

# Germany: Left Party advances prospect of federal coalition with SPD and Greens

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The Left Party conference in Hanover, which closed on Sunday, agreed the party's manifesto for the Bundestag (federal parliament) elections in September. Behind a few hollow phrases about social justice and anti-militarism, the call for a government coalition with the parties of war and austerity—the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Green Party—stood at the centre of the gathering.

Although a so-called “red-red-green” alliance is currently not a realistic option—it is rejected by a large majority of voters, and the SPD and the Green Party are not calling for one—the Left Party is clinging firm to it. At all costs, the Left Party wants to prevent the working class and youth breaking with the establishment parties and developing an independent movement against the capitalist system.

The last keynote speaker at the party congress, Sahra Wagenknecht, who heads the party's parliamentary group and is its lead candidate for the election, did not rule out government participation: “We want to change the basic direction of politics in this country,” she told the delegates. The Left Party wanted to restore the “welfare state,” “reverse the damn Agenda laws” [the Agenda 2010 welfare and labour “reforms”] and “end German war adventurism.” If there were a partner for this, “then we want to govern, that is quite clear.”

The assertion that the SPD and Greens could be in a fight against social cuts and war is a blatant lie. Martin Schulz, the SPD's lead candidate, openly defends the hated Agenda [2010] policy and, together with SPD Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, is beating the drum for a militarization of Europe under German leadership. After Schulz's right-wing political orientation became ever more apparent, the SPD's gains in the opinion polls collapsed. Standing at 25 percent, it lies far behind the Christian Democratic Union/Christian

Social Union (CDU/CSU) at 39 percent.

The same is true for the Greens, who are constantly losing support. The party of the affluent upper middle class has only arrogance and contempt for the working class. Even in opposition, it has supported every German war effort. The Greens' lead candidates in the federal election, Cem Özdemir and Katrin Göring-Eckardt, are so far to the right politically that they are flirting with an alliance with the CDU/CSU.

The Left Party itself is stagnating in the polls, because everyone knows that as a government party it would pursue the same right-wing policies as the SPD and the Greens. This was proved, above all, in the 10 years of coalition government with the SPD in the Berlin Senate (state legislature). No other state government in Germany imposed such massive cuts in wages and social benefits, and at the same time underwrote billions for the failing Berlin Bankgesellschaft. In Greece, the Left Party's sister party Syriza has ruined the lives of millions of people with a brutal austerity programme.

The so-called “red lines” formulated by Wagenknecht are not worth the paper on which they are written. Other speakers left no doubt of this. Gregor Gysi, the party's long-time parliamentary leader and chairman of the European Left, said: “I know we tend to adopt 50 red lines, but I have confidence in our party leadership and know that they do not need them. Those who are not willing to compromise are also not capable of democracy, and those who make too many compromises lose their identity.”

Gysi and the Left Party are willing to go a long way to give up their missing “identity.” In France, Gysi defended the new president, Emmanuel Macron, on the day of the parliamentary elections, although Macron has extended the state of emergency and is preparing

massive attacks on the working class.

“If Le Pen had triumphed, the EU would be dead. Do we want to hope for a Macron again in a comparable situation in another country? And, how far has it come that I, as a left-winger, am forced to put my hopes in someone like Macron? However, unlike Le Pen, he upholds democratic structures, he leaves left-wing alternatives,” Gysi declared cynically.

In his speech, Dietmar Bartsch, the second lead candidate of the Left Party in the Bundestag election alongside Wagenknecht, said the whole party supported the course towards government: “Thousands of times we have all—without any differences between the parliamentary faction and party—said: ‘Of course we are ready to take over governmental responsibility.’ That is not in question at all. Of course, we are!”

Bartsch openly commented on the goals of the Left Party: “We urgently need a different policy in Europe’s central industrial power, dear comrades. Right up front, the election programme says: the world has turned upside down. ... If there is already such a president as Trump, it needs a strong, a peaceful Europe. But the EU is in the greatest crisis of its history: there is Brexit, the uncontrolled financial crisis, rampant youth unemployment in the southern countries—in Greece, Spain, more than 50 percent for over four years.”

To sum up Bartsch’s lamentations: Under conditions of the deepest crisis of the capitalist system since the end of the Second World War and growing political and social instability in Europe too, the Left Party is prepared to stabilize German and European capitalism internally and position outwardly against their rivals. To this end, like the federal government itself, with “humanitarian” phrases it tries to divert the widespread opposition to the right-wing politics of Trump into support for independent German and European great power politics.

Just a few days before the conference, the founder and long-time chair of the Left Party, Oskar Lafontaine, published a statement on his Facebook page praising former French President Charles de Gaulle, an authoritarian nationalist, as a model: “For years, the Left Party has been calling for an independent European foreign policy. It is a long time since Charles de Gaulle recognised that France herself must decide whether to participate in a war. That is why he did not integrate the French army into the military structures of

NATO, i.e., the USA.”

In face of the growing transatlantic tensions before the party conference, party chair Katja Kipping demanded that it was “finally time to recalibrate the relationship with the USA, and finally on an equal basis.” In order to make the world “safer,” it requires “an alternative” to NATO, “a collective security system.”



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