

Arms race in the Bundestag

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It is hard to say what is more repulsive about the level of debate in Germany's parliament, the Bundestag: the contributions of the speakers or the media coverage.

The deliberations on the budget for the Chancellor's Office are traditionally used as a general debate on the policies of the federal government. That was the case again on Wednesday. Opposition leader Friedrich Merz (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) and Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) competed to see who could deliver the most ferocious war rhetoric. Like a couple of yobs butting heads, both promised to send even more lethal weapons to Ukraine and to upgrade the Bundeswehr to be the most powerful Armed Forces in Europe.

Merz opened the debate by thanking the SPD, Liberal Democrat (FDP), Green "traffic light" coalition, with which the CDU and CSU (Christian Social Union) had agreed last Sunday on the design of the "Bundeswehr special fund" amounting to 100 billion euros. "Last Sunday was and is first and foremost a good day for our country's alliance and defence capabilities, and it is a good day for the Bundeswehr," he said.

Scholz later returned the appreciations. He thanked everyone who had helped bring about this decision "so constructively and also across party lines." He said it was a "quantum leap": "The Bundeswehr will then probably have the largest conventional army in the European NATO system."

After putting on record his fundamental agreement with the government's rearmament policy, Merz then began to attack the chancellor fiercely. Scholz, he said, had "issued a much-publicized government statement" on Feb. 27 in which he promised a "change of era" and the delivery of heavy weapons to Ukraine. "Since then, everything you said there has evaporated and evaporated into obscurity, into vagueness."

The promised heavy weapons had not been delivered to Ukraine to this day, he said. The chancellor was

ruining the reputation of German politics. He was untruthful, insincere and dishonest. He was not committed to building a "European security architecture." Instead of "Ukraine must win this war," he says only, "Russia must not win this war." It went on like that for minutes.

Scholz countered by listing the large quantities of weapons and ammunition that Germany has supplied to Ukraine in the hundred days since the war began: anti-aircraft missiles and anti-tank weapons, "more than 15 million rounds of ammunition, 100,000 hand grenades, more than 5,000 anti-tank mines, extensive explosive material, machine guns, and dozens of truckloads of other "relevant goods." Together with Denmark, it has supplied "54 modernized armoured troop carriers," "20 T-72 main battle tanks" from the Czech Republic and armoured personnel carriers from Greece, which were being replaced by Germany.

In addition, there were "twelve of the most modern self-propelled howitzers in the world" and Gepard anti-aircraft tanks on which Ukrainian soldiers were currently being trained: "This weapon comes with an initial supply of 59,000 rounds of ammunition; enough for 1,200 combat operations."

Finally, Scholz announced the government had decided to supply Ukraine with "the most advanced air defence system that Germany has" as well as "a state-of-the-art tracking radar that detects enemy howitzers, mortars and rocket artillery."

The IRIS-T-SLM anti-aircraft missile system, developed by German defence contractor Diehl, can shoot down aircraft, helicopters and drones up to an altitude of 25 kilometres and a distance of 40 kilometres. The missiles are guided by a target-tracking radar and hit their target on final approach using a jam-resistant infrared seeker.

According to Scholz, the decision to supply these highly effective weapons was made in close

consultation with the US, which is also supplying Ukraine with state-of-the-art missile systems capable of hitting targets deep inside Russia.

The result is an escalation of the war, which was deliberately provoked by NATO, and the growing danger of direct combat between Russian and NATO forces, including the use of nuclear weapons.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had already commented on initial reports of the planned missile deliveries last week, saying that they had “warned the West in the strongest terms that it was basically already waging a proxy war against the Russian Federation.” But these deliveries were “the most serious step toward an unacceptable escalation.”

It is a measure of the decline and depravity of the German media that not one commentary warns of the dangerous implications of this military escalation. Instead, Scholz was hailed for his military showmanship. “The chancellor can also be different” (*Tagesschau*) and “The chancellor goes on the offensive” (*taz*) ran some of the headlines.

What the Social Democrat “delivered in the general debate in parliament has little to do with the staccato sleeping pill speeches for which he is actually known,” cheered *Der Spiegel*. “Instead, Scholz presented himself this Wednesday in a way that one rarely experiences: feisty, rhetorically biting, surprisingly precise on the matter at hand.”

Have only one of these hacks thought for a second about what the consequences will be if the conflict with the world’s second largest nuclear power continues to escalate? They do not because they have long been intoxicated by German militarism.

Eight years ago, when then-Federal President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) called for an end to military restraint and for a German global power policy, the media already lay at their feet. Now, the Ukraine war is serving as an excuse to put these plans into action.

The “special fund” of 100 billion euros, which the Budget Committee launched on Wednesday with the votes of the traffic light coalition and the CDU-CSU faction, and which passed in the Bundestag Friday, is intended to transform the Bundeswehr not only into the largest, but also the most modern army in Europe.

41 billion euros are earmarked for modernizing the

Luftwaffe (Air Force). Plans call for the purchase of nuclear-capable American F-35 fighter jets, the development and purchase of Eurofighters with electronic warfare capability and the arming of Heron TP drones. In addition, 60 new transport helicopters, light support helicopters for the Army, electronic maritime reconnaissance aircraft and early warning and reconnaissance systems are to be purchased.

Some of the money is also to go toward the Franco-German “Future Combat Air System” (FCAS), whose development costs are estimated at 100 billion euros.

20 billion is earmarked for the digitization of the Bundeswehr.

19 billion is assigned for the Navy. Corvettes are to be modernized and at least one additional F126 frigate purchased. Also on the shopping list are modern anti-ship missiles capable of sinking large warships, anti-aircraft missiles for submarines, a new submarine and multi-purpose combat boats.

A total of 16.5 billion has been earmarked for the Army. This will be used primarily to purchase armoured vehicles, improve communications (including via satellite) and create the conditions for a new 5,000-strong brigade that can be rapidly deployed.



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