

Germany assumes UN Security Council chair while accelerating rearmament

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Germany, which began a two-year period as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council on 1 January, took over as chair of the body on Monday. Germany's presidency of the council follows immediately after the presidency of France, a permanent UNSC member, and is being closely coordinated with Paris. With their "jumelage" or twin presidency, Berlin and Paris want not only to "deepen European cooperation in the Security council," but also "strengthen peace around the world," according to a statement on the German Foreign Ministry's website.

Foreign Minister Heiko Mas (Social Democrats, SPD) declared shortly prior to his departure for New York on Monday that Germany is aware "of the responsibility we are assuming with the chairmanship." The German government will "during our chairmanship strengthen long-term conflict prevention, focusing particularly on the role of humanitarian assistance, among other things." Hospitals, doctors, and support staff are "increasingly becoming targets, with access to foodstuffs and medical care abused as a method of waging war against civilian populations." This trend towards "the complete disappearance of restrictions on military conflict" must be stopped in order to prevent the threat of a "slide into a new form of barbarism."

Workers and young people should understand such declarations as a warning. Under the cover of humanitarian phrases, the European powers, with Germany in the lead, are rearming in preparation for new conflicts between the major powers that will eclipse the two world wars of the 20th century.

The initiatives taken by Germany's grand coalition give an indication of the ruling elite's comprehensive programme of rearmament and war planning.

In a guest commentary in the *Welt am Sonntag* entitled "These are the crucial steps towards a

European army," Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen (Christian Democrats, CDU) lauded Germany's rearmament drive over the past five years. Since 2014, Germany's defence budget "has risen six times in a row. According to NATO criteria by a total of 40 percent to the €45 billion planned for 2020." Last year alone, "the army received 13 transport helicopters, 10 Eurofighter jets, and more than 100 tanks, including 72 Puma tanks."

This is merely the beginning, because "of course, only 70 percent combat readiness is not good enough," continued Von der Leyen. As a result, the army expects in this parliamentary session "another 200 tanks, 14 Sea Lion marine helicopters, the first new F-125 model frigates, and plenty of equipment for our soldiers, including the long demanded all-weather combat boots." On average, the army will therefore receive "a new tank every week, a new plane or helicopter every month, and a new ship every year."

To "invest reliably in military capabilities" and take "decisive steps in the direction of a European army," the defence budget must be increased. "The federal government has promised to increase the defence budget to 1.5 percent of gross domestic product by 2024," wrote Von der Leyen. It will be "necessary to exert considerable effort to move credibly towards the NATO target of spending 2 percent of GDP on defence."

The goal of adding additional billions to the military budget annually to increase it to €75 billion is fully supported by Finance Minister Olaf Scholz (SPD). He is delighted that he "can contribute as a Social Democratic Finance Minister to ensuring that the army gets the support it needs," said Scholz at the presentation of the draft budget for 2020 in March. The federal government recognises its "international

obligations” and will “therefore stabilise the change of course on defence spending,” added Scholz.

Mas reaffirmed these plans in a recent interview. The government will “move step by step towards (the NATO 2 percent target) [...] because the planes have to fly and the ships must sail.” He has “been in Afghanistan, Mali, and Iraq over recent weeks” and has met “German soldiers who are doing incredible things in a tremendous way.” These men and women “deserve that we enable them to perform their sometimes dangerous service with the best possible equipment.”

Five years after the German government announced at the 2014 Munich Security Conference that Germany must assume “more responsibility” in the world, the ruling elite is declaring ever more openly what this means.

Germany is “in Europe’s fragile ecosystem what they in America refer to as the ‘800 pound gorilla’: the animal that causes the trees to tremble just by turning over in its sleep,” states a contribution in the latest edition of the magazine *International Politics*, which is published by the German Society for Foreign Affairs (DGAP) think tank. According to one of its conclusions, “dialogue demands the ability to enforce measures. This presupposes the ability to deploy military power; even our friends consider our prudish attitude towards hard power to be hypocritical.”

Another piece with the provocative title “Against pseudo-intellectual chatter” calls for the abandonment of the “vacuous concept of ‘responsibility’,” which implies “a diffuse pleasantness in the midst of global political turbulence.” In fact, the issue is “competing interests and having the means to impose them.” This includes “the discussion about nuclear weapons.”

When one reads such statements, it becomes clear why the political establishment and media are collaborating with the far-right Alternative for Germany, and praise right-wing extremist and militarist academics like Jörg Baberowski (“Hitler was not vicious”) and Herfried Münkler (“Threats are the perfect weapon”). As the book “Why are They Back?” authored by SGP deputy leader Christoph Vandreier demonstrates, the Humboldt professors’ calls for brutal wars and trivialisation of German imperialist crimes in the 20th century are directly bound up with the foreign policy shift.

A glance at those occupying leadership positions at

the DGAP makes clear why the Left Party and its pseudo-left supporters have not lifted a finger in protest against the return of German militarism. They are themselves part of this process, being fully integrated into its institutions. Along with the SPD’s foreign policy spokesman Nils Annen, the CDU’s Elmar Brok, and the Greens’ Frithjof Schmidt, the Left Party is represented on the DGAP presidium by its former secretary for federal affairs Matthias Böhn.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is the only party that is arming the mounting social and political opposition in the working class and among young people with a socialist programme. Our statement on the European elections declares, “The SGP is standing in the European elections in May 2019 to oppose the rise of the far-right, the growth of militarism, and glaring social inequality. Together with our sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International, we fight across Europe against the EU and for the unification of the continent on a socialist basis. This is the only way to prevent a relapse into fascist barbarism and war.”



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