

## The BSW campaign against US intermediate missile systems and a NATO HQ in Germany

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For several months, the far-left Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) has been waging a campaign challenging the German government's security policy decisions. It aims to halt military support for Ukraine, initiate dialogue with Russia, and curtail Germany's collaboration with the United States and its engagement in NATO. The BSW particularly criticises two issues directly affecting the security of NATO's eastern flank.

Since July, the BSW has campaigned for Berlin to revoke its approval for the deployment of US intermediate-range missile systems, including the SM-6 (with a range exceeding 500 km), Tomahawk (around 1,300 km), and hypersonic missiles (exceeding 3,000 km) in western Germany from 2026 onwards. This deployment was announced during the NATO summit in Washington in July this year (see '[Enhancing deterrence in Europe: a return to intermediate-range missiles](#)'). According to the BSW, these systems, deployed on German territory could potentially become targets of Russian nuclear strikes.

In recent days, the BSW has sharply criticised the October announcement of establishing the Command Task Force Baltic (CTF Baltic), a new command structure based at the German Navy's headquarters in Rostock, with Polish and Swedish personnel. CTF Baltic will assume command of NATO's maritime forces in the Baltic Sea for four years (with the Polish Navy scheduled to take over in 2028). Wagenknecht's party contends that this arrangement antagonises Russia and claims it contravenes the provisions of the 1990 Two Plus Four Treaty, which states that "foreign armed forces and nuclear weapons or their carriers will not be stationed or deployed" in former East Germany. The German Ministry of Defence refutes this interpretation, asserting that CTF Baltic is a German command with allied staff officers.

The BSW campaign is unlikely to have a direct impact on the current government's security policy. However, it will be the main theme of the party's campaign ahead of the 2025 parliamentary elections, potentially influencing public opinion. The BSW seeks to position itself as the sole political force capable of shielding Germany from entering a conflict with Russia.

### Commentary

- **The BSW positions itself as an alternative to both the ruling coalition and the opposition Christian Democrats, advocating for a significant shift in Germany's security policy.** It opposes continued military support for Ukraine, calling instead for peace negotiations

with Moscow and the establishment of a pan-European security framework that includes Russia. The BSW perceives Germany's NATO membership as a vehicle for US dominance over Berlin, contending that the US utilises Germany to further its interests in Ukraine, thereby drawing it into the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The party is also critical of Germany's increased defence spending, viewing diplomacy as the most effective means of securing peace in Europe. It seeks to position itself as the true "peace party", contrasting with the Alternative for Germany (AfD). While the AfD aligns with the BSW on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, it does support increased defence spending. The BSW's favourable outcome in September's regional elections in eastern Germany highlights the appeal of its narrative; voters there cited the party's stance on Ukraine and Russia as their primary reason for support (see '[Success for the AfD and the BSW in Thuringia and Saxony](#)').

- **The BSW's attempt to leverage its regional election success to influence federal policy is unlikely to yield direct results.** The party seeks to **address** topics such as initiating peace talks with Russia, halting military aid to Kyiv, and prohibiting the stationing of US intermediate missile systems in Germany during coalition negotiations with the SPD in Brandenburg and with the CDU and SPD in Saxony and Thuringia. However, these demands will likely be reduced to non-binding statements of "striving for peace in Europe", incorporated into the preambles of coalition agreements without affecting Berlin's current stance. The federal states lack authority over national security policy, and both the CDU and SPD oppose the BSW's positions. Furthermore, the BSW's local structures do not prioritise these issues in forming coalition governments
- **The BSW's efforts to challenge Germany's traditional security policy will be central to the party's campaign strategy leading up to the 2025 Bundestag election.** The party is likely to seek increased polarisation on issues relating to the Russian-Ukrainian war, relations with Moscow, strengthening NATO defence and deterrence, and US involvement in Europe. An October opinion poll by Forschungsgruppe Wahlen indicated that 31% of respondents favoured reducing military aid to Ukraine (+3 percentage points since June), 38% supported increasing it (-3 percentage points), and 27% preferred maintaining it at the current level. Another October poll by Infratest dimap found that 45% of Germans viewed the deployment of US intermediate missile systems in Germany negatively, while 40% viewed it positively.