

German Navy prepares for worldwide military missions

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A central component of German imperialism's return to an aggressive foreign and great power policy is the massive rearmament of the German Navy.

Given the growing conflict between the great powers over geopolitical zones of influence and trade routes, the rearmament is being systematically promoted by the grand coalition of Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD) as well as German industry. In mid-May, the two German shipyards Lürssen Group and German Naval Yards Kiel (GNYK) announced their intention to merge into a national German shipyards' alliance. The declared goal is to create the necessary armament structures for the building of German warships.

"The aim is to improve the national industrial structure as well as to strengthen efficiency and sustainability," says a joint communication from Lürssen and GNYK. The planned merger follows "the demands of the public client to see high-performance industrial structures in nationally reliable availability and guaranteeing efficient cost structures." This includes, "not only the construction of technologically highly innovative naval ships but also their functional maintenance over the entire life cycle."

The merger of the two shipyards, which Thyssen Krupp Marine Systems could also join in the future, is directly related to the construction of the Multipurpose Combat Ship 180 (MKS) and the ruling class' goal of building a powerful navy.

Norbert Brackmann, the government's Maritime Coordinator and a CDU member of the Bundestag (parliament), said he very much hoped "that with this decision, the construction of the Multipurpose Combat Ship 180 can now also start promptly." This would enable "the envisaged timetable for the ships to be realised, by and large. This would be good news for our navy since it is waiting for the ships."

Since then, the MKS project—the largest naval contract of its kind in the history of the German armed forces—has

been single-mindedly implemented. According to a report by the Ministry of Defence, GNYK withdrew its legal reservations against awarding the MKS180 to a consortium led by the Dutch Damen Shipyard Group immediately after the planned merger with Lürssen was announced.

Part of the consortium is the Hamburg shipyard Blohm+Voss, which belongs to Lürssen. According to media reports, the Bundestag's budget committee was to approve the funds for the construction of the first four MKSs, worth around six billion euros, on Wednesday.

The Bundeswehr's official website provocatively calls the approximately 155-meter-long and heavily armed MKS a future "all-purpose weapon." It should be able "to patrol large sea areas all over the world for a long time, to monitor embargoes and, if necessary, to evacuate German citizens from crisis situations, and on the other hand be able to assert itself in the North Atlantic or Mediterranean in sea battles against other warships of its kind and submarines, if necessary."

Other ships that essentially serve the same objectives are now to be completed quickly or have already been put into service, such as four frigates of the Baden-Württemberg Class 125, five corvettes of the Class 130 and two further submarines of the Class 212 Common Design.

The costs for the planned projects are gigantic and set to explode in future. The government's current armament report mentions a cost increase of 1.175 billion euros for frigates and corvettes alone, compared to the original estimate. And that is only the beginning—behind the scenes, the German ruling class is already thinking about building its own aircraft carrier, which would put all previous projects far in the shade.

The ruling elite is making no secret of the imperialist goals associated with the rearmament of the German Navy. In his keynote address at the 60th Historical-

Tactical 2020 Fleet Meeting in January, the Navy's Inspector, Vice Admiral Andreas Krause, quoted the core statement of the foreign policy keynote speech of Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU) last November: "A country of our size and our economic and technological power, a country of our geostrategic position and with our global interests, cannot simply stand on the side-lines and watch."

Then he added, "The statement makes it clear that our minister knows where she's going and, of course, influences the course of our navy. Even if many in our country still don't really want to recognize it. The sea and therefore the German Navy is playing an increasingly decisive role in German security and defence policy."

Later in his speech, Krause explained why this is so. "For a nation dependent on foreign trade such as ours, freely usable and safe sea routes are of paramount importance, and not only for the classic movement of goods." For example, "over 90 percent of global internet traffic is transmitted by underwater cables, the expansion of wind turbines in the sea is steadily increasing and the amount of mineral resources extracted from the sea is growing." Especially "for the last remaining resources that have not yet been clearly allocated and developed," the "global competition has long since begun."

Germany must therefore be in a position to act globally on the high seas and wage war successfully. "Global developments in security policy require a navy that is capable of worldwide deployment, on the one hand, but that can also effectively assert our interests on our own doorstep at any time," Krause reminded his audience. "Only with a globally deployable navy that is capable of fighting," he said, would Germany be able to meet its alliance obligations and assert its interests.

Krause's plans and his rhetoric are reminiscent of the German megalomania on the eve of the First and Second World Wars. "It is not only the sea routes of the Baltic that are of crucial strategic importance to us," he said. "The maritime lines of communication across the North Atlantic, through the English Channel and into the North Sea are also important lifelines for our continent and our country." Here, "the German Navy would also be called upon in the event of a military confrontation."

In the course of "globalisation and the corresponding effects on world trade to and from the East... other sea areas have gained in importance for us. Although the Mediterranean has lost none of its strategic relevance for Germany and Europe, the new 'mare nostrum' of the world, ladies and gentlemen, is the Indian Ocean."

Then Krause threatened the nuclear powers Russia and China. "Even though Russia is the primary focus for us in Germany, in Europe and in NATO, another strategically relevant player is increasingly establishing itself with China." In just four years, "China has built and commissioned about as much tonnage as the British Royal Navy has in total" and has "set out on a determined course to become a globally active 'maritime nation.'"

It is not Russia and China who are the aggressors on the world's oceans, but the imperialist powers. As part of its provocative military encirclement of China, the US Navy has sent three aircraft carrier combat groups into the Pacific Ocean simultaneously for the first time in years. From June 3 to 16, the German Navy took an active part in the "Baltops" manoeuvres in the Baltic Sea, which is part of the NATO military build-up against Russia. A total of 29 ships and 29 aircraft were deployed.

In its struggle against the return of German militarism and the danger of a Third World War, the working class is confronted not only with all parties in the Bundestag but also with the trade unions. In an official statement, the head of the IG-Metall Küste (Coastal) district, Daniel Friedrich, backed the plans for a national shipyard alliance and the government's decision to classify naval shipbuilding as a key national technology.

"A merger in naval shipbuilding" was "sensible, if it would strengthen the industry and thus secure the key technology in Germany," Friedrich stated on the record. "The know-how in German shipbuilding, to which naval shipbuilding makes an important contribution," had to be "secured."



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