

State election in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania: Social devastation, militarism and the rise of the far-right AfD

Andy Niklaus, Peter Schwarz
20 September 2026

The state elections in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, held on Sunday alongside that in Berlin, like the one in Saxony-Anhalt two weeks ago, is dominated by the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

For a long time, opinion polls had predicted a clear election victory for the far-right party. It is now running neck and neck with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of incumbent State Premier Manuela Schwesig. Nevertheless, the AfD, at 36 percent, is expected to almost double its vote share compared with the last state election five years ago.

The rise of the AfD is a damning indictment of the SPD and the Left Party, which have governed together in the state capital Schwerin for five years. The two parties are expected to suffer only relatively modest losses—2.5 percentage points for the SPD and 1 percentage point for the Left Party—but at 9 percent, this would still be the worst result in the Left Party's history.

During the election campaign, State Premier Schwesig deliberately distanced herself from the federal government, even though she is one of the closest confidantes of SPD leader and Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil and has helped negotiate every federal coalition agreement since 2013. During the campaign, for instance, she railed against the abolition of the penalty-free pension after 45 years of contributions, which the federal government passed with SPD votes. With slogans such as “The Woman against Blue”—a reference to the AfD's party colour—which she plastered on large posters, she tried to present herself as an opponent of the AfD.

Under these circumstances, outrage over the federal government's policies has been directed above all at the CDU, which—in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, where former Chancellor Angela Merkel also had her constituency—must fear for the first time in its history that it will fail to enter a state parliament. Chancellor Friedrich Merz has convened a special session of the CDU executive committee for Sunday evening to fend off expected calls for his resignation.

Social devastation

The AfD is above all exploiting the social devastation left behind by the federal government and the current state government, as well as their predecessors.

Its lead candidate, Bundestag (federal parliamentary) member and former radio host Leif-Erik Holm, presents himself as deliberately moderate, while numerous neo-Nazis operate in the second row. The number two on the AfD's state list, parliamentary business manager Thore Stein, has been closely networked with the neo-Nazi scene since his youth. His father-in-law, Gernot Mörig, initiated the infamous Potsdam

“remigration meeting.”

Their election manifesto combines classic AfD themes—curbing immigration, criticism of Islam, tougher security policies and rejection of the transition to renewable energy—with state-level issues such as the shortage of teachers, cutting bureaucracy, support for families and restructuring the state administration.

By national comparison, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania ranks near the bottom in terms of unemployment, low incomes and the poverty rate. Unemployment stands at almost 8 percent, and youth unemployment at 9.3 percent—well above the national average. Almost one in six people lives in poverty. Wages are among the lowest in Germany. As a result, many well-qualified young people have left the state. Over the past 30 years, the population has fallen by 250,000 to 1.6 million today.

These conditions are the result of a deliberate policy. After 1990, the Treuhand—established by the last government in the former East Germany (GDR)—wound down around 8,500 businesses, destroying almost 3 million jobs. In , this hit the shipyards and their suppliers, the ports and the maritime economy, food processing and agriculture. In industry, the number of jobs fell from 102,000 to 60,000; in agriculture, only 21,000 of 180,000 jobs remained.

The consequences—mass unemployment, demographic decline, the devaluation of vocational qualifications, the spread of precarious employment—still shape the state today. Tourism, employing 120,000 people, is now among its most important economic sectors, though workers are often poorly paid or employed only seasonally. On top of this comes the explosion in fuel prices, which has a devastating impact in this large, sparsely populated state.

The responsibility of the Left Party

The Left Party is directly responsible for this social devastation. At the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, its predecessor, the PDS, organised the introduction of capitalism with its devastating consequences, and suppressed resistance to this. From 1998 to 2006, it took part in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania's first SPD-Left Party state government, and it has been back in government since 2021. That amounts to around thirteen years in state office in total. The party currently holds two ministerial posts, education and justice.

In government, the Left Party acts as a reliable accomplice of the SPD. “Boss Schwesig sets the tone, and the Left Party obediently follows,” writes the *taz*. The Left Party's lead candidate, Education Minister Simone Oldenburg, is, in the words of *taz*, “a pragmatist through and

through.”

This is most clearly shown in military policy. When State Premier Schwesig travelled to Kiev in 2024 and spoke out in favour of a military victory over Russia, the Left Party briefly protested. But when it came to the crunch in March 2025, Oldenburg voted in the Bundesrat (upper house of parliament) for the constitutional amendment that laid the foundation for the largest rearmament programme since the Second World War.

