

# Merz government paves the way for the far-right Alternative for Germany

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The claim by the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Left Party, the trade unions and the media that an alliance of all so-called “democrats” would stop the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is being refuted every day.

Last week, the Infratest Dimap polling institute published the latest projections for the state election in Saxony-Anhalt next year. According to this, the AfD has almost doubled its share of the vote compared to the 2021 state election, reaching nearly 40 percent. It would then be by far the strongest party in Saxony-Anhalt.

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the SPD, who govern both federally and in Saxony-Anhalt, have slumped badly in the polls. The CDU has lost ten points and fallen to 27 percent. The SPD, at 7 percent, is close to missing the five-percent threshold for parliamentary representation and faces political irrelevance.

The AfD is also expected to make gains in the municipal election held Sunday in North Rhine-Westphalia, the most populous federal state, which contains the former centre of heavy industry in the Ruhr region. This is the first ballot since the federal elections in February and is being seen as a test of the political mood. In a recent nationwide poll, the AfD stood at 25 percent, one point ahead of the CDU, making it the strongest party.

These are polls, of course, which not only test moods but also shape them. Nevertheless, it is clear that the right-wing course of the Merz government, which has adopted the AfD’s policies in key areas, is strengthening the fascists.

The claim by Interior Minister Dobrindt (Christian Social Union, CSU) that his policies make the AfD superfluous, because they do not stop at verbal racist agitation but carry it into practice—by further restricting asylum rights, introducing border controls, strengthening the police and curtailing democratic rights—is right-wing demagoguery. In reality, the government’s implementation of these measures strengthens the far-right party.

The political mechanism behind the growth of the AfD is obvious. The CDU and its Bavarian sister party (CSU) and the SPD, the main parties of German imperialism that have

alternated in the chancellery for decades, are responding to the deepening global capitalist crisis and the election of Donald Trump with a “new era.” They are pouring over a trillion euros into rearmament and war, financed by dismantling the welfare state. All the other parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament) support them in this.

This strengthens the AfD in two ways. On the one hand, the AfD exploits the anger and indignation against the establishment parties demagogically and channels this in a reactionary, xenophobic direction. On the other hand, the AfD articulates the fascist programme required to enforce a pro-war policy and social cuts against growing resistance—and thereby wins increasing support among the ruling elites.

The Left Party and the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), which emerged from it, play an especially foul role. They reject a principled struggle against capitalism, support the trade unions, which block every fight against mass layoffs, welfare cuts and war, and work closely with the governing parties. In several state governments they even hold ministerial posts and themselves implement anti-working class policies. In this way they sabotage any progressive offensive against the government and the AfD.

Thus, the rot in the political system deepens further, from which right-wing and fascist forces grow and are deliberately fostered. While the government officially clings to its supposed “firewall” against the AfD, high-ranking representatives of the governing parties—Bundestag President Julia Klöckner, CDU/CSU parliamentary group leader Jens Spahn, CDU General Secretary Carsten Linnemann and others—are already reaching out to it.

## Julia Klöckner and her far-right network

The vintner’s daughter and former “German Wine Queen” Julia Klöckner from Bad Kreuznach is a member of the

CDU executive committee and has been President of the Bundestag since spring. In terms of protocol, she thus holds the second highest office in the republic, behind Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD).

Klößner maintains close contacts with politicians and businessmen who are working for cooperation between the AfD and the CDU/CSU. Among them is billionaire and software entrepreneur Frank Gotthardt.

In mid-August, Klößner and Gotthardt both spoke at a CDU Koblenz summer party, held in Gotthardt's company premises. In her greeting, Klößner praised Gotthardt's friendly and energetic support for the CDU.

Gotthardt is the owner of *Nius*, a far-right media platform he established three years ago to promote close cooperation between the CDU and AfD. *Nius* is headed editorially by former *Bild* editor-in-chief Julian Reichelt, known as a right-wing agitator.

Gotthardt's corporate empire also includes CompuGroup Medical (CGM), a software company focused on doctors' surgeries and pharmacies. There are close links between Gotthardt, Reichelt and CDU parliamentary group leader Jens Spahn, who was Federal Health Minister from 2018 to 2021, as the investigative platform *Correctiv* has revealed. CGM's turnover rose sharply during Spahn's term in office.

A month before Klößner delivered her laudatory speech for Gotthardt at the CDU summer party, Reichelt had conducted a vicious smear campaign on *Nius* against law professor Frauke Brosius-Gersdorf, nominated by the SPD as a Supreme Court judge.

Reichelt demanded categorically that Brosius-Gersdorf's appointment must "be prevented!" According to *Der Spiegel*, he relied on the AfD-friendly platform *Apollo News*, which accused her of supporting abortion and mandatory vaccination. The allegations later proved to be fabricated. Nevertheless, within ten days *Nius* published more than twenty defamatory articles about Brosius-Gersdorf, who eventually withdrew her candidacy.

When Klößner was criticised for her closeness to Gotthardt, she shot back that she would not let anyone tell her with whom, when or where she should speak. Moreover, she said, the journalistic methods of *Nius* did not differ significantly from those of the Green Party-aligned *taz*.

A few days later, *Die Zeit* and other media reported on even closer ties between Klößner and Gotthardt. In early summer 2023, the *Nius* owner had agreed with the then CDU treasurer to found a joint company called "CDU App GmbH."

The project, named "China Club" after the exclusive club in Berlin's Adlon hotel where the initial talks took place, was intended to improve the CDU's "campaigning capacity, member participation, party management and

communication." It would have given the far-right *Nius* boss extensive access to party information and influence over members. After internal criticism, the project was shelved, at least temporarily.

Another right-wing network within the CDU revolves around its general secretary Carsten Linnemann, who has been quoted in media reports saying: "The Nazi-bashing against the AfD and the firewall talk must stop."

When CDU leader Merz—then not yet chancellor—pushed through his five-point plan on migration policy in parliament at the end of January with AfD votes, it was Linnemann, Klößner, Spahn and others pulling the strings.

At that time, hundreds of thousands took to the streets to protest against this right-wing provocation. Yet at the rallies, SPD, Left Party and trade union officials insisted that the fight against the right required a "coalition of all democrats." Today, eight months later, it is clear how false this orientation was. The current coalition government, supported by the Left Party, is not stopping the AfD but implementing its policies and strengthening it.

We therefore stress: one must face political reality. There is no "lesser evil" to be found among the Bundestag parties. They all support rearmament, financed by welfare cuts, and are themselves ready to collaborate with the extreme right.

The only way to stop the rise of the AfD and the rightward turn of the state apparatus is to build an international socialist movement in the working class and youth, which unites the fight against war, militarism, social cuts and dictatorship with the struggle against capitalism and for a socialist society. This requires building the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party), which advances this perspective.



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