

German chancellor calls for a “real European army”

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To the applause of the vast majority of European parliamentary deputies, German Chancellor Angela Merkel issued a call on Tuesday for the “creation of a real European army.” Merkel’s speech in Strasbourg underscores the reactionary traditions currently evoked by the ruling elites in Germany and Europe. The task of such an army would be to advance the economic and geostrategic interests of Germany and Europe across the world using military force.

“We are aware that as Europeans, we can better defend our interests when we act together,” Merkel explained. She continued, “Only a united Europe is strong enough to be heard on the global stage and defend its values and interests. The times when we could rely unconditionally on others are over. This means that we Europeans have to increasingly take our fate into our own hands if we want to survive as a community. This means in the long term that Europe must become more capable of acting abroad.”

Merkel tried to sell the creation of an army “capable of acting,” i.e., a Europe armed to the teeth, as an “opportunity” to achieve “lasting peace” after the “horrors” of two world wars. What a mockery! Her own words left no doubt that the European powers are militarily rearming to prepare for war and play an independent role in the struggle to reorganise the globe.

There is “less and less chance of enforcing interests on the global stage alone,” Merkel declared. She therefore proposed “that we set up a European Security Council with alternating, rotating memberships of the Member States, in which important decisions can be prepared quickly.” One needs a “European reaction force,” which “can also act locally.” There has been “great progress” in “permanent structural cooperation in the military field” but “due to developments in recent years” one must now “work very consciously on

the vision of creating a real European army one day.”

A German-dominated European army is one of the stated goals of Germany’s grand coalition (Christian Democratic Union, CDU, Christian Social Union, CSU and Social Democratic Party, SPD) government. The coalition pact already agreed on taking further steps towards creating an “army of Europeans.”

Last weekend, SPD leader Andrea Nahles also pleaded for a European army at the “debating camp” of the SPD in Berlin. “We have to put an end to all this small-state politics. We now have to find a European answer.” There are 28 armies, 27 air forces and 23 navies in the European Union. What is necessary is a “European army,” she declared.

This demand is also supported by the Greens and sections of the Left Party. The EU must be able to “conduct world politics in a dramatically changed situation,” Green Party leader Annalena Baerbock told *Der Spiegel* in a recent interview. A common European security and defence policy is “a holistic project” and requires “first and foremost combining military capabilities in Europe and reducing duplicated structures.”

Already two years ago, immediately following the election of Donald Trump, leaders of the Left Party called for a “European army” to “put an end to the pussyfooting” with Washington.

In Strasbourg, Merkel claimed that a “European army” was not an “army against NATO” but “a good complement to NATO.” In fact, it is obvious that the call for an independent European force is a response to the growing conflicts between the major powers, which are reverting to open hostility and creating the danger of a third world war, exactly 100 years after the end of WWI.

When French President Emmanuel Macron raised his

own demand for a “true European army” last week, he made absolutely clear that it would also be directed against the US.

US President Donald Trump immediately responded via Twitter, describing Macron’s proposal as “very insulting.” On Tuesday he said: “Emmanuel Macron suggests building its own army to protect Europe against the US, China and Russia. But it was Germany in World Wars One & Two—How did that work out for France? They were starting to learn German in Paris before the US came along. Pay for NATO or not!”

Merkel and Macron are currently striving to transform the EU into a military alliance that, unlike NATO, can operate independently of, and against the US. But historical grounded tensions and conflicts are also breaking out between Berlin and Paris. As tensions escalate with the US, differences are increasing between the European powers themselves.

Representing an ever more vocal anti-French wing in the German ruling class, the leader of the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD), Alexander Gauland, condemned Merkel’s participation in the ceremonies to mark the end of WWI. Gauland said on German television that “it was wrong to retrospectively rewrite history and participate in the victory celebrations of the former allied forces at a later date.” Germany had “lost the war,” he said, and “yes, the policies that led to WWI have many guilty parties.” Therefore, one could not march “beside Mr. Macron through the Arc de Triumph.”

The fact that Gauland can uncritically propagate his aggressive historical revisionism on a major German public news channel is indicative of the course being taken by the German ruling class. Earlier this year, Gauland provocatively referred to “Hitler and the Nazis” as a mere “speck of bird shit in over a thousand years of successful German history” and said that Germans had “the right to be proud of the achievements of German soldiers in two world wars.”

When the ruling class in Germany now dreams of a “European army” or an “army of Europeans,” it draws directly from the criminal traditions of German imperialism. The Nazi regime was quite prepared to use pro-European rhetoric to justify its plans for world domination. For example, it described its forces in the former Soviet Union, which suffered a crushing defeat in Stalingrad, as a “European army.” A memorandum

from the German Foreign Office of September 9, 1943 on the establishment of a “European Confederation” resembles many of the passages in current speeches and strategy papers on European foreign and defence policy.

“The unification of Europe, which has been on the cards for a long time in history, is an inevitable development,” it reads. “Europe has become too small for feuding and mutually exclusive sovereignties. A divided Europe is also too weak to sustain itself in the world with its own character and strength and maintain peace.”

The section headed “Joint Defence Against External Attacks” states: “The basic principle must be that an attack on Europe will be opposed by a solidarity-based defence of the European peoples. The military forces of the European peoples are to be regarded as a single unit and aligned with one another.”

Today, as then, the implementation of such a strategy requires an aggressive nationalist, anti-working-class and ultimately fascist programme. That is why Macron declared it “legitimate” to honour World War II general, fascist dictator and Nazi collaborator Philippe Pétain when Macron made his own appeal for a “European army.” For the same reason, the ruling class in Germany is courting the far-right AfD and permits far-right terrorist networks to be active in the German army (Bundeswehr)—networks which in turn can rely on support from sections of the military, police and intelligence apparatus.

In his book *Power in the Middle*, published in 2015, the now emeritus Humboldt professor and foreign policy adviser to the German government, Herfried Münkler, demanded that Germany, as a “central power,” once again become the “hegemon” and “disciplinarian” of Europe. From the standpoint of German elites, the call for a European army serves exactly this purpose. It must be sharply opposed by the working class along with all other attempts to strengthen European nation states and their respective armies.



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