

# German chancellor's government speech: Anti-refugee propaganda, rearmament and war

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel delivered her first government statement Wednesday following her re-election last week. In her typical lethargic and tedious style, Merkel presented the grand coalition's reactionary programme, which will serve as the basis for the most right-wing government in Germany since the end of World War II.

Merkel's speech focused on the grand coalition's refugee policy, which is increasingly being borrowed from the demands of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). An "exceptional situation" as occurred in 2015 "should not and cannot be allowed to be repeated," declared Merkel. She then presented a long list of measures aimed at cracking down on refugees and ensuring quicker deportations to the Middle East and North Africa.

Europe has to be "capable" of "safeguarding and securing its external borders," intoned Merkel. The "formation of a joint border security agency" is "just as important as the entry and exit register that is now finally being established." Refugees "who have no right to protection have to leave our country," Merkel continued, "preferably by means of voluntary repatriation programmes," but "via state-ordered repatriation if necessary."

While the bourgeois media claims otherwise, Merkel came to the defence of Interior Minister Horst Seehofer's (Christian Social Union, CSU) anti-Muslim agitation. Seehofer declared last week that Islam does not belong to Germany, which has been "historically and culturally shaped by Judaeo-Christian ideas and not Islam." Merkel now agrees with him, stating, "There can be absolutely no doubt that our country's historical influences were Judaism and Christianity." With 4.5

million Muslims living in Germany, Islam has "since become part of Germany," she added. But she realised that "many people have a problem accepting this thought. And they are fully entitled to do so."

The *World Socialist Web Site* explained at the beginning of this week that the government is stoking a racist atmosphere to enforce its reactionary programme of militarism, social attacks, and the strengthening of the repressive state apparatus against mounting opposition among workers and young people. Merkel's government statement, taken as a whole, made this connection clear.

On domestic policy, Merkel announced the hiring of "15,000 new police officers" and warned everyone to bow before the strong state. The enforcement of "the law and legislation" requires "respect and recognition for those who enforce the law and legislation in this country: police officers, customs officials, judges, law enforcement personnel, public servants in the judiciary in particular, but also in custodial centres and elsewhere."

In the area of social policy, Merkel frankly acknowledged that the government's extremely modest promises are not worth the paper they are written on. The planned hiring of 8,000 care workers was justifiably dismissed as a "drop in the bucket." On behalf of big business, Merkel appealed for more "competitiveness," meaning further attacks on the wages and living standards of the working class throughout Europe.

Merkel left no doubt about the fact that the entire budgetary plan for the current legislative period will be subordinated to the grand coalition's plans for a huge programme of rearmament. She declared her support

for NATO's goal of spending 2 percent of GDP on the military, which equates to an increase in defence spending of €35 billion annually in the coming years. Germany needs "a modern-equipped army able to deploy," she said. The recent report by the parliamentary commissioner for the armed forces made "crystal clear that there is much still to be done, even though we carried out a shift in course on defence spending over the past four years."

At another point, Merkel claimed that there is "not a single member state" in NATO "that believes Germany spends too much on defence." Concerning "the fear of excessive militarisation," this exists "nowhere outside of Germany with regard to Germany," she asserted. In reality, Germany's new rearmament offensive, which is comparable only with Hitler's rearmament of the Wehrmacht prior to World War II, will intensify the conflicts between the major powers.

Currently, the German ruling class is (for now) relying on the establishment of a common European military great power policy so as to pursue its imperialist ambitions around the world. To defend "our sovereignty, our interests, and our values," we need "in addition to more permanent and structured cooperation on defence, more joint action on foreign policy," explained Merkel. "Because we are under no illusions. The world around us is unpleasant and unpredictable. Today, Europe is surrounded by major conflicts."

And it is now necessary to intervene much more forcefully, added Merkel. "Iraq must be stabilised. The killing in Syria must be brought to an end and Syria's political future dealt with. Libya must be stabilised and supported," she said. She threatened the United States with countermeasures in the looming trade war. The federal government intends to "continue to work for talks with the American administration, but if necessary resort to robust countermeasures."

Merkel also gave her backing to London in its aggressive anti-Russian campaign over the Skripal affair. "We are on Britain's side, and are in solidarity. A lot of evidence points to Russia. ..." Responding to interruptions from deputies, Merkel aggressively declared, "I would be happy if I did not have to mention Russia at this point, ladies and gentlemen! But we cannot explain away evidence just because we don't want to mention Russia. And that's certainly not what's happening now."

The debate on the government statement, which lasted several hours, continued in parliament yesterday and will conclude today, demonstrated that all parliamentary parties agree on the essentials of the grand coalition's reactionary and militarist programme. Deputies from the Free Democrats, Left Party and Greens applauded on several occasions during Merkel's speech.

The far-right AfD's parliamentary group leader, Alexander Gauland, who as "leader of the opposition" spoke directly after Merkel, acknowledged that in her speech, the chancellor had "for the first time spoken of Germans." This was "a victory for the AfD," Gauland boasted. In a fascistic tirade, he blustered about "perpetrators, knife killers, and rapists," cited Bismarck, and pushed the anti-refugee and anti-Muslim hysteria to the limit. There is "no obligation to diversity and colourfulness" and also "no obligation for me to share my state's territory with foreigners," declared Gauland.

Hardly anyone embodies the sharp rightward shift in German capitalist politics more than Gauland. The 77-year-old was a high-level functionary in the CDU for four decades, before co-founding the AfD in 2013. His rise to the position of parliament's far-right hardliner is the direct result of the policies laid out by Merkel in her government speech and supported by all the establishment parties. As in the 1930s, Germany's return to a great-power policy around the world is bound up with the spreading of nationalist and racist propaganda, and the building up of a far-right party.



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