

# GERMAN ELECTIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR GERMAN POLITICS, CLIMATE POLICY, FOREIGN POLICY, AND GERMANY’S RELATIONS WITH THE EU AND TURKEY

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On February 23, 2025, Germany went to the polls in a historic snap election. The results of the election are not only decisive for the future of Germany’s domestic landscape but also its foreign policy and potential leadership role in the European Union, the future of EU-Turkey relations, and its climate policies. This analysis examines the elections through these dimensions to provide a holistic perspective of the future of Germany, Europe, and regional and global politics.<sup>1</sup>



## A Picture of the Election Results in Germany

The CDU/CSU (Union) won 28.5 percent of the votes and is the clear election winner<sup>2</sup>; however, it remains below the targeted 30 percent, giving it the second-worst result in party history. It is the only representative of the political center that was able to make gains in this election.

The parties of the *Ampelkoalition* (traffic light coalition), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Greens, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), have lost nearly a 20-percent share in the voter turnout. The FDP will not enter the Bundestag.

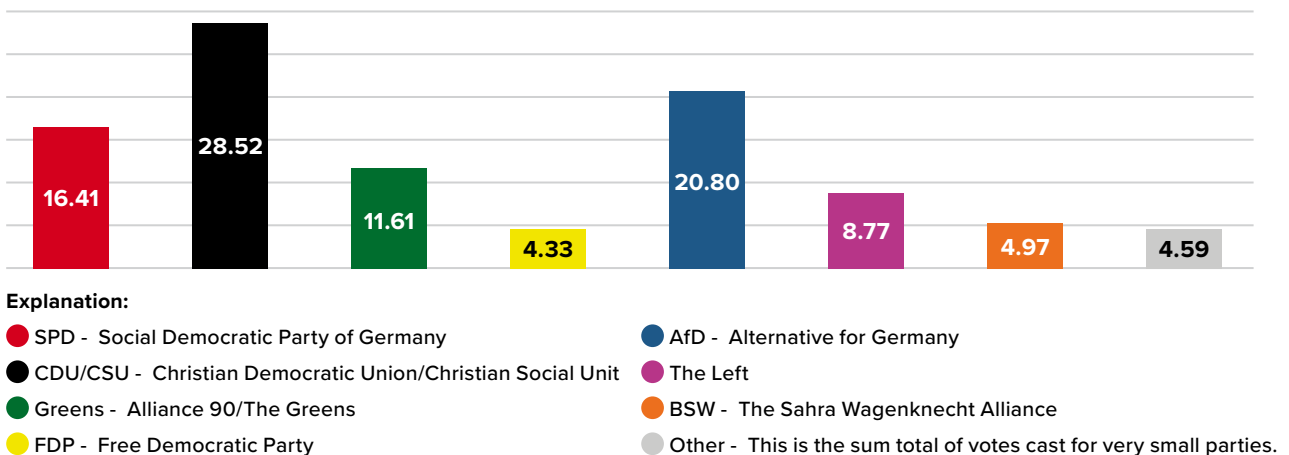
Compared to 2021, the German electorate is much more fragmented and polarized. The political climate is characterized by uncertainty and dissatisfaction, and the political fringes are benefiting from this.

The parties on the political fringes—the Alternative for Germany (AfD), Left, and Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW)—won a total of 19.3

percentage points, of which almost 5 percentage points are not parliament-effective due to the five-percent threshold. The AfD doubled its result compared to the last election and became the second strongest force. It benefited considerably from increased voter turnout. Contrary to expectations, the Left has entered the Bundestag with 8.8 percent and is the strongest party in Berlin. While the BSW failed by a narrow margin, the Left Party has reached 35 percent among younger women in cities; the AfD has reached 36 percent among younger men in rural areas.<sup>3</sup>

Due to the new electoral law, the winner of the direct mandate cannot enter the Bundestag in 23 constituencies. The metropolitan region between Frankfurt and Stuttgart was particularly affected by this new law. While these are the most prominent results, several additional trends between regions, in voting behavior, and voter turnout, among other factors, are noteworthy and thus pointed out below.

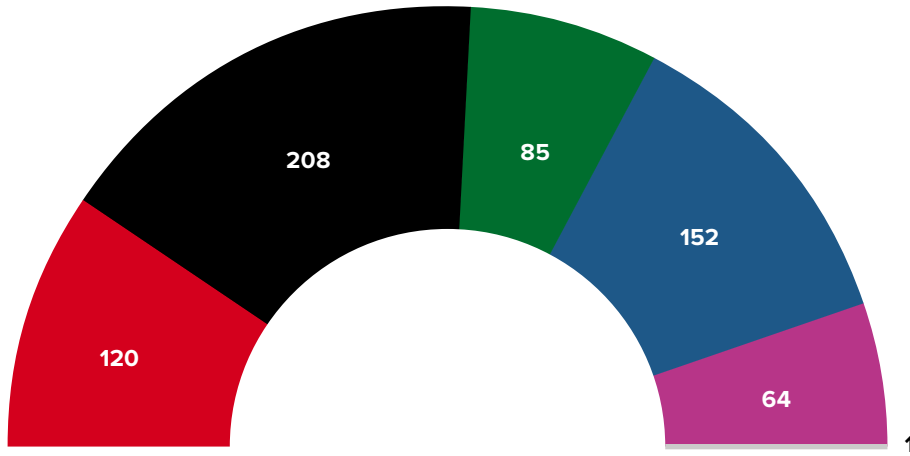
Figure 1: Germany's Election Results (in percent)



Source: Deutschland.de



Figure 2: Breakdown of the new Bundestag by Party



**Explanation:**

- CDU/CSU - Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Unit
- SPD - Social Democratic Party of Germany
- Greens - Alliance 90/The Greens
- Die Linke - The Left
- AfD - Alternative for Germany
- Other - This is the sum total of votes cast for very small parties.

Source: Deutschland.de

**East-West Polarization**

As in the last federal elections, there were significant differences in the voting behavior of the population in the eastern and western German federal states.<sup>4</sup> The SPD recorded significant losses of 12 percentage points in the east of the country, now with only a 12-percent share of votes. In the west, it is still 18 percent. While the CDU/CSU improved their results in the west to 31 percent (+5 percentage points), their results in the east remained close to those of the last election at 19 percent (+1 percentage point). The AfD, in turn, received 18 percent (+10) in the west and as much as 32 percent (+13 percentage points) in the east, making it the strongest party in all eastern German states.

**Significant Changes in Voting Behavior within Occupational Groups**

Voting behavior also differs significantly when we look at the population by employment relationship.<sup>5</sup> Particularly large differences can be seen among blue collar workers, among whom the AfD gained 17 percent and now, at 38 percent, is well ahead of the CDU/CSU, at 22 percent. The SPD lost 14 percentage points and now stands at 12 percent. Among pensioners, the CDU/CSU (39 percent) and SPD (24 percent) are in the lead. The biggest shift occurred among unemployed voters. Here, only the AfD dominates with 34 percent (+17 percentage points), while all other parties are far behind. There has also been a particularly drastic shift among those who assess their own economic situation as less good or bad.<sup>6</sup> Here, the AfD has gained 20 percentage points and now stands at 39 percent. Although the issue of migration is at the top of the list of problems perceived by citizens (42



percent), the economic situation is seen as slightly more problematic (43 percent). When voters are asked which issues are most important for their own voting decisions, completely different issues come to the fore. Here, the question of peace and security (45 percent) and improving the economic situation (44 percent) are at the top of the agenda. Social justice follows with 39 percent, and only in fourth place, with a significant gap, is refugee and asylum policy mentioned with 26 percent.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Highest Voter Turnout since Reunification***

One of the most positive surprises of the early elections was the sharp increase in voter turnout. Approximately 82.5 percent of those eligible to vote, or almost 50 million German citizens, exercised their right to vote. This is a new record since reunification. As in the last federal elections, voter turnout in the east in 2025 is slightly lower than in the west of Germany (80.3 percent vs. 83.1 percent). However, the figures are gradually becoming more equal.

### ***Voter Migration from the Center to the Extremes***

The question of which party has given votes to which other camp or has won these votes is methodically very difficult to grasp and should therefore be treated with caution. This evaluation is based on an exit poll by Infratest Dimap in selected polling stations and voting districts.<sup>8</sup>

By far the greatest loss of votes for the SPD was to the CDU; this was followed by the AfD. The CDU/CSU suffered its greatest loss to the AfD, while the FDP lost the biggest number of previous voters to the CDU/CSU. The greatest loss of votes for the Greens was to the Left.

