

Germany: Grand coalition expands foreign operations in Afghanistan and Iraq

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The incoming grand coalition government is preparing a massive expansion of Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan. No sooner had the membership of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) voted for the continuation of the government alliance with the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) than the expansion plans were announced.

On Wednesday the caretaker government decided to increase the previous upper troop limit in Afghanistan by about one-third, and send up to 1,300 soldiers to the central Asian country in future. According to reports, the Bundestag (parliament) should agree to this by the end of March.

The CDU/CSU and SPD are swiftly implementing the militarist plans they have concocted in recent weeks and months. The coalition agreement states, “We want to continue our involvement in the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) mandate in Afghanistan, with an unchanged mandate. As part of the multilaterally agreed concept of protection for northern Afghanistan, we will increase the number of soldiers deployed to protect trainers.”

The Bundeswehr mission in Afghanistan is not about “concepts of protection” but about the geo-strategic and economic interests of German imperialism. “Asia’s unbroken dynamic continues to offer great opportunities for Germany and Europe. At the same time, massive changes in the international order are emerging in the region,” the coalition agreement states. “Asia harbours great potential for conflict through a multitude of unresolved conflicts. We are therefore dedicated to a strong German and European economic, social and security policy commitment in Asia.”

The SPD and CDU/CSU had already agreed on the extension of German intervention in the resource-rich Middle East in the coalition agreement. In the section

on “current foreign missions” they explain, “The Bundeswehr mission in northern Iraq was successful, IS [Islamic State] has been largely pushed back there militarily. Therefore, we can phase out and end the training mandate in northern Iraq ... In a further step, we want to further develop this mandate for the comprehensive stabilization and sustainable fight against IS terror, in particular through capacity building.”

By “capacity building” the government means comprehensive and long-term military engagement throughout Iraq. The new draft mandate, which initially foresees a maximum of 800 soldiers and was also approved by the federal cabinet on Wednesday, states, “On the basis of requests from the international anti-IS coalition and the Iraqi government, NATO is currently reviewing a transformation and possible intensification of its previous involvement in training and consulting in Iraq into a training mission.”

Specifically, this concerns the training of the Iraqi army as a proxy army and lackey for imperialist interests. “The regular Iraqi armed forces and security forces need to be empowered to respond to the changing threat and thus ensure the security necessary for successful stabilization,” reads the mandate. The planned actions serve to “strengthen structures and capabilities, through the training of trainers” and “also to ensure effective political control over the security forces.”

A particularly perfidious aim of the grand coalition is the preparation of mass deportations of refugees to Iraq. The mission also “contributes to creating the basis for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees,” write the CDU/CSU and SPD in the draft mandate. At the same time, they undertake to continue the West’s brutal air warfare in Syria, which has turned hundreds

of thousands into refugees.

In addition to the new Bundeswehr mission in Iraq, the German war effort in Syria should continue. This includes reconnaissance flights by German Tornados from Jordan, the refuelling of jet fighters of the so-called anti-IS coalition and the surveillance of the region using AWACS reconnaissance aircraft. Germany supports “the international coalition in the fight against IS directly by the provision of reconnaissance means,” and by doing so, “contributes to the fact that air reconnaissance over the area of operation of IS becomes all the more important the more IS operates in a concealed manner,” the mandate reads.

The government’s attempt to portray the deployment of the Bundeswehr as an “anti-terrorist operation” is pure propaganda. It is well known that the US invasion under George W. Bush in 2003 initiated the destruction of Iraq, and that IS itself was the product of the country’s subsequent occupation and of Western cooperation with Islamist militias in the regime-change wars in Libya and Syria.

While Germany had held back during the wars against Iraq and Libya, it was fully involved in the Syria war from the outset. The Bundeswehr is directly or indirectly using terrorist methods. The Peshmerga units and Iraqi forces it has trained and armed have killed tens of thousands of civilians in the so-called liberation of Mosul from ISIS, and the German Air Force supplies target coordinates for the massacres of the US-led anti-IS coalition in Syria.

Although the grand coalition is now planning to intensify the brutal and unpopular war effort, there is virtually no opposition in the Bundestag. Representatives of all parties backed the new government on Sunday and have already voted in favour of foreign deployments of the Bundeswehr in the past. If there is any criticism from the so-called opposition parties, it focuses on the orientation and concrete implementation of the new mandates.

For example, in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Green Party foreign policy spokesman Omid Nouripour said that while it was right to want to help Iraq, the mandate was “so imprecise that it is unclear how it should succeed and how parliamentary control is possible.” Tobias Pflüger, Defence Policy Spokesman of the Left Party, also complained that the mandate was unclear.

“The previous cabinet draft leaves open how many soldiers should be transferred to Iraq, including the relationship of trainers and other soldiers,” said Pflüger. With such a “vague submission,” the Defence Minister leaves “everything open” and will have to “answer questions” in the Defence Committee.



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