

After Trump's coup attempt: German politicians call for massive military build-up

Johannes Stern
13 January 2021

The ruling class in Germany is reacting with a mixture of shock, nervousness and aggression to the fascist coup attempt in the US on 6 January.

Politicians and the media fear that the ongoing far-right conspiracy ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Joseph Biden on 20 January could plunge the country into deeper crisis—with far-reaching domestic and foreign policy consequences for the stability of the capitalist system in the US and internationally. In the process, all the establishment parties are stepping up their offensive for a more independent German-European foreign and great power policy, which will also further strengthen the extreme right-wing elements in the military and state apparatus here.

The most aggressive is the Social Democratic Party (SPD), with former foreign minister and now Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who in 2014 was already at the forefront of the campaign for a return of German militarism. “We are well-advised to rely very strongly on Europe and ultimately also decide on our own measures, and not to go through world history in the wake of the USA,” said Rolf Mützenich, chair of the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag, on the ARD morning magazine programme last Thursday.

In an extensive interview with broadcaster Deutschlandfunk, former Social Democratic foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel elaborated on what this means: a further increase in defence spending and the massive arming of the military to assert Germany's own imperialist interests more independently of the USA, and increasingly against it.

“We must stop conducting the debate on defence policy as if it were about doing a favour for a US president,” Gabriel demanded. It is “about the world changing dramatically. America, even under Joe Biden, will turn away a bit from Europe, from Africa, turn towards the Indo-Pacific—this is the new challenger to the USA—and the Europeans themselves will have to fill the vacuum. It's in our interest to increase our defence capability, it's not a labour of love.”

Specifically, Gabriel advocates increasing defence spending as quickly as possible to the envisaged two-percent

target to which the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats first committed at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales.

As Germans, we can deal with the demand intelligently, we can say that we are putting 1.5 percent into the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces] so that it does not appear too gigantic compared to other European armies after ten years, and we are putting 0.5 percent into the defence capability of Eastern Europe because only the Americans have done that so far. In this way, we Germans are also showing that we are taking on a responsibility that only the Americans have had up to now.

Germany must “hold Europe together” and “become more independent, also in defence policy,” insists Gabriel. This demand is being made not least “by our neighbours. It is the French who say that it cannot be that we keep getting into the situation in Mali, that we have to fight, French soldiers fight, and you just take pictures.”

This is unmistakable: 75 years after the end of the Second World War, Germany must finally stand up again confidently for militarism and war and be prepared to conduct real combat operations with high casualties.

We also have to speak the truth for once and stop having a fear-laden debate about America, as if it were the Americans' fault that we have to talk about defence. I believe that if we don't do that, then Europe will become a pawn in the game, then we simply won't be taken seriously. We are considered rich but politically uninteresting if we are not able and capable of defending our interests on our own.

All parties in the Bundestag support this course. The debate is only about how to establish Germany's own independence and world power capability. The current issue of the magazine *Internationale Politik*, published by the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), has the telling title, "Topsy-turvy House: What Europe lacks to become a world power." It gives an insight into the megalomaniac plans being discussed behind the backs of the population.

In a contribution entitled, "Your mission, Europe! Russia, Turkey, Middle East, Iran, Africa, Asia-Pacific: How the EU must now position itself geopolitically," it says the following under the subheading, "Sanctions and guns":

Strengthening Europe's capacity to act in foreign policy involves not only adapting the neighbourhood policy to the new realities but also expanding its own military capabilities. The conflicts in Syria and Libya clearly show that the EU only has the leverage to assert its interests if it can back them up militarily. This is especially true vis-à-vis Russia, whose foreign policy logic is not geared towards compromise but the unilateral assertion of its own interests.

Representatives of the Left Party and the Greens are also firmly part of the war offensive. In a for-and-against contribution, Dietmar Bartsch, co-chairman of the Left Party parliamentary group in the German Bundestag, and Jürgen Trittin, member of the Foreign Affairs Committee for Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen, discuss the significance of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline for German imperialism.

Bartsch argues for the construction of the pipeline to ensure "Europe's energy security" and its "economic sovereignty." The US sanctions aimed at stopping the project are "naked economic imperialism," "Germany "must not bow to this behaviour."

Trittin opposes the construction of the pipeline but also does so from the standpoint of asserting Germany's own economic and geostrategic interests more strongly against the other major powers. "Hopes that something will change in the US sanctions policy under Joe Biden should not be entertained," he writes. "Whoever wants to strengthen Europe's independence" must "reduce its fossil dependence" and strengthen "Europe's resilience."

At the turn of the year, former Green foreign minister Joschka Fischer drummed up support for strengthening German and European militarism against Moscow, Washington and Beijing in an interview with the *Neue*

Züricher Zeitung .

"With Brexit and Trump" the "British and Americans have said goodbye to the West," he notes. Berlin and Brussels must now "make a much greater contribution to territorial defence and common security" and also assert their interests more strongly than before in the conflict between the USA and China. China was too "big and too important" to isolate it. Washington's "strategy in this case" did not convince him.

Fischer is openly stating that, with Germany's foreign policy offensive, the ruling class is once again going back to its worst historical traditions. After 1945, the Germans had "instinctively concluded: never again! Never again [conducting] world politics, never again [harbouring] fantasies of world domination, never again [pursuing a] military foreign policy." But the "difficulty in German minds" was that "what proved to be right for decades under the protection of the USA now presents itself as a stumbling block." For "without Germany" there will be "no Europe that can represent its interests as a power in the 21st century." Readjusting this "discourse" will "take some time and involve major domestic problems."

Workers and youth must take such statements as a warning, just like the recent coup attempt in the USA. In Germany too, the ruling class can ultimately only maintain its policy of militarism, social inequality and "herd immunity" by establishing a dictatorship based on far-right parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and fascist networks in the police, secret services and military. These are the "big domestic problems" Fischer is talking about. Opposition among workers and youth to the reactionary policies of all Bundestag parties is enormous and is being further fuelled by explosive developments in the US.

The sister party of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) in the US, the Socialist Equality Party, is calling for the building of a nationwide network of action committees and the preparation of a political general strike against Trump's conspiracy. In its current statement, it declares that the January 6 coup attempt expresses "a comprehensive breakdown of American capitalist society." The "political antidote to fascism is the development of a mass political movement of the working class for socialism." Based on this international perspective, workers and youth must also intervene in political events in Germany and Europe as an independent revolutionary force.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact