

German General: What Are the War Aims?

Description

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Erich Vad is an ex-Brigadier General. From 2006 to 2013 he was the military policy advisor to Chancellor Angela Merkel. He is one of the rare voices who spoke out publicly early on against arms deliveries to Ukraine, without political strategy and diplomatic efforts. Even now, he speaks an uncomfortable truth.



by [Annika Ross](#)



Chancellor Angela Merkel and Brigadier General Erich Vad in Kunduz in 2010

Mr. Vad, what do you think of the delivery of the 40 martens to the Ukraine that Chancellor Scholz just announced?

This is a military escalation, also in the perception of the Russians – even if the more than 40-year-old marten is not a silver bullet. We're going down a slide. This could develop a momentum of its own that we can no longer control. Of course it was and is right to support the Ukraine and of course Putin's attack does not comply with international law – but now the consequences must finally be considered!

And what could the consequences be?

Do you want to achieve a willingness to negotiate with the deliveries of the tanks? Do you want to reconquer Donbass or Crimea? Or do you want to defeat Russia completely? There is no realistic end state definition. And without an overall political and strategic concept, arms deliveries are pure

militarism.

What does that mean?

We have a militarily operational stalemate, which we cannot solve militarily. Incidentally, this is also the opinion of the American Chief of Staff Mark Milley. He said that Ukraine's military victory is not to be expected and that negotiations are the only possible way. Anything else is a senseless waste of human lives.

General Milley caused a lot of trouble in Washington with his statement and was also heavily criticized in public.

He spoke an uncomfortable truth. A truth that, by the way, was hardly ever published in the German media. The interview with CNN's Milley didn't show up anywhere bigger, when he's the chief of staff of our western powerhouse. What is going on in Ukraine is a war of attrition. And one with meanwhile almost 200,000 fallen and wounded soldiers on both sides [yes, on the Russian side out of 150,000 SMO – Ed], with 50,000 civilian dead and with millions of refugees. Milley drew a parallel to the First World War that couldn't be more apt. During the First World War, the so-called 'Bloodmill of Verdun', which was conceived as a battle of attrition, led to the deaths of almost a million young French and Germans. They fell for nothing then. So the warring parties' refusal to negotiate has led to millions of additional deaths. This strategy didn't work militarily at the time – and it won't work today either.

You too have been attacked for calling for negotiations.

Yes, as did the Inspector General of the German Armed Forces, General Eberhard Zorn, who, like me, warned against overestimating the Ukrainians' regionally limited offensives in the summer months. Military experts – who know what's going on among the secret services, what it's like on the ground and what war really means – are largely excluded from the discourse. They don't fit in with media opinion-forming. We are largely experiencing a media synchronization that I have never experienced in the Federal Republic. This is pure opinion making. And not on behalf of the state, as is known from totalitarian regimes, but out of pure self-empowerment.

They are being attacked across the board by the media, from BILD to FAZ and Spiegel, and with them the 500,000 people who signed the open letter to the chancellor initiated by Alice Schwarzer.

That's the way it is. Fortunately, Alice Schwarzer has her own independent medium to be able to open this discourse at all. It probably wouldn't have worked in the leading media. The majority of the population has been against further arms deliveries for a long time and also according to a current survey. However, none of this is reported. There is largely no longer a fair, open discourse on the Ukraine war, and I find that very disturbing. That shows me how right Helmut Schmidt was. In a conversation with Chancellor Merkel, he said: Germany is and will remain an endangered nation.



Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock in Kharkiv. – Xander Heinl/IMAGO

How do you assess the Foreign Minister's policy?

Military operations must always be coupled with attempts to bring about political solutions. The one-dimensionality of current foreign policy is hard to bear. She is very heavily focused on weapons. The main task of foreign policy is and remains diplomacy, reconciliation of interests, understanding and conflict management. I miss that here. I'm glad that we finally have a foreign minister in Germany, but it's not enough to just use war rhetoric and walk around in Kyiv or Donbass with a helmet and flak jacket. This is too little.

Baerbock is a member of the Greens, the former peace party.

I don't understand the mutation of the Greens from a pacifist to a war party. I myself don't know of any Greens who even did military service