Chancellor Scholz promotes militarisation of Europe under German leadership in Prague speech

Peter Schwarz
29 August 2022

Germany is deliberately intensifying the war in Ukraine in order to weld Europe together under its hegemony and militarise the continent so it can become a world power. This was the central message contained in the keynote speech by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the Charles University in Prague on Monday.

Against the backdrop of the venerable Czech university founded in 1348, Scholz wasted little time with the usual phrases about peace, freedom and democracy that the European Union supposedly embodies. He then got to the point of his remarks.

"In recent years, many have rightly called for a stronger, more sovereign, geopolitical European Union," he said. "For a Union that knows its place in the history and geography of the continent and acts strongly and united in the world. The historic decisions of the past few months have brought us closer to this goal."

By "historic decisions," Scholz meant the "determination and speed" with which the EU imposed sanctions on Russia and exacerbated the war in Ukraine through NATO's intervention. He did not even hint at the suggestion that the German government or the EU might be interested in an early ceasefire or a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Instead, he boasted of the economic, financial, political and, above all, military support—"here Germany has fundamentally changed course in recent months"—being provided to Ukraine. "We will maintain this support, reliably and above all: for as long as necessary!"

In the coming weeks and months, Ukraine will receive from Germany "new, state-of-the-art weapons—air defense and radar systems, for example, or reconnaissance drones," stated the chancellor. The last package of arms supplies alone had a value of over €600 million. "Our goal is a modern Ukrainian armed forces that can permanently defend their country," he declared. He could imagine that "Germany would take special responsibility for building Ukrainian artillery and air defense."

Federal Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens) promised Ukraine on Sunday that she would continue to indefinitely support Ukraine with heavy weaponry. One must "expect that this war could last for years to come," she told the *Bild am Sonntag*. Like Scholz, Baerbock explicitly declared her support for the goal of recapturing the Crimean peninsula by military force and thereby inflict a total military defeat on Russia, a nuclear-armed power.

The German government already supported the right-wing coup in Ukraine in 2014, which brought a pro-Western puppet regime to power and sowed the seeds for the current war. But it hesitated for a long time to completely break off economic relations with Russia, which had been supplying Germany with cheap and secure energy since Soviet times.

Despite significant pressure, Chancellor Angela Merkel refused throughout her time in office to stop the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which would have doubled the capacity of the existing pipeline. The Scholz government only took this step after the outbreak of the war. Even then, his government came under sustained fire for allegedly acting too hesitantly and delaying promised arms deliveries.

This has changed radically. After the United States, Germany is the driving force in the proxy war with Russia. In order to dismember Russia and seize control of its rich natural resources, the German government is prepared to let its own population freeze and inflation rise uninterruptedly, and is risking a world war fought with nuclear weapons.

Already three days after the outbreak of war, Scholz announced in the Bundestag (parliament) a "new epoch," massive arms deliveries to Ukraine and a tripling of the defence budget in order to make Germany the leading military power in Europe once again. His Prague speech was directly linked to his "new epoch" speech. The demand for a "geopolitical Europe capable of world politics" that "can assert its values and interests worldwide" is a constant theme throughout the one-hour text.

"In a world of 8, probably 10 billion people in the future, every single one of our European nation states is far too small to assert its interests and values alone. This makes a united European Union all the more important for us," Scholz stressed.

He was careful not to say a critical word about the US and praised the "indispensable value of the transatlantic partnership." Nevertheless, he made it clear that Germany's geopolitical ambitions are also directed against the US.

It is "fortunate for all of us" that "today, with President Biden, a convinced transatlanticist is sitting in the White House," he said. But in spite of everything Biden has done for the partnership, "we know at the same time that Washington's view is more focused on competition with China and the Asia-Pacific region. This will also apply to future American governments—perhaps even more."

According to Scholz, in the multi-polar world of the 21st

© World Socialist Web Site

century, “it is therefore not enough to cultivate existing partnerships only as valuable as they are. We will invest in new partnerships—in Asia, Africa and Latin America.” The united Europe also has to “emphasise its weight even more vis-à-vis China.”