### ***Only a CDU/CSU-SPD Coalition Is Likely***

After the failure of the traffic light coalition, the first three-party coalition at the federal level is considered a failed experiment. With three parties

hovering around the five-percent hurdle, the 2025 election campaign was still characterized by uncertainty as to whether a two-party coalition would be possible. Now, the election results have shown that the FDP and BSW have missed out on entering the Bundestag, which makes the formation of a coalition between two parties possible, at least in terms of numbers. This applies to a coalition between the CDU/CSU and both the SPD and the AfD.

The task of forming a government lies with Friedrich Merz, the head of the CDU and chancellor candidate of the CDU/CSU. Since he has ruled out a coalition with the AfD, the only mathematically possible two-party alliance is a coalition with the SPD.

On the one hand, the formation of the coalition needs to be done quickly in view of the economic crisis at home, the geopolitical upheaval, and the need for a strong Europe. To this end, Friedrich Merz announced his intention to form his government before Easter. On the other hand, the hard-fought election campaign has revealed rifts between the parties that still need to be filled. The SPD will need to strike a balance between the necessary renewal of its party program and the need to give up positions in the coalition negotiations with the CDU/CSU so that the country quickly forms a government in a time when many European countries hope for German leadership.

Among voters, a black-red (CDU/CSU-SPD) alliance has the highest approval ratings at 39 percent.<sup>9</sup> But here, too, the proportion of those who are opposed to this option is the largest group, at 44 percent. However, the same applies to all other coalition models, with rejection outnumbering approval.

The result of the parliamentary elections suggests that the traditional foundations of the Federal Republic of Germany—its Western integration and the social market economy—are crumbling. Populist parties on the right and left with ties to Russia have



won more than one-third of the seats in the German parliament and can thus block any changes to the constitution that would provide funding for urgently needed defense spending. Many observers share the opinion that the next government is doomed to succeed if it does not want to lose power to the AfD in the next elections. The election results, therefore, will not only affect the shape of Germany's domestic policies but also its foreign and security policy, its place within the European Union (EU), and its climate policies.

The domestic debates and campaigns of political parties leading up to the elections, alongside historical election results and the changing geopolitical landscape in Europe and globally, point to significant trends and challenges for German foreign policy, its position in the EU, Germany's role in EU-Turkey relations, and its climate policy during the upcoming legislative term.

## **Germany's Watershed Elections: A *Zeitenwende* for German Foreign Policy and Its Leadership Role in the EU?**

During the election campaigns, various aspects of German foreign policy were the focus of intense public debates and contestation, driven especially by populist far-right and far-left parties. The election programs, coupled with the public speeches and (social) media statements of key political figures, intensified and broadened the political debate and contestation around international affairs in Germany. As such, the "politicization of foreign policy"—the increasing prominence of international issues in political discourse, the widening range of individuals and groups who are mobilized to engage with these issues, and an increasing polarization among the views of these participants<sup>10</sup>—became a prominent feature of Germany's federal elections.

### ***Increasing Politicization and Domestication of German Foreign Policy***

The new geopolitical era, largely triggered by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, has been shaped by the growing division within the transatlantic alliance during Donald Trump's second term as President of the United States. This context has created a conducive environment for the domestic politicization of international issues in the German federal elections to obtain voters' support.

The far-right AfD described Russia in its election program as "the Achilles heel" of German industry, highlighting its importance as a guarantor of affordable energy supplies. The party called for the immediate lifting of economic sanctions against Russia. Alice Weidel, co-leader of the AfD, gave numerous polarizing interviews to German newspapers and major TV channels before the elections, where she avoided any critique of Russia's aggression. On the contrary, she claimed that the Scholz government was responsible for escalating Germany's dialogue with Russia and initiating an economic war against Germany.<sup>11</sup> The domestic politicization of Germany's Russia policy was intensified by the digital and physical propaganda efforts of U.S. tech billionaire and current senior advisor to the president Elon Musk in support of the AfD and the narrative of the Russia-friendly populist party BSW that described Russia's aggression against Ukraine as a proxy war between Russia and the United States, suggesting that Germany should remain uninvolved in the matter. Germany's policy toward Russia gained public attention, particularly through the mobilization and media efforts of both far-right and far-left parties. This was evident in various street rallies across German cities, where pro-Moscow supporters confronted protesters opposing Russian aggression.



