

German Left Party supports SPD foreign minister's great power politics

Johannes Stern
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The class gulf between the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) and the Left Party could hardly be greater. While the SGP is the only party calling for new elections and fighting for a socialist programme against war and militarism, the Left Party is vehemently defending the interests of German militarism and demanding the rapid formation of a right-wing bourgeois government.

Left Party parliamentary group leader Dietmar Bartsch commented on the recent Social Democrats' (SPD's) party congress on his Twitter account, stating, "Dear Martin Schulz, dear SPD, almost three months after the federal elections, the people justifiably expect that you do not enter open-ended discussions with Merkel, but rather impose just policies in the new federal government. Best of luck!"

Bartsch knows full well that the SPD will not enforce "just policies" as part of a new grand coalition, but will continue to press ahead with Germany's return to an aggressive foreign policy guided by great power interests. It is for this reason in particular that Bartsch supports the SPD. Responding to Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel's widely observed keynote foreign policy address at the Körber Foundation's Foreign Policy Forum on December 5 in Berlin, Bartsch stated on public broadcaster *ARD*:

"I expressly welcome Germany's intention to adopt another course in its US policy. It is high time that we stop being the United States' yes-man, and that Germany plays an assertive role in the world through the European framework. History shows, solely by the fact that the US even spied on the German chancellor, that there is evidently no equality among actors. So to be clear and precise: we support Sigmar Gabriel and would hope that this quickly becomes government policy."

Bartsch and the Left Party are thus making clear that they fully endorse the return of German militarism and the course pursued by the incoming federal government. Gabriel did not merely demand more "equality" with the US, but delivered the most provocative and aggressive speech by a German foreign minister since the end of World War II. The Social Democrat outlined a policy drawing directly on Germany's great power ambitions during the first half of the twentieth century.

"In the aftermath of two devastating world wars, German foreign policy was part of the Transatlantic alliance with the US and its Western allies, and was restricted for a long time to the German question and Ostpolitik," stated Gabriel at the beginning of his address. "But now we recognise that even with great economic prosperity in our country, there is no comfortable place for us on the sidelines of international politics any more. Neither for us as Germans nor for we Europeans."

The speech was clear. After seven decades of a relatively reluctant foreign policy, Germany, based on a militarised European Union under its leadership, must resort to an independent foreign and military policy. Gabriel not only identified the US, with or without Trump, as an international rival, but also Russia and China.

Gabriel unabashedly addressed the consequences of Germany's third grab for world power. "A values-oriented foreign policy, such as that which we Germans have preferred to pursue, will certainly no longer be adequate to assert ourselves in this world characterised by economic, political and military egoism," he told the high-ranking political and military officials. In plain language, this means that the ruling class must once again resort to criminal methods that are illegal under

international law to pursue its global economic and geostrategic interests.

In his appeal for a more strategic foreign policy, Gabriel based himself on the Berlin-based political scientist Herfried Münkler. In his latest book on the Thirty Years War, Münkler “blasts the political class in Germany” and complains of a “German fixation on the law as the form for overcoming political challenges, which almost amounts to a refusal to acknowledge reality.” Instead of “thoroughly analysing what is really going on,” their gaze always drifts off to the “horizon of moral norms and imperatives,” the foreign minister said. Münkler, who already called for Germany to once again become Europe’s “disciplinarian” in his 2015 essay “Power in the Centre,” has put “his finger on a sore spot,” added Gabriel.

One also has to “recall however, that the period in which Germany allowed itself to have strategic ideas was quite unpleasant for everyone else,” Gabriel provocatively added. He was referring to the monstrous crimes of German imperialism in two world wars—including the Holocaust and Hitler’s war of annihilation in the east, which claimed the lives of 27 million Soviet citizens.

The fact that Bartsch can praise and support such an openly militarist speech without confronting any criticism in his own ranks underscores the reactionary and pro-imperialist character of the Left Party and the pseudo-left tendencies that support it. As class tensions and the conflicts between the major powers grow, they are closing ranks with the ruling class and even abandoning the phrases about human rights that they used in the past to conceal their right-wing policies.

Seven parties are now represented in parliament, more than at any time since the founding of the German Federal Republic. But all have pledged to rehabilitate German militarism. This comes as no surprise. The *World Socialist Web Site* pointed out four years ago that Stefan Liebich, the Left Party’s representative on the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, was involved in the authoring of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs’ (SWP’s) study, “New power—new responsibility.” This served as something of a masterplan for the return of German militarism.

Since then, leading Left Party representatives like Bodo Ramelow (“We are not pacifists”) have endorsed

militarism, or like Sahra Wagenknecht (“Whoever abuses the right to hospitality has lost the right to hospitality”), have agitated in the style of the right-wing Alternative for Germany against refugees.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei and the International Committee of the Fourth International are the only political tendency fighting on a principled basis against war and militarism. This is understood by growing sections of workers and young people. The building of the SGP is the central task in the struggle against social attacks, militarism and war.



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