With the transformation of the Baltic Sea into a NATO staging ground against Russia, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania is becoming a frontline state. On October 21, 2024, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius and State Premier Schwesig inaugurated the new NATO maritime headquarters CTF Baltic in Rostock. Pistorius described the Baltic as a “front line” and declared that Germany was ready to “take the lead in the Baltic Sea region.”

The Left Party supports this course. While its website calls for “a clear rejection of rearmament,” it does not say a word about the militarisation of the state—about the NATO headquarters in Rostock, the expansion of the port of Rostock and Rostock-Laage airport into military hubs, or the conversion of the Wismar and Wolgast shipyards to the production of warships.

The Left Party’s policy of mouthing left-wing phrases while pursuing, in government, the same anti-worker and militarist policy as the SPD and CDU creates fertile ground for the AfD. It can pose as an opponent of the “establishment parties” even though, in reality, it is pushing their reactionary policies to the extreme. The AfD—the first party to call for raising military spending to 5 percent of GDP—campaigns in the election for an end to military support for Ukraine and for more diplomacy and peace negotiations with Russia.

Police state preparations with the support of the Left Party

The Left Party also supports the build-up of Germany’s domestic security forces. This year, the state government in Schwerin passed a series of laws granting the police and intelligence service expanded powers of surveillance and intervention—and the Left Party voted in favour.

On May 6, 2026, the state parliament passed the amendment to the Security and Public Order Act (SOG M-V). The government presents it as progress in protection against domestic violence—featuring electronic ankle tags, digital no-contact orders and expanded information-sharing with counselling centres. In reality, the law serves to substantially expand police powers.

The same pattern is evident in the *Verfassungsschutz* (domestic intelligence agency) law, which was also passed on May 6. While formal hurdles have indeed been raised for conducting particularly intrusive measures, and oversight by the parliamentary G10 Commission provided for, at the same time, however, the domestic intelligence agency will in future be permitted, under certain conditions, to store data on children under the age of 14.

The government is promoting the reform as “modernising the rule of law and data protection”—while at the same time expanding the circle of people on whom the intelligence service can collect information. The Left Party, which presents itself as a defender of civil rights, voted for this tightening of the law together with the SPD and CDU.

In addition, there is the Information Security Act of March 2026 and a new state Disaster Protection Act, which establish the framework for cybersecurity and “crisis management” in administration and the municipalities. In connection with “Operation Plan Germany,” which subordinates civilian infrastructure to the needs of the military, these

administrative laws become building blocks in the arming of the state for war and domestic repression.

The Left Party has not only helped build the police and surveillance state in Schwerin. In the Berlin Senate (state assembly), the SPD and Left Party coalition had already expanded police powers back in 2007. In neighbouring Brandenburg, the Left Party voted for an authoritarian police law in 2019. Those in Schwerin who now invoke supposed protection against domestic violence to push through an expansion of police surveillance is continuing this tradition.

A socialist perspective

Social devastation, militarisation and the expansion of the police state are all part of one and the same process. The ruling class is preparing for a war on two fronts: against the working class at home and against its economic rivals abroad. The militarisation of the Baltic Sea and the build-up of the police are two sides of the same policy. The government in Schwerin is implementing both at once—and the Left Party votes for both.

Anyone who votes for the Left Party thinking this can stop the AfD is voting for the very policy that has prepared the ground for the AfD. This is not the supposed “firewall” against collaborating with the AfD, but the continuation of the policy that made the rise of the extreme right possible in the first place.

The election in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania underscores that the fight against social cuts and war requires the independent intervention of the working class. The Left Party supports the wave of social cuts, helps build the police state, and has voted for the largest rearmament programme since the Second World War. The AfD channels social anger against immigrants in order to split the working class, leading it into a nationalist dead end. Both represent two forms of capitalist politics: one openly, the other under a false flag.

The working class needs its own party, a party that fights against war and militarism, against the capitalist profit system, for the international unity of the working class and for the building of a socialist society. That is why building the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is the most urgent task.

Study the SGP’s programme and history! Read the World Socialist Web Site! Get in touch with the SGP, and in Berlin, where it is standing in Sunday’s state election, vote SGP!



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact