

As war chancellor, Green Party leader would triple Germany's military budget

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In the campaign for February's early federal election, incumbent Economic Affairs Minister and Green Party candidate for Chancellor, Robert Habeck, is positioning himself as the most aggressive warmonger. At the beginning of December, after he had already declared that as Chancellor he would deliver Taurus cruise missiles to Kiev to attack targets deep inside Russia, he is now calling for a massive increase in defence spending in order to pursue German "power politics."

Speaking to leading news weekly *Der Spiegel*, he said, "According to expert calculations, about three-and-a-half percent of our economic output will be needed for defence in the next few years." Habeck, added in confirmation, "I agree. We have to spend almost twice as much on our defence." And when the magazine asked him whether this was "affordable," he replied, "Yes, and it has to be." In the end, such a "large sum" could only be pre-financed through loans, but of course "the loans will have to be repaid at some point."

This is a declaration of war against the population. The figure Habeck brought into play underscores that the German ruling class is working on the largest rearmament programme since Hitler. The Federal Ministry of Finance is forecasting a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of €4,210 billion for this year, 3.5 percent of which would correspond to a military budget of almost €150 billion. This would not be a doubling, but almost a tripling of the regular annual military budget. Without the existing €100 billion "special fund" for the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), this is currently just under €52 billion.

The sum is gigantic. It almost corresponds to the entire social budget (€175.67 billion in 2024), seven times the education budget (€21.49 billion) or nine times the health budget for 2024 (€16.71 billion), which has already been massively cut in recent years. When Habeck stresses that the loans "will of course have to be repaid," he is saying nothing other than in the end, there will be nothing left of the remnants of the welfare state.

And when the Green candidate for chancellor justifies the massive rearmament spending with talk of the "protection of peace" and the "security of this country," this is well-known propaganda. In the interview, he leaves no doubt that in reality it is about Germany's return to aggressive great power politics in order to enforce the interests of German imperialism—including with military might.

There were "massive geopolitical power shifts," Habeck says, adding ominously, "Only if we fully embrace this dimension can

we provide the necessary answers. No more Mr. Nice Guy." Germany, he says, "has to reinvent itself again, or it will no longer have the option of being able to reinvent itself. If we don't change fundamentally, we will no longer play the role we have played so far in a competitive world. We have already fallen behind too much."

Habeck identifies Moscow and Beijing as the main opponents. "We have to take the security issue, especially the relationship with Russia and China, much more seriously than in the past," he warns. Some people still wished they could just snap their fingers, and everything would be back to normal, as it was no longer normal even under Angela Merkel. But the policy of the three monkeys—hear nothing, see nothing, say nothing—must end.

Habeck attacks the SPD and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its sister party in Bavaria, the Christian Social Union (CSU), whose candidate for chancellor, Friedrich Merz (CDU), is also campaigning for more armament and social attacks and is combining this with aggressive agitation against refugees, from the right. When a Chinese company wanted to buy part of the port of Hamburg, it became clear 'that we differ in our assessment of China's interests'. In 2023, Federal Chancellor Scholz had prevailed against Habeck's Ministry of Economic Affairs to allow the Chinese state-owned company Cosco to acquire a 24.9 percent stake in a Hamburg container terminal.

And as far as the CDU/CSU is concerned, Habeck believes that it "has not yet realized what a fundamental shift in power we are dealing with. What follows from this: We have to do power politics for democracy in this world."

In the same breath, Habeck makes it clear that for him and the Greens it is not really about "democracy" or other supposedly noble values, but about the enforcement of imperialist interests, even by brutal force. "Our actions are, of course, derived from our values. But the world is not one in which everyone somehow wants the good," he declared cynically. And nobody knew this "better than Annalena Baerbock."

Indeed. While Habeck was talking to *Der Spiegel*, the incumbent Green foreign minister was courting the new Islamist leader and al-Qaeda terrorist Abu Mohammad al-Jolani in Damascus in order to secure Germany's interests in the control and division of Syria and the entire Middle East. A few weeks earlier, in a speech to the Bundestag (parliament) she had openly defended the genocidal attacks by the Israeli military on schools and hospitals, declaring:

Of course, self-defence means that you not only attack terrorists, but destroy them... When Hamas terrorists hide behind people, behind schools, then we are entering very difficult areas. But we do not cower in the face of that. That is why I made it clear to the United Nations: then civilian places can also lose their protected status.

