Germany supplies heavy weapons to Ukraine, risking nuclear war

Peter Schwarz
28 April 2022

It is now exactly two months since Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a “turn of the times” in foreign and military policy in the Bundestag (federal parliament). The arms budget would be increased threefold by €100 billion, the principle of not supplying weapons to areas of tension abandoned, and Ukraine would be supplied with German war materiel.

Since then, this programme has been vigorously put into action. Germany has supplied Ukraine with large quantities of anti-tank weapons, anti-aircraft equipment, ammunition, vehicles and other materiel from Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) stocks. It has given Kiev a list of deliverable weapons from German arms companies, for which Berlin is footing the bill, and has made two billion euros available for arms deliveries. Ukraine will receive operational Soviet-designed tanks from Eastern European NATO countries, which Germany will then replace with German-made tanks.

Despite this, Chancellor Olaf Scholz came under fierce attack. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his ambassador Andriy Melnyk, German and international media, the Christian Democratic (CDU-CSU) opposition and even members of his own coalition have accused the chancellor of being too hesitant, of not keeping promises and of stabbing Ukraine in the back out of economic self-interest. Now the government has responded to the pressure and agreed to supply heavy weapons directly from Germany.

In the run-up to a top-level meeting of representatives from around 40 countries held yesterday at the US Ramstein Air Base in Rhineland-Palatinate, Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht gave the green light for the delivery of Gepard anti-aircraft tanks from former Bundeswehr stocks. The Düsseldorf-based arms manufacturer Rheinmetall has also applied for the delivery of 88 used “Leopard” battle tanks and 100 “Marder” infantry fighting vehicles to Ukraine. The government wants to decide on this quickly.

In Ramstein, Lambrecht also promised to train Ukrainian troops on German soil to use artillery systems. “We will provide training on howitzers and ammunition for Ukraine together with the Netherlands, because we all know that artillery is an essential factor in this conflict,” the minister said.

By supplying heavy weapons and training artillerymen, Germany is becoming more and more openly a direct party to the war. It is not only prolonging and intensifying the war in Ukraine, but also risking it spreading to Germany and escalating into a nuclear third world war.

Just last Friday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz had declared in an interview with *Der Spiegel* that everything must be done “to avoid a direct military confrontation between NATO and a highly armed superpower like Russia, a nuclear power.” He had asserted, “I am doing everything to prevent an escalation leading to a third world war. There must be no nuclear war.” Now he has thrown his own warning to the wind.

He is thus following the US, which is calling the shots in Kiev and will not allow the war to end until, in the words of Ben Hodges, former commander of the US Army in Europe, Russia’s “backbone” is broken to the point “where it is no longer able to exercise power outside Russia.”

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin traveled together to Kiev before the Ramstein meeting to make sure President Zelensky sticks to this goal. “We focused the meeting on the things that will enable us to win the current fight and also build for the future,” Austin explained afterwards.

In Ramstein, the necessary weapons for the war against Russia were arranged and a monthly contact group set up to coordinate military support. “Heaven and earth” will be moved to ensure that Ukraine gets what it needs to defend itself, affirmed Defence Secretary Austin.

The US alone has delivered $3.7 billion worth of weapons to Ukraine since the war began, including man-portable anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles that locate their targets themselves. But to “break the back” of the Russian army, far heavier weapons, such as tanks, artillery pieces and fighter planes, and direct support from NATO are needed.

The chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley warned in Ramstein that time was not on Ukraine’s side.

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"The outcome of this fight here today depends on the people in this room." There is no clearer way to say that NATO itself is at war with Russia and is merely using the Ukraine conflict, which it has fomented for years, as a means to an end.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had already warned of the real danger of a nuclear war on Russian state television before the meeting in Ramstein. NATO's arms deliveries were a "legitimate target for Russian forces," he threatened. "If NATO enters into a de facto war with Russia through a proxy and arms that proxy, then you do in war what you have to do in war." The danger of a third world war was serious, real and should not be underestimated, he said.

But instead of working to defuse this danger, NATO is pouring oil on the fire.

In Germany, where, according to a recent Forsa poll, 56 percent of the population fear an expansion of the war to the whole of Europe and 63 percent advocate ending it through negotiations and a diplomatic solution, the war hysteria is particularly shrill.

A compliant media, which endlessly regurgitates NATO's war propaganda and has close ties to trans-Atlantic think tanks, has been attacking Chancellor Scholz for weeks for allegedly being too hesitant. For example, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* headlined a commentary: "Weapons for Ukraine: A German tragedy." And the latest issue of *Der Spiegel* appeared with the editorial, "Chancellor Scholz and the war in Ukraine: proclaimed, delayed, bungled!"

The CDU and CSU tabled a motion in the Bundestag to oblige the government to expand arms deliveries to Ukraine "immediately and perceptibly in quantity and quality" and also to deliver "heavy weapons."

The "traffic light" coalition parties—SPD, Greens and Liberal Democrats (FDP)—responded with a motion of their own calling on the government to "continue and, where possible, accelerate the delivery of needed equipment to Ukraine, including extending the delivery to heavy weapons and complex systems." For example, this would mean in the framework of back-filling Eastern European NATO members with German weapons, replacing the Soviet-era weapons they supply to Ukraine.

At the FDP party convention last weekend, the leadership only barely managed to stop delegates from passing a resolution against their own government. FDP Parliamentary Deputy Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, who accused the chancellor of a "deafening silence" when it came to heavy weapons, was enthusiastically applauded.

The Greens are even more belligerent. Bundestag Deputy Anton Hofreiter, a former pacifist, goes from TV studio to studio with his FDP colleague Strack-Zimmermann to demand more weapons for Ukraine.

Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock toured the three NATO Baltic states recently to reassure their governments, saying, "The Baltic states can rely 100 percent on Germany."

She visited a newly erected monument to the "victims of communism," while ignoring the victims of Nazi terror—usually an obligation for German politicians. Yet the Nazis and their local collaborators, who today are once again revered as heroes, almost completely exterminated the Jewish inhabitants of the Baltic states.

The proponents of comprehensive arms deliveries are deliberately playing with fire. They know that they are risking nuclear war.

For example, *Der Spiegel* Editor-in-Chief Steffen Klusmann writes in the above-mentioned editorial: "In the Chancellery, they now assume that the man in the Kremlin could use nuclear weapons as a last resort. But what if these bombs do not fall on Ukrainian soil, but in Warsaw or even in Berlin?" The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* also admits, "Never since the end of the Cold War has the risk of a military confrontation with Russia been so high." But even the prospect of nuclear bombs falling on Berlin cannot slow down the determination to intensify the war.

The war hysteria among politicians, journalists and, unfortunately, some cultural figures is so widespread that it cannot be explained by subjective motives. It has deep objective causes.

On the one hand, there is the social division of society, exacerbated by the pandemic and inflation, which undermines the stability of bourgeois rule and will lead to fierce class struggles. War and militarism serve as a tried and tested means of temporarily diverting domestic social tensions outwards.

And there are, on the other hand, the geopolitical interests of German capital, which can no longer be realised by peaceful means in the face of growing international tensions. In the last century, Germany waged war twice against Russia, or the Soviet Union, and occupied Ukraine in the process. Now, German imperialism—in fierce competition with the US—is returning to its traditional direction of expansion eastward.

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