

# How the governing Christian Democrats pave the way for the far-right Alternative for Germany

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Germany's governing Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) parties are preparing to bring the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) into the government. That is the significance of Chancellor Friedrich Merz's anti-immigrant rhetoric, which has dominated the media for the past 10 days.

During an appearance in Brandenburg on October 14, the chancellor boasted about his government's successes in keeping migrants out. Between August 2024 and August 2025, the number of new asylum applications had fallen by 60 percent, he said. Merz added, "But of course we still have this problem in our cityscapes, which is why the federal minister of the Interior is now working to enable and carry out repatriations on a very large scale."

Describing people of non-German origin as a problem in the cityscape that needs to be solved through large-scale repatriation is pure racism and grist to the mill for the AfD. Anyone who can count to three politically knows that such racist slogans strengthen the AfD. And that is intentional.

When Merz was criticized for his racist remarks, he doubled down. "Ask your children, ask your daughters, ask your friends and acquaintances: everyone will confirm that this is a problem—at least after dark," he said at a press conference.

Migrants who disrupt the cityscape and threaten daughters from good families after dark—there is no clearer way to cater to the backward prejudices and vague fears of the AfD's clientele. Numerous other leading members of the CDU/CSU also support and have defended Merz's racist remarks.

This is not the first time Merz has incited hatred against migrants. He is notorious for calling migrant children "little pashas" and claiming that asylum seekers are taking the places of locals at the dentist. Shortly before this year's federal election, Merz passed two anti-migrant motions in the Bundestag together with the AfD. He obviously wanted to test the reaction to cooperation with the far right.

But coming from the mouth of the incumbent chancellor, the incitement against migrants carries a completely different weight. Merz is expressing it in a situation where the governing coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD) is stumbling from one crisis to the next and has lost its majority in the polls. Pressure is growing within his own party to tear down the so-called "firewall" against the AfD and to cooperate openly with it at the state and federal levels.

At the local level, such cooperation has long been common practice. The Berlin Social Science Center (WZB) examined more than 11,000 meetings of local representative bodies at the district level from mid-2019 to mid-2024. The study, titled "Is the firewall holding? A pan-German analysis," concludes that almost one in five motions tabled by the AfD received the approval of the CDU or other established parties.

The established parties are also already cooperating with the far right at the state level. In Saxony, where the CDU and SPD form a minority government, the AfD is involved in all legislative procedures at an early stage through a consultation mechanism. In Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, where state elections are due next year and the AfD is well ahead in the polls, leading CDU politicians are pushing for cooperation with the AfD.

One spokesperson for this movement is historian and former Merz adviser Andreas Rödder. Instead of marginalizing the AfD, Rödder argues, dialogue with the party must be sought and a "debate on the issues" must be held. Only in this way, he says, can the party be forced to decide "which direction it wants to go: extremist or democratic."

As if this had not already been decided long ago. Even the right-wing Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Germany's top domestic spy agency, now classifies the AfD as "confirmed right-wing extremist."

"Meanwhile, Rödder's theses are being circulated among the CDU grassroots," reports *Stern* magazine. There, they are seen as an "emergency exit" from the coalitions with the SPD and the Greens. "Even in the Bundestag faction, some have long been asking the dangerous question of why the right-wing majorities are not finally being used to pursue right-wing policies—pure CDU, economically liberal and socially conservative," according to *Stern*.

Jens Spahn, head of the CDU/CSU faction in the Bundestag and Merz's rival within the party, supports Rödder's course. "For 10 years, Germany has been voting center-right by a majority, but is then governed by center-left governments," he recently complained to the FAZ. Spahn has also advocated for federal funding for Rödder's right-wing think tank.

Advocates of direct cooperation with the AfD are now so strong that the CDU's executive committee met for a two-day retreat last weekend to discuss how to deal with the right-wing extremists in

the future.