In order to strengthen the EU accordingly, Scholz advocates its further expansion to the east: “The fact that the EU continues to grow to the east is a win-win situation for all of us!” he declared. In addition to the countries of the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova, he also wants to “prospectively” welcome Georgia into the EU. The EU would thus grow from the current 27 to up to 36 members.

Scholz also hopes that this will strengthen Germany’s position in Europe. “Germany, as a country in the middle of the continent, will do everything in its power to bring East and West, North and South together in Europe,” he said.

In order to make the EU more effective and to strengthen Germany's leadership role, Scholz intends to centralise its institutions and largely disempower smaller members. In the Council of the EU, in which the heads of government or the ministers responsible for the various countries are represented, the unanimity principle is to be replaced by the majority principle, so that individual members can no longer veto proposals.

Scholz wants to reduce the European Parliament’s size, “in compliance with the democratic principle that every vote should have approximately the same weight.” So far, smaller countries have been favoured because they have more deputies per head of population than other states.

With an ambitious technological and economic development programme, Europe should “fight back to the top of the world” and join the trade war against China and the US. Scholz cited the production of chips and semiconductors, the mobility of the future and the “ecological and digital transformation of our economy” as central fields.

Scholz also plans to include space: “Independent access to space, modern satellites and megaconstellations—this is not only crucial for our security, but also for environmental protection, agriculture and, last but not least, for digitalisation.”

To realise these plans, Scholz intends to arm the EU as a military world power under German leadership so it is capable of waging war around the globe.

“The past uncoordinated shrinking of European armies and defence budgets should now be followed by a coordinated growth of European capabilities,” he said.

In addition to joint arms projects, the unification of European defence structures and a well-equipped EU military headquarters, he intends to accelerate decision-making processes and form “coalitions of the determined” from individual member states for military operations.

Germany will also “ensure that the planned EU Rapid Reaction Force is operational in 2025—and then also provide its core,” Scholz promised. It was decided that Germany would support Lithuania with a rapidly deployable brigade and Slovakia in air defense, as well as compensate the Czech Republic and other countries for the delivery of Soviet tanks to Ukraine with tanks of German design.

Europe needs to catch up considerably in order to counter threats from the air and from space, he continued. Therefore, Germany will invest very significantly in an air defense system and design it in such a way that European neighbours can also participate. A commonly built air defense system in Europe is “a safety asset for the whole of Europe,” he stated.

The fact that the German government bases its European programme on the prospect of a long war against Russia, which costs hundreds of lives every day in Ukraine, ruins the living standards of the European working class and threatens to escalate into a nuclear war, shows its reactionary character. The federal government is thus returning to the worst traditions of German imperialism and is supported by all parties represented in the Bundestag.

At the end of the 19th century, capitalist Germany developed the most advanced industry in Europe, but at a time when the world was already divided among its capitalist rivals. With the First World War, it tried to change that by redividing the world. The control of Eastern Europe—or “Central Europe” (Mitteleuropa) as it was then called—including Ukraine was one of the central goals of the German war.

After the defeat in World War I, Hitler made another attempt to redivide the world in the interests of German imperialism 20 years later. “To convert united Germany into a base for European domination; to convert united Europe into a base for the struggle for world domination, consequently for confining, weakening, and reducing America—this task remains unchanged for Hitler,” wrote Leon Trotsky in December 1939, shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War.

Scholz’s European strategy follows the same trajectory. His attempt to subordinate the EU to German interests and to transform it into a basis for the struggle for world domination will inevitably lead to a catastrophe. It will not only lead to violent conflicts between the European powers, but will also intensify the class struggle.

This contains the key to the development of a response to the danger of war. The working class must combine the struggle to defend its social achievements and democratic rights with the struggle against war and militarism. It must reject the European Union, an instrument of the European imperialist powers, and take up the fight for the United Socialist States of Europe—for a united socialist Europe in which social interests dominate, not the profit interests of the capitalists.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site