

German warships in the Taiwan Strait: A war provocation against China

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The passage of two German warships through the Taiwan Strait is a deliberate provocation against China. It underscores that Germany is once again pursuing its imperialist interests with relentless military force, regardless of losses.

On Thursday evening, the frigate *Baden-Württemberg* and the supply ship *Frankfurt am Main* sailed through the strait between the island of Taiwan and the Chinese mainland, which is claimed by the Chinese government as territorial waters. It was the first time in 22 years that a German warship had travelled through this sea route. Three years ago, the frigate *Bayern*, which was travelling in the region, had avoided passing by the island.

The US, Canada, Australia, Britain and France have been sending warships through the Taiwan Strait for years despite fierce Chinese protests. Their ongoing provocations are part of their military encirclement of China and preparations for war against the economically rising country.

Beijing had expressly warned Germany against joining this practice. When asked about the route of the *Baden-Württemberg*, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning explained that China rejects provocations and threats against its sovereignty and security under the guise of “freedom of navigation.” Taiwan is seen by Beijing, Mao stressed, as an inseparable part of China and the waters in the Taiwan Strait are Chinese waters.

But Berlin demonstratively ignored this warning. Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrat, SPD) personally confirmed the passage of the two warships on Friday morning. “International waters are international waters. It is the shortest and, given the weather conditions, also the safest route. So we are going through,” he said.

Christian Democratic Union (CDU) foreign affairs expert Roderich Kiesewetter, one of the fiercest warmongers in Berlin, told *Der Spiegel* that the passage

was overdue: “It is important that Germany, as a major economic nation that is absolutely dependent on free sea routes, finally does this, because otherwise Germany’s reputation and the trust of states in the region such as Taiwan, the Philippines or Japan in Germany would suffer massively.”

The provocation against China comes at a time when the US and UK are practically declaring war on Russia by granting permission for their medium-range missiles to be used for attacks deep into the Russian heartland. A massive Russian retaliation, including the use of nuclear weapons, is thus becoming increasingly inevitable.

The German government is reacting to this by demonstrating its support for the US-led war front against China, which is allied with Russia, with its latest provocation. The economic consequences of such a confrontation would be enormous. They go far beyond the effects of the Russia sanctions, which have driven energy prices and inflation to record highs.

In 2023, China was Germany’s largest trading partner for the eighth year in a row with a trade volume of €255 billion. The country is particularly important for the crisis-ridden German automotive industry as a sales market, production location and supplier. In total, German companies have made direct investments worth more than €100 billion in China, which continue to rise despite warnings from the German government and the EU. In 2023, direct investments by German companies in China totalled €11.9 billion. In 2024, this figure was already €7.3 billion in the first half of the year.

A Bloomberg study concludes that a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait alone would lead to a 5 percent slump in global economic output due to the blockade of the important waterway, which is used by almost half of all international container ships. If Taiwan’s chip deliveries were to be cancelled, global economic output would fall by more than 10 percent. That is almost twice as high as

the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. The consequences of an all-out war with China are beyond imagination.

Although the German government is taking enormous economic risks with its provocation, marking a further escalation towards a nuclear world war, not a single voice is being raised against it in Berlin's official circles. This shows that the ruling class has long considered a third world war to be inevitable and is systematically preparing for it.

The provocation against China is reminiscent of the infamous "Panther's Leap" to Agadir, which almost triggered a war between the European powers in July 1911, which then actually broke out three years later with the First World War. Kaiser Wilhelm II had sent the German gunboat "Panther" to the Moroccan port of Agadir in order to force France, which was allied with Britain, to cede colonial territories. The conflict was eventually defused by a deal at the expense of the colonial peoples.

Rosa Luxemburg, who fought colonialism relentlessly, warned fiercely at the time against the illusion that this would eliminate the danger of war. She wrote:

The inseparable connection of imperialism with capitalist development, of which it is the legitimate child despite its chilling ugliness, or rather precisely in its chilling ugliness—that is what we must teach the working class to understand. And from this it must draw the conclusion that we can only fight imperialism, war, the theft of countries, genocide, violation of the law and violent politics by fighting capitalism, by opposing the global political genocide with social revolution. (Rosa Luxemburg, *Petty-bourgeois or proletarian world politics?*, 19 August 1911)

These lines are highly relevant today. Ten years ago, the German ruling class came to the conclusion that it must once again use military force to assert its global economic and strategic interests. The then Foreign Minister, and current Federal President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier along with other representatives of the ruling CDU/SPD grand coalition declared at the time: "Germany is a little too big and economically too strong for us to be able to comment on world politics from the sidelines."

Since then, Germany has been massively arming itself,

provoked the war in Ukraine and is financing the NATO war against Russia. It is also becoming increasingly openly confrontational towards China, despite the immediate catastrophic economic consequences.

The latest provocation is just the latest in a long series of military missions with which Germany intends to "show its colours" in the region since adopting its Indo-Pacific guidelines in September 2020.

The frigate *Baden-Württemberg* crossed the Taiwan Strait on its return from South Korea, where it had taken part in the monitoring of sanctions against North Korea. War Minister Pistorius visited Hawaii, South Korea and the Philippines in the summer to emphasise Germany's claim to great power status.

Luftwaffe (Air Force) fighter jets also spent eight weeks travelling in the Pacific and took part in five exercises on four continents—from Alaska to Hawaii, Japan, Australia and India. In the process, they covered 1.3 million kilometres in the air.

The inseparable flip-side to escalating militarism are the attacks on the jobs, wages, social gains and democratic rights of the working class, which is forced to bear the costs and consequences of the pro-war policy. The shift to the right by all the establishment parties, which is so clearly expressed in the witch-hunting of refugees, and the targeted strengthening of far-right and fascist forces such as the Alternative for Germany (AfD) are directed against their growing resistance.

As Rosa Luxemburg so aptly wrote, there is only one way to fight war, dictatorship and social counter-revolution, "by fighting capitalism, by opposing the global political genocide with social revolution." The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and the International Committee of the Fourth International are fighting for this, for the mobilisation of the international working class on the basis of a socialist programme.



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