Merz assured afterwards that the AfD would be “our main opponent” in the five state elections next year. He emphasized that the CDU would distance itself “very clearly and unequivocally” from the AfD. “Fundamental issues and fundamental political convictions separate us from the AfD,” he said. But this is obviously a lie, as his own agitation against migrants shows.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has warned for years that the AfD is being systematically promoted from above. In his book *Why Are They Back?* published in 2018, the chairman of the Socialist Equality Party, Christoph Vandreier, demonstrated that the growth of the AfD cannot be understood “without examining the role of the government, the state apparatus, the parties, the media, and the ideologues at the universities who are paving the way for it.”

The SPD, the Greens, and the Left Party, which occasionally criticize Merz’s racism, are just as responsible for strengthening the AfD as the CDU/CSU. For years, they have been organizing social cuts, deportation policies, state armament and war policies at the federal and state levels, which strengthen the right-wing extremists and drive desperate people into their arms, while sabotaging any resistance to them.

Left Party politician Heidi Reichinnek now accuses Merz of “blatant racism”—and directs the outrage over this into the political dead end of feminist identity politics. “When women walk home alone at night, they are not afraid of migrants, they are afraid of men: the problem is violent and cross-border masculinity,” she told the Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland (RND).

The rise of the far right is not limited to Germany, but is taking place in virtually all highly developed capitalist countries. This alone shows that it cannot be explained by the personal motives of individual politicians, but has deep social causes. Capitalism is in a hopeless global crisis to which the ruling class has only one answer: dictatorship and war.

The enormous sums spent on armament and war, financed by social cuts, the escalating trade war, which is destroying entire industries, and the enrichment of billionaire oligarchs at the expense of millions are incompatible with democracy. That is why the rulers in all leading capitalist countries are turning back to authoritarian and fascist forms of rule, as they did a hundred years ago.

This development is most advanced in the US, where Donald Trump is establishing an authoritarian presidential dictatorship and gathering fascist figures around him. He faces no significant resistance from the Democrats, who, like Trump, represent the interests of Wall Street and the military. The “No Kings” demonstrations, in which millions participated, show that the “sleeping giant” of American politics, the working class, is beginning to awaken.

A similar development is emerging in Europe. In some countries—Hungary, Italy, Czechia—far-right parties are already in government. In France and Germany, they are on the threshold of power. This development is not taking place without internal friction and crises.

The great Marxist Leon Trotsky noted in the 1920s that the bourgeoisie prefers quieter forms of rule to fascism, since fascism brings upheaval and is associated with danger. “The big

bourgeoisie loves fascism as little as a person with diseased jaws loves tooth extraction,” he wrote. “In the end, however, they resigned themselves to the inevitable, albeit with threats, action, and haggling.”

In the Weimar Republic, the German bourgeoisie ruled for three years with emergency decrees before finally deciding to hand over power to Hitler. His NSDAP had received just one-third of the votes in the previous election—2 million fewer than the workers’ parties, the SPD and KPD. But the Nazis were needed to crush the labor movement and convert the economy to war production. Despite his populist demagoguery, Hitler’s rule embodied the pure dictatorship of big capital.

Today, too, there are a number of reasons why parts of the ruling class still hesitate to bring the AfD into government. One of them is foreign policy. The close relations that some AfD politicians maintain with Moscow and Beijing are seen as an obstacle to German war policy. Another reason is the expected explosive resistance. After the traumatic experiences of Nazi dictatorship and world war, the rejection of war and fascism is deeply rooted in the population.

But it would be a dangerous illusion to believe that conflicts within the established parties and pressure from below will stop the rise of the AfD. When the pain—i.e., the class struggle—becomes too intense, the economic and political elites will once again opt for tooth extraction. They will help the right-wing extremists to power, whom they are already promoting with all their might and whose program they are implementing.

The danger of fascism and war can only be stopped by an independent movement of the working class—i.e., the vast majority of the population—that frees itself from the paralyzing influence of the SPD, the Left Party and the trade unions and links the struggle against social spending cuts, war and dictatorship with the overthrow of capitalism. The objective conditions for such a movement are developing explosively, as evidenced by the growth of strikes and protests throughout Europe, the US and other countries. But its success depends on the building of a party that wins the working class to a socialist program and unites it internationally—the International Committee of the Fourth International and its sections, the Socialist Equality Parties.



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