

EU powers build joint “Future Combat Air System”

European Union rearms for World War III

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Following the announcement last week by the US Defense Department of its biggest ever arms deal involving the purchase of nearly 500 F-35 fighters, Europe replied in kind on Monday. At the world’s largest air show in Le Bourget near Paris, the German defence minister Ursula von der Leyen, together with her colleagues from France, Florence Parly, and Spain, Margarita Robles, signed major agreements to develop a joint European air combat system (Future Combat Air System—FCAS).

The cost of FCAS, which is announced to be operational by 2040, is immense. Up to €8 billion will flow into joint development alone. Overall, costs are expected to be more than €100 billion. The *Handelsblatt* newspaper reports that “by the middle of the century” the FCAS project could devour “up to €500 billion.” The same sum would finance Germany’s entire education budget for 27 years!

The massive armaments project is part of plans to transform the European Union into a major military power capable of waging war independently of and, if necessary, against the United States.

According to a report posted on the official web site of the German Defence Department: “FCAS is not just a fighter plane, but a composite system.” Under the proposed “‘System of Systems,’ manned fighter aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (‘remote carriers’) would be integrated into a network. In addition, navy vessels and land vehicles could be included in the network. Air force, navy and army could thereby act closely together.”

After the unveiling of a first model of the new NGWS (New Generation Weapon System) at Le Bourget, von der Leyen said: “Today is an important day in two respects: firstly, the Franco-German fighter plane system is a big step forward in modernising the Bundeswehr (German army). But secondly, it is also a great day for the European Defence Union, because for the first time we are jointly launching a European fighter system,” Thirdly, it is “a great day for European industry, which will be

given a huge boost by this fighter plane system.”

The inspector general of the German air force, Lieutenant General Ingo Gerhartz, praised the joint development of the NGWS as a sign of “Europe’s great innovative power.” The head of the French military aircraft manufacturer Dassault Aviation, Eric Trappier, assessed the project as an important step towards achieving autonomy with regard to armaments and military requirements. Up until now, European countries have tended to buy US defence equipment. “Now we are offering Europeans a European plane that is independent of US technology,” he told the French news channel CNews.

The decision by central European powers to develop a US-independent air combat system will further exacerbate transatlantic tensions.

Most recently, at the beginning of May the US administration warned the EU against excluding US arms companies from European defence projects, describing the creation of independent European military structures, such as the European Defence Fund and enhanced EU defence cooperation (Pesco), as “deeply worrying.” A US letter dated May 1 to the EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini stated that the provisions made for both projects represented “a dramatic step back in three decades of growing integration of the trans-Atlantic defence industry.”

In response to US threats and Washington’s preparations for war against Iran, which are also directed against the economic and geostrategic interests of European powers in the region, leading EU nations are aggressively stepping up their own foreign and defence policy.

In the “Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024,” which will be adopted at the EU summit in Brussels today, the EU sets out its claim to be a world power in the future. Europe strives to “reinforce its global influence” and “influence the course of world events,” the document reads. To

achieve this goal, the EU must “move forward towards a genuine European Defence Union.” This would “allow Europe to take further responsibility for its own security” and “improve its strategic autonomy.”

These plans are explicitly directed at preparing for war. The section titled “Protective Europe” states that the EU should “focus on areas where cooperation can result in clear benefits, such as in defence industry and research, cyber-defence, military mobility, hybrid crisis management, and missions and operations abroad.” Leading political and military strategists openly declare that the EU is preparing for conflicts with other major powers, entailing the danger of a third world war.

We find ourselves “in a historically unique situation in which Europe is being challenged or under pressure from three major powers—from a revisionist Russia, an economically and politically expanding China and an America, under President Trump, moving on several fronts against the EU,” declared the new president of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Tom Enders, in a recent interview. Enders was previously head of Europe’s second largest European arms company, EADS.

“There can only be one answer,” Ender continues. “The governments of Europe must not allow themselves under any circumstances to be further divided, but must find joint answers, especially in foreign policy, foreign trade and security policy. And those in charge should not be dissuaded by threats from Washington.”

Above all Enders maintains that Germany is obliged to take the lead in developing an independent European military and great power policy. We need “a public, non-ideological, strategic debate in Germany, based on the realities of power-politics, not sentimentalities, and starting from our special responsibility for the development of Europe.” A country that “pretends to have no national interests, but always takes the moral high road and as a vegetarian in a world full of carnivores ignores the need for military measures” made a “common foreign and security policy for Europe” impossible.

Thirty years after the reunification of Germany and the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe, the German ruling class is openly returning to its former militaristic traditions. In a commentary headlined “Europe Needs More,” Wolfgang Schäuble, acting president of the German Bundestag and former interior and finance minister, called for the rapid development of “a European army” as “an effective instrument of security and defence policy.” In addition, it was necessary to agree “upon the

type of threatening situations joint forces should be used for,” he writes.

In order to enforce this war policy in the face of the growing popular resistance, Schäuble argues, among other things, to abolish parliament’s scrutiny of military intervention enshrined in the country’s Basic Law, following the crimes committed by German imperialism during the First and Second World Wars. Accordingly, every Bundeswehr mission outside NATO territory requires the prior approval of the Bundestag.

“If Europe is serious about common defence, we have to change national laws and seek legal harmonisation,” Schäuble writes. That applies “to all partners in the Union. Even Germany with its historically justified narrow constitutional requirements—note: parliamentary accord—will have to move.”

As was the case in the 1930s, massive military rearmament and preparations for war require an authoritarian and ultimately a fascist program. That is why French President Emmanuel Macron recently paid tribute to the fascist dictator and Nazi collaborator Philippe Pétain, and the ruling class in Germany calls for “more tolerance towards the right wing” (ex-president Joachim Gauck) while tolerating right-wing extremist terrorist structures with close links to parts of the military, police and intelligence apparatus.

The fact that all the imperialist powers are preparing for war makes clear that workers and young people are faced with revolutionary tasks. European capitalism cannot be tamed any more than American capitalism. In the Manifesto of the Fourth International published at the beginning of World War II, Leon Trotsky stated: “The task posed by history is not to support one part of the imperialist system against another but to make an end of the system as a whole.”

This task is raised again today with great urgency. In order to prevent a fresh lapse into world war and barbarism, the working class must take up a struggle against all of the capitalist warmongers based on an international socialist program.



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