

Great power politics, militarism, increased deportations: The right-wing programme of Germany's grand coalition

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The new German government will be sworn in today, but the media has already begun to condition the public to its programme. In doing so, they confirm what the WSWs has written about the coalition treaty from the start: the policy of the grand coalition will be characterised by great-power politics, militarism and fierce attacks on social and democratic rights.

On Saturday, *Der Spiegel* published an essay entitled "Thank You, Donald." The editor-in-chief of the magazine, Klaus Brinkbäumer, sums up what Sigmar Gabriel, Ursula von der Leyen, Wolfgang Ischinger, Herfried Münkler and other representatives of German foreign policy have proclaimed in recent months and draws definite conclusions.

One must be grateful to the American president, because "the cracks in the transatlantic alliance" offer Germany the "opportunity" to "grow up," reads the article's central argument. Germany must once again conduct a dirty foreign policy based on great-power politics. "The times when we could rely on the US and leave all the major, and above all dirty tasks, to the US are over," Brinkbäumer declares, arguing, "We must once again make Europe a world political force."

Brinkbäumer casts an envious eye at "non-democratic China," which advocates "free trade and globalisation," which is "predictable" and is "in certain respects a better partner" than "an America shattered in its democratic foundations." For multinational issues, Europe "needs to choose the partners it needs to impose what it considers right. And of course, when necessary, against the US."

Brinkbäumer then summarises what this means concretely in four points.

"We must say goodbye to the gentle, protected,

sometimes hypocritical foreign policy of the past," reads the first. Germany can no longer "hide" and "take morally pure positions."

Secondly, he advocates openly propagating militarism rather than disguising it: "When it comes to military operations involving huge expenditures and outright risks, then in a democracy it should first be argued about and then decided."

He then goes on to demand a foreign policy based on interests and not on values; this must also be debated "fearlessly." He cites as an example Germany policy for Turkey and asks: "Do we want Turkey to respect human rights and democratic rules, or do we want to prevent it orienting towards Moscow or Beijing?"

Finally, Brinkbäumer demands: "We must unite Europe into a single entity." In the end, "we must have a joint financial and economic policy, a joint army, a joint strategy and thus a joint foreign policy." The aim must be "a strong Europe—or we Europeans yield up our importance and lose the fight."

A decade ago, such an openly imperialist programme would have provoked protests or at least caused a sensation. Today, there is a consensus within the ruling elite and its parties, including the Left Party. The coalition agreement, signed by the CDU, CSU and SPD on Monday, spells this out in detail.

The international framework, which permitted Germany after the Second World War to become an economic great power by relatively peaceful means, no longer exists. Geo-strategic differences have long existed with the US. These are now compounded by a trade war, involving threats of import duties on steel and aluminum and punitive taxes on cars by US President Donald Trump, which would hit at the heart

of the German economy.

“There is no other country that would so be hard hit,” *Der Spiegel* quotes the economist Gabriel Felbermayr. Every fourth German job depends on exports. In particular, five key industries—auto, machinery, electrical engineering, pharmaceuticals, precision instruments—are major exporters to America.

The European Union (EU), by far the most important market for the German economy, is also disintegrating. Following the British Brexit, parties hostile to the EU have now gained a majority in the parliament in Italy, a founding member of the European Economic Community. And despite enthusiasm for the French president, Berlin and France have come no closer to implementing the reform of the monetary union proposed by Macron—even though the next financial crisis is looming.

The ruling class of Germany is reacting to this crisis by returning to the criminal methods it used in the past. In order to regain world power, it seeks to dominate the EU and turn it into a well-equipped military alliance.

This has a direct impact on domestic policy. Militarism and great-power politics are incompatible with democracy. Years of welfare cuts combined with a huge expansion of the low-paid sector have already sharpened class tensions enormously. Now, rising military spending is on the agenda. The target agreed in the coalition pact of 2 percent of GDP as required by NATO amounts to a doubling of the military budget to a total of €70 billion per year. This all has to be paid for by the working class.

That is why the campaign against refugees is now being stepped up again, although the number of applications for asylum is declining significantly. The campaign against refugees serves to direct social discontent against the most vulnerable layer in society. At the same time, it is used to wipe out basic democratic rights and erect a police state to suppress social opposition.

The new interior and homeland minister, Horst Seehofer (CSU), marked the beginning of this renewed assault on Sunday when he announced a “master plan for more resolute deportations,” mass surveillance and other police state measures. On the same evening, in the course of a German television talk show, he received the backing of the new CDU general secretary, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer; the SPD politician

Manuela Schwesig; the parliamentary faction leader of the Left Party, Sahra Wagenknecht; and FDP leader Christian Lindner.

On Monday, deputy CSU leader and group leader of the European People’s Party in the European Parliament, Manfred Weber, followed suit with a long interview in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Weber declared he was “horrified” by the Italian election result. A breakdown of the EU “would mean the end of our global assertiveness,” he warned. He then identified the “miserable failure” of EU states “in migration policy” as the chief problem.

His solution: “We need tough security for our borders. ... If the Bulgarians try to prevent illegal migration with fences on the border with Turkey, then they deserve support.” Europe needs “active officers” for joint border security. Instead of the current 1,500, “at least 10,000” are required.

As a role model for the deportation of refugees, Weber cited the 2016 agreement with Turkey. “We need to organise direct but structured repatriations from the camps, as, for example, from [the Greek island] Lesbos back to Turkey. ... In Libya, we must at least build enclaves to which we can return and provide for illegal migrants.”

“Dirty, interest-oriented foreign policy,” “huge spending on military operations,” “resolute deportations”—these are the keystone policies for the new government that takes office today. It will be the most right-wing German government since the overthrow of the Nazi regime.



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