

# German Left Party backs European army

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The Left Party has responded to the electoral victory of Donald Trump by moving further to the right on both domestic and foreign policy. The party is reacting to expected tensions with the United States by abandoning its anti-militarist façade and lending its full backing to German militarism and the creation of a European army.

A leading role is being played, as in the past, by Stefan Liebich. Already, on the night of the US election, the Left Party's representative on the foreign affairs committee of the German parliament (Bundestag) responded to Trump's victory with the demand that Germany and Europe "intervene in foreign policy more strongly, independently and with self-confidence." Now there had to be "an end to tip-toeing" around Washington.

Last Friday, Liebich commented on the US election in the "Friedman" talk show on N24, "I am in favour of a European army—in place of the national army. As long as we need armies, it makes no sense to have several armies. I don't think it is a bad goal to overcome the armies of the nation state."

The programme's second guest, the right-wing Christian Social Union (CSU) domestic political spokesman Stefan Mayer, also promoted a European army. Friedman declared with satisfaction at the end of the interviews that the CSU and the Left Party shared the same line.

Liebich, who as leader of the Left Party in the state of Berlin bears considerable responsibility for the right-wing policies of the SPD/Left Party state government, has advocated a militarist course for some time.

Prior to the last federal election, he cooperated in drafting the paper "New Power—new responsibility" published by the German Institute for Foreign Affairs (SWP), which laid out a blueprint for the revival of German militarism and great power politics carried out by the grand coalition.

When the German government decided to intervene militarily in 2014 in the Mediterranean to destroy Syrian chemical weapons, Liebich voted, with a group of five Left Party representatives, in favour. In recent weeks, Liebich and other leading Left Party representatives made clear that as part of a red-red-green federal coalition they would support further foreign interventions by the German army.

After Trump's election victory, the Left Party is now abandoning all pretences of opposition. With his support for a European army, Liebich is lining up with Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen, who commented on the US election result, "Europe must be better prepared to take care of itself."

Other Left Party politicians have demanded a more aggressive German foreign policy in the aftermath of Trump's election. Sahra Wagenknecht, the parliamentary group chair for the Left Party in the federal parliament (Bundestag), stated in an interview with the daily *TAZ*, "The centrepiece of German foreign policy must now be a more independent policy, freeing itself from subordination to the United States. Europe cannot afford to join in every pirouette Mr. Trump may undertake, but must focus on its own interests."

The finance policy spokesman for the Left Party in the Bundestag, Axel Troost, formulated the political conclusions the Left Party had drawn from Trump's election victory: an embrace of the Alternative for Germany's (AfD) right-wing populism.

Troost published a lengthy statement on the Left Party's web site titled, "What does Trump's election victory tell us?" in which he approvingly cited a statement by the deputy chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, Hans-Peter Friedrich. Trump's election, according to Friedrich, was "the expression of Americans' desire to rule their own country ... and this wish is evidently shared by people in Europe and

Germany.”

Like the AfD, Troost argues, “Many people feel under foreign rule—from the ECB, from EU technocrats, from TTIP and from the consequences of uncontrolled migration.” Like the Brexit vote, Trump’s election was “above all a right-wing populist response of a large section of the electorate, disappointed with the policies of the political and economic establishment.”

His conclusion for the Left Party: strengthen the state and control the “flow of refugees.” At the beginning of his article, he made the astonishing remark, “If the current political elites advocated more regulation, higher corporate taxes and increased market interventions, if they saw the state not always as a problem, but part as the solution, if they were sceptical towards free trade and freedom of movement, then there would be the possibility of a new shift in politics.”

Troost is basing himself on the will of the “concerned” populace, which is allegedly shifting to the right. “The increase in prejudice and fears must be seen in the context of growing divisions in the population over the effects of the influx of refugees and the undeniable shortcomings of the state apparatus.”

In reality, the Left Party fears that social dissatisfaction could take on a left-wing form and direct itself against the entire capitalist system. Troost’s colleague, parliamentary group co-chair Dietmar Bartsch, summed up this fear with by declaring that the Left Party is now called upon to “demonstrate that it has nothing in common with political adventurism.”

In recent weeks, the Left Party has advocated a coalition with the SPD and Greens, the parties of social welfare cuts, justifying this political union by referring to the need for policies favouring social and democratic rights. After the Trump election, the party is showing its true face: like the SPD and Greens, the Left Party is a nationalist party in favour of a strong state and militarism. It is offering its services to German imperialism in its conflict with the United States against a background of growing social tensions in Europe.



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