

# Germany's 2025 federal election: How the struggle against fascism and war must be waged

**Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei****25 February 2025**

Germany's federal election, held this past Sunday, reflects the deep political and social crisis present in every major capitalist country. The situation in Germany will lead to explosive class conflicts, with global consequences.

The election result is an expression of the enormous anger at the coalition government, which is comprised of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Green Party and Free Democrats (FDP). The government's policy of war and austerity has doubled defense spending, slashed social programs, education and health, and destroyed the living standards of broad sections of society through rising prices and soaring rent.

Never before in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany has an incumbent government lost as many votes. Overall, the coalition parties lost 19.5 percentage points. The FDP failed even to make it into the Bundestag (Federal Parliament). The SPD, with 16 percent, achieved its worst result since 1887, when the party was suppressed and persecuted under Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Laws.

The Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) will likely supply the future federal chancellor, Friedrich Merz. Nevertheless, it had its second worst result in history, with 28.5 percent. A new edition of the "grand coalition" of the CDU/CSU and the SPD, which is currently being prepared, would be the smallest coalition in German history. It would have the backing of only 45 percent of voters. It would have a narrow majority of deputies in parliament only because 14 percent of the electorate voted for parties that failed to reach the 5 percent hurdle for parliamentary representation.

A "grand coalition" will intensify the policy of mass layoffs, social cuts and war that led to the premature end of the SPD/Green/FDP coalition. It will increasingly rely on the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which almost doubled its result to 20.8 percent of the vote. Eighty years after the collapse of the Third Reich, this makes a fascist party the second strongest force in the Bundestag for the first time.

The crucial question now is how the fight against fascism and war must be waged.

During the election campaign, the SPD, Greens and CDU did everything they could to channel outrage over their war and austerity policies behind attacks on the weakest members of society. They organized a vile smear campaign against refugees. CDU chancellor candidate Friedrich Merz even made a pact with the AfD and passed a motion in parliament against migrants together with the fascists.

The result was the normalization and strengthening of the AfD. At the same time, the AfD was able to present itself as an opponent of the establishment because the trade unions systematically suppressed any fight against job and social cuts, and supported the government's war policy. At the beginning of the election campaign, for example, the IG Metall union agreed without a fight to the destruction of 35,000 jobs at

Volkswagen and a reduction in wages of up to 20 percent.

Under these conditions, the anger over the social catastrophe turned into despair and formed a breeding ground for the AfD. This was particularly true in eastern Germany, where the SPD, CDU and Left Party have produced a social catastrophe since the restoration of capitalism. There, the AfD became by far the strongest force with 36.2 percent of the vote. Among workers, the party received 38 percent nationwide, more than twice as much as any other party.

However, agitation against refugees and social demagogery cannot hide the fact forever that the AfD represents the interests of the most greedy sections of finance capital. Fascist parties are also being brought to power in numerous other countries in order to smash the democratic and social rights of the working class, and all obstacles to the further enrichment of the rich – from Viktor Orbán in Hungary to Giorgia Meloni in Italy, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, Javier Milei in Argentina and Donald Trump in the United States.

During the election campaign, the AfD received massive support from Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, who is organizing an unprecedented social slash-and-burn campaign on behalf of US President Donald Trump.

It is only a matter of time before the AfD is brought into government in Germany too. From the standpoint of the ruling class, its trivialization of the Nazis and hatred of migrants do not stand in the way of this. The only obstacles at present are foreign policy differences on the European Union and Ukraine.

But while the AfD is being normalized and embraced by the established parties, resistance to the fascists is growing. This was particularly evident in the final weeks of the election campaign. After Merz tore down the so-called firewall to the AfD at the beginning of February by voting with the fascists in parliament, hundreds of thousands of predominantly young people took to the streets and protested against the AfD and the political establishment's shift to the right.

Politically, this has benefited a party that has contributed significantly to social cuts and the deportation of refugees and is among those most surprised by the sudden influx of young members and voters it is experiencing: the Left Party (Die Linke).

While the Left Party was polling only 3 percent in January, it achieved 8.8 percent in the election and entered the Bundestag as a parliamentary fraction. Among young voters, it even became the strongest party with 25 percent, and it also came first in the state of Berlin, with 19.9 percent.

There is a huge discrepancy between the hopes that young people associate with the Left Party and what it actually is. The former want to oppose the fascists, they reject the refugee agitation, and they want reasonable incomes and affordable rents. As the Left Party was the only party in the Bundestag to focus its election campaign on social issues –

taxes on the rich, a rise in the minimum wage, and rent controls – it was well received.

But the Left Party has no program to counter the shift to the right by those in power. It is spreading the illusion that the main parties of the ruling class can be persuaded to change course through a combination of parliamentary opposition and pressure from the streets.

