

“So that rifles shoot”: Germany’s Green Party leader Baerbock pleads for massive arms spending and new war missions

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2 December 2020

In advance of next year’s elections, the Greens are spearheading the campaign for the return of German militarism. At their party conference last weekend, the former pacifists adopted a new programme that advocates a more independent German-European foreign and great power policy and massive spending on arming the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces).

At the beginning of this week, the re-elected chairwoman of the Green Party and potential chancellor candidate, Annelena Baerbock, followed suit. In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), under the headline “Baerbock wants to strengthen the Bundeswehr,” she pleads for a massive increase in defence spending and new war missions to assert the interests of German imperialism in competing with the other major powers worldwide.

The Greens have long called for a sovereign German-European war policy. The election of Joseph Biden as president-elect was now a “chance” to “reshape transatlantic relations, as Europeans on an equal footing with the Americans.” Europeans should “not wait and see what comes out of Washington, but rather, go forward with a proposal for joint security.” This must “also involve NATO’s capabilities and concrete burden-sharing.”

By this, Baerbock means above all closer cooperation with the right-wing, extremely anti-communist regimes in Eastern Europe and a stronger European role in NATO’s war drive against Russia. The Ukrainian crisis had “shown that our own defence of the alliance is central for our Polish and Baltic partners. It is, therefore, a matter of flexible, rapidly deployable units in alliance territory, just as much about dangerous situations as cyber-attacks, a new form of warfare.”

Baerbock also adopted an aggressive tone toward China, a nuclear power with which Germany maintains close economic ties. “While Europe is busy with itself, China is creating new geo-strategic dependencies,” she warns. It was using “the pandemic to sell vaccines in Africa and Asia,” and was also “gaining access to critical infrastructure in Europe.” However, she added, “the most sensitive areas of our security should not be left to an autocratic regime.”

To assert German interests not only against China and Russia, but increasingly also against the United States, Baerbock advocates the establishment of an independent European economic and military policy in close cooperation with France. For Europe, she argues, “it cannot be a matter of choosing between authoritarian China and the capitalist digital corporations of the US, which in case of doubt, also break European law.” The EU was “one of the strongest domestic markets in the world” and must “set its own standards... This would make European companies less dependent on corporations like Google.”

Asked by the SZ about French President Emmanuel Macron’s call for “strategic autonomy,” she said, “it would be the wrong signal right now to dissociate ourselves from the US. Nevertheless, we must strengthen European sovereignty. Europe has been circling around itself for years; the Trump administration has turned its back on the world.” This “leads to Russia or Turkey becoming active in our neighbourhood—and the EU being left out, as in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh.” This would be “fatal for the people in the region and the democratic process in Armenia, but also for the peace role the EU once gave

itself.”

Baerbock’s interview makes clear that this propaganda about democracy and peace serves only as a cover for the EU’s aggressive war policy. When asked what she thought about France’s call for more “robust European military operations abroad,” she replied, “It is time to respond seriously to Macron’s proposals—even if we do not share everything. And that means also talking about foreign military missions. It will not be easy. But we must not duck away.”

That is clearly the case. Under the guise of a few humanitarian phrases, a federal government including the Greens would launch new wars of aggression in violation of international law. “There is an international responsibility to protect. The international community cannot ignore genocide. This is the dilemma we Greens face. And we emphasize it today more than in the past,” Baerbock said. One “has experienced how the ‘Islamic State’ in Iraq has deliberately kidnapped Yezidi women and children in order to wipe them out. There would have been a window of two, maybe three days to prevent a genocide. But we Europeans have done too little.”

The concept of the “international responsibility to protect” is a fraud. It has nothing to do with the protection of human rights but only serves to “protect” imperialist interests. In Libya, NATO justified the bombing of the resource-rich country and the brutal assassination of the head of state Muammar al-Gaddafi with reference to “Responsibility to Protect” and an allegedly imminent genocide in 2011.

Tens of thousands of civilians died, and the country still confronts a bloody civil war today. The NATO powers’ anti-IS mission in Syria is, likewise, not about humanitarian goals, but the military and political subjugation of the resource-rich and geostrategically important region.

To put the comprehensive war plans into practice, Baerbock calls for a further increase in defence spending. She said that Germany had “increased its defence budget by ten billion euros since 2016. Nevertheless, the equipment and security of the soldiers have not improved noticeably.” Soldiers were being sent to Mali, “although they were not able to prepare themselves sufficiently: There is a lack of night-vision equipment for training, not to mention flying hours. We must be honest about this. Yes, in some areas you have

to invest more to make rifles shoot and night-vision devices work.”

Baerbock’s war interview underlines the sharp rightward turn of the Greens, who at their official founding in 1980 still presented themselves as being “left-wing” and “pacifist.” However, they have always rejected the working class and a socialist perspective, and instead referred to the anti-Marxist theories of the Frankfurt School and postmodernism as well as to various forms of identity politics. Having already co-organized Germany’s first combat operations since World War II in Kosovo and Afghanistan, from 1998 to 2005, in a governing coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Greens are now crying out for war again.

David North’s book *A Quarter Century of War*, recently published in German as *30 Years of War* by Mehring Verlag, examines the deeper social and political processes behind this development.

In the statement, “After the Bloodbath: Political Lessons from the Balkan War,” written as early as 1999, North writes, “Perpetually rising share values, especially the explosion in market valuations since 1995, have given a significant section of the middle class—especially among the professional elite—access to a degree of wealth they could not have imagined at the outset of their careers.”

When Baerbock now calls so loudly for rearmament and war, it is a matter of defending these sinecures. In response to extreme social inequality and the growing conflicts between the imperialist powers, the wealthy middle classes, for whom the Greens speak, are reacting with a sharp turn to the right and creating an increasingly direct new social base for militarism and dictatorship.



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