

What's behind the calls by the German Left Party and the Greens to support local Afghan forces?

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The reaction of Germany's main parties to the fall of the imperialist puppet regime in Kabul underlines once again that voters have no real political choice in the federal election due to take place on September 26—apart from the Socialist Equality Party (Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei).

The political and military debacle in Afghanistan has led to fierce recriminations in Germany. In particular, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (Social Democratic Party—SPD), who just a few days before the fall of Kabul dismissed the notion of such an event, has been singled out as a scapegoat.

In fact, all of the political parties represented in the German parliament have reacted in the same manner. From the Left Party to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), they all emphasize the need to assist so-called “local forces”—Afghans who have worked for the Bundeswehr (German Armed Forces)—to leave the country.

The two leading candidates of the Left Party, Janine Wissler and Dietmar Bartsch, devoted an entire press conference to this issue on August 16.

The Left Party had always opposed the German military mission in Afghanistan, Wissler said. “But now the main thing is to get as many people to safety as possible.” The German government had simply abandoned people, and was “responsible for endangering human lives in Afghanistan.”

Bartsch stressed that the Left Party had moved a motion in the Bundestag (parliament) on June 23 calling for “local Afghan forces who worked for the Bundeswehr and the German police to be admitted to Germany quickly and without red tape.” The party supported a similarly worded motion moved by the Greens, which was rejected by a government majority. Now it was “absolutely crucial to get as many out as possible.”

The Greens have adopted the same line. “We have to get people out now! It doesn't matter which German authority someone worked for and when,” the party declares in an appeal calling for demonstrations in dozens of cities. It is “first of all a matter for the international community to maintain control of the airport and secure its operation. To this end, the EU and the German government must use their foreign policy influence.”

Green Party MPs Omid Nouripour, Jamila Schäfer and Agnieszka Brugger demand in a supplementary paper, “The USA... must not withdraw its military contingent until evacuations by all

NATO partners have been completed... The German government must offer the US support in securing the airport and quickly present the Bundestag with a mandate for a rescue operation that meets requirements on the ground.”

The German government has long since complied with this demand. At the start of last week, it deployed 600 soldiers to supplement the US contingent of several thousand soldiers in Kabul. On Wednesday, the Bundestag will vote to ratify the “deployment of armed forces for military evacuation from Afghanistan.”

Approval on the part of the Greens is considered certain. It remains to be seen whether the Left Party parliamentary group, which has so far rejected combat missions by the Bundeswehr, will also agree. But even if it decides to abstain or vote “no” in order to save its pseudo-pacifist face, the stance taken by Wissler and Bartsch makes clear that the Left Party also supports this dangerous deployment, even though it threatens to reignite and escalate the war raging in the devastated country.

Even the far-right AfD, which usually conjures up the downfall of the West every time a single refugee is admitted to Germany, supports allowing local Afghan forces to enter the country. Germany is obliged to do so, AfD leader Alexander Gauland told Deutschlandfunk radio. “We have to make it very clear that we have a responsibility for those who are genuinely at risk because they worked for us,” he said.

The sudden concern for the lives of local forces is utterly hypocritical. The Bundestag parties have not shed a tear for the vast number of Afghan casualties of American bombing and drone attacks, or the “anti-terror” operations of the Bundeswehr and the Afghan army. Not a word is said about the victims of the brutal war lords and drug barons with whom the Western powers collaborated. Instead, the official parties used every means at their disposal to ensure that no Afghan refugee could set foot on German soil and apply for asylum—and in the rare cases where refugees succeeded, sent many of them back as quickly as possible.

The Left and the Greens are now making a huge fuss about the fact that the German government only recently stopped deportations to Afghanistan. But on every plane that repatriated refugees to Afghanistan there were refugees from states where the Left Party and the Greens are in government, or, as in Thuringia

and Baden-Württemberg, hold the post of state premier.

In reality, the Left and the Greens have no sympathy for local Afghan forces. They are worried only that Germany will not find local collaborators in future wars if it ditches them so ruthlessly in Afghanistan. This is what Bartsch meant at his press conference when he called the disaster in Afghanistan a “devastating foreign policy defeat for the German government.”

