

German government defends US war drive against Iran

By Johannes Stern
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The German government is preparing to support a possible US war against Iran. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (SPD—Social Democratic Party) and Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU—Christian Democratic Union) made this clear once again on Wednesday. Having previously defended the US assassination of Iran’s leading general Qassim Suleimani—an illegal act of state terrorism—they condemned the Iranian retaliatory strike against US targets in Iraq.

In an official statement by the Federal Foreign Office, Maas stated: “We condemn the Iranian missile attack on Iraqi military bases where coalition forces are also stationed. We call on Iran to refrain from any steps that could lead to further escalation.”

Kramp-Karrenbauer expressed a similar opinion in an interview with the ARD television network. “I can say on behalf of the federal government that we reject this aggression in the strongest possible terms. It is now crucial that we do not allow this spiral to continue to turn upwards”. It was “now above all up to the Iranians not to escalate further”. That is why “the appeal goes in particular once again to Tehran”.

The day before, Kramp-Karrenbauer had already attacked Iran and blamed it for the escalation of the conflict. At a press conference on the fringes of a CSU (Christian Social Union) closed-door meeting in the Bavarian monastery of Seon, she stated: “At this point, I would like to emphasise quite clearly that those who have also in the past been responsible for escalation in the region is particularly Iran. It is therefore now also the responsibility of Iran to contribute to de-escalation”.

Who is the federal government trying to fool? Everyone knows that in the Middle East the US and its European allies are the aggressor. The imperialist

powers have left a trail of devastation there over the past 30 years in their attempt to subject the geostrategically important and resource-rich region to their interests. The first Gulf War in 1991 was followed by the illegal wars of aggression and regime change operations in Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), Libya (2011) and Syria (since 2014), which cost millions of lives and reduced whole countries to rubble.

The current escalation against Iran is also coming from the US. Since the Trump administration unilaterally abrogated the nuclear agreement with Iran in May 2018, it has been constantly tightening sanctions and issuing military threats against the country. The targeted killing of Soleimani on January 3 was a de facto declaration of war against Iran. In his speech to the nation on Wednesday, Trump – surrounded by high-ranking generals – made it clear that he will further intensify the course of aggression against Iran. He announced new sanctions and threatened the nuclear powers Russia and China, which have close economic and political ties with Tehran.

With their statements, Maas and Kramp-Karrenbauer signal that the German government, in contrast to its stance during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, is supporting the preparation of a war of aggression in violation of international law. This war threatens millions of lives and could trigger a third world war. In a guest article for the German daily *Tagesspiegel*, former German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel warned of a “1914 moment: nobody wants war and yet it is coming to pass... Because the conflict between Iran and the USA could quickly not only affect Iraq, but could spread in a conflagration to the entire Gulf region, Syria, Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon.”

When representatives of the ruling class like Gabriel warn against a massive war and criticize the US, this

has nothing to do with pacifism. They fear that the Trump administration's ruthless actions will undermine their own economic and military influence in the region and draw the conclusion: Germany and Europe must in future pursue their interests more independently of the US and ultimately establish themselves as the hegemonic powers in the region.

Gabriel writes: "Europe's intervention must be [...] so courageous and strong that it is also prepared to take political risks itself in order to be credible, especially vis-à-vis Iran. For Europe has so far only little influence in this conflict in the Gulf".

Roderich Kiesewetter (CDU), member of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Bundestag, was even clearer in an interview with Deutschlandfunk radio. "I could imagine that we Europeans would even increase our presence and the Americans withdraw from the region, that we would gain more European weight in the region, so to speak, within the framework of a transatlantic burden sharing", he declared, adding: "I rather see advantages of a stronger European engagement if Iraq wants it. And the Americans could withdraw from the region – they already do so to some extent – if the Europeans take on more responsibility."

Kiesewetter made clear that Brussels and Berlin are just as concerned as Washington about imposing imperialist subjugation over the entire region and pushing back Iranian influence. "It is simply a matter of ensuring stability in the region, because otherwise Iran has a zone of influence that extends from Iraq and Syria to Lebanon. If the West loses this, then we will also lose the influence to fight the terrorist militia ISIS, and we will lose a region in a really difficult period... This is why we Europeans have a massive interest in being present in the region".

Under conditions of acute danger of war and explosive tensions between the great powers, all political tendencies are forced to show their true colours. The Left Party, which has postured as pacifist, at least in public speeches, is advocating most aggressively for a more independent German-European foreign and great power policy.

Kiesewetter's position is "still too weak", stated Alexander Neu, chairman of the Left Party group on the Bundestag's defense committee, in his own interview with Deutschlandfunk radio. One would have to "really distance oneself from the US" and he "hopes

that the Europeans or the European Union will pursue an independent foreign and security policy, i.e. detached from the USA".

Neu left no doubt that he and the Left Party seek to increase European influence in the region – also by military means. He proposed cynically that "one should perhaps ask in Tehran and Baghdad whether it is really desirable for Europeans to take over the role of Americans. I think it really makes sense for all foreign forces to withdraw and try to rebuild Iraq only by civilian means. And if you think that you can handle a training mission, then you can just as easily bring Iraqi military personnel to Germany and train them there. It's a possibility that even we as the Left Party would not reject."

At the end of the interview Neu made it clear that Germany could not, however, "all at once leave NATO". This was "a position" of his party, but "not the subject of this debate now". It was simply a matter of "the Europeans making an independent foreign and security policy on a case-by-case basis... and not unconditionally backing the US". In other words, the Left Party also operates within the framework of the war policy of NATO and the USA and is a pro-war party in the Middle East.

The only party that opposes war and mobilizes the massive opposition among workers and youth is the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP), the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Next Tuesday its youth and student organization IYSSE is organizing a rally entitled "No war against Iran" at the Humboldt University in Berlin. In the leaflet for the meeting it declares:

"The attack on Soleimani is an expression of the extreme crisis and despair of a capitalist class that threatens to plunge humanity into the abyss. At the meeting we want to talk with an editor of the World Socialist Web Site about the background of the war development and discuss why an international socialist movement is necessary to prevent a catastrophe".

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