

German political establishment demands foreign policy “sovereignty” after US elections

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Germany’s ruling elite has responded to the US presidential election with a mixture of shock, anger, and aggression. The political establishment and media are warning that the election, whose outcome remains unclear, and Trump’s attempt to prematurely declare victory will further destabilise the United States and plunge it into a deep domestic and foreign policy crisis. At the same time, representatives of all parties are demanding a more aggressive foreign and military policy that is also more independent of the United States.

“The real message of the developments over recent years is a wake-up call for Europe,” stated the parliamentary group leader of the conservative European People’s Party (EPP) Manfred Weber, in an interview with the radio channel Deutschlandfunk. “We must finally develop self-confidence. Europe must finally develop autonomy.” Europe, he said, is “precisely on the issue of military capacity...currently largely dependent on NATO cooperation with the United States, and that cannot remain so permanently.”

Weber called for “an independent military pillar of the European Union, which projects self-confidence and sovereignty, especially with the insecurity surrounding us.”

Weber made clear that the European ruling elites view Trump’s fascistic tirades and plans for a coup above all as a threat to the Europeans’ propaganda, which seeks to sell imperialist wars as a struggle for democracy. “Under conditions in which there is (again) global competition between the systems in particular it is necessary to jointly advocate our values, our beliefs and project them throughout the world as the correct model,” he said. If “this is now being questioned” or “called into doubt,” this makes him “very, very concerned.”

Leading representatives of the German government spoke along similar lines. “We have to acknowledge—and I think this is the real task we confront—that Europe has to

become more sovereign, regardless of who wins, we have to do our own homework and make an attempt to place these relations on a new basis,” stated Deputy Foreign Minister Nils Annen (Social Democrats). He said, “the Trump presidency was a wake-up call, and now it is up to us to formulate concrete policies in response.”

Annen spelt out what he meant by this. “We cannot afford sluggishness, because it isn’t just about the United States of America,” he said. There is a danger of “not being perceived or taken seriously enough as a global actor” by China “and other regions in the world, where an incredible dynamic has developed over recent years.” This has “a direct impact on our capacities to realise our own interests.” It is necessary to “sharpen our teeth, and that is precisely what we are trying to do, especially during our presidency of the European Union“.

The opposition parties in parliament also support this agenda. In the Deutschlandfunk interview already cited, the Green Party’s Jürgen Trittin, who sits on the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, agreed with Weber. He said, “That means we have to get used to the fact that over the next two years (until the mid-term elections), we will be dealing with a United States that will be much more focused on itself and will act much less as a global player. And that also means for us that we must take care of politics in our own neighbourhood.”

A joint interview on public broadcaster ARD with the Left Party’s foreign policy spokesman, Gregor Gysi, and the Alternative for Germany’s (AfD) leader Jörg Meuthen underscored how closely all establishment parties collaborate with the far-right to impose a foreign policy offensive despite mounting opposition from the population. “If the US pulls back militarily to some extent,” Meuthen said he would support “that which many people, including Mr. Gysi from the Left Party, have been calling for: We must ensure that we are capable of defending ourselves independently as a sovereign

state.”

However, Meuthen complained that the German army’s condition can be “politely summarised as woeful.” Perhaps it would “even be good if we were freed a little from the overbearing mothering of the United States so that we can further develop our own sovereignty,” Meuthen cynically added.

In a separate interview, Gysi demanded that Germany must learn “for geostrategic reasons...to sometimes say ‘No’ to the United States.”

Reports published by think tanks on the eve of the election underscore the vast scale of the rearmament plans being plotted by the ruling class behind the backs of the population. In a document entitled “Which reforms does the German army need today—Food for thought,” the former parliamentary commissioner for the army, Social Democrat Hans-Peter Bartels, and the former commander of the army’s operational central command, Rainer Glatz, urged Germany to prepare once again for major wars.

“The future structure of the army should further increase the number of soldiers (at the expense of redundant and ‘tiers of equity-oriented’ command structures), and create organic units capable of sustained resistance,” the paper states. “The forces trained for the most demanding central tasks of alliance and national defence must also be able to carry out worldwide operations to intervene in crises. This double role requires comprehensive equipment in materiel to ensure a high degree of operational readiness at all times.”

A recent publication by the Munich Security Conference entitled “Zeitenwende/Wendezeiten“ (End of an era—changing times) demanded that the return of Germany to an aggressive imperialist foreign policy, publicly announced in 2014, be implemented “much more quickly” than up to now.

The goal is no longer the NATO target of spending 2 percent of gross domestic product of the military as demanded by Trump, but much more: “In line with a comprehensive concept of security, a broader target in the sense of a three-percent goal—acknowledging the role of the military but also assigning other expenditures adequate importance—seems appropriate.”

The ruling elite also intends to enforce these plans if the Democrat Biden takes office. In an interview on ARD’s “Brennpunkt” (Focus) programme, Wolfgang Ischinger, head of the Munich Security Conference and former German ambassador to the United States, warned against illusions in a Biden administration.

“The worst thing” that Germany and the EU could do,

he said, would be to hope “that the horror is over with a Biden electoral victory” and Germany can “return to its hibernation.” The Trump presidency will hopefully “even if it ends now, be understood as a wake-up call for Europe.” Germany must “do its homework” and “take much more responsibility for its security and European future.”

Prior to the US elections, the World Socialist Web Site repeatedly stressed that the danger is posed not only by Trump, but the ruling class as a whole, which is responding to the deepest crisis of world capitalism since the 1930s with militarism, fascism, and war. This is shown in Germany in particular. The planned rearmament offensive—the “3 percent goal,” which amounts to an annual military budget of over €100 billion—is the largest rearmament since that of Hitler’s Wehrmacht prior to World War II.

Domestically, the ruling elite is also resorting to authoritarianism and dictatorship to impose its policies of militarism, social spending cuts, and “herd immunity” in response to the pandemic. “The ability to act externally requires stability on the inside: The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically highlighted the importance of resilience”, states the paper from the Munich Security Conference. “Resilience” is a euphemism for the systematic surveillance and repression of the population.

Following the US elections, the most urgent task on this side of the Atlantic as well as in the United States is the arming of the working class with an internationalist and socialist programme directed against all of the bourgeois parties and the capitalist system as a whole.



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