

Germany: The Greens' Joschka Fischer calls for national rearmament

By Peter Schwarz
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Anyone who wants to know what prominent political circles in Germany are thinking should read the newspaper columns by ex-Green Party leader Joschka Fischer. The former anarchist and street fighter, who made a political career with the Greens, and then as foreign minister oversaw the first Bundeswehr (armed forces) missions abroad, never distinguished himself with an independent opinion. He provides, however, a sensitive measure of political trends. He sets his course according to the prevailing wind, before others even perceive this.

Fischer has long spoken for that section of the German bourgeoisie that holds a strong European Union (EU) and a close military alliance with the US within the framework of NATO to be indispensable. The coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Greens broke up prematurely in 2003 not least because Fischer rejected the close relationship between Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

It is all the more remarkable that Fischer now calls for a “security option on the basis of the nation state” and places the future of NATO in question. He draws the conclusion from a possible rapprochement between Moscow and Washington under the new US president, Donald Trump, that Germany should massively upgrade its military—irrespective of the EU, and if possible, in cooperation with France.

On Monday, in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, he published an “Outsider’s view” headlined, “Europe’s Agenda 2017: Squeezed between Presidents Putin and Trump, the EU cannot remain a ‘soft power.’” He calls the coming to power of Trump on January 20 a “watershed moment” for Europe, which will deeply shake the EU. He sketches out a scenario in which Russian President Vladimir Putin and Trump attempt

“to destabilise the EU by supporting nationalist forces and movements within its member states.”

What had even more far-reaching consequences for the EU, said Fischer, was “the announcement by the new American president to review the American security guarantee for Europe and to put the relationship of the US with Russia on a new basis.” If this were “at the expense of NATO, this would radically change the security situation for Europe.”

Although Fischer advises the “EU should now shore up what it has left with respect to NATO and focus on salvaging its own institutional, economic, and legal integration,” he continued, “It should also look to its member states to provide a second security option. The EU itself is based on soft power: it was not designed to guarantee European security, and it is not positioned in its current form to confront a hard-power challenge.”

As a Green, Fischer clothes his call for military rearmament in phrases about the preservation of peace. If Europe wants “an enduring peace” then “it first must ensure that it is taken seriously,” he writes. This is “clearly not the case today.” That is why Europe, “in the Trump era, beyond the US security guarantee, must substantially strengthen its own [military] capabilities.”

Fischer therefore advocates a joint effort by France and Germany: “Other countries such as Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain, and Poland will also have a role to play, but France and Germany are indispensable.” But he also has to admit that many diplomats hold the differences between Germany and France on military issues to be insurmountable. Although he hopes that Berlin and Paris find a compromise under pressure from Trump and Putin, ultimately his proposal amounts to a massive strengthening of German militarism.

That Fischer is not alone is shown by the German

reaction to the American hacker accusations against Russia. Although the US intelligence agencies have so far produced no factual evidence to support their allegation that the Russian government influenced the US elections, the German media supports what they say as an indisputable fact. The anti-Russian hysteria in Germany is also assuming grotesque proportions. Significantly, the edition of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* containing Fischer's column bears the headline: "Berlin fears Russian hackers."

The American ruling class is currently gripped by a fierce dispute over the future foreign policy direction. While outgoing President Obama and sections of the security apparatus want to escalate the confrontation with Russia, Trump and his followers regard China as their priority opponent.

The German media have largely taken the side of the Obama camp in this conflict. While some, during the Ukraine conflict, had warned against escalating the confrontation with Russia, with regard to Germany's economic interests, they now fear a rapprochement between Washington and Moscow at the expense of the EU, and above all Germany.

They are responding by stepping up the campaign for the revival of German militarism, which began three years ago when German President Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen proclaimed the "end of [German] military restraint." The return of militarism is being accompanied by a massive upgrade of the police and state monitoring apparatus to suppress any social and political opposition—with the Greens playing a leading role.

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