

European Commission President Juncker calls for state-build up and war

By Johannes Stern
15 September 2016

Two days before the post-Brexit summit in Bratislava on Friday, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker delivered his annual State of the European Union speech. Speaking before the European Parliament, he warned that the European Union is facing “an existential crisis” and made clear that the European ruling elite has nothing to offer to the European working class besides austerity, nationalism, police state build-up and war.

“I am not going to stand here today and tell you that everything is now fine. It is not,” he said. “I have witnessed several decades of EU integration, but never before have I seen such little common ground between our member states. So few areas where they agree to work together [...]. Our European Union is, at least in part, in an existential crisis.”

Juncker acknowledged that the historical crisis of the EU is reproducing the same national divisions and political break-down that plunged the continent into two world wars in the twentieth century. “Never before have I seen national governments so weakened by the forces of populism and paralyzed by the risk of defeat in the next elections,” he warned.

“The next twelve months are decisive if we want to reunite our Union,” Juncker added. He was “therefore proposing a positive agenda of concrete European actions for the next twelve months.”

In reality, there is no “positive agenda.” Juncker all but admitted that the EU's policies have deprived a whole generation of a better future. “I cannot and will not accept that the millennials, Generation Y, might be the first generation in 70 years to be poorer than their parents”. Coming from a man who has overseen years of deep austerity that have slashed wages and living standards in Greece and across Europe, this is utter cynicism.

In an attempt to cover up the class character of the EU and channel rising anger among European workers in a nationalistic anti-American direction, Juncker claimed: “Europe is not the Wild West, but a social market economy. In Europe, consumers are protected against cartels and abuses by powerful companies. This goes for giants like Apple too.”

Who is Juncker kidding? Those who are protected in capitalist Europe—as in capitalist America—are the superrich and the banks! After years of deregulation and austerity, European workers face in the final analysis the same devastating conditions as their class brothers and sisters in the US. When Juncker criticizes Apple, which like most big companies is involved in large-scale tax evasion, this has nothing to do with protecting European workers. Rather, it points to the increasing tensions as the EU seeks to assert its interests more independently of, and even against, the United States.

“Europe can no longer afford to piggy-back on the military might of others, or let France alone defend its honour in Mali,” Juncker said, all but calling for a major European military escalation in ongoing wars in Africa and the Middle East.

Juncker also pledged a major military build-up: “For European defence to be strong, the European defence industry needs to innovate,” he said. “That is why we will propose before the end of the year a European Defence Fund, to turbo-boost research and innovation.”

Juncker confirmed longstanding EU plans, revived by defense ministers Ursula von der Leyen of Germany and Jean-Yves Le Drian of France in the lead-up to the summit, to transform the EU into a de facto military and police state.

“Europe needs to toughen up”, Juncker stated. “Nowhere is this truer than in our defence policy. The

Lisbon Treaty enables those Member States who wish, to pool their defence capabilities in the form of a permanent structured cooperation. I think the time to make use of this possibility is now.”

Juncker called for “a European Strategy for Syria” and for Federica Mogherini, the EU's High Commissioner for Foreign Policy, “to become our European Foreign Minister, via whom all diplomatic services, of big and small countries alike, pool their forces to achieve leverage in international negotiations.”

This plan alone speaks volumes about the EU's reactionary strategy. Mogherini has been leading the EU's push for a common European military and foreign policy after the UK's vote to withdraw from the EU. At the first EU summit without British participation, at the end of June, she presented a paper titled “Global Strategy for European Foreign and Security Policy.” At its center stood the goal that the EU must become an aggressive military power capable of waging war independently from the United States.

Europe “must be better equipped, trained and organised to contribute decisively to such collective efforts, as well as to act autonomously if and when necessary,” this document demands. The paper calls for a massive rearmament program and makes clear that there is virtually no geographical limit to the potential reach of an EU military force. Brussels reserves the right to intervene not only in the war-torn regions in North Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, but anywhere in the world.

The stated interests of the EU include “ensuring open and protected ocean and sea routes critical for trade and access to natural resources.” To this end, “the EU will contribute to global maritime security, building on its experience in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, and exploring possibilities in the Gulf of Guinea, the South China Sea and the Straits of Malacca.”

The drive to prevent the break-up of the EU by preparing for global wars is pushed above all by Berlin. Germany's recently published “White Paper 2016 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr” explicitly welcomes “the European Union’s new global foreign and security policy strategy,” stating that it will “make a significant contribution to strengthening the EU’s capacity to act in the domain of foreign and security policy.”

“From the very beginning, Germany has played an active role in supporting the development of this new strategy,” Berlin's official foreign policy doctrine boasts.

The current Franco-German plans, such as the creation of a unified EU military headquarters, were also spelled out first in Berlin's white paper. In the medium term, a “permanent civil-military operational headquarters” is required, it states, with a “civil-military planning and command and control capability”. Only thus could the “political weight of the countries of Europe” be maintained in the long term, along with the “security interests of the EU,” given “geopolitical shifts and global demographic developments.”

The push especially by the German ruling class to organize Europe militarily after Brexit to defend its geostrategic and economic interests on a world scale is only increasing the tensions between the European powers and the danger of another major war between the imperialist powers.

Britain’s Admiral Lord West was quoted in the British tabloid the *Sun* last week: “Because of Brexit, I think Europe is very flaky, I think it is unfortunate that we didn’t stay in, because they actually need our military expertise. I can see bits of Europe breaking up and when Europe gets into a mess, twice in the past we’ve had to go in there and clear it up with immense loss of blood and lives.”

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>