

Germany's New Green Foreign Minister Baerbock threatens Russia and China with nuclear weapons

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Just days before Annalena Baerbock is sworn in as Germany's new foreign minister, the co-leader of the Green Party gave the *taz* newspaper a widely-read interview on foreign policy issues. Baerbock's statements make two things clear: On the one hand, the "traffic light" coalition of the Social Democrats (SPD), Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens, which will officially take over government business on Wednesday, will intensify the grand coalition's war and rearmament policies, especially with regard to the nuclear powers Russia and China. Secondly, the former pacifists of the Greens, who launched the first German foreign military intervention since the end of the Nazi regime when the party was last in power between 1998 and 2005, are once again playing the central role.

With an aggressiveness that is otherwise seen only from extreme right-wing and militarist circles, Baerbock linked Germany's ability to pursue an aggressive foreign and great power policy with nuclear rearmament. "It is precisely this question of nuclear weapons that makes it clear that in the future we will again pursue an active German foreign policy that faces the dilemmas of global politics," she explained. "We stand by our responsibility within the framework of NATO and the EU and also for nuclear participation."

As if this was not enough, she went a step further. In the midst of the pandemic, which has already cost more than 100,000 lives in Germany alone, and which the government allegedly lacks the economic resources to combat, she reaffirmed the traffic light coalition's call for the procurement of new combat aircraft capable of deploying nuclear weapons. "We have to procure the successor system for the Tornado because the conventional capabilities have to be replaced. So it's not just about so-called atomic bombs. We will then have to

continue talking about the issue of nuclear certification," she declared.

Neither Baerbock nor the *taz* spell out what these plans mean. In financial terms, they dwarf all rearmament projects since the end of World War II. Germany is planning to replace the outdated Tornado aircraft by procuring at least 90 new Eurofighters and 45 American F-18 fighter jets. Total cost: almost 20 billion euros. And that is only the beginning. Germany and France are currently developing the European Future Combat Air System, which will cost several hundred billion euros by 2040.

And what exactly does "nuclear participation" mean? In the event of a conflict, German warplanes armed with US atomic bombs stored in Germany would be mobilized, possibly even resulting in the bombs being dropped—with catastrophic consequences. A full-scale nuclear war between the NATO powers and Russia (and/or China) would not only turn all of Europe into a nuclear desert, it would mean the annihilation of the entire planet.

Baerbock made no secret of the fact that the rearmament is primarily directed against Moscow and Beijing. When the *taz* stated that "Russia has become more threatening," Baerbock replied, "The legitimate security interests of the states in Central and Eastern Europe in particular must be taken seriously." A "values-based foreign policy" is "always an interplay of dialogue and rigor. In the long run, eloquent silence is not a form of diplomacy, even if it has been seen that way by some in recent years," she said.

In other words: the new federal government will intensify the aggressive course towards war against Russia. In fact, the foreign policy towards Moscow in recent years has not consisted of "eloquent silence," but has followed a line that is directly linked to the imperialist

great power policy of the German Empire and of Hitler. In 2014, Berlin supported the right-wing coup in Ukraine to install an anti-Russian regime in Kiev and weaken Moscow. Since 2017, the German army has been relocating combat troops to Eastern Europe as part of the so-called NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP).

The Greens played a particularly aggressive role from the start. In the protests on the Maidan in Kiev, which were dominated by right-wing extremist forces, both the party-affiliated Heinrich Böll Foundation and many leading Green Party members were actively involved. In doing so, they openly defended and played down the alliance with fascist figures such as Svoboda leader Oleg Tyahnybok.

Now they are going one step further and calling for the Ukrainian army and the fascist militias allied with it to be armed against Russia. In the election campaign, co-leader and vice-chancellor-designate, Robert Habeck, travelled at the invitation of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to address the front in eastern Ukraine, declaring that he considered “Ukraine’s wishes for arms deliveries in view of the war in the east of the country to be justified.”

It is now clear which strategy the NATO powers are pursuing. The US-led military alliance is pressing ahead with the offensive against Russia to distract attention from the impact of the criminal pandemic policy at home. NATO is holding massive military maneuvers on the Russian border and arming Ukraine with Javelin anti-tank missiles, guided-weapon-armed warships and anti-aircraft missiles. The Kiev government has not denied Russian reports that the Ukrainian military is gathering 125,000 soldiers on the border with Russia.

Baerbock also supports the US war course against China—which no less threatens to trigger nuclear war. “As European democracies and part of a transatlantic democratic alliance,” we are “also in a systemic competition with an authoritarian regime like China,” she raged in the *taz*. In this regard, it is important “to seek strategic solidarity with democratic partners, to defend our values and interests together and to persistently promote these values in our foreign policy.”

In fact, the issue at stake is not “values,” but tangible economic and geostrategic interests. China is a “competitor, especially when it comes to the question of future technological leadership,” Baerbock herself admits. In order to assert its own interests, Baerbock appealed for a more aggressive European policy on China under German leadership. She threatened to restrict China’s

access to European markets and did not rule out a boycott of the upcoming Winter Olympic Games in Beijing.

Europeans should “not make themselves smaller than we are. We are one of the largest domestic markets in the world,” she boasted. China in particular has “massive interests in the European market.” If, for example, “there is no longer any access for products that come from regions like Xinjiang, where forced labor is common practice, this is a big problem for an exporting country like China,” claimed Baerbock. This “lever of the common internal market” works “only if all 27 member states pull together and not, as in the past, Germany as the largest member state formulates its own China policy.” We need “a common European policy on China,” she concluded.

The Greens specialize in using phrases about human rights, democracy and climate protection to mobilize wealthy layers of the petty bourgeoisie for an aggressive foreign and war policy. Baerbock personifies this clientele and the turn to the right of their party like no other. She became a member of the Greens in 2005, when the Schröder-Fischer government broke up due to resistance among workers and young people against the red-green coalition’s attacks on social welfare programmes and pro-war policies.

Sixteen years later, Baerbock is taking office as foreign minister in order to continue the hated war policy—even if it ends in a third world war. In order to prevent a catastrophe, the growing opposition needs a clear political perspective and orientation. The fight against militarism and war requires—just like the fight against social inequality, fascism and the “profits before lives” policy in the pandemic—the independent political intervention of the working class on the basis of a socialist program.



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