

German federal election 2025: Historic debacle for government parties, gains for the far-right AfD and Left Party

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Germany's 2025 federal election has deepened the political crisis in Germany and Europe. The result confronts workers and young people who want to fight against fascism, militarism and social cuts with fundamental political tasks.

The parties that have dominated German politics since the end of the Nazi era and have formed governments at the federal level are deeply despised. While the conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) under Friedrich Merz received the most votes with around 28.5 percent, it recorded the second worst election result in its history. The Social Democrats (SPD) plummeted to an all-time low with just 16 percent, while the Free Democrats (FDP) were kicked out of the Bundestag (German parliament) with less than five percent of the vote. Overall, the parties that formed the last government coalition—SPD, Greens and FDP—lost almost 20 percentage points and were severely punished.

The incumbent head of government, Olaf Scholz (SPD), left office as one of the most hated chancellors in the history of the Federal Republic. According to a survey by Infratest dimap on election day, 72 percent of the population were “dissatisfied with Olaf Scholz's political work.” Only 15 percent believed that the SPD was “most likely” to “solve the most important tasks in Germany.” In the end, only 17 percent were “satisfied with the coalition government.”

The election was a massive vote of no confidence in a government whose policies essentially consisted of escalating the NATO war offensive against Russia, supporting genocide in Gaza, massively arming the Bundeswehr (German Armed Forces) and making the attacks on the working class necessarily associated with this program. The population is suffering from exploding living costs, falling wages and an unprecedented social crisis. But while millions are bitterly opposed to the established parties and are politically mobilised—voter turnout was 84 percent, the highest level since reunification—this anger found only a highly distorted political expression.

The biggest beneficiary of the election was the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which almost doubled its share of the vote and achieved its best result to date with 20.5 percent. The party dominated in eastern Germany in particular, where the restoration of capitalism in the former East Germany (GDR) destroyed the economic and social foundations for broad sections

of the population. With the exception of Berlin, it won all East German federal states—in some cases with election results of over 40 percent and with a large lead over all other parties.

The AfD also achieved record results among workers (up 17 percent compared to 2021) and among voters “with a poor economic situation” (up 19 percent), achieving a 38 percent share of the vote in each group. Only slightly more than half voted for the party out of “conviction.” Some 39 percent of AfD voters stated on election day that they had made their decision “out of disappointment with other parties.” Among those who voted for the AfD for the first time, 59 percent did so out of “disappointment” and only 38 percent out of “conviction.”

The Left Party, which secured 8.7 percent of the vote, was able to benefit from the growing social and political opposition to right-wing government policies, particularly among young voters. Among voters under 25, it achieved the best result of all parties with 25 percent, putting it ahead of the AfD (21 percent), the CDU/CSU (13 percent), the SPD (12 percent) and the Greens (11 percent). The Left Party also won the capital Berlin with 19.9 percent, ahead of the CDU (18.3 percent) and the Greens (16.8 percent).

This does not change the toothless and bourgeois character of this party. Wherever the Left Party governs at state level with the SPD and the Greens (currently in Bremen and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania), it continues to implement policies of social austerity, the build-up of a police state, and attacks on refugees and migrants. Through its opposition role in the federal parliament, it aims to ensure that the resistance against fascism and war and the massive attacks on democratic and social rights does not get out of control and assume independent forms.

As there are currently not “any coalitions with the Left Party” on the horizon, the party is “going into opposition—in the Bundestag and on the streets,” announced lead candidate and party chairman Jan van Aken in a debate of major party leaders broadcast on German public television Sunday evening. He had “worked for Greenpeace for years” and learned that “you don't necessarily have to co-govern,” but can also “win quite a lot in the extra-parliamentary opposition.”

Van Aken's announcement that he would “make it difficult to carry out his (Merz's) attacks on the welfare state” was met with a cynical smile from Merz. The ruling class knows that it has

nothing to fear from the party whose predecessor organisation, the Stalinist Socialist Unity Party/Party of Democratic Socialism (SED/PDS), reintroduced capitalism in East Germany 35 years ago.

