

Germany's *Süddeutsche Zeitung* defends murder of Suleimani

Peter Schwarz
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In reaction to the recent crisis in the Middle East, Germany's ruling circles are enthusing about the criminal methods of President Donald Trump, while pursuing their own imperialist interests more aggressively.

Following the assassination of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani, not a word was heard from official Berlin condemning the deliberate killing of the high-ranking representative of a sovereign state on the soil of a third country, despite the fact that it violated international and US law. To the extent that the German government called for de-escalation—as in a joint statement with the French and British governments—it placed the onus exclusively on Iran.

In the meantime, the servile German press is openly defending the criminal methods of US foreign policy. Symptomatic of this is a lead commentary that appeared Monday in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, once considered to be relatively liberal in contrast to conservative papers such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Welt*. In the column, Hubert Wetzel, the Washington correspondent of this daily newspaper published in Munich, explicitly justifies and defends the murder of Suleimani.

A week ago, “half of America and all of Europe were convinced” that “Trump would turn the Middle East into an inferno,” Wetzel sneers. Trump had indeed “done many stupid and erratic things as president,” but that did not mean “that everything he does is stupid, erratic and driven by ignorance and egomania.” One did not have to consider Trump's decision to have Suleimani killed correct. “But one should not pretend there was no benefit, and that anyone who comes to a different conclusion in weighing up the pros and cons is a warmonger.”

In Washington's view, Wetzel writes, the attack on

Suleimani served “to restore an old and actually very rational security policy principle: deterrence.” Trump wanted to make clear to Iran “where the red line runs for him: no more dead Americans.” This was “simple and clear.”

Wetzel continues: “And clarity is sometimes very helpful in an environment where provocation and misunderstanding can trigger wars.” That Suleimani had been “a legitimate military target” could “hardly be denied.” Tehran now knows “where Trump's limits are and what it costs to cross them.”

The argumentation of the *Süddeutsche* is reminiscent of the notorious “Hun speech” of Emperor Wilhelm II, who called on the German soldiers who went to China in 1900 to suppress the Boxer Rebellion to ensure that for 1,000 years “never again will a Chinese dare to look suspiciously at a German.” It shows that the days are past when Germany was inhibited from pursuing its foreign policy interests with ruthless violence because of the crimes of the Nazis.

This has long been apparent. The assertion that the defence of German interests requires a “moral price” has been a recurrent theme in foreign policy debate for years. For example, in a speech last year on “Germany's role in the globalized world,” the president of the Bundestag (federal parliament), Wolfgang Schäuble, declared that “the pacifist attitude of most Germans” was “historically understandable,” but “our history cannot be a fig leaf. It must not serve as an excuse for irresponsibility.”

In parallel with the justification of Suleimani's assassination, the German government is feverishly developing political and military activities to strengthen its own influence in the Middle East and Africa.

On Sunday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime

Minister Boris Johnson issued a joint statement in which they delivered an ultimatum to Iran to “return to full compliance with its obligation under the Vienna nuclear agreement” and threatened to impose their own sanctions. A year ago, the US unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear agreement and imposed sanctions on Iran. The Europeans failed to maintain trade with the country despite the US sanctions, as they had promised.

Now the three leaders are threatening to ensure “that Iran never develops a nuclear weapon.” They denounced “Iran’s destabilizing role in the region, including the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the Al-Quds forces,” and declared that their “commitment to the security of our allies and partners in the region [i.e., the US] is unshakable.”

On Saturday, Merkel had travelled to Moscow to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin to obtain his approval for a Libya conference in Berlin. As mediator in the Libyan civil war, in which Italy, France, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other powers support various hostile militias, the German government hopes to strengthen its own influence in the oil-rich country, as well as in the broader region of North Africa and the Sahel zone, where Germany is militarily active together with France.

While Merkel was in Moscow, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas visited Jordan to ensure that the German troops stationed there and deployed in Syria and Iraq can continue to remain in the region.

The aggressive pursuit of imperialist interests is accompanied by massive rearmament and an increase in arms exports. The German military budget will increase from €32.4 billion in 2014 to €45 billion next year and, according to current plans, will reach €90 billion by the beginning of the 2030s. Last year alone, arms exports doubled to €8 billion.

All the parties represented in the Bundestag support the main features of this policy. The return of war and militarism can be prevented only by an independent, international movement of the working class that combines the struggle against war with the struggle against its cause, capitalism.



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