### ***The Inward-Outward Paradox of German Foreign Policy***

As populist parties gain power in Germany and increasingly politicize and mediatize aspects of international affairs—such as European integration, EU expansion, NATO enlargement, climate action, and arms sales to conflict zones—different domestic groups with varying preferences are paying closer attention to German foreign policy and actively mobilizing to influence policymakers. The growing domestication and politicization of international affairs in Germany's domestic arena is likely to generate a “constraining dissensus” over some aspects of German foreign policy and limit the policy preferences of the Merz government. As Friedrich Merz will aim to be more outward-looking than his predecessor and seek to pursue a “true” *Zeitenwende* in Germany's foreign, security, and defense policies and its role in European/international affairs, he will also need to look inward to obtain a “permissive consensus” from the domestic constituency. The inward-outward paradox of German foreign policymaking will likely reinforce Germany's support of differentiated integration in the EU. This means that the German federal government may refrain from taking big leaps forward in highly politicized issues in the German domestic landscape, such as migration and asylum policies of the EU, EU climate policy, and the Green transition. Security and defense policy is an area where the next German federal government intends to enhance capabilities significantly at both the national and European levels. Since security and defense are part of high politics, which is particularly susceptible to politicization, the Merz government may face constraints on its policy options based on the level of domestic politicization in the years to come. Germany will thus seek a leading role within the EU in order to shape these and other policies.

### ***Reigniting German Leadership in the EU***

Germany's elections were especially significant for the EU due to Germany's economic and political weight in Europe and its leadership role in the EU, which it shares with France. During the previous coalition government, however, Germany mostly shied away from asserting its preeminence in European affairs. Although the existence of the Greens as a coalition partner was relevant for the success of the European Green Deal, the lack of coordination and cohesion in the government translated into a reluctant and elusive European policy. A new coalition led by the CDU-CSU may raise hopes about a more focused and coherent policy regarding the EU and a revival of Franco-German leadership at the helm of the Union. The Donald Trump administration's stance on Europe requires Germany to adopt a clearer and more assertive role to stand against the pressure from the United States and steer an independent course of action not only in foreign and defense policy but also in industrial, trade, technology, and energy policies.

Under Friedrich Merz's chancellorship, Germany is keen to reassert its influence on the EU in favor of a strong inclination for deregulation, competitiveness, and resilience of the European economy. While the upcoming government's priority will be to modernize and revitalize the German economic model, this task will inadvertently be linked with strengthening the European economy. Merz noted that he is interested in rekindling the Franco-German tandem especially vis-à-vis rivals and competitors including Trump's America. Both leaders in Germany and France may still find it difficult to find fast and effective formulas for the future of the EU due to the increasing appeal of populist forces inside their countries. For Merz it may be problematic to create a balance between the need for renewed investment for the moderni-



zation of the German and European economies due to the focus on fiscal discipline and restraint for borrowing. The significant presence of the AfD and the Left inside the parliament may prove to be a hurdle for achieving a consensus on where investments need to be concentrated.

### ***Toward a Stronger European Defense***

Coming from an Atlanticist tradition, Merz's words uttered during the post-election debates attest to a radical change in the transatlantic relationship. Commenting on President Trump's remarks prior to the elections, Merz said, "... it is clear that this government does not care much about the fate of Europe... My absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that, step by step, we can really achieve independence from the USA." Merz talked about pressure on the EU not only from Russia but also from the United States and emphasized the need for "creating unity in Europe."<sup>12</sup> Hence, one of the top priorities for the next German government will be to prop up European defense capabilities autonomous from the United States. The special military fund that was created by former Chancellor Olaf Scholz in order to support Ukraine will need to be transformed into a regular military budget that will fund stronger European defense capabilities.

### ***Driving EU Enlargement***

Germany's new government will play an important role in the EU's approach to the accession of candidates and Ukraine's position. The rift between the European Union and United States regarding support to Ukraine against Russian aggression will require the EU to continue to display unwavering commitment to the stability of Ukraine following a peace deal. This may entail an acceleration of Ukraine's accession to the EU in the near future. Taking into account other candidate countries that have already advanced far enough in the negotiation

process such as Montenegro and Serbia, an institutional reform strategy will have to be put into action in order to prepare the Union for enlargement. A report prepared by a Franco-German working group recommended a differentiated integration process, including differential phases of integration sharing common values and rule of law of principles.<sup>13</sup> During the current term, which will last until 2029, the EU will have to engage in reforms including a Treaty reform process, which may be extremely tricky due to the rise of populist votes in many member states. While outgoing Chancellor Scholz expressed his support for enlargement, linking it with the necessity of institutional reform, he also underlined the need for a transition to unanimity in foreign policy decisions, as well.<sup>14</sup> The new German government's position on institutional reform of the Union will thus shape the EU's continued relevance for the future of Europe.

