

“Army of the Future”: Germany restructures its military for total war

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At the end of January, German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democratic Party, SPD) stated in several interviews that Germany had to prepare for a direct war with the nuclear power Russia. He cited “the next three to five years” as a period that had to be “used intensively” to “arm ourselves” and make Germany “fit for war” again.

With the new structure of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), which Pistorius announced last Thursday, these insane war plans are being realised. In presenting the plans, Pistorius made no secret of what was at stake: The transformation of the Bundeswehr from a formation primarily geared toward global missions abroad into a military force able to conduct total war.

His letter to the parliamentary group leaders of the parties in the Bundestag (German parliament) states:

The entire Bundeswehr will position itself according to guiding principles that can be derived from the overarching goal of war capability: Growth capability, scalability, dynamic robustness, digitalisation (future technology, operational command) information superiority, war supply.

The central measures, which are detailed in a 34-page document entitled “Bundeswehr of the Future,” include the creation of a standardised central command structure for “national operational planning and command of missions.” To this end, the existing Territorial Command (for domestic operations) and the Operational Command (for operations abroad) will be merged into a joint Operational Command of the Bundeswehr.

This measure means the de facto reestablishment of a general staff, which was banned in the Potsdam

Agreement of 1945 following the criminal role played by the German military leadership in the two world wars. Now it is being tacitly reintroduced. Civilian control over the Bundeswehr, which was enshrined in West Germany’s post-war constitution, is being removed with the return of the old war and great-power ambitions of German imperialism.

“Compared to the status quo, the new target structure of the armed forces is significantly less top-heavy and clearly focussed on operational planning and command in an emergency,” the document states. The aim is “to establish a single-source command capable of fighting a war and to create the conditions for consistently strengthening the troops.”

In addition, the “Bundeswehr of the future” must enhance the role of the branches of the armed forces “in order to fulfil the requirement of war capability.” In addition to the traditional military forces of the army, air force and navy, the existing area of cyber/information space (CIR) will be established as a fourth armed force. The CIR will play a key role not only in the digitalisation of the armed forces, but also in “identifying hybrid tactics of actors who threaten security... as early as possible in order to be able to react to them.”

In other words, the Bundeswehr is preparing to take the lead in the field of drone warfare and the use of artificial intelligence (AI). The potential for mass murder using these technologies is currently becoming apparent in the genocide in Gaza. The emphasis on AI and CIR is also about suppressing the growing opposition to war and massively expanding attacks on democratic rights and control of the internet under the guise of the fight against Russia’s “hybrid warfare.”

As in the past, the policy of war abroad requires the establishment of a total military state at home. It is not only the regionally deployed homeland security forces, which were previously managed by the various federal

state commands, that are being “transferred to the army proper in accordance with the ‘organise as you fight’ principle.” The civilian organisational areas are also to be directly aligned in accordance with this principle. This applies above all to the creation of structures for the comprehensive mobilisation of the reserve and the planned reintroduction of compulsory military service (conscription).

These moves leave no doubt that the German ruling class has decided once again to recruit masses of young people as cannon fodder for its wars. Thus the document states, “irrespective of the political decision to be made about compulsory military service or compulsory civilian service, including in peacetime, a consistent orientation of the structures of the personnel sector towards an emergency situation also includes the preparation and examination of conscription and enlistment processes.”

What this means concretely can be seen in Ukraine. At the behest of NATO, the Zelensky regime has already sacrificed hundreds of thousands on the front lines and is currently preparing a law to mobilise half a million more soldiers. Just a few days ago, the official age limit for reservists to be called up was lowered from 27 to 25. At the same time, there are reports about the criminal methods used to forcibly recruit men.

Significantly, Pistorius announced the structural reform on the same day that NATO celebrated its 75th anniversary and used its meeting in Brussels for a massive escalation of the war against Russia. The Bundeswehr is currently preparing the permanent stationing of 5,000 combat troops in Lithuania. On Monday, Herr Pistorius saw off the first advance detachment.

The “Bundeswehr of the Future” document also identifies Russia as the main adversary. For the Bundeswehr, “The turning point in security policy” means that “the primary focus of its actions today is once again the ability to deter and defend against state attacks.” Today, this means “resolutely opposing attacks by states such as Russia that trample on the international legal order.”

The propaganda of “defence” against an “attack” by Russia turns reality on its head and ties in directly with earlier German war lies. The German wars of aggression in the two world wars of the 20th century—including the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, which cost the lives of 30 million Soviet citizens—were justified by the ruling class in the German Empire and under Hitler with the same arguments.

Today, German imperialism is once again the aggressor.

With the systematic military encirclement of Russia and the anti-Russian coup in Kiev in February 2014, Germany, the US and the other leading NATO powers provoked the reactionary intervention of the Putin regime in the first place. Now they are escalating the conflict in order to prevent the imminent collapse of the Ukrainian troops on the front lines and to realise their war aims: To militarily defeat Moscow in Ukraine in order to secure control of the country and subjugate the resource-rich and geostrategically central Eurasian landmass as a whole.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) analysed and warned of the objective driving forces behind this in 2014, after the then-government in Berlin had announced the return of German militarism at the Munich Security Conference:

The propaganda of the post-war era—that Germany had learnt from the terrible crimes of the Nazis, had “arrived at the West,” had embraced a peaceful foreign policy, and had developed into a stable democracy—is exposed as lies. German imperialism is once again showing its real colours as it emerged historically, with all of its aggressiveness at home and abroad.

This is exactly what is now happening—with all its far-reaching consequences. In the Middle East, Berlin is supporting Israel’s genocide of the Palestinians, which is itself part of the imperialist subjugation of the entire Middle East and the war offensive against Russia and China.

The SGP declares war on this madness. The only way to stop the development towards world war and dictatorship is to build a conscious socialist movement of the international working class against war and its root cause: the capitalist profit system. This is what we are fighting for in alliance with our sister parties in the upcoming European elections.



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