As the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) narrowly failed to enter the Bundestag with 4.97 percent and the FDP fell well short with 4.3 percent, the CDU/CSU and SPD have a majority of parliamentary seats, although together they only received 45 percent of the vote. Both have signalled their willingness to form a joint government. The Greens would also be prepared to cooperate with the CDU/CSU and SPD.

The entire televised debate, the “Berlin Roundtable,” highlighted the rightward turn of the political establishment and emphasised what lies ahead for the working class if the political initiative remains in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

The media, which already courted the fascists during the election campaign, have long been treating the AfD as a potential governing party. When asked what “concessions” she would be prepared to make as a governing party, AfD leader and candidate for chancellor Alice Weidel explained: “I don’t think we have to make any major concessions. I’ll tell you why: the CDU has almost completely copied our programme and adopted all of our positions. You can do that, but they won’t be able to implement it with left-wing parties.”

In fact, the outgoing governing parties have also largely adopted the fascists’ programme on refugee policy and are ready to put it into practice with the CDU/CSU. Both Scholz and the Green candidate for chancellor Robert Habeck reaffirmed their willingness to work with Merz. At the height of the election campaign, the latter organised a parliamentary majority with the fascists in order to further tighten asylum policy, demonstrating thereby that he is also prepared to govern with the AfD if necessary.

The fact that he vehemently rules this out—at least for the moment—is primarily due to foreign policy issues. Bavarian Minister President and CSU Chairman Markus Söder, who is further to the right than Merz, accused the AfD of advocating “a Eurasian community of interests” that would “turn our country into a vassal state of Moscow.”

Merz himself, as well as Scholz and Habeck, criticised the AfD during the “Berlin Roundtable” from the same standpoint and made it clear what the programme of the next government will be: the massive rearmament of Germany and Europe in order to continue the Ukraine war against Russia and to be able to stand up to the US under Trump.

When asked about the direct talks between the US and Russia on Ukraine, Merz explained: “For me, the absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that we can achieve real independence from the US step by step.” The NATO summit at the end of June will show whether we are “still talking about NATO in its current form or whether we need to establish an independent European defence capability much more quickly.”

Rearmament papers published shortly before the election show what this means. A study by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy titled “Defending Europe Without the US: First Estimates of What is Needed” explained that the Europeans would

have to set up around 50 additional brigades and purchase 1,400 new battle tanks and 2,000 infantry fighting vehicles, among other things. In addition, the Bundeswehr alone would have to be capable of mobilising 100,000 combat troops for NATO in a potential confrontation with Russia.

A “master plan to strengthen the Bundeswehr and Germany’s defence” presented by the CSU calls for the “growth” of the Bundeswehr “to 500,000 operational soldiers and reservists” and the “reintroduction of compulsory military service.”

This is the programme for the developing third world war, with all its consequences. All remaining social and democratic rights will fall victim to this kind of rearmament, not to mention the countless human victims on the battlefields. And, as in the past, the implementation of this madness will require the establishment of a brutal dictatorship.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in its pre-election perspective, the federal election marks a historic turning point. It underscores that the struggle against fascism, militarism and social inequality can only be led by an independent movement of workers on a socialist basis. The ruling class is preparing for a brutal confrontation with the working class, which will be forced into mass struggles. The decisive question is whether the workers will respond to this with a conscious political programme.

The building of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and the International Committee of the Fourth International as the new revolutionary leadership of the working class is now crucial. We call on all our voters and supporters to make a conscious decision and become members.

In Berlin, the SGP received 425 votes for its state list, roughly on a par with the last election. Notable results were achieved by SGP deputy chairman Dietmar Gaisenkersting as a direct candidate in Duisburg North with 560 votes and a 0.5 percent share of the vote, and SGP national committee member Martin Mauer in the Leipzig I constituency with 310 votes (0.2 percent).



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