

# German reaction to Trump presidency: More rearmament, more austerity

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As Donald Trump's inauguration approaches, concern is growing in Germany that the new US president will realise his "Make America Great Again" agenda at the expense of Europe. There is therefore nervousness and uncertainty in the corporate boardrooms, ministries and editorial offices.

"No one should harbour any illusions about the scale of what lies ahead for Germany and Europe," warned Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, Director of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in the specialist journal *Internationale Politik*. "What we can expect for America is not only a relapse into nationalism and isolationism, but also an entry into unpredictability."

In particular, the threatened punitive tariffs of 10 to 20 percent on imports from Europe would hit the German economy hard. According to calculations by the Institute for Macroeconomics and Economic Research (IMK), they would directly jeopardise 300,000 jobs. According to the Prognos Institute, a total of 1.2 million German jobs depend on exports to the US. Several German companies are already relocating production facilities overseas for fear of the tariffs.

However, Trump has numerous other means at his disposal to weaken Europe. There is concern in Berlin that he will try to split the European Union, on which Germany is highly dependent and which it dominates.

Under the headline "It will be easy for Trump to divide Europe," *WirtschaftsWoche* listed more than half a dozen dangers from the Trump administration threatening the EU.

The publication warned that Trump, together with Moscow, will impose a "dictated peace" on Ukraine at the expense of Europe. "It could end up with the Europeans paying for the reconstruction, the Americans earning from it and the EU states also having the obligation to militarily secure the ceasefire along the

long demarcation line between Ukraine and Russia," it quotes a "senior diplomat" as saying.

*WirtschaftsWoche* also accused Trump of trying to "undermine the cohesion of Europeans by offering individual deals that are advantageous for one EU country but rather negative for the EU as a whole." As an example, it cited the €1.5 billion deal for a secure communication system that Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni agreed with Elon Musk, the head of SpaceX, on the sidelines of a lightning visit to Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence. It torpedoes European efforts to build their own such system.

"It should be similarly easy for Trump," the publication continued, "to play the individual EU states off against each other when it comes to US investments in Europe or the purchase of US military equipment at the expense of products from Airbus factories."

*WirtschaftsWoche* sees a further danger in the growing number of right-wing populist European heads of government who are hostile or sceptical towards the EU and some of whom, such as Meloni and Viktor Orbán (Hungary), are "ardent Trump fans."

Finally, it warned against the growing influence of US internet platforms that interfere in European politics. The support of Elon Musk and his platform X for Alternative for Germany (AfD) leader Alice Weidel and the swinging of Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg behind Trump has also been criticised by other German media outlets. The EU Commission is now discussing measures to limit the power of US social media networks.

Some media outlets are now also focussing on the "connection between power and capital" in Trump's government and his authoritarian tendencies. This weekend, news magazine *Der Spiegel* appeared with a cover picture of a grim-faced Trump with a laurel

wreath and the headline: “The Emperor. How Trump wants to impose his will on the world.” The opening lines read: “Donald Trump returns to the White House, more powerful and determined than ever before. His enemies are the liberal world order that America helped to build and democracy at home.”

But one searches in vain for an explanation. For a quarter of a century, German governments have participated in US wars—from Yugoslavia to Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria to the war in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza—and justified this with the defence of the “liberal world order” and “democracy.” But now, as a result of these wars, a bitter enemy of democracy is taking power in the US!

How is this possible? It cannot be explained by Trump as an individual. Rather, the rise of this vulgar gangster to the top of the most powerful capitalist country is the result of the bankruptcy and rottenness of the capitalist system on a global scale, which only produces social inequality, war and destruction.

In its New Year’s statement, the *World Socialist Web Site* editorial board wrote:

The character of the new government marks a violent realignment of the state to correspond with the nature of capitalist society itself. The world’s richest individuals and corporations control resources on an unfathomable scale...

These processes, clearly evident in the United States, are in fact universal. All over the world, capitalist governments are being shaken by massive political crises, facing popular resistance and resorting to authoritarian measures.

The ruling class in Germany and Europe is reacting to Trump accordingly. “Their answer to ‘Make America Great Again’ is ‘Deutschland über alles,’” reads the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei’s election statement.

In the article cited above, DGAP Director Kleine-Brockhoff distinguishes between three European reactions to Trump: adapters, sovereigntists and right-wing populists. The “adapters,” among which he counts Poland and Germany, consider the preservation of NATO and the US nuclear umbrella to be so important “that they want to please, charm, impress or

distract Trump.”

The “sovereigntists,” led by France, “want to distance Europe from America and establish the continent as an independent pole of power politics in what they see as a multipolar world order.” And the “right-wing populists,” led by Hungary, support Trump because they are ideologically close to him and “he is trying to detach Europe from America.”

Kleine-Brockhoff is in favour of “an alliance between the different camps” and believes this is possible. In fact, the various camps agree on the fundamental issues. Their response to Trump is: even more rearmament, even more exploitation and austerity, and even more agitation against refugees and the buildup of the repressive powers of the state.



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