

# The German army's new policy doctrine: Preparing for World War III

Johannes Stern  
28 August 2018

Virtually unnoticed by the public, German Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen presented the army's new policy doctrine in late July.

The 87-page document underscores what the grand coalition and the entire German ruling elite are planning behind the backs of the population: the massive rearmament of the army in preparation for major military operations and the prospect of a third world war.

The centrepiece of the policy doctrine is “operational orientation”—i.e., the preparation of all military and civilian forces for war. “The army follows the principle ‘focus on the operation.’ The army’s common thoughts and actions must be directed towards swiftly empowering the army to operate across the full spectrum of its tasks and remain ready to deploy. Operational orientation demands the self-awareness that not only the forces operating abroad, but rather all military and civilian members of the army—irrespective of where they serve—do their part, including reservists,” states the document on page 11.

This is followed by statements like, “Operational orientation demands from all members of the army a high degree of physical and psychological robustness, as well as personal flexibility and mobility,” “Independent infrastructure, facilities, bodies of troops and capabilities have to be strengthened and made resistance-ready,” and “The goal is to prepare the army for known and new challenges, risks, and threats across the full spectrum of tasks and levels of intensity.” In the fifth chapter, titled “Prerequisites for the army’s capability profile,” it is stated, “Conventional attacks on alliance territory are to be expected, especially on its external borders.

“The army must be given the capacities to operate in this area. It must have the forces and means at its disposal to deploy after a brief mobilisation to the borders or beyond alliance territory. This must include strategic deployment capabilities. The possibility of an early response to the identification of concrete plans for attacks can be supported by capabilities to respond to emerging crises. Collective defence within alliance territory can range from small-scale operations to an extremely demanding deployment within the framework of a very large operation both within and on the outskirts of alliance territory.”

Preparations for war—against whom?

The Defence Ministry and army leadership do not declare in the new “doctrine,” which draws on the mad rearmament plans of the 1930s, whom the target of the “very large operations” will be. Perhaps once again an operation will be directed against Russia,

which was invaded by Hitler’s Wehrmacht in World War II and targeted for a horrific war of extermination, and which is now encircled and threatened militarily by NATO? Or against the United States, which under President Donald Trump has ceased to be the protective power of the post-war era and is once again a political opponent? Or against Germany’s neighbours France and Poland, with whom Berlin (for now) cooperates closely on the military and political fronts, but which have historically been the military targets of German imperialism?

Young people and workers in Germany and around the world have a right to know what is going through the minds of the politicians and generals!

The “doctrine” leaves no doubt about the fact that the German military, its two catastrophic defeats in the world wars notwithstanding, is once again preparing for major wars. “Rapid strike and follow-up capabilities for a very large operation have to be planned. They must be effectual in a hybrid conflict as it develops and escalates across the full spectrum of its effects, in all its dimensions, in a joint, multi-national armed force, and in all types of operations. At the beginning of a very large, high-intensity operation, a huge deployment of readily available forces and equipment is necessary. Provisions to regenerate the personnel and material will be undertaken.”

The mad scenario even includes the possibility of a nuclear war. In the section “National and alliance defence within the framework of NATO and the European Union,” it states, “Ultimately, the entire territory of the alliance, its full spectrum of state and social activities, can rapidly become the target of hostile acts. The continued existence of the doctrinal underpinnings and practical possibility of the deployment of nuclear weapons complements this. The army, with its Single Set of Forces, must be capable of deploying for collective defence in all its dimensions within a brief preparatory period, with the full range of its capabilities up to and including large combat-ready units both within and beyond alliance territory.”

Other sections of the “doctrine” recall Goebbels’s call for “total war.” The army must, for example, “be able to ensure the deployability essentially of its own facilities without any reliance on third parties and in the face of severe disruptions. Independently of this, the forces and facilities can be deployed as subsidiary support services within a legal framework, particularly with capabilities that cannot be sustained by civilian services, e.g., due to their reliance on volunteers.”

In a section with the heading “effect,” the document states, “The control over and security within areas will be secured and sustained by superior effectiveness within the operational leadership. Successful functioning and the control over areas are critical for fulfilling operational goals. The army must be given the capabilities, either alone or as part of an alliance, to achieve effective superiority in all dimensions and across all levels of intensity.”