Jan van Aken, leader of the Left Party, declared on the evening of the election that his party was “willing to talk” in order to work together with the new government on legislative projects, for example. “You don’t necessarily have to co-govern, you can also change quite a lot and win quite a lot from the extra-parliamentary opposition,” he explained, referring to his experience with Greenpeace.

The Left Party claims it is possible to reform capitalism, not abolish it. But that is a dangerous illusion. The ruling elites’ turn to the right is not simply the product of mistaken policies that can be corrected by a bit of pressure. The ruling class everywhere is resorting to dictatorship and war because it is confronted with the deep crisis of its social system.

As in the 20th century, capitalism is again leading to fascism and war. This can be seen most clearly in the US.

The policy of the next government will be completely dominated by the international crisis of capitalism. The German ruling class is reacting to the break-up of NATO and Trump’s trade war measures by massively rearming and preparing to wage war on its own account as the “leading power” of Europe. This was already clear on election night.

Merz spoke out in favor of supplying Ukraine with even more weapons. He also said that the entire NATO border with Russia should be taken into consideration. On Monday, Merz spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the phone and invited him to Germany despite an international arrest warrant. In doing so, he indicated that, as chancellor, he will continue to support the genocide against the Palestinians.

According to media reports, the CDU/CSU and SPD are negotiating to pass a new special fund to provide €200 billion to the German armed forces before the old Bundestag is dissolved. Green Party leader Habeck explained that an “independent European defence capability” must now be driven forward much more quickly. “We now really need to get our act together in the area of security, military defence, but also counter-espionage, cybersecurity and also in the economic sector, and we will need huge amounts of money,” he said.

These “huge amounts” are to be squeezed out of the workers. Massive job and wage cuts in the public sector, cuts to pensions, education and healthcare have long been planned. Added to this is a job massacre in industry, by means of which the large corporations are preparing for trade war. This is not compatible with democracy but requires the establishment of a dictatorship.

The Left Party has done nothing to oppose this. On the contrary, wherever it has taken on government responsibility, it has not pushed through any social reforms, but rather the worst attacks on workers’ rights. In Berlin, it cut wages, education and healthcare like no other state government. Its only minister president to date, Bodo Ramelow, has deported more refugees in Thuringia than any other federal state per head of population.

The real position of the Left Party is particularly clear on the issue of war. It has largely adopted the line of the federal government. At its last party conference, it officially abandoned its previous pacifist phrases, welcomed arms deliveries to Ukraine and invoked Israel’s “right to self-defense.”

It is impossible to resolve a single problem or prevent a catastrophic world war without overthrowing capitalism. But the Left Party rejects this. Its entire policy is geared towards paralyzing the growing mobilization against war, fascism and social inequality through fruitless appeals to those in power and subordinating workers to the government. This is the surest recipe for further strengthening the fascists.

For the same reason, the Left Party works closely with the bureaucratic apparatuses of the trade unions, which sabotage any serious industrial action and organize job and social cuts as “social partners” of corporations and governments.

The role of the Left Party in Germany is repeated in different forms internationally. Greek workers have had the same experience with Syriza, the sister party of the Left Party, and Spanish workers have the experience of Podemos. Faced with the alternative of following the will of their voters or the dictates of the international banks, they opt for the latter—with catastrophic social consequences.

In the US, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) does everything it can to prop up the Democratic Party, whose own policies of war and austerity created the conditions for Trump’s return. *Jacobin* magazine, which is affiliated with the DSA, responded to the German election with an article extolling the Left Party, under the headline, “After Germany’s Election, the Left Can Hope Again.”

Of concern for the DSA is not only the situation in Germany but also the United States. It aims to breathe new life into figures like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and to block the independent mobilization of the working class.

The fight against fascism, in Germany and throughout the world, requires the development of working class struggle. The fight against layoffs and wage cuts must be connected to a political mobilization against war and fascism. Only in this way can workers defend democratic rights and oppose the capitalist oligarchy.

This requires overcoming the paralyzing influence of the trade union apparatus and organizations of the pseudo-left, including the Left Party in Germany. It is necessary to build an independent movement of workers and youth directed against the root cause of barbarism: capitalism. They must oppose the growth of nationalism and war with the international unity of the workers.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, is fighting for this program. In our election manifesto for the federal election, we wrote:

The international working class is a formidable social force, comprising 3.5 billion people—55 percent more than in 1991. It creates all social wealth while bearing the entire burden of war and crisis. Only if the working class intervenes independently in political life and transforms society on a revolutionary basis—expropriating the big banks and corporations and placing them under democratic control—can catastrophe be averted.

The struggle for this socialist program is now of decisive significance. We call on all readers in Germany to register as active supporters of the SGP, and for workers and young people throughout the world to join our sister parties and build the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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