

Ex-Left Party leader helps pave the way for far-right rule in eastern Germany

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Previously a leading figure in the Left Party, Sahra Wagenknecht is now working to help the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) into power. Her programmatic rapprochement with the AfD has been apparent for years. In 2011, Wagenknecht—then the figurehead of the Communist Platform within the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)—discarded the works of Marx and Engels and declared her allegiance to capitalism, competition and the meritocratic society. (The PDS was the successor to the Stalinist state party of the former East Germany and forerunner of today's Left Party, in which Wagenknecht was a leading member.)

Ten years later, she split with the Left Party and founded the Bund Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW), after discovering her affection for tradition, homeland and a strong nation state, and railed against refugees and migrants.

Wagenknecht is now taking a further step. She is not merely moving closer to the AfD in terms of policy but is actively helping it attain power. She denounces the so-called “firewall”—the supposed refusal by the mainstream parties of any political cooperation with the AfD—as “madness” that must be ended immediately.

The BSW has not yet declared itself willing to form a joint government with the far right, but it has proposed various ways of enabling the AfD to participate in government.

With the state election in Saxony-Anhalt less than three weeks away, this question has become acute. According to the latest polls, the AfD stands at 41 to 43 percent there, 10 points ahead of the incumbent coalition of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Liberal Democratic Party (FDP). Should several parties fail to clear the 5 percent threshold for parliamentary representation, this could be enough for an absolute AfD majority in the state parliament, allowing it to install the state premier unopposed. If that does not happen and the BSW enters the legislature, it would likely hold the deciding votes.

In this context, Wagenknecht has proposed electing an “independent” and “non-partisan” state premier together

with the AfD, one who would rely on shifting majorities in the state legislature—including the votes of the AfD. She has also announced that her party would abstain in any third round of voting for state premier, in which a simple majority suffices. This could allow Ulrich Siegmund, the far right's lead candidate, to be elected head of an AfD minority state government.

But Wagenknecht has not stopped there. She is seeking to create a *fait accompli* in neighbouring Thuringia even before the Saxony-Anhalt election. The BSW federal executive issued an ultimatum to the party's Thuringia parliamentary group, demanding it immediately withdraw from its coalition with the CDU and SPD. As justification, it cited the retraction of state Premier Mario Voigt's (CDU) doctoral title by the Technical University of Chemnitz over plagiarism allegations. This, however, is merely a pretext.

In reality, Wagenknecht's aim is to boost the electoral prospects of the BSW in Saxony-Anhalt through closer cooperation with the AfD. Having narrowly failed to enter the Bundestag (federal parliament) in 2025, and having fallen apart in Brandenburg, where it was likewise part of the state government, a further defeat for the BSW in Saxony-Anhalt could spell the end of the party.

Björn Höcke, chairman of the AfD in Thuringia and former head of its ultra-right *Der Flügel* faction, responded immediately to Wagenknecht's initiative, offering to have her elected state premier of Thuringia with the votes of the AfD parliamentary group. His group was prepared to clear the way for her, he said, so that they could tear down the “firewall” together. Wagenknecht rejected Höcke's offer, arguing it was “neither honest nor serious.” She added, however, that she would not be able to secure a majority for this within her own party's parliamentary group.

In an open letter to the Thuringia BSW parliamentary group, Höcke then came out in support of Wagenknecht's proposal for an “independent” state premier. “Let us jointly search for an independent figure who commands authority, can unite the state and can rally a majority behind them in the Thuringia state parliament,” he wrote.

The Thuringia BSW, led by Finance Minister Katja Wolf and Digital Minister Steffen Schütz, rejected the federal executive's ultimatum on Monday and is sticking with its coalition with the CDU and SPD. A special party congress is expected to decide on the way forward, one that could split the BSW, as happened in Brandenburg.

In a social media post, State Digital Minister Schütz called Wagenknecht an "AfD enabler" and told *Bild* newspaper: "I've had enough! Otherwise, at some point, I won't be able to look myself in the mirror." He accused Wagenknecht of pursuing a "highly dangerous course" and making common cause with the AfD without any internal party debate.

Undeterred, Wagenknecht continues to campaign on right-wing platforms for her line. "Involving the AfD in government" was "self-evident," she said on right-wing blog Tichys Einblick. On Welt TV, she spoke about "why the BSW must enter the state parliament to prevent a firewall coalition, and why the hysterical handling of the AfD is simply crazy."

She also posted a nauseating video dialogue with Höcke on X, in which she ingratiates herself with the leader of the AfD's extreme right wing—a man lawfully convicted for using a banned Nazi slogan and with close ties to neo-Nazis. Wagenknecht says Höcke and she should talk with rather than about each other, appeals to his "masculinity" and challenges him to a live debate to "discuss objectively the similarities and differences between the AfD and the BSW."

What is the reason for this rightward evolution of Wagenknecht and her party? It cannot be explained by her personality alone. Rather, it is an expression of the rightward shift of official bourgeois politics as a whole.

Capitalism is in a hopeless crisis worldwide, to which the ruling class is responding with war, social cuts and dictatorship. This is most clearly evident in Trump's United States, but the development is not confined to the US. Far-right parties are growing throughout Europe or are already in power.

They are being systematically fostered from above. Their inhumane agitation against refugees, which brands the weakest members of society as scapegoats for the social crisis, has long been official European Union policy. It also serves as a pretext for building a surveillance and police state. Raising Germany's military budget to 5 percent of GDP, first proposed by the AfD, is now official NATO policy, and the construction of a police state, as advocated by the AfD, is advancing rapidly.

The SPD and trade unions have turned into bitter opponents of the working class. They organise mass layoffs and social cuts and stifle any resistance to them. In Germany, an SPD defence minister, Boris Pistorius, is arming the military for the next world war. An SPD finance

minister, Lars Klingbeil, is responsible for the biggest social cuts in decades.

This creates fertile ground for the AfD's right-wing demagogues, who exploit social and political frustration for their own purposes while actually representing, like all fascist movements, the interests of capital in their most brutal form.

The Left Party (Die Linke) and its international allies play a key role in this development. They criticise official politics from the left in order to cushion and neutralise the growing opposition to it. But they support those same policies once in government. Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, and the Left Party in the state governments in Berlin, Thuringia and elsewhere have demonstrated this time and again.

The Left Party now claims that the AfD can be stopped by supporting the parties of war—the CDU, SPD and Greens—and forming joint governments with them. In reality, this is a growth programme for the AfD. It deepens the disappointment and anger that right-wing demagogues then exploit for their own ends, while simultaneously paralysing popular opposition to the AfD by subordinating it to the pro-war parties. This is not a mistake or a misunderstanding, but follows from the character of the Left Party, which defends capitalism and represents the interests of affluent upper-middle class layers.

Wagenknecht (estimated net worth of over €4 million) was a leading member of the Left Party and its predecessor, the PDS, for 34 years before leaving in 2023 to found her own party. By throwing herself at the fascist Höcke, she is drawing the ultimate conclusion from the pro-capitalist politics of the Left Party, which, like parts of the BSW, cling instead to their old role of cushioning and paralysing the growing opposition.

The rise of the AfD can only be stopped by an independent movement of the international working class that links the fight against war, social cuts and fascism with the abolition of their cause, capitalism. This is the perspective for which the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and the International Committee of the Fourth International are fighting.



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