart, Florence Parly, who spoke soon afterwards, struck a similar tone. "Robust European defence" begins "with efforts at home." French President Emmanuel Macron has therefore "decided to give our defence all resources it needs to meet its goals," and announced "France's goal of spending 2 percent of gross domestic product on the military by 2025." Within the last week, she presented "a law for a military programme," which "proposes the sum of €300 billion." It aims to "increase our personnel, initiate new arms programmes and to modernise and renew equipment."

Von der Leyen and Parly left no doubt that Germany and France, in spite of two catastrophic world wars, are once again preparing for major military conflicts. In front of hundreds of high-level political, military and intelligence service representatives, they advocated an independent European foreign and security policy to enable Berlin and Paris to deploy military means around the world in pursuit of their economic and geostrategic interests.

This is about "a Europe able to exert more military

weight. And thus manage to be more independent and bear more responsibility—ultimately also in NATO. That is our European task of the future,” stated Von der Leyen. “We have made a start. We have created a European defence union. We have begun the political journey to establish an ‘army of Europeans.’ The German-French action plan, the ‘Feuille de Route’ and the European defence fund give us strong momentum.” Germany and France are now “ready, to press ahead with the joint European project.”

Concretely, this means that the ruling classes on both sides of the Rhine are once again on the road to war. Parly said at one point, “It is insufficient to prepare for the war of tomorrow. We have to be already thinking about the war the day after tomorrow.” For her part, Von der Leyen warned, “The building of capacities and structures is one thing. The common will to actually deploy military force when the circumstances require it is another.”

At times, Von der Leyen resorted to statements familiar from the agitational speeches of the Nazi era. There are “also cases when we must place a strong focus on tough military measures,” she blustered. For example, in the struggle against Islamic State, “attempts at negotiations would have been pointless... They don’t negotiate, they behead. There will only be victory in the region if we manage to create political and social stability.”

Von der Leyen and the ruling class desire a modern-day colonial policy based on the use of ruthless military force and the subsequent occupation and plundering of the conquered countries.

There can be “no Transatlantic division of labour according to which one is responsible for the sharp end, the others take care of humanitarian issues and reconstruction. No, everyone is responsible for both sides of the coin,” warned Von der Leyen. The Europeans in particular must “strain every nerve to be equal to this task.” Europe has to be “capable and politically decisive” and “finally get up to speed.”

Von der Leyen’s speech must be taken as a warning. A new installment of the CDU/CSU/SPD grand coalition would be the most right-wing German government since the downfall of the Nazi regime. The government would launch a massive programme of rearmament, initiate a new round of social attacks and establish a police state to suppress the growing

opposition to militarism and war.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei opposes the grand coalition’s reactionary plans, which in essence are shared by all parliamentary parties, and calls for new elections. The SGP bases itself on the mounting opposition in the population to militarism and war. According to the Allensbach Security Report 2018, published just a few days ago, trust in the army has declined sharply over recent years, from 53 percent in 2011 to 45 percent in January 2018. In addition, only 27 percent of the population supports more defence spending.

While the global foreign policy and military elites press ahead with their plans for rearmament and war in Munich against the wishes of the population, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei and *World Socialist Web Site* are intensifying their fight for the construction of an international movement against capitalism, war and dictatorship. The looming threat of a third world war can be stopped only by the independent mobilisation of the working class on the basis of a socialist programme.



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