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Saxony-Anhalt: AfD and BSW demand an end to aid for Ukraine

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At a special session on 14 October, the parliament of Saxony-Anhalt adopted a joint resolution submitted by the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), entitled 'Peace talks instead of expanding the war in Ukraine'. The AfD (39 MPs) and BSW (5) hold a majority in the 83-seat state parliament (*Landtag*) but have not formed a formal coalition. In the resolution, the two parliamentary groups call for an immediate ceasefire and the start of negotiations with Russia, alongside the normalisation of economic relations and the immediate lifting of sanctions. Its authors argue that "the energy and economic war being waged against Russia is inflicting enormous losses on German industry, businesses, trade and our citizens". The AfD and BSW demand a halt to arms deliveries and all financial assistance to Ukraine, with the exception of humanitarian aid. In the longer term, they also want Ukraine to be granted neutral status.

The resolution brings together earlier demands by the AfD and BSW to end German support for Ukraine. However, it also marks the first attempt to advance these demands through the Bundesrat, Germany's upper house. In practice, the resolution would only be submitted to the Bundesrat by a new AfD-led state government.

Commentary

- **Pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian policies provide common ground for the AfD and BSW. The two parties can therefore be expected to support similar initiatives in the future, even without a formal coalition.** In its state election manifesto, the AfD calls for resuming gas imports from Russia, repairing the damaged Nord Stream pipeline, expanding Russian-language teaching and restoring school exchanges with Russia. The BSW also advocates resuming purchases of Russian gas. During the debate in the *Landtag*, a BSW representative suggested that Kyiv had violated an agreement on 'Ukraine's neutrality' and stressed that "NATO's eastward enlargement should never have taken place".
- **The decision to convene a special session of the *Landtag* specifically to discuss policy towards Russia and Ukraine reflects negative public sentiment in Saxony-Anhalt regarding support for Ukraine** – a theme that also featured prominently in the campaign ahead of the September state election. Opposition to supporting Ukraine is particularly strong in eastern Germany: according to an INSA poll published on 12 September, 50% of respondents in the former East Germany favour reducing this assistance, compared with

41% in western Germany. An ARD poll published on 6 September found that 57% of Saxony-Anhalt residents, including 92% of AfD voters, support the party's efforts to halt arms deliveries to Ukraine.

- **The state parliament's decision is political and will not prompt the current state government to submit the initiative to the Bundesrat.** On 8 October, the office of the incumbent Minister-President, Sven Schulze (CDU), emphasised that it would decide on the next steps independently. The state government has two months to provide the *Landtag* with a written response outlining further action. Foreign and defence policy falls within the remit of the federal government. Should the AfD form a government in Saxony-Anhalt, submitting the resolution to the Bundesrat would likely become a priority for the new administration. The election of a new state Minister-President is expected to take place in December this year; the AfD intends to nominate Ulrich Siegmund for the post.