## **The Future of EU-Turkey Relations under the New German Government**

The upcoming German government's stance on relations with Turkey will be critical for the country's EU perspective. The CDU's approach to Turkey's EU membership perspective was apparent even before the start of Turkey's accession negotiations. The policy of favoring a partnership rather than membership persists, underpinning a transactionalist and pragmatic approach to relations with Turkey. It seems clear that the CDU/CSU-led government will steer a pragmatic and goal-oriented approach in this regard, prioritizing security and migration issues. A transactional approach is likely to shape relations, emphasizing a need for Turkey's cooperation in such issues as the future of Syria, regional stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, and control of irregular migration.



### ***Pragmatism and Transactionalism in German Foreign Policy and Germany's Position on Turkey vis-à-vis the EU***

Transactionalism—a foreign policy strategy focused on short-term, interest-driven interactions and temporary alliances between states based on reciprocity that do not prioritize normative concerns<sup>15</sup>—seems to be emerging as a growing trend, especially in Germany's relations with Turkey. The transactional features of Germany's Turkey policy were already strong during the successive Merkel governments. The EU-Turkey Statement on Irregular Migration, initiated under Merkel's leadership in 2016 and commonly known as the EU-Turkey refugee deal, facilitated a transactional dialogue between the EU and Turkey. This agreement tied material incentives, such as financial aid, to Turkey's cooperation with the EU in externalizing migration governance in alignment with EU and German interests. Germany further facilitated moments of temporary, reciprocal, and interest-driven rapprochement between the EU and Turkey, independent of the EU's traditional conditionality, during its mediatory role in resolving the Eastern Mediterranean crisis. In 2021, under Merkel's leadership, a positive agenda for the EU-Turkey relationship was initiated. This agenda linked material incentives for Turkey, such as trade facilitation and the modernization of the EU-Turkey Customs Union, to the alignment of Turkish foreign policy with the EU's geopolitical interests and preferences in the Eastern Mediterranean.

#### ***Privileged Partnership: Old Wine in a New Bottle?***

Friedrich Merz's public statements on Germany's relations with Turkey and its role in the international system in the run-up to German federal elections signify the growing trend toward transactionalism and pragmatism in German foreign policymaking. In an exclusive interview ahead of the elections, Merz told Anadolu Agency that the EU needed to strengthen cooperation with Turkey on shared foreign policy interests to address regional chal-

lenges, including those related to migration and Syria.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the CDU seems to envisage closer dialogue with Turkey outside the EU's normative accession framework based on a strategic partnership. For the first time in history, the CDU election program discernibly closed the door to a prospective Turkish accession to the EU, noting: "We regret that it [Turkey] is currently moving away from the EU's system of values and is therefore unable to join."<sup>17</sup> Unexpectedly, the Social Democrats, who have historically supported Turkey's EU accession process, have also joined the ranks of skeptics this time around. They made no mention of Turkey in their election program, particularly in the section concerning EU enlargement, while referencing their support for Georgia, whose government unilaterally halted the accession process shortly after it began. Hence, during Friedrich Merz's term as chancellor, the concept of "privileged partnership," which the CDU used in the early 2000s to describe their preferred relationship between the EU and Turkey, may be rebranded as a "strategic partnership" and promoted within EU and Turkish circles.

#### ***A Defining Challenge for the Next German Government: Moving Beyond Pure Transactional Relations with Turkey***

While transactionalism and interest-driven pragmatism may provide short-term stability in Turkey's relations with the EU and Germany, potentially fostering a fundamental sense of mutual trust and reliability, a norm-free, purely transactional approach is likely to undermine and destabilize these relations over the long term. In an "intermestic" world, where the boundaries between domestic and international issues are increasingly blurred, the domestic policies and normative positions of states significantly impact the national interests and domestic stability of external partners. The German government should, therefore, transcend mere transactional relations with Turkey. It should establish a careful balance between shared interests and the promo-





tion of mutual understandings of democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights. The preservation and revitalization of Turkey's EU accession process, as well as the initiation of accession talks in Chapters 23 and 24 concerning the judiciary, fundamental rights, freedom, and security, are crucial in this context. These steps are also essential for strengthening Germany's diminishing function as a normative actor in EU-Turkey relations and beyond. Additionally, as Turkey already provides for European security in its role as a NATO ally and frequent contributor to Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, the search for a European-only security and defense policy may necessitate closer cooperation in defense and require a deeper form of commitment in EU-Turkey relations.