Global wars of conquest and the preparations for waging war on such a massive scale go hand in hand with the German ruling elite’s desire to assert itself militarily on the world stage. In the section “International crisis management,” the document states, “The requirements range from preventative actions in the face of developing crises to time-limited, highly-tensive rapid response operations and long-lasting stabilisation missions within the framework of security and post-crisis management. This also includes contributions to the struggle against international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, threats in cyberspace and space, new threats of a different character, as well as the enforcement of embargos and sanctions, and displays of military force to support diplomatic efforts in crisis management.”

This is explicitly about enforcing the geostrategic and economic interests of German imperialism. “If the security situation in a region or area deteriorates and German interests are affected, the army can respond with a variety of military actions on the low end of the escalation spectrum, including by supporting diplomatic measures. With the presence of military strength in a crisis-ridden region with forces on land, in the air, or at sea, an aggressor can be dissuaded from his plans without the outbreak of an open conflict. Protective operations and convoys in crisis regions serve to safeguard shipping routes, air traffic, and trading routes, and to increase the mobility and response-readiness.”

After the German government declared in 2014 that the era of military restraint was over, and in 2016 published a new white paper for the army, it is now openly declaring that Germany will assume a leadership role in future international military operations. “The army is committed to developing and putting into practice the principles laid out in the 2016 white paper, and to participate in operations with ad hoc coalitions or to initiate them with partners, including as a lead nation,” states the “doctrine.”

In other words, Berlin intends, just like the United States in its illegal invasion of Iraq, to form future “coalitions of the willing” to attack and occupy entire countries. In the imperialist language of the twenty-first century, such wars are justified as follows, “If an eruption of violence cannot be prevented, a time-limited combat mission to restore peace can be necessary, which can be followed up with a stabilisation mission. Measures to enforce peace are to be selected in such a way that they pursue the long-term goal of stabilisation. The armed forces must be able to enforce ceasefires, including no-fly-zones, demilitarised zones, and zones for civilian protection, and organise the disarmament and repatriation of the conflict parties.”

It continues, “If necessary, they will assume responsibility for stabilising the area, and protecting civilians and critical infrastructure. To separate conflict parties, the force of a military

opponent can sometimes be required. Soldiers deployed to overcome crises and armed conflicts must be capable of engaging in combat at all levels of intensity. ... If the country concerned is incapable of securing public order and security independently, the army can temporarily assume responsibility in a cross-department intervention to secure order, the equivalent of which domestically would be led by non-military forces.”

The deployment of the army domestically and the return to a militarist foreign policy goes hand in hand with the erection of a police state. “With regard to the threats in the ‘global commons,’ as well as hybrid threats in cyberspace, national and spatial boundaries, as well as the separation of internal and external security, are losing their significance,” states the doctrine.

The paper openly declares its support for the deployment of the army domestically and its collaboration with the police and other state agencies. “Subsidiary support services in Germany” are to be “adopted permanently within the framework of departmental agreements, including parliamentary flights, surveillance of oil, the promotion of sport, and export support. In Germany, available forces as well as contributions for support services in case of natural disasters, particularly severe accidents (including due to major terrorist incidents) should be mobilised to provide support during emergencies as well as with official business if requested.”

The ruling class knows that it can only enforce its plans, as it did in the 1930s, by establishing an authoritarian terror regime and violently crushing all opposition among young people and workers. It is no accident that the army’s new “doctrine” appears the same week as the latest report from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutz) appeared. The report defended the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany while labelling the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) “left-wing extremist” because it advocates a socialist programme “against the existing state and social order which it slanders as capitalist, against the EU, alleged nationalism, and against militarism and imperialism.”

Workers and young people in Germany and throughout Europe understand very well what this means. The attack from the Verfassungsschutz was aimed at the SGP, but also against anyone opposed to social inequality, militarism and state repression—the vast majority of the population.

The task now is to mobilise this opposition on the basis of a socialist and internationalist programme. The same ruling class which twice before plunged humanity into the abyss cannot be allowed once again to put their criminal plans into practice. We call on all workers and young people who are concerned by the dangerous developments in Germany and want to oppose militarism, fascism and war to support a socialist counteroffensive and apply to join the SGP.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**