

Germany's defence policy guidelines: "Ready for war"—like the Nazis

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Just under a fortnight ago, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrat, SPD) called for Germany to become "war-ready" and "capable of defence" again, and for both the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) and society as a whole to be arranged accordingly.

The goal of the comprehensive rearmament and militarisation of society as a whole not only links back rhetorically but also substantively to Nazi policy. Before and during the Second World War, the Nazis had constantly invoked the German people's "readiness for war" and "ability to defend themselves."

On July 9, 1944, when the defeat of the Wehrmacht (Hitler's Armed Forces) was already unstoppable, the Nazi weekly newspaper *Das Reich* published the headline, "More fit for war than ever." The editorial, penned by Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, invoked Germany's "war-readiness" and called for all the forces of the "nation" to be mobilised for "victory."

The German ruling class is pursuing this goal again today. On Thursday, Pistorius and the Inspector General of the Bundeswehr, Carsten Breuer, published the 2023 Defence Policy Guidelines, which can only be described as a blueprint for total war. The National Security Strategy, published in June, was already moving in this direction.

All areas of society are once again to be geared towards war, German soldiers and civilians are once again to die *en masse* for the predatory interests of German imperialism. This is the core message of the 35-page document, which Pistorius and Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) underlined on Friday with further pro-war speeches at the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) conference in Berlin.

"Our ability to defend ourselves requires a Bundeswehr that is war-ready," reads the very first section of the paper. This means "that its personnel and equipment are geared towards fulfilling its demanding missions." The yardstick for this was "readiness to fight at all times with the aspiration to succeed in high-intensity combat." We do not just want to win the confrontation with an "at least equal opponent," we have to, the document declares.

Another key objective is: "War-readiness as a maxim for action." Germany needs "soldiers who have the will to bravely defend the rights and freedom of the German people, consciously accepting the risk to life and limb."

These statements are a warning. During the Second World War, Germany's ruling class reduced Europe to rubble and ash and committed the worst crimes in human history with the war of extermination and the Holocaust. Since then, it has not dared to speak so openly about war, victory, and the will to die on the battlefield. Now it is determined to rearm Germany to become the leading European military power and to put it in a position to wage a major war in Europe itself.

"War has returned to Europe. Germany and its allies must once again confront a military threat," reads the first paragraph of the document. This "turning point" is "fundamentally changing the role of Germany and the Bundeswehr." As the "most populous and economically strong country in the centre of Europe," Germany has a "responsibility" and must "be the backbone of deterrence and collective defence in Europe."

The paper identifies the nuclear power Russia as the main opponent. Following its "war of aggression against Ukraine in violation of international law," the Russian Federation "remains the greatest permanent threat to peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area without fundamental internal change."

This turns reality on its head. In fact, NATO deliberately provoked the Russian invasion through its aggression. And German imperialism is now using the war to realise its long-cherished rearmament plans and, despite its historical crimes, to reorient itself militarily towards the East. The guidelines describe the "reorganisation of a combat brigade in Lithuania" as "the lighthouse project of the new era."

And Scholz added at the Bundeswehr conference: "We are also contributing to airspace security in the other Baltic states, in Poland, Slovakia and Romania, strengthening our presence on the ground and also the Alliance's deterrent capability at sea." And all of this was "only the beginning;

because with the implementation of NATO's defence planning," "we will be called upon to do even more. Our geographical position in Europe means that Germany functions as the central hub for the Alliance."

The "implementation of NATO defence planning" means nothing less than war against Russia. At the last NATO summit in Vilnius, the alliance adopted a 4,000-page war plan that sets out in detail which troops will be deployed where and which weapons will be at their disposal.

Among other things, the NATO Rapid Reaction Force will be increased from 40,000 to 300,000 soldiers. Specifically, the NATO plan envisages "ensuring the timely reinforcement of all allies in accordance with our 360-degree approach." There was a "commitment to fully fund these plans and to exercise regularly in order to be prepared for high-intensity and cross-cutting collective defence operations."

The defence policy guidelines extend to nuclear escalation. "National and alliance defence continues to require participation in credible nuclear deterrence," it says in the section titled "Strategic priorities of defence policy." Through nuclear sharing, Germany "continues to make its contribution to nuclear deterrence within the Alliance."

Germany's great power ambitions are not limited to Europe and Russia. In the section "Defence policy assessment," it states: "Even if our focus is on security from the Russian Federation, Germany faces a multitude of simultaneous, mutually reinforcing security policy challenges. Crises, conflicts and regional tensions influence our immediate security environment in Africa, the Middle East, the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific." China was "simultaneously a partner, competitor and systemic rival." And "cyber, information and space" were also of "strategic relevance."

The paper explicitly formulates the Bundeswehr's claim to intervene militarily worldwide. The "spectrum" of German contributions ranges "from the deployment of military advisory groups and mobile training teams to the deployment of extensively capable contingents."

This explicitly involves economic and geostrategic interests. "For Germany as an economically globally networked trading nation ... destabilisation in other regions of the world and threats to the freedom of sea routes have a direct impact on security and prosperity." German defence policy must once again "think and act in geostrategic spaces."

The current guidelines also differ from previous strategy papers in that they are much more specific about the consequences of the war plans—including within Germany. They call for the development of a war economy and the complete militarisation of society. "The expansion of robust

and secure defence industry capacity" was "an important element for the rapid, comprehensive and sustainable supply of the Bundeswehr in times of crisis and war."

The term "Wehrhaftigkeit" ("defence capacity") describes "the inner attitude towards defence readiness of the entire Bundeswehr with long-term appeal in all defence-relevant areas and in German society." The Bundeswehr, including the reserve, belongs "in the centre of society" and must be "tangible where people are." "Defence for the protection of Germany" is "a task for society as a whole" and "an active veterans' and martyrs' culture that is also supported by society ... is a constant obligation."

The paper leaves no doubt that the working population should pay the price for this war madness: As victims on the front line, which according to Pistorius may again flow through Germany itself; through social and wage cuts to finance the rearmament; and in the form of massive attacks on democratic rights to suppress resistance to this.

"Operational readiness requires resources" and "security policy" will "not be able to manage without difficult prioritisation for the foreseeable future," the paper states. At the same time, "the demand on the operational readiness of the Bundeswehr ... does not tolerate any delay" and makes "time a critical factor."

The German ruling class can obviously hardly wait to wage war again and commit genocide and other crimes. "Please keep up the good work. Approach even complex processes with courage, make things happen," Scholz called out to the assembled Bundeswehr leadership in Berlin. "Dealing with the new era" also included "learning lessons from the current war [in Ukraine and also in Israel] and adapting our equipment and procurement accordingly."

In Gaza, all the parliamentary parties—from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to the Left Party—support the genocide against the Palestinians. The defence policy guidelines are intended to develop this criminal policy on a much larger scale.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) will not allow this and will expand its fight against capitalist and imperialist barbarism. The worldwide mass protests against the genocide in Gaza are the basis for this. They must be expanded, oriented toward the working class and armed with a socialist perspective.



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