## Climate Policy in an Era of Green Backlash

Despite the last decade of climate leadership in Germany, discontent with climate policies played a significant role in shaping the outcome of the most recent elections. Concerns over climate protection's economic and social costs are growing, fueled by weak economic performance and mass layoffs even in traditionally strong sectors like the automotive industry. This boosted support for anti-green parties, particularly the far-right AfD and the left-wing BSW.

Within this politically costly context, the CDU and its coalition partners now face the challenge of addressing voter concerns while staying committed to climate goals. Indeed, the next five years are critical not only for Germany but also for the entire world. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global emissions must be halved by 2030 to limit warming to 1.5°C by 2100, with Germany playing a central role as a leading European economy. Yet, climate protection is more than reducing emissions. It shapes our economy, society, and global security. Whether

and how this transformation in Germany succeeds largely depends on the new government.

### *How German Parties Position Themselves on Key Topics Related to Climate Change*

Most German parties acknowledge the human-caused climate crisis and support maintaining the country's net-zero emissions target by 2045, as outlined in the Federal Climate Change Act of 2019. Most parties support the expansion of renewable energies, with current renewable energy sources accounting for around 55% of the country's energy mix.<sup>18</sup> All major parties, except for the BSW and the AfD, oppose reestablishing gas imports from Russia in the event of a peace treaty with Ukraine.

Coal-fired power generation in Germany is set to be phased out by 2038 at the latest.<sup>19</sup> Currently, there are efforts, particularly from the Greens and the Left, to bring the shutdown forward to 2030. However, Merz has emphasized the importance of industrial policy and warned against phasing out coal and gas power generation too quickly without sufficient replacement capacity. Disagreement also remains among the parties over the role of nuclear power. The CDU has long shown interest in restarting the country's nuclear power plants,<sup>20</sup> while the SPD, Greens, and the Left deem this idea expensive and impractical, expressing a commitment to reaching climate neutrality without using nuclear power.

The role of e-fuels in the automotive sector remains a controversial issue, as they are often viewed as expensive, inefficient, and primarily suited for sectors such as aviation and shipping.<sup>21</sup> Scholz has proposed that Germany's car manufacturing future lies in electric mobility. In contrast, Merz has announced that he will call for reversing the phase-out of internal combustion engine cars by 2035 (EU Regulation 2019/631). The CDU advocates for the continued use of e-fuels in automobiles. Meanwhile, CDU and SPD agree on supporting the EU fleet-wide zero emissions target (EU Regulation 2023/85) but want to remove penalties for manufacturers.



Figure 3: Political Parties' Positions on Climate Issues

	Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Unit (CDU/ CSU)	Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD)	Greens	Free Democratic Party (FDP)	Alternative for Germany (AfD)	BSW - The Sahara Wagenknecht Alliance	The Left
Recognition of human-caused climate crisis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Hold on to net zero emission target by 2045	✓	✓	✓	✗ * postpone to 2050	✗	✗ * postpone, date unclear	✓
Support and expansion of renewable energy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓ * but not 100%, mix of technology	✓
Hold on to Building Energy Act (GEG)	✗	?	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Early coal exit	✗ * no earlier coal exit as long as there is no proper replacement through e.g. gas	? * unclear, the coalition agreement of the last leg- islative period stated that the coal phase-out should ideally be brought forward to 2030	✓ * in 2030	✗	✗ * cancel coal exit completely	✗ * no clear coal exit date	✓ * in 2030
Hold on to nuclear energy exit	? * keeping the option of restart- ing nuclear power plants open	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓ * only nuclear fusion	✓
Expansion of hydrogen infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓ * but no clear strategy, focus on technology neutrality	✗	✓ * but rather reluctant	✓ * but only where absolutely essential, especially in industrial production
Hold on to EU fleet emission standards for vehicles	✓ * with adjustments and no penalty fees	✓ * but no penalty fees	✓	✗	✗	?	?
Phase-out of combustion engine vehicles incl. e-fuels ("ICE car ban")	✗	?	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Introducing a general speed limit on highways	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	?	✓

✓ affirmative    ? unclear position    ✗ rejection

Source: Data collection and analysis by the author based on the election programs of the parties as of February 7, 2025.