As we pointed out in an earlier article, the Afghan war was “from the beginning a dirty colonial war with everything that goes with it: massacres, torture, criminality and corruption.” It was never about human rights and democracy, but rather about gaining influence in an oil- and gas-rich region of extraordinary geo-strategic importance.

The Greens are among the main perpetrators of this criminal war. It was an SPD-Green coalition government, with Green Party leader Joschka Fischer as foreign minister, which decided to participate in the war in Afghanistan. Fischer and the Greens defend their decision to this day, and now attack the German and American governments from the right.

He still stands behind his decision, Fischer said recently at an election campaign appearance with the current Green Party leader, Annalena Baerbock. In a radio interview, Fischer declared that at stake at that time were Germany’s imperialist interests. It was about demonstrating solidarity with the Germans’ most important transatlantic partner, the Americans, he said. In addition, Afghanistan plays a major geopolitical role in the region. China is a direct neighbor and Russia is not far away.

Fischer claimed that no strategic mistakes had been made. The big mistake, he said, was the sudden withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan: “It was always clear to me that you can’t just pull out like that.”

The Left Party, for its part, has always voted against the Afghanistan mission in the Bundestag--when it was clear that its votes would make no difference and would help to suppress opposition to the war. The party did not lift a finger to mobilize opposition against it. After tens of millions protested against the Iraq war worldwide in 2003, it did everything it could to stifle the anti-war movement.

Today, it says nothing about the criminal nature of the war in Afghanistan, but rather speaks of a “historical fiasco” and regrets the war’s failure. “A greater failure following 20 years of major armed deployment by the Bundeswehr is hard to imagine,” the Left Party writes in one statement on the war.

The Left Party, like the Greens 23 years ago, is now preparing its open transition into the camp of militarism. Already eight years ago, Left Party MP Stefan Liebich participated in a working group, which, under the title “New Power, New Responsibility,” drafted a great power strategy for German imperialism in the 21st century. Since then, the Left Party has repeatedly signaled its willingness to support future war missions of the Bundeswehr if it is accepted by the SPD and the Greens as a coalition partner in a federal government.

This is the background to the Left Party’s current campaign on behalf of local Afghan forces. The Greens and the Left Party are demonstrating to the ruling class and the current governing parties their willingness to take responsibility for German militarism.

In leading foreign policy and military circles, lessons have long since been drawn from the Afghanistan debacle. The tenor of commentary is that Germany must pursue its imperialist interests more autonomously, more vigorously and more independently of the Americans, and accelerate the process of military build-up that has already assumed enormous proportions in recent years.

One thing is certain, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told *Der Spiegel* magazine, “The result of this process must not be that we no longer take responsibility internationally. The question is how we undertake it.” At times, he said, “NATO’s decisions are made in Washington, and NATO in Brussels hardly has a say.” Therefore, it was necessary to “strengthen the European pillar in NATO.”

In the *Financial Times*, Bastian Giegerich of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, who has worked as an adviser in the Ministry of Defence since 2012, called for Germany to develop a “strategic mindset” in security and defence policy. This “is necessary and urgent,” he wrote, “because the rise of resurgent revisionist and repressive powers—China and Russia—threatens the international order on which Germany’s post-war security and prosperity were founded.”

He added that Germany’s strategic goal “should be to contribute to the defence of the Western international order against assertive, expansionist and authoritarian regimes, and in a way commensurate with its political and economic stature.” Diplomacy and geo-economic statecraft would contribute to this defence, “But German military power will be an indispensable component of Europe’s self-defence.” Germany “cannot afford for its political class to ignore this reality.”

The Socialist Equality Party (Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei—SGP) is the only party to uncompromisingly oppose German militarism and, as the German section of the Fourth International, fight for the international unity of the working class against social inequality, oppression, war and their root cause: capitalism. Those who support these goals should support the SGP’s election campaign, vote for it on September 26 and join the party.



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