How Germany's "new foreign policy epoch" was prepared

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Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a gigantic increase in the German military budget in parliament on Sunday. The "German Army Special Fund" of €100 billion, which he promised, together with the €50 billion that was already budgeted for 2022, means a tripling of the military budget this year.

Military spending is set to continue to rise thereafter. "From now on, we will invest more than two percent of our gross domestic product in our defense year after year," said Scholz. Based on the GDP of 2021, this means an increase of €24 billion to over €71 billion, or almost $80 billion, every year.

Overall, this is Germany's largest rearmament program since the end of the Second World War, and it makes Germany Europe's strongest military power overnight. By way of comparison, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Britain's military spending amounted to $61.5 billion last year, Russia's to $60.6 billion and France's to $55 billion.

In parliamentary debate, Scholz and other spokesmen for the government and opposition justified this "new foreign policy epoch" by referring to Putin's aggression against Ukraine. This is nothing more than propaganda.

Significantly, according to a report in *Der Spiegel* titled "The 100-billion bazooka," the rearmament programme was already agreed and finalised during the talks on forming a coalition government last October. "The idea has been discussed in the Ministry of Defence for some time now," writes the news magazine. "Months ago, the military planners and the department's budgetary officials had already drawn up a series of confidential templates, which were forwarded to the negotiators in the coalition talks."

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, which was provoked by the NATO war offensive, "now made the unthinkable possible," reports *Der Spiegel*. In order to "send a strong signal in terms of security policy,…the Chancellery brought out the old documents again," in particular "a confidential, six-page argument paper dated 26 October." This paper specifically laid out a "German Army Special Fund" amounting to €102 billion. "The military planners" also specifically listed "where the money should be invested."

The article in *Der Spiegel* provides an overview of the planned purchases.

Around €34 billion will be invested in "multinational armaments projects." These include the "Twister" system for defence against hypersonic weapons, a "Combat Cloud" and "strategic air transport." In addition, there are mega-projects such as the new European Future Combat Air System (FCAS), the German-French Main Ground Combat System (MGCS) and the Eurodrone.

In addition, new artillery systems and ammunition will be developed together with Britain, a new frigate and airborne platforms with the Netherlands and new submarine technology with Norway.

The majority of the Special Fund (about €68 billion) is earmarked for "national large-scale projects." "At the top of the list of priorities," the article says, is "the successor to the ancient Tornado fighter jet." The cost of purchasing modernized Eurofighter jets and US F-35 jets is estimated at around €15 billion.

Approximately €5 billion was earmarked for a new heavy transport helicopter and €20 billion for new ammunition to replenish the depots. At the moment, "there is a lack of rockets and grenades everywhere for tanks, ships or helicopters." Another "major assignment" is the "digitisation of land-based operations," i.e., modernising the army's communication systems.

More billions are to flow into new warships and the modernization of the "Patriot" air defense systems. These are "by no means all the projects listed by the military planners in their templates," emphasizes *Der Spiegel*.

The massive rearmament program is a warning to the German and international working class. Seventy-seven years after the downfall of the Third Reich, the ruling class, which committed the greatest crimes in human history with the Holocaust and the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, is abandoning all restraints and returning as a military superpower.

The "new foreign policy epoch" announced by Scholz has been meticulously prepared in recent years. The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party have consistently documented and strongly condemned this conspiracy of the ruling class to resurrect German militarism. Here are only the most important stages of this dangerous development.

Already in 2013, more than 50 leading politicians, journalists, academics, and military and business representatives worked out a new foreign policy strategy under the auspices of the government-funded German Council on Foreign Relations (SWP) think tank, titled "New Power—New Responsibility." It demanded that Germany again play a global "leadership role" politically and militarily. As a "trading and export nation," it asserted, Germany is more dependent on "demand from other markets as well as access to international trade routes and raw materials" than almost any other country.

