

Germany's new interior minister embarks on course of the far-right AfD

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18 May 2025

?While the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) forms the largest opposition faction in the Bundestag, and its members do not sit on the government benches, politically they have long set the tone in the German parliament.

This was demonstrated by new the Interior Minister, Alexander Dobrindt (Christian Social Union, CSU), when he presented his programme for the next four years last Friday. In his 12-minute speech, which was interrupted by numerous heckles, he focused on two main points: sealing Germany's borders against refugees and migrants and establishing a police state.

Dobrindt, regarded as the "man for the tough jobs" since his time as CSU secretary-general, has clearly studied the approach of US President Donald Trump closely.

Trump also treats refugees with extreme brutality and uses this as leverage to break the law, abolish fundamental democratic rights and grant the security forces dictatorial powers. The attack on refugees serves as a spearhead for the suppression of all social and political opposition and the establishment of an authoritarian regime.

Dobrindt began with a eulogy to the police, who, in his narrow-minded worldview, embody the epitome of security and what he calls "democracy." "The police, our security agencies," he said, "need the best possible equipment and appropriate powers. It is a matter of maximum support and backing from politicians, not mistrust."

The measures he promised would "significantly expand the toolbox of the police and intelligence services" but have repeatedly failed in the past due to public resistance and court rulings.

For example, the storage of IP addresses is to be permitted again. Dobrindt claimed that this was "often the only investigative approach" to uncovering crimes. In 2017, the European Court of Justice ruled that such data retention, which had been decided by Angela Merkel's government, was contrary to European law.

In addition to the Federal Office of Criminal Investigation and the Federal Intelligence Service, the Federal Police will also be allowed to use so-called source telecommunications surveillance in future. This means that they will be able to secretly install spyware (Trojans) on mobile phones and

computers to read messages sent via WhatsApp, Telegram and other services before or after they are encrypted or decrypted.

Dobrindt wants to expand the powers of the intelligence services in general and "ensure efficient and effective data exchange between the services." To evaluate large amounts of data more efficiently, the authorities are to be enabled to use artificial intelligence.

Dobrindt also wants to ensure that violence and abuse of power by the police, which are already difficult to prosecute, become even more difficult to prove. He criticised that the police and security authorities had been "too often placed under general suspicion" in the past. The new federal government would put an end to mandatory identification requirements, police check confirmations and complaint points. This opens the door to arbitrary police actions.

According to Dobrindt, unconditional trust in "our security authorities" served to "preserve and strengthen our democracy." To this end, he wanted to resolutely oppose anyone, "no matter where they come from," who criticises or questions the existing order.

First and foremost, he cited the fight against "antisemitism" and "hatred of Israel." This refers to anyone who rejects the genocide of the Palestinians, which is unconditionally supported by the new government as well as its predecessor. Second was the fight against "Islamism, left-wing extremism and right-wing extremism. Whether someone wants to proclaim a kingdom, a caliphate, fascism or communism in Germany, we will take decisive action against this," Dobrindt said.

What to make of this decisive action against right-wing extremism is shown by the fact that Dobrindt has adopted the law-and-order and anti-refugee policies of the far-right AfD. He claimed in all seriousness that the AfD had doubled its vote because the previous government had refused to take the necessary measures to curb migration. According to this logic, right-wing extremism is combated by implementing its programme.

In any case, the previous government had already done this, which Dobrindt acknowledged by warmly thanking his predecessor Nancy Faeser (Social Democratic Party, SPD). But Dobrindt is going even further than Faeser. On the day he took office, he instructed the federal police to tighten controls at

Germany's external borders and to turn away asylum seekers.

The tightened border controls violate European law, which also stipulates that asylum seekers must be allowed into the country so that the state responsible for their asylum application can be determined. The German government is therefore invoking Article 72 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which allows European rules to be suspended in exceptional cases for the "maintenance of public order and the protection of internal security."

The move is reminiscent of Trump, who declared the influx of refugees from Mexico was a "foreign invasion" to be able to deploy the military against them. Refugees do not threaten "public order" or "internal security." The number of asylum applications in Germany is steadily declining; in April, there were 9,100, compared to 17,500 in the same month last year. In 2016, a record average of 60,000 people applied for asylum each month.

Tighter border controls are also causing long traffic jams at the borders, which has serious consequences for European supply chains, on which entire industries depend, and for the more than 400,000 commuters who regularly cross borders on their way to work.

Switzerland, Austria and Poland have complained about the measures. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in particular fears that turning away refugees at the German-Polish border will strengthen the right-wing nationalist PiS party in the upcoming presidential election. On Monday, Polish border guards in Guben refused to take back two Afghan refugees who had been picked up at the border, in what is seen as a test case for Dobrindt's policy.

But the new German government considers fuelling xenophobia and nationalism more important than the economic and political consequences of its isolationist policy. CSU party leader Markus Söder had already called for a "fundamental change in migration policy" last summer. During the election campaign, Dobrindt advocated a "tough line" on migration policy.

He continued this line in his speech to the Bundestag. "Citizens expect a change in policy from us," he claimed. This change had now begun at Germany's borders. Illegal migration threatened "the political stability of Germany and Europe," he said, adding that it threatened "the political stability of our country."

The measures taken so far were only the first step, Dobrindt continued: "We will reintroduce restrictions into the Residence Act. We will abolish fast-track naturalisation. We will suspend family reunification for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. We will end voluntary admission programmes if possible. We will expand the list of safe countries of origin. We will implement and tighten the Common European Asylum System in Europe. We will deport people to Afghanistan and Syria. And we will introduce a permanent system of pre-deportation arrest for dangerous individuals and serious criminals who are

required to leave the country, so that there are only two options left: detention or repatriation."

"This is our agenda for humanity and order, for control and limitation, and for less division and more social peace in our country," the interior minister added scornfully.

The SPD supports all of this. With her migration policy, former Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (SPD) paved the way for Dobrindt, just as he is now paving the way for the AfD. Lars Klingbeil, as party chairman, vice-chancellor and finance minister, the new strong man of the SPD, responded to the question of the legality of Dobrindt's measures by saying, "We are not violating European law, we are not going it alone as a nation," referencing Chancellor Friedrich Merz (CDU).

There was only quiet criticism from the SPD concerning the border controls because it believes they jeopardise European unity and thus German dominance in Europe. The SPD has no legal or humanitarian reservations.

The AfD's reaction to Dobrindt's speech confirmed the saying "give them an inch and they'll take a mile." It demanded more. Its domestic policy spokesman, Gottfried Curio, accused Dobrindt of wanting not to "end illegal migration, but only to push it back" and demanded more use of custody for those pending deportation, the revocation of residence permits for hundreds of thousands of Syrians with subsidiary protection and other additional measures.

The attack on refugees and migrants, the weakest and most disenfranchised members of society, is the prelude to attacks on the entire working population. The enormous expenditures for war and rearmament, the associated wage and social cuts, and the mass layoffs in the automotive, supplier and other industries will trigger fierce resistance.

The incitement of hatred against migrants and the stepping up of the repressive powers of the state apparatus are aimed at preventing this. The working class must not allow itself to be divided. The defence of refugees and migrants, the fight against war and militarism, and the defence of jobs, incomes and social benefits are inseparably linked.

This requires the building of a party that unites workers of all nationalities and countries and fights for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society—the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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