

# Stop the rearming of Germany's air force, army, and navy!

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US President Donald Trump's latest threats of war against Iran underscore the urgency of building an anti-war movement in the working class based on a socialist programme. The same applies to developments in Germany. Six years after the federal government declared the end of military restraint at the 2014 Munich Security Conference, the largest rearmament programme since the Second World War is being implemented, despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the past week, European arms giant Airbus announced the signing of a contract to supply the German air force with 38 fighter jets. Prior to that, the budgetary committee in Germany's federal parliament relied on the votes of the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD) to move ahead with the project. The fighter jets, which are to be supplied over the coming years, will cost a total of €5.4 billion.

The purchase is part of a more comprehensive rearming of the German air force and its counterparts across Europe. Dirk Hoke, CEO of Airbus Defence and Space, remarked on the signing of the contract, "The new Tranche 4 Eurofighter is currently the most modern fighter jet produced in Europe with a lifespan stretching well beyond 2060. Its technical capabilities make possible its full integration into Europe's Future Combat Air System (FCAS)."

The FCAS is a European-wide air combat system composed of manned multi-purpose jets, unmanned support aircraft, drones and satellites, potentially equipped with energy and nuclear weapons. The cost of the system, which is officially to be operational by 2040, surpasses all European arms projects since the end of the Second World War. According to media reports, estimates range from \$300 billion to \$500 billion.

Alongside the German air force, a major rearmament programme is also underway for the navy. Work is "continuously ongoing to swiftly push ahead with the modernisation and growth of our fleet initiated over recent years," wrote the inspector of the navy, Vice Admiral Andreas Krause, in his lead contribution to an annual report titled "Facts and figures on the Federal Republic of Germany's naval independence." Above all, the contract for the building of the new F126 class of frigates, known as MKS 180, was "finally signed." Valued at €6 billion, it is the largest naval contract in the history of the Bundeswehr, the Federal Republic's armed forces.

Behind the scenes, much larger plans are also being plotted here. In early 2019, Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer and Chancellor Angela Merkel (both Christian Democrats) raised the possibility of constructing a joint German-French aircraft carrier, which would cost even more.

Irrespective of which absurdly huge projects are officially adopted, the ruling class has decided, as it did prior to the First and Second

World Wars, to prepare Germany for war by spending enormous sums of money on rearmament. Hardly a day has gone by since the US presidential election in which leading media outlets, think tanks, and politicians have not demanded a more rapid implementation of rearmament plans and increases to the defence budget. Following the speech from German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Social Democrats, SPD) on the 65th anniversary of the Bundeswehr's founding, Kramp-Karrenbauer spoke along similar lines on Wednesday.

It is "a whole-of-government task" to strengthen "Germany's reliability in defence and security policy," she stated in her second foreign policy keynote speech to students of the Bundeswehr University in Hamburg, which was held virtually. "The long-term financing of the defence budget must be of common concern for a government." She can "therefore believe it is possible to adopt a defence planning law that codifies the multi-year financing of our security over the long-term. So that security is constantly underpinned as an absolutely central task of the state."

The message is clear. While spending on education and social services will be cut further, and there is no money for health care in the midst of a deadly pandemic, the defence budget will constantly increase to finance the gigantic rearmament plans. "I am happy that in the current budget talks we were able to agree on already providing some of these projects with a perspective of being financed over the medium-term: the eurofighter, the NH90 helicopter, the eurodrone," stated Kramp-Karrenbauer. This is "good for the soldiers, reliable for our allies" and promotes "European independence, industrial capacity and technology."

The defence minister made no secret of what is really at stake with the rearmament plans: a third German grab for world power. "We must have an outward-looking view of the world together instead of only focusing on ourselves," she said. "My goal, and this must be our goal, is that Germany and Europe actively influence our own neighbourhood and the global order. That we keep the interests we have firmly in mind, how we serve them, which goals we pursue in the world, and how we can get there by cooperating with others."

She sought with a touch of pathos to convince the military personnel to internalise the interests of German imperialism and decisively enforce them. "I hope you will learn to practice this view early on, constantly develop it, and never lose it, regardless of which rank you are currently deployed, from the young unit commander to the military policy level." On this specific point, she intends to "start an initiative whose aim will be to strengthen this view, that is the geopolitical and geostrategic schooling of the soldiers and Bundeswehr employees."

Due to its historic crimes in World War II, the German ruling class felt compelled for a long period to conceal its military interventions with humanitarian rhetoric. If they now speak openly of geopolitics and geostrategy, this must be taken as a warning. The ruling elite is preparing to impose its imperialist interests militarily, even in the farthest flung corners of the globe.

