

# German imperialism sets its sights on Africa

Johannes Stern  
24 May 2022

Germany's coalition government is systematically working to increase the country's economic, political, and military weight in Africa. Currently, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) is visiting Senegal, Niger and South Africa along with a high-level business delegation.

Scholz's trip centred on a visit to Bundeswehr soldiers in Niger on Monday. It was the Chancellor's first troop visit abroad. "The Bundeswehr is doing extraordinary things here and has also achieved extraordinary things under very difficult conditions," Scholz said at the military base in Tillia.

Officially, 200 German soldiers are deployed in the resource-rich and geostrategically important country. The Bundeswehr is training Nigerian special forces as part of Operation Gazelle, which has been running since 2018 and is part of the EU's EUTM mission.

Last Friday, the Bundestag (federal parliament) decided to extend the German war missions in the Sahel. Niger is playing an increasingly central role in this, with the EUTM mission being transferred almost entirely from Mali to Niger. "The focus of Germany's participation in the EU's capability building in the Sahel is Niger," read the motion passed by the federal government.

According to the new mandate, up to 300 Bundeswehr soldiers are meant to be helping improve the "operational capabilities of the security forces of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger and the Joint Task Force of the G5 Sahel states." This involves "military advice and training, including pre-deployment training" and "support." In other words, German war policy is being extended to the entire Sahel via Niger.

Scholz made it clear in Tillia that German troops were there to stay. The mission should also be continued beyond the mandate that has just been extended, he said. The task now, was to identify "a good follow-up project."

"Seeing the motivation of our soldiers," Scholz said, he had the feeling they were all looking forward to it. The mission so far had been "very successful and driven forward with great passion."

The crimes committed by the Malian army in cooperation with Russian units are cited by Berlin as the reason for the shift of focus to Niger. In this way, the German government also wants to conceal the criminal character of its own intervention. In reality, the massacres of the civilian population are being perpetrated by the same troops that the Bundeswehr has trained for years. The imperialist occupation forces are directly or indirectly involved in these crimes and have engulfed the entire region with terror and war.

Berlin also plans to continue cooperating with the publicly criticised Malian coup regime. It was "devastating that Russian mercenaries are now in Mali", Scholz said at a joint press conference with Senegalese President Macky Sall on the first day of his trip to Dakar. Germany would continue to "live up to its responsibility" and had "therefore also decided that we will continue to support the UN mission MINUSMA."

In fact, the Bundeswehr is increasing its MINUSMA troops in Mali from 1,100 to 1,400 soldiers, preparing for an escalation of the fighting. According to the mandate text, even more troops may be mobilised "for phases of redeployment as well as in the context of troop rotations and in emergency situations." In doing so, MINUSMA was "authorised to take all necessary measures, including the use of military force, to accomplish the mission."

The offensive in Africa is not, as the official propaganda would have one believe, about "the fight against terrorism" or "human rights" and "democracy." It is about naked imperialist interests. Already during the Bundestag debate on the extension of the mandate, numerous speakers stressed that Germany must also

assert its interests in the region militarily.

Germany's presence in the Sahel is "a sign of new responsibility, a response to geostrategic challenges," claimed the Green Party member of parliament, Merle Spellerberg. "When French troops withdraw from Mali in late summer, we will be the largest provider of troops from the global North." With "300 new soldiers," Germany is "closing the gap left by the French."

Leading members of the government, such as Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens), explicitly emphasised that the aim is to contain other powers, first and foremost Russia. "If MINUSMA were to withdraw from Mali, the vacuum would be filled even more by other forces," Baerbock warned in the Bundestag. This applied "to Islamist fighters," but "also to Russian forces."

Why Germany wants to fill the vacuum is clear. Mali and Niger are not only geostrategically important, but also rich in raw materials. Niger is the largest uranium producer in Africa and the fifth largest worldwide. Since 2011, the country has also been one of the oil-exporting states. Other raw materials that are mined and processed locally are phosphate, gypsum, and limestone. Mali is Africa's third-largest gold producer after South Africa and Ghana, and it has large deposits of bauxite, phosphate, and iron ore, among other minerals.

Scholz's visit to Senegal highlights Germany's hunger for African mineral resources and raw materials, which has been intensified by the conflict with Russia. In Senegal, it is above all the country's gas deposits that Germany wants to secure as quickly as possible.

"I want to be very clear about this," Scholz stressed in Dakar. "Of course, we want to cooperate with Senegal in particular not only on the issue of the future generation of energy from renewable sources ... but we also want to do so with regard to the LNG issue and gas production here in Senegal." The two countries had begun to "exchange views on this," he said, and would "continue this very intensively at the technical level following these talks."

In South Africa, too, where Scholz was welcomed with military honours by President Cyril Ramaphosa in Johannesburg on Tuesday, energy interests are at stake. The trip included a visit to Sasol. The transnational petroleum and chemical company is South Africa's

second largest industrial enterprise, with more than 30,000 employees and 17 plants in different countries. Sasol is known for the construction of gas-to-liquid plants, especially in Qatar. A few days ago, Scholz agreed a comprehensive energy partnership with the emirate and the world's largest exporter of liquefied gas.

Another motive behind the German offensive in Africa is undoubtedly the fear of revolutionary unrest. We are facing "dramatic global challenges," warned Scholz in Dakar. The COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the climate crisis would have "devastating consequences for the African states" and "on the reality of our lives." They endangered "the social and economic achievements that the global South has worked for." So that "these crises do not fan new flames," he said, Germany must "act decisively."

Scholz's brash posturing in Africa, like NATO's proxy war against Russia, which Berlin fully supports, stands in the tradition of Germany's murderous colonial and world power policies. The warmongers in the media say so openly and are demanding an even more aggressive showing by Germany in the new scramble for Africa, at the expense of the nominally allied imperialist powers.

"Germany must catch up," is the headline of a commentary by Nikolas Busse in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. "Although Germany itself was once a colonial power," "other Western countries [were] gladly given precedence, above all France," he enthused. This can no longer be tolerated "if one wants to be a leading European power."



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**