In order to pursue Germany's new imperialist power politics in the 21st century, the Greens are promoting the same great power concepts that already led to world war and barbarism in the 20th century. When asked by *Spiegel* whether Germany should become "the leading military power in Europe," Habeck responded with approval, stating: "Overall, the NATO states should cooperate much more closely in the EU and also include Britain. It would make sense if we finally organised a pan-European arms and defence policy."

Germany, too, must "serve a European defence policy in order to also take the financial lead, including jointly financed procurement." Elsewhere, he warns that "we have to change our defence posture" and "put our armies in a state where they can defend themselves."

It is clear that the establishment of a militarised and belligerent EU under the command of Berlin is also aimed at enforcing Germany's own interests against its imperialist allies, above all the US. In the interview, Habeck criticised American oligarch and Trump advisor Elon Musk for interfering in the German election campaign as a "foreign actor" in order to support the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), "the most anti-European party."

He was also "concerned about the US" and did "not want to imagine that the oldest democracy of modern times is developing into a neo-feudal system, a kind of moneyed aristocracy in which billionaires are soon in government and use their influence to pursue business interests."

Two things need to be said about this. Firstly, Habeck's remarks are only a weak description of what is actually already taking place in the US. With Trump, the ruling class is seeking to establish a fascist regime that will enforce the interests of the capitalist oligarchy against the population with brutal force. And secondly, the Green Party's candidate for the post of Chancellor has made it clear he is prepared to collaborate with this "neo-feudal moneyed aristocracy." He asserts that "you don't always have to agree to get along" and that "I will do everything I can to ensure that we have good cooperation with the US, even when it gets difficult."

In its New Year's perspective, the WSWS explained that the character of the new US administration represented "a violent realignment of the state to correspond with the nature of capitalist society itself." The ruling class in Germany is working on the same "realignment." It plans to bring an extreme right-wing government to power via the early federal elections, which will brutally enforce the interests of the German "moneyed aristocracy" both at home and abroad. Habeck and the Greens are ready for this and are thus bringing a long process of their constant right-wing development to a conclusion, so to speak.

Asked whether he would refuse military service again today as he had done during the Cold War, Habeck answered, "No. Today I

would join the Bundeswehr... I would no longer have a moral argument for refusing." And in response to the comment by *Spiegel* that with his demand for 3.5 percent of GDP for defence he was likely to "run into problems with [his] party," he replies, "I don't think so; there is consensus in the party. We have to spend a lot more on our defence."

Habeck's interview and his own assessment of his party as a monolithic block for rearmament and war highlight the extreme right-wing character of the Greens, which, when the party was founded in 1980, still claimed to be "left-wing" and "pacifist," but which essential characteristics were already in their DNA.

The Greens have always vehemently rejected the working class and a socialist perspective, instead relying on the anti-Marxist conceptions of the Frankfurt School and postmodernism, as well as on various forms of identity politics. When they first took government responsibility at federal level as part of the Social Democrat-led Schröder government between 1998 and 2005, they initiated the first German combat missions since the end of World War II in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Two decades later, they can hardly control their desire for rearmament and war.

Behind this development are fundamental social and political processes. In his book *A Quarter Century of War* published in German by Mehring Verlag in 2020, David North cites the text "After the Slaughter: Political Lessons from the Balkan War," which originally appeared on the *World Socialist Web Site* in 1999:

The social structure and class relations of all the major capitalist countries have been deeply affected by the stock market boom which began in the early 1980s. Perpetually rising share values, especially the explosion in market valuations since 1995, have given a significant section of the middle class—especially among the professional elite—access to a degree of wealth that they could not have imagined at the outset of their careers.

As Habeck positions himself as the best German war chancellor, his concerns are the defence of these fortunes, which have since soared to astronomical heights. The wealthy upper middle-class layers, whom the Greens represent like no other party, are reacting to the extreme social polarisation by completely transforming themselves into ruthless militarists and warmongers in the interests of the capitalist oligarchy.



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