"I am encouraged that the federal government adopted a comprehensive doctrine for the Indo-Pacific, which also includes security and defence policy. The strategic significance of the region is thus fully acknowledged," stated Kramp-Karrenbauer. Germany will also "show its flag" there—"such as with more liaison officers and, in the coming year, coronavirus permitting, with a German naval vessel."

To enforce its interests not only against Russia and China, but also increasingly independently of and if necessary against the United States, Berlin is pursuing the goal, in close collaboration with Paris, of establishing Europe as a foreign policy great power. "Germany and France want the Europeans to take more decisions themselves and act more effectively when it is necessary. We want Europe to be a strong partner for the US on a level playing field, not a foundling in need of protection. The new American President Joe Biden must see and sense that this is precisely what we are striving for," demanded Kramp-Karrenbauer.

All parliamentary parties agree with this orientation in its fundamentals. There are merely discussions on how the German-European offensive should be implemented. While Kramp-Karrenbauer stated in her speech that "the idea of European strategic autonomy" is a bridge too far "if it nourishes the illusion that we can guarantee stability, security and prosperity in Europe without NATO and the US." Representatives from the SPD, Left Party, and Greens in particular are pushing for a more aggressive pursuit of independent European initiatives—in line with the course of French President Emmanuel Macron.

"Instead of suggesting herself what she would like to do concretely to strengthen Europe's defence capabilities, she stays in the shadows and focuses on administrating instead of shaping," said Green Party Deputy Franziska Brantner in criticising the defence minister.

What the Greens understand by "shaping" is explained in the text of a motion recommending passage of the party programme at its congress being held this weekend. "The EU must become able to do world politics," it states. Above all, the aim is to "strengthen the EU'S common security and foreign policy (GASP/GSVP) and thereby make it more capable of taking action."

The SPD proposes in a current paper the creation of a European army "to set a security policy anchor and occupy new firm ground." The German presidency of the EU must be used "to push ahead with the project of a European army." The "nucleus" of such an army should be based around "the already existing EU battlegroups," and over the medium-term "grow to the size of a reinforced military brigade and rise to approximately 8,000 troops, including the support element (logistics, medical service)."

The Left Party is the most aggressive of all in demanding a German-European foreign policy independent of the United States. The party's foreign policy spokesman, Gregor Gysi, stated shortly before the US presidential election that Germany must learn, "for geostrategic reasons," to "sometimes say no to the US."

In a recent statement published on YouTube, the former parliamentary group leader and influential Left Party politician Sahra Wagenknecht complained that Europe is "not in a position to protect

its companies" and is "a digital colony of the United States." It is necessary to "deal with the US with self-confidence, irrespective of who the president is" and "invest money in areas where our independence and sovereignty are at stake," she added.

The aggressive nationalist and militarist campaign of all the parliamentary parties corresponds with their deadly policy in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The strategy of "herd immunity," i.e., the murderous mass infection of the population with the virus, is supported just as forcefully by the nominal left-wing parties as it is by the explicitly right-wing organisations, up to and including the AfD. The state governments in Germany, of which the Left Party and Greens are a part, led the way in reopening the economy; now they vehemently oppose closing schools and nonessential production. "Profits before life" is the essentially fascistic slogan of the media, big business and the politicians.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) already analysed six years ago at its special conference against war how the ruling class was responding to the deepening capitalist crisis and the upsurge of working class opposition by turning to militarism, fascism and war, as it did in the 1930s. We wrote at the time:

The revival of militarism is the response of the ruling class to the explosive social tensions, the deepening economic crisis and the growing conflicts between European powers. Its aim is the conquest of new spheres of influence, markets and raw materials upon which the export-dependent German economy relies; the prevention of a social explosion by deflecting social tensions onto an external enemy; and the militarization of society as a whole, including the development of an all-embracing national surveillance apparatus, the suppression of social and political opposition, and the bringing into line of the media.

The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated this process, while at the same time radicalising workers and young people around the world. What they require now is a clear political strategy and perspective. The struggle against militarism, war and the policy of herd immunity requires the independent political mobilisation of the working class on the basis of a socialist programme

It is necessary to overthrow the capitalist profit system, which in the final analysis is the cause of militarism and war, expropriate the vast wealth of the super-rich, banks and major corporations, and place them under democratic control. Only in this way can the social rights of all—including the right to health and life itself—be secured. Billions of euros to combat the pandemic, health care, education, social services and culture! Not a single cent for the rearming of the German air force, army and navy!



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