Based on this strategy paper, Federal President Joachim Gauck and leading representatives of the Grand Coalition officially announced the "end of military restraint" at the 2014 Munich Security Conference. Germany is "too big to only comment on world politics from the sidelines" and has "to be prepared to make an earlier, more decisive and more substantial contribution to foreign and security policy," said Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD), who

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has since become President of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The strategy was implemented in practice for the first time in Ukraine. Together with the United States, Germany supported the right-wing coup in Kiev in February 2014 and entered into a pact with fascist parties such as Svoboda to bring an anti-Russian regime to power.

Even at that stage, the SGP warned against an escalation of the conflict with Russia. In September 2014, a special conference of the party adopted a resolution against war and the return of German militarism, stating:

> A clique of political operatives, military figures, journalists with close ties to the intelligence agencies and other opinion makers has manipulated events and taken decisions that threaten to plunge all of humanity into a bloodbath…A nuclear war with Russia is now no longer a hypothetical possibility, but a real danger.

The resolution also pointed out that the return of militarism and nationalism faced overwhelming popular opposition in Germany in the light of history. This is why the ruling class is working to rewrite history to draw a veil of silence over the crimes of German imperialism. “The propagandists at the universities are not content to rehabilitate the war policies of the German empire. They are also attempting to rehabilitate Hitler’s reputation,” it declared.

Since then, the campaign for the return of German militarism has been systematically promoted. The military budget has risen from around €32 billion to almost €50 billion over the last eight years. The German Army’s international military operations were massively expanded with missions in Mali and the Middle East, and Germany also played a leading role in NATO’s rearmament against Russia—principally with the dispatch of a battlegroup to Lithuania.

At the same time, papers were drawn up in the Ministry of Defence, openly stating that Germany must be prepared and able to wage major wars for its economic and geostrategic interests. “The goal is to prepare the army for known and new challenges, risks, and threats across the full spectrum of tasks and levels of intensity,” says the “German Army Doctrine” adopted in 2018.

> It [the German army] must have the forces and means at its disposal to deploy after a brief mobilisation to the borders or beyond alliance territory. This must include strategic deployment capabilities… Collective defence within alliance territory can range from small-scale operations to an extremely demanding deployment within the framework of a very large operation both within and on the outskirts of alliance territory.

At the moment, the German war offensive is directed against Russia. After an initial hesitation, Germany is at the forefront of military support for Ukraine. Earlier this week, Berlin announced the delivery of 2,700 ground-to-air “Strela” missiles to Kiev. Last Saturday, the government approved the delivery of 1,000 anti-tank weapons and 500 “Stinger” surface-to-air missiles.

“Germany has taken a big step forward with arms deliveries to Ukraine and has broken with some old certainties,” Steinmeier rejoiced yesterday during a visit to German troops in Lithuania. The president praised the “significant increase” in the defence budget and explicitly threatened Russia with a long military confrontation. Nothing, he said, “points to an imminent end of the war. We will need a deep breath, and we will have it.”

Significantly, the German offensive against Russia, which increasingly runs along lines similar to those of 1914 and 1941, is being pushed forward by the nominally “left” parliamentary parties. The SPD heads the government and the Ministry of Defence, and the Greens the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Economy. The Left Party is also fully on board. Leading party representatives support the sanctions against Russia and arms supplies to Ukraine, and even demand the reintroduction of conscription.

There is no doubt that the return of Germany as a heavily-armed, aggressive military power will also exacerbate tensions between the European powers and between Germany and the United States. *World Socialist Web Site* editorial board chairman David North wrote on March 1 on Twittter:

> Germany, which is already the dominant economic power in the EU, will now be on course to becoming the dominant military power in Western and Central Europe. This is not great news for France, and that is probably why Macron is trying to keep his lines of communication with Putin open.
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> It should be recalled that Britain and France were bitterly opposed to the reunification of Germany in 1989. Though they did not dare say so in public, Prime Minister Thatcher and President Mitterrand were frightened that a reunified Germany would be uncontrollable.

He continued:

> While its forces are currently directed against Russia, the NATO coalition contains within itself explosive contradictions. The war in Ukraine marks the final and decisive breakdown of the entire post-World War II order.
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> The world is confronted with a volcanic eruption of imperialist violence. The catastrophe can be avoided only through the growth of the international class struggle, directed towards the conquest of power by the working class and the establishment of world socialism.

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