

Parliamentary Party SPD



German Social Democratic Party

“In the future as well, international deployments of the Bundeswehr can only be the ultima ratio, when all other instruments designed to secure freedom and protect human beings are unable to bring about resolutions.

Deployments of the Bundeswehr should always be legitimated through a mandate of the UN Security Council as well as an authorizing resolution of the German Parliament and be integrated within an overall political vision.”

[SPD Defence Policy Statement](#)

“As Social Democrats, we want to be the driving force in Europe on the road to a European Army subject to parliamentary control, and we want to make steady progress towards this goal.”

[SPD Position Paper on the Europeanization of the armed forces](#)

Key Facts

Chancellor Candidate in 2021 Federal Election: [Olaf Scholz](#), former Mayor of Hamburg (2011-2018), current Vice-Chancellor of Germany and Federal Minister of Finance.

Ideology: The SPD is Germany’s center-left party.

History

Founded: 23 May 1863, Leipzig as the ‘General German Workers’ Union; oldest political party in Germany.

Chancellors:

- [Willy Brandt \(1969-1974\)](#) : Initiator of ‘Ostpolitik’ (normalization of West German relations with East Germany and the Eastern Block) in 1969.
- [Helmut Schmidt \(1974-1982\)](#): Initiator of NATO Double Resolution of 1979 calling for both disarmament negotiations with the USSR and to deployment of US medium-range missiles in [absence of results](#).
- [Gerhard Schröder \(1998-2005\)](#): First Chancellor to deploy the Bundeswehr abroad, in Kosovo in 1999. He refused to support the 2003 US Intervention in Iraq.

Parliamentary Party

- **Results in 2017 Federal Elections:** Obtained 20.5% of votes cast. Second-largest party in the German Parliament, with 153 out of 709 seats. Junior partner in Grand Coalition with CDU/CSU since 2013.
- The SPD PP includes a [Security and Defence Policy Working Group](#). Here are the party’s key initiatives, position statements and press releases regarding issues on this topic. Its Spokesperson is [Siemtje Moller](#).
- A Press Release dated 9. June 2021, ‘[Securing Future Civil Engagement in Afghanistan](#)’ includes a position paper detailing the party’s perspective on the Afghanistan mission and the future of the country entitled ‘[For a peaceful future in Afghanistan](#)’ providing **key data on Germany’s participation in the mission** as a US ally (pp. 2; 8-9).

Policies

- The [2021 SPD Program for Government](#) sets out “the primacy of politics in securing peace and defence at home and abroad” (p. 63).
- The Parliamentary party’s [Workgroup on Security and Defence Policy](#) issues various papers and statements on the Party’s positions. In a 2011 position paper entitled ‘[The New NATO](#)’, NATO is described as “a regional alliance, assistant of the United Nations and engine of a new international security structure” (p. 1).
- The SPD is committed to the Parliamentary right of oversight of deployments of the Bundeswehr, which it considers as “a democratic achievement” that cannot be put into question “even within multinational deployments of shared alliance assets” (p.3).
- The SPD is committed to the “Europeanisation of the armed forces” within a redefined Common Foreign and Security Policy, as stated in a [2014 position paper on this topic](#).
- [In 2021 The SPD supported the deployment of German military personnel as part of the EU Mission in Mali](#).
- The Workgroup’s spokesperson, Siemtje Moller, issued [a statement on 5. July 2021](#) regretting that Parliament had not been duly informed of the return home of German troops from Afghanistan.

Key Take-Away Quote

“From our perspective as Social Democrats, German foreign and security policy is a policy for peace. Germany’s caution regarding the use of military force, an approach consistently followed and supported across party lines, is important and right. Nonetheless, there are situations where the use of military force is necessary and proportionate in order to prevent a greater evil. It is also true that Germany’s caution must not consign it to the political sidelines in Europe and must not be misunderstood as Germany going it alone. We stand clearly and unequivocally by our Alliance commitments, and we will also seek to ensure that other countries do not go it alone either. The prerequisite for this is for our European partners’ trust in Germany’s reliability to be restored.” [SPD Position paper on the Europeanization of the armed forces, 13. November 2014](#).