### ***Trigger Points of a Grand Coalition***

The CDU and the SPD align on several general climate transition goals, including the 2045 net-zero target, supporting renewable energy, and expanding the country's hydrogen sector. However, disagreements are growing regarding the role of regulatory climate instruments and the decarbonization of the building and transportation sector. The CDU supports a technology-neutral, market-based climate policy. Key measures include emissions trading, lowering electricity costs, abolishing the heating law, and allowing combustion engines that use e-fuels. The CDU has also left open the option of returning to nuclear energy and warned against phasing out coal and gas power generation too quickly. The SPD favors a mix of regulations and market incentives, focusing on socially balanced climate protections that are affordable for everyone.

Against the background of these climate policy plans, the crucial issue that triggered the incumbent coalition's collapse—budget negotiations—still needs to be resolved. The reform of the debt brake that limits the deficit to 0.35% of GDP so far remains open. Merz has signaled openness to reform, and the SPD also seeks new debt rules. The debate among the SPD, Greens, and CDU now is whether the outgoing Bundestag should reform the debt brake immediately to avoid a future veto from the AfD and Left. The AfD argues that the state should never spend more than it takes in; the Left will not agree to reforming the debt brake if this leads to additional defence funds. As long as the SPD, Greens, and CDU hold a majority, a fast-track reform is possible.

### ***Uniting through Climate Policy as an Industrial and Social Policy Core Task***

Business associations, NGOs, and think tanks in Germany are calling on the next federal government to make greater efforts in climate policy.<sup>22</sup> To achieve climate neutrality by 2045, immediate investments are needed. Therefore, a reform of the debt brake must increase financial flexibility. Lower energy taxes and network charges improve access to renewable energy and improve the competitiveness of the German industry. An industrial transformation is fundamental for competitiveness and employment. A socially fair climate policy with funding programs for climate-neutral, affordable heating and mobility and financial compensations to refund citizens for rising CO<sub>2</sub> costs increases the acceptance of the transition.

Germany's ambitious climate goals face high costs and growing anti-green opposition, delaying progress and results. Ensuring a coherent strategy by swiftly setting a clear climate protection program for the coming legislation to navigate the transition is key now. By integrating climate policy into industrial and social policy targets, the next government can address people's concerns without sacrificing climate ambitions.



## Notes

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- 3 | “Wahlverhalten Bundestagswahl 2025,” Forschungsgruppe Weltanschauungen in Deutschland, March 3, 2025, <https://fowid.de/meldung/wahlverhalten-bundestagswahl-2025>.
- 4 | Ibid.
- 5 | Ibid.
- 6 | “Bundestagswahl 2025,” Tagesschau, last updated February 23, 2025, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/bundestagswahl/wahlverhalten-bevoelkerungsgruppen-umfragen-bundestagswahl-2025-100.html>.
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- 8 | Infraset Dimap exit poll, cited in Catrina Schläger, Jan Niklas Engels, and Nicole Loew, “Analysis of the Bundestag elections 2025,” Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, February 2025, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/a-p-b/21863.pdf>.
- 9 | Ibid.
- 10 | Edgar Grande and Swen Hutter, “Introduction: European Integration and the Challenge of Politicisation,” in *Politicising Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*, edited by Swen Hutter, Edgar Grande, and Hanspeter Kriesi, 3–31 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
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- 14 | German Federal Government, “Speech by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the Charles University in Prague on Monday, 29 August 2022,” <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/scholz-speech-prague-charles-university-2080752>.
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- 16 | “German chancellor favorite Merz vows to enhance ‘strategic dialogue’ with Türkiye,” Anadolu Agency, February 3, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/exclusive-german-chancellor-favorite-merz-vows-to-enhance-strategic-dialogue-with-turkiye/3470013>.
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## About the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative

The Istanbul Policy Center–Sabancı University–Stiftung Mercator Initiative aims to strengthen the academic, political, and social ties between Turkey and Germany as well as Turkey and Europe. The Initiative is based on the premise that the acquisition of knowledge and the exchange of people and ideas are preconditions for meeting the challenges of an increasingly globalized world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Initiative focuses on two areas of cooperation, EU/ German-Turkish relations and climate change, which are of essential importance for the future of Turkey and Germany within a larger European and global context.

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