

Why is Germany's far-right AfD championing Israel?

Peter Schwarz
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The German parliament (Bundestag) held a debate April 26 on the 70th anniversary of the founding of Israel, and passed a lengthy resolution which described “the existence and legitimate security interests of the state of Israel as a central principle of German foreign and security policy.” The resolution also urged the German government to continue to “actively” advocate for this.

The motion was proposed by the government parties, the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the opposition Free Democrats (FDP). The Greens and far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) voted for the resolution.

The Left Party abstained. However, it did so only because its deputies were not invited in advance to participate in drafting the resolution. Instead, the Left Party presented its own draft which differed from the government-backed resolution only in nuances and was also backed by the Greens. The Left Party resolution also called on the German government to “continue to actively advocate for the existence and security interests of the state of Israel as a central principle of German foreign and security policy.”

In the debate, speakers from all parties stressed that Germany's obligation for Israel's security arose out of Germany's responsibility for the Shoah, the murder of 6 million Jews.

The Federal Republic “initially reluctantly, but later with ever more conviction” came to the conclusion “that the existence of the state of Israel and the securing of this country's existence has to be a state mission for Germany, the country on whose territory a previous government declared the extermination of the Jews to be a state mission,” said Martin Schulz (SPD).

Referring to the Shoah, AfD leader Alexander

Gauland declared, “Precisely because we are bound in this horrific way to the right of Israel to exist, it was and is correct to declare the securing of Israel's existence as part of our reason of state.” Green parliamentary group leader Katrin Göring-Eckardt demanded, “We must be the guarantors of the state of Israel.” And Left Party parliamentary group leader Dietmar Bartsch declared, “For the Left Party, it is clear: Israel became a necessity due to Auschwitz. Israel's right to exist is of course not up for discussion.”

In reality, the recognition of Israel's security interests has nothing to do with moral considerations arising from the Shoah. Instead, the parliamentary parties are exploiting the crisis of the Zionist state to strengthen German militarism. They view the alliance with Israel as a means to be involved in the new violent imperialist carve-up of the Middle East.

This was shown most clearly of all by Gauland's speech. The 77-year-old is the leader of a right-wing extremist party saturated in the fascistic traditions of the past. One of the members of the AfD's parliamentary group is Martin Hohmann, who was expelled from the CDU in 2004 after he linked the Jews to the term “race of perpetrators” in a speech on German Unity Day. One of the AfD's most prominent leaders is Björn Höcke, who last year demanded the overturning of Germany's culture of remembrance and described the Holocaust memorial as a “monument of shame.” The list goes on and on.

Gauland called during the last federal election campaign for a line to be drawn under Germany's Nazi past. “We can no longer be held responsible for these 12 years. They no longer affect our identity today. And we are saying so clearly,” he declared to the cheers of right-wing extremists. He explicitly praised the

Wehrmacht, which was implicated in the murders of millions of Jews in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, stating, “If the French are justifiably proud of their emperor and the British of Nelson and Churchill, then we have the right to be proud of the achievements of German soldiers in two world wars.”

But now, Gauland has not only joined the declarations of solidarity with Israel, but has sought to outdo the other parties. While the other parties committed to Guarantee Israel’s security, Gauland appealed “to fight and die alongside Israel in the event of a serious threat to its existence.”

A glance at the political map of the Middle East shows why Gauland wants to “die”—to send others to their deaths. The Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu is working deliberately to scuttle the Iranian nuclear deal and provoke a military confrontation with Iran. It is doing this in close collaboration with the Trump administration in the United States. Gauland sees the alliance with Israel as an opportunity for Germany to secure some of the booty when Washington blows apart the Middle East and the world is re-divided.

All of the other parliamentary parties agree with this. The German government is currently working to preserve the nuclear deal with Iran. But Chancellor Angela Merkel agreed to new negotiations during her recent trip to Washington that Tehran will hardly be able to accept. If a war breaks out with Iran, there can be no doubt on whose side the German government would stand. This is shown by the declarations of solidarity for Israel in parliament. Unlike the Iraq war in 2003, Germany would not oppose participating in such a conflict.

This was also underscored by the resolution, which the Bundestag passed almost unanimously. It is “a key concern for Germany that Iran ends its negative regional influence and in particular its support for organisations and structures that threaten Israel’s right of existence,” the resolution states.

The foreign policy spokesman for the FDP, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, noted in the debate that given “Iran’s push towards the Israeli border” and “in light of common economic and political interests ... a significant expansion of cooperation with Israel is the order of the hour.” CSU politician and former minister Christian Schmidt stressed the importance of military

cooperation with Israel.

None of this has anything to do with moral considerations arising from the Shoah or solidarity with Israel’s Jewish population. A war with Iran, a country of 80 million people, would rapidly escalate into a regional conflict and even a global conflagration, claiming the lives of millions, including in Israel.

It is revealing that nobody in the Bundestag criticised the provocative foreign policy of the Netanyahu government and its brutal crackdown on Palestinian protesters in Gaza. As we explained in a Perspective on Israel’s crisis on the 70th anniversary of its founding, Tel Aviv is responding to “the malignant contradictions underlying the state of Israel and the intensifying crisis gripping its society and government.”

Israel is one of the most unequal societies in the world and its state is rife with corruption. We wrote, “the Zionist myth that the carving out of a Jewish state in Palestine—by driving three quarters of a million Palestinians from their homes—would secure peace and security for the Jewish people after the horrors of the Holocaust is unravelling.”

Anyone seeking to draw the lessons from the crimes of the Nazis must fight for the international unity of the working class in the struggle against war, oppression and their source—the capitalist profit system. “In Israel, as in every other country, it is class, rather than race, religion or ethnicity, that is the fundamental driving force,” we stressed in the Perspective. “The way out of the bloodletting, repression, reaction and war that are the stock-in-trade of the Israeli state on its 70th anniversary lies in the development of a unified struggle of Arab and Jewish workers against capitalism, for the building of a socialist society and the eradication of the irrational national borders that divide the region.”



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