

Chancellor Scholz promotes German great power policy

Peter Schwarz
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In a guest column that appeared Monday in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Chancellor Olaf Scholz gave an unvarnished explanation of why Germany is supporting NATO's proxy war against Russia, heavily arming Ukraine, sabotaging any negotiated settlement and massively rearming the Bundeswehr.

It has nothing to do with the defence of democracy and "Western values," resisting an authoritarian aggressor, and everything else usually cited as official justifications. In reality, the war in Ukraine is intended to help Germany become the leading military power in Europe and transform itself from a great power into a world power.

The column is titled, "Europe in Times of War: The EU must become a geopolitical player." Scholz writes, "It has often been rightly demanded in recent years that the EU must become a geopolitical actor. An ambitious claim, but a correct one! With the historic decisions of recent months, the European Union has taken a big step in this direction."

When a member of the German government says "Europe" or "EU," he means Germany. In his article, Scholz emphasizes that dissenting policies by smaller states will not be tolerated in the EU in future. As already in financial and economic spheres, Brussels, Berlin and the powerful economic interests that back them are to dictate the course in foreign policy as well.

Europe's "most important response to the turn of the times" was "unity," Scholz states. "We absolutely must maintain it and we must deepen it. For me, that means an end to egoistic blockades of European decisions by individual member states. An end to national solo actions that harm Europe as a whole. We simply can no longer afford national vetoes, for example in foreign policy, if we want to continue to be heard in a world of competing great powers."

This also shows how mendacious is the Zelensky government's claim that joining the EU means democracy and national self-determination. In reality, the oligarchs Zelensky speaks for are promising themselves that EU accession will allow them to exploit their own working class more effectively.

The workers of Greece, whose standard of living has been decimated by EU austerity dictates, can say a thing or two about this, as can workers in Bulgaria, Romania, and other Eastern European states who, even after 15 years of EU

membership, earn only a fraction as much as their Western European counterparts. As EU members, they enjoy freedom of movement and are allowed to work in other EU countries, but there they are exploited at slave wages on construction sites, in slaughterhouses and in the service sector.

Scholz unconditionally supports NATO's goal of continuing the war until Russia is militarily defeated, even if it means risking nuclear war. "We support Ukraine—and we will do so as long as it needs this support: economic, humanitarian, financial, and by supplying weapons," he writes.

At the beginning of the war, Scholz and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) had been accused of only half-heartedly backing Ukraine and delaying the delivery of weapons. But the party has since taken a clear position. Members who warn against a complete break with Moscow are isolated. Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who is friends with President Putin and long worked for the Russian energy company Gazprom, is even the subject of party expulsion proceedings.

At a conference of the party-affiliated Friedrich Ebert Foundation on June 21, the new SPD chairman Lars Klingbeil had already called for "new strategic partnerships."

"We need new strategic alliances based on economic interests and political orientation," he declared. "Germany must aspire to be a leading power. After nearly 80 years of restraint, Germany now has a new role in the international coordinating system."

Klingbeil explicitly stressed that this role as a "leading power" also meant using military means. "I suspect some are now alarmed," he said. "The chairman of the SPD is talking about being a leading power, about the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces], about military force. I can imagine how some debates are now going. But I can claim that we are realistic."

With the proxy war against Russia, the German government is following in the traditions of Hitler's *Wehrmacht* (armed forces). A military defeat of Russia, as sought by NATO and the German government, would set the stage for splitting up the huge country and plundering its vast reserves of raw materials—a goal Germany already pursued in World War II when it invaded the Soviet Union.

Scholz also sees the Ukraine war as a means to strengthen

German dominance in Eastern Europe. As a “country in the centre of Europe,” Germany would “bring together East and West, North and South in Europe,” he writes. Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and all six countries of the western Balkans are to be admitted to the EU. “In the eastern alliance area—in Lithuania, in Slovakia, in the Baltic Sea”—Germany would “significantly increase its military presence,” he adds.

Here, too, Scholz is harking back to Germany’s criminal traditions. Control of “Mitteleuropa,” as the region was then called, was Germany’s central wartime objective in World War I and World War II. Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg’s infamous “September Program,” which the then Reich Chancellor wrote shortly after the beginning of World War I, stated that only a Germany strengthened by Mitteleuropa would be able to assert itself as an equal world power between the world powers Great Britain, the United States and Russia.

It is striking that Scholz does not mention the US in a single syllable in his article. This is not an oversight. At present, the US is indispensable to Germany as the world’s largest military power and the pre-eminent NATO power, but in the long term, it is regarded as a strategic rival.

The German media are following the internal and external decline of the US with a mixture of concern and malice. Typical is a commentary by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on President Joe Biden’s visit to Saudi Arabia.

Biden, who “arrived with a completely overloaded wish list only to depart a good 24 hours later with many lofty words but few concrete achievements,” had learned “a lesson in loss of power,” writes Stefan Kornelius, the newspaper’s political director. “The trip illustrates the decline of American authority; it makes visible the centrifugal forces at work in what has become a multipolar world.”

German imperialism is reacting to the loss of authority of the former protecting power with the biggest rearmament offensive since Hitler. It is not limiting its geopolitical ambitions to Russia and Europe; the “Global South,” as Scholz calls Asia, Africa and Latin America, is also to become its sphere of influence.

If Germany “assumes responsibility for Europe and in the world in these difficult times,” it will make “the concerns of the Global South our concerns,” Scholz writes. He had quite deliberately invited his “colleagues from India, South Africa, Indonesia, Senegal and Argentina to the recent G7 summit in Germany.”

Both Scholz and Klingbeil take pains to portray Germany’s return to militarism and great power politics as a reaction to the Russian attack on Ukraine, which they describe as a “turn in the times.” In reality, it is the other way round. The revival of German militarism is one of the main causes of the war in Ukraine.

As early as 2014, the then Federal President Joachim Gauck and leading representatives of the German government—including the current President Frank-Walter

Steinmeier and the current President of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen—had proclaimed a more aggressive global political and military role for Germany and put this into practice in Ukraine. They supported the coup there that brought a Western puppet regime to power with the help of far-right militias.

Moscow responded by annexing Crimea, whose inhabitants voted overwhelmingly to join Russia, and by supporting separatist movements in eastern Ukraine that were unwilling to accept the ultra-nationalist regime in Kiev. Since then, Ukraine has been systematically armed by NATO and any approach to a negotiated settlement has been sabotaged, finally provoking Russian President Putin to take the reactionary decision to attack Ukraine militarily.

In 2014, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) was the only party to warn against the return of German militarism and its consequences and to mobilise against it. The balance of this work is documented on the *World Socialist Web Site* and in two books published by Mehring Verlag, *Scholarship or War Propaganda?* and *Why Are They Back?*

All our warnings at the time have since been confirmed. The return of German militarism goes hand in hand with the rehabilitation of Nazism and its collaborators, such as Stepan Bandera. And it is linked to a declaration of war on the working class.

Scholz also states this openly in his FAZ article. He is preparing the German population for huge and long-lasting sacrifices. “This road is not easy, not even for a country as strong and prosperous as ours,” he writes. “We will need staying power.”

Already, many citizens are suffering from the effects of war and are looking anxiously at their next electricity, oil, or gas bills, Scholz said. The global economy was facing “a challenge unprecedented for decades. Disrupted supply chains, scarce raw materials, war-related uncertainty in the energy markets—all this is driving up prices worldwide.” But he said he was convinced that “we will emerge from the crisis stronger and more independent than we went into it.”



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