

# German Social Democrats, Greens, Left Party support German war policy

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Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD), Greens and Left Party are aggressively pushing for the revival of German militarism. This was made absolutely clear during a panel discussion, promoted under the title "Red-Red-Green Peace Policy," recently held at the *taz.café* in Berlin.

At the invitation of the Forum of the Democratic Left DL21, a grouping within the SPD, Left Party foreign policy spokesman Stefan Liebich, former Green Party parliamentary leader Jürgen Trittin and German *Bundestag* (parliament) vice-president Edelgard Bulmahn (SPD) discussed "prospects for a common peace policy." The location could not have been more apposite. The pro-Greens *taz* national daily beats the drum like no other German newspaper for military operations in the name of "human rights", "peace" and "humanity".

When politicians from the SPD, Greens and Left Party talk about a "peace policy", one is left with a vision of tanks rolling over the horizon. Euphemisms such as "crisis prevention", "conflict resolution" and "peacekeeping", which they use with maddening monotony, are in reality substitutes for wars contravening international law, subversive foreign missions and the establishment of brutal puppet regimes.

Trittin is the former head of the Green Party's parliamentary faction and environment minister in the SPD-Green government under Gerhard Schröder. He presents himself a something of an expert on humanitarian war policy. He boasted that the Greens and SPD had formerly "chosen to implement policies of robust and aggressive military operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan.... which certainly did accomplish something". An answer had now to be found for "modern conflicts" like the civil war in Ukraine, or

"asymmetrical conflicts" like those in Syria, Libya and Iraq.

Trittin left no doubt that an SPD-Green foreign policy means preparing for devastating new wars. He explicitly associated himself with the calls for a more aggressive foreign policy and more German leadership in world affairs. "[Foreign Minister] Steinmeier is right when he says we are too big to go on distancing ourselves from events", he explained, before proceeding to attack the federal government from the right. "What plan do we have to remedy this grievous state of affairs? How is it to be financed?"

Just as Mao's *Little Red Book* had so enraptured former Communist League of West Germany (KD) member Trittin in the 1970s, today it is his dream of never-ending German participation in military interventions. He believes it is no longer acceptable that the Germans only have to pay the bill, while "others do the dirty work." It is "also not the case that you can simply make a sudden decision to launch a foreign operation. These decisions have consequences for at least the next ten years", says the Green Party politician. The only question is: "How, in the last resort, is political order to be achieved?"

Bulmahn, who like Trittin served as a minister under Schröder, took the same line. She asked, "Do we want German foreign policy to take on more responsibility when it comes to international military operations? Do we want to stay with [former Chancellor Helmut] Kohl's policy and only pay the financial costs? Do we want to sit back from it all, or do we, too, want to send over personnel—that is, police and soldiers?" For Bulmahn, to ask the question is to answer it. "We need to send personnel. We can't fob the issue off", she explained.

Trittin and Bulmahn stressed again and again that the

Left Party, just like their own parties, had to unconditionally support the policy of military missions for the *Bundeswehr* (German army). Only then was the option of an SPD-Left Party-Green federal coalition conceivable.

Trittin ranted: “You can't be for disarmament, on the one hand, while running away from reality by more or less condoning the annexation of Crimea, on the other. You can't talk about 'the responsibility to protect' and then scurry away from intervening in Libya. And you can't be for international law and then vote against it, when it comes to the disposal of Syrian chemical weapons”. It is “a fundamental duty to commit oneself to this necessity for a common foreign policy, despite all stomach aches, and knowing the limits of taking action and knowing things can go wrong.”

The reproaches directed at the Left Party and especially its representative, Stefan Liebich, had something surreal and absurd about them. Liebich is playing a key role in the return of German militarism. As co-author of the policy paper, “New Power—New Responsibility: Elements of German foreign and security policy for a changing world”, he contributed to the formulation of the federal government's aggressive foreign policy reversal.

Liebich has been vehemently fighting for a long time to have this course adopted by the Left Party. Last autumn, he published a collection of essays under the title of “Leftist Foreign Policy: Perspectives for Reform”, in which leading Left Party politicians spoke out in favour of military operations and a greater international role for Germany. In April, Left Party deputies under his leadership joined for the first time with other parties in the Bundestag to vote for an overseas deployment of German armed forces.

Liebich used the discussion to make it clear that his endeavours in the Left Party had been successful, and it now had no irreconcilable differences with the SPD or the Greens on matters of foreign policy. With regard to Ukraine, he wanted to “thick and boldly underline” that “Russia [had] clearly acted contrary to international law”. That was the position of the party's parliamentary faction, whose resolutions were there to be read in black and white. He said that the Left Party's unambiguous stance was sometimes “distorted by a few loudmouths”, but these did not constitute “the majority”.

Flaunting his customary cynicism, Liebich stressed that there were no fundamental differences within the Left Party when it came to the question of war. He had “no problem being in a faction that argues about military operations before deciding to support them”. The problem was that Russia had been suddenly excluded from the operation to destroy the Syrian chemical weapons. “Despite all the justified criticism against Russia”, this had been “a mistake”, because, when all is said and done, “German businesses make money in Russia and vice versa.”

In general, “*Bundeswehr* military missions (are) an option”, according to Liebich. The Left Party would not rule out “*Bundeswehr* operations abroad”, when they involve maintaining a “cease-fire policy” or participating in “disaster management”, for example. However, issues had to “be decided from case to case”. One such case, for example, had been the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. “Yes, there should have been an intervention in Rwanda”, he said. Only a few weeks ago, there had been a “very moving debate” on this issue in parliament.



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