

Germany's grand coalition presses ahead with military rearmament

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Ahead of Germany's federal election on 27 September, the federal grand coalition government is pressing ahead with military rearmament. In its last sitting of the legislative session, the parliamentary budgetary committee approved spending for 27 rearmament projects with a total value of close to €20 billion at the end of June.

The projects include major purchases for the navy, air force and land-based armed forces. According to an official report on the Defence Ministry's website, the investments cover "a broad spectrum of land, air, naval, and cyber dimensions." Some of the most comprehensive projects are:

- The purchasing of five P-81 Poseidon aircraft. (Cost: €1.43 billion)
- The construction and delivery of two 212 Common Design class submarines (U212CD). (Cost: €2.79 billion)
- The conclusion of a contract for the production and supply of long-range Naval Strike Missile 1A. (Cost: €512.2 million)
- The construction of three class 424 fleet service vessels (FDB424). (Cost: €2.1 billion)
- The purchasing of combat and reflecting gunsights, as well as laser modules for the army's Sturmgewehr System. (Cost: €304.05 million)

Almost €2 billion was set aside for the modernisation of the Puma tanks. The goal is to equip the already existing 150 Pumas with technology so that they are operationally ready for the NATO spearhead Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). In other words, the tank rearmament programme is aimed directly at Russia. The VJTF was established in 2014 as part of the NATO Response Force (NRF) with the declared goal of deploying troops more rapidly to NATO's eastern flank.

The largest sum, €4.4 billion, was made available to push ahead with the development of the gigantic Future Combat Air System (FCAS) project. "In the next stages, the technologies required for the development of a new jet fighter system in the areas of aircraft, engines, unmanned components, system operations, sensors, signature reduction and simulation environment ... should be brought to the

development stage," wrote the Defence Ministry.

The FCAS is Europe's largest armaments project. It is an integrated air combat system, linking drones, fighter jets, command-and-control aircraft and satellites with each other. Another element is the development of a sixth generation fighter jet. It is to possess stealth capabilities, a more powerful engine, and potentially cyberwar capabilities and energy weapons.

French Defence Minister Florence Parly described the project as "one of the most important tools for Europe's sovereignty in the 21st century." The participating European nations, Germany, France and Spain, believe the project promises more autonomy in combat and better coordination between other air units and ground forces.

In tandem with the FCAS, a German-French central ground combat system (NGCS) is under development to produce a tank. The budgetary committee demanded its rapid implementation. A "guideline decision" explicitly passed for the purpose by the federal government called for "the immediate adoption of measures to ensure a simultaneous timeframe for the FCAS and NGCS in the foreseeable future."

The estimated costs of these projects are gigantic. Projections for the tank system alone amount to €100 billion. According to the *Handelsblatt*, the cost for the FCAS will reach "up to €500 billion ... by mid-century."

Under conditions of the coronavirus pandemic and the current flood catastrophe in western Germany, the financing of these projects is an even more despicable crime. With the sum of €600 billion, it would be possible to finance the entire health care budget for 2021 (€35 billion) for 17 years. And the €20 billion approved for weapons systems is 100 times more than the emergency aid approved by the government for victims of the floods on July 21.

As in the last century, the massive military rearmament is aimed at preparing for war. Just days before the multi-billion euro rearmament proposals were passed by the budgetary committee, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (Christian Democrats) held her third keynote foreign policy address

since becoming Defence Minister. In it, she threatened the nuclear-armed powers Russia and China, and announced an increase of the defence budget.

“Next year, 2022, we will be over €50 billion for the first time,” she said. “For many people,” that is “according to their values an ‘obscene’ amount of money. But that is a misconception for many reasons,” she cynically added. “For almost a quarter of a century...the defence budget (has been) used as the quarry for the federal budget.” Measured against this, the “budget is comparatively small.”

In reality, the defence budget is the second-largest segment of the federal budget, and it has increased continuously since 2014. Over the past four years alone, it has risen by more than €10 billion under the Social Democrat Finance Minister and Chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz. Nonetheless, the plan is to increase it still further.

“In the face of modern new threats,” it is necessary to “invest massively in the most modern defence technology,” continued Kramp-Karrenbauer. Defence will be “much more expensive in the future because it will be more demanding. This is not even to touch upon the growing operational costs for personnel, capabilities and equipment.” The budget will “therefore have to increase if we want to remain safe. And if the German army is going to be a key player in Germany’s future.”

This “future player” status means militarism and war. In an emergency situation, “defence” and “deterrence” can mean “the use of military force, fighting,” said Kramp-Karrenbauer.

The Defence Minister is apparently making advanced preparations for a German submarine war. She explained that “prior to purchasing,” she went “diving with one of our submarines.” She enthused, “A highly modern, highly complex weapons system. A weapons system that can deter and fight if necessary. There are good reasons why we operate these weapons systems. It is important not only to know this but to understand it.”

She was speaking “so clearly because it is a commandment of decency towards our soldiers that we don’t deny them by shamefacedly describing their actual tasks.” This “honesty” must be “an expectation” of Germany. Anyone who defends “freedom and peace” must “know that they have to pay a moral price,” and they must “be prepared to pay this price.”

Coming from the mouth of a German Defence Minister, these statements are a warning. On June 22, 1941, the murderous war of the Wehrmacht against the Soviet Union began, in the course of which 27 million Soviet citizens died and the industrial extermination of 6 million Jews was organised. Eighty years later, the Foreign Ministry is more or less openly declaring that Germany must be ready once

again to commit war crimes. This is not about “freedom and peace,” but the imposition of geopolitical and economic interests with military force.

The grand coalition and the Defence Ministry can only press ahead so aggressively because they are supported by all parties in parliament, including the nominal “lefts.” In the budgetary committee, which is significantly led by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Green representatives voted for many of the rearmament projects. In the election campaign, Green Chancellor candidate Analena Baerbock regularly attacks the grand coalition from the right and demands a more aggressive course towards Russia.

The Left Party also plays a key role in the return of German militarism. While it makes certain public criticisms of the massive rearmament campaign, the Left Party, in the person of its former foreign policy spokesman Stefan Liebich, was involved in the drafting of the notorious document “New power – New responsibilities.” The document served as the basis for the aggressive great power speeches at the Munich Security Conference in 2014 and the subsequent rearmament offensive and military build-up led by the grand coalition.

Critical milestones in Germany’s return to an aggressive foreign policy, including the right-wing coup in Ukraine, and the imperialist interventions in Syria and Iraq were actively supported by the Left Party. In the election campaign, the Left Party’s lead candidates, Dietmar Bartsch and Janine Wissler, are demanding a government coalition with the pro-austerity, pro-war Social Democrats and Greens. In the process, they have made repeatedly clear that as a party of government, the Left Party would support NATO and the German army’s foreign interventions.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) is the only party to call for a struggle against the return of German militarism, and arm the widespread opposition among workers and young people to fascism and war with a socialist and internationalist perspective. In our election statement, we demand, “The immediate end of all foreign interventions and wars! Dissolution of NATO and the German army! Billions for education and labour instead of rearmament and war!”



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