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**Master Thesis**

Educational degree – M.A.

**“Controversies in politics of the Left party in Germany towards Ukraine before and after the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine”**

Performed by: student of the 2nd year of study  
052 Political Science

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Master Thesis is defended with the note  
«\_\_\_\_\_»

Secretary \_\_\_\_\_  
«\_\_\_\_» \_\_\_\_\_ 2023

Kyiv 2023

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## Glossary

**CDU**- the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (German: Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands)

**CSU**- the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (German: Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern)

**DDR/GDR**- German: Deutsche Demokratische Republik/ English: German Democratic Republic

**Der Bundestag**- the national Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany

**Die Linke Partei** (Linkspartei oder Die Linken)- the Left Party in Germany

**EU**- the European Union

**FDP**- the Free Democratic Party (German: Freie Demokratische Partei)

**KPD**- the Communist Party of Germany (German: Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands)

**LDPD**- Liberal Democratic Party of Germany (German: Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands)

**PDS**- the Party of Democratic Socialism (German: Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus)

**SED**- the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (German: Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands)

**SPD**- the Social Democratic Party of Germany (German: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)

**WASG**- Labour and Social Justice – The Electoral Alternative (German: Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit – Die Wahlalternative)

## Introduction

The Left Party has experienced numerous internal conflicts over the years. Following Gregor Gysi's resignation as parliamentary group leader in 2015, the party no longer had any of its three key figures for integration and leadership (Oppelland/Träger 2014: 232). Under the joint leadership of Sahra Wagenknecht and Dietmar Bartsch, the party became divided into two factions with differing views.

On the one hand, the party stayed for the more position that envisions the end of the capitalist order (Sahra Wagenknecht). Still, on the other hand, Dietmar Bartsch, with additional moderate members of the party, was persuaded that the Left's purpose is to merely crop capitalism's neoliberal excesses — mainly through market regulation and a social welfare system that is not based on punitive sanctions (Holzhauser 2021: 15, 18).

Even though Wagenknecht is well-known and good at speaking for the party, some people at the party do not agree with her. These internal disagreements and controversies have persisted over time. Remarkably, the party's stance on foreign policy, specifically concerning Russia, has been a point of contention, both before and after the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022. Some people in the Left Party hold pro-Russian views and defend Putin's policies, while others adopt a more critical stance towards the Kremlin (Spiegel 2022; Wissler/Schirdewan 2022). Consequently, relations with Russia have become a divisive factor within the party.

There have been problems inside the Left Party because of changes in leaders, differences in beliefs, and arguments about its policies and positions in different political fields. In addition, the internal functioning of the party has influenced its capacity to maintain a unified stance on crucial political issues.

In 2009, the Left Party got many votes in a big election. They got 11.9% of the votes and became the fourth-biggest party in the Bundestag.

In subsequent federal elections, the Left Party maintained a notable presence in the Bundestag, consistently receiving a significant share of the votes. For instance, the party consistently garnered substantial voter support, enabling them to maintain their presence in the Bundestag. From 2009 to 2021, the party secured a range of votes, varying between 8.7% and 11.9% in different elections (Bundestag, 2022).

The Left Party's politics towards Russia and its stance on the ongoing war in Ukraine hold significant relevance in the German political landscape and foreign affairs. With its historical connections to the Soviet Union and its role as a prominent political force in Germany, understanding the party's position on these issues is crucial for comprehending the broader dynamics of German foreign policy and its impact on regional stability.

So, the Left Party is a top topic for scholars and voters in Germany. A large body of research is being produced about the history, failures of that party to enter the parliament, the attitudes of that party towards Russia before February 2022, the values and interests of that party, and its ideology. Numerous studies have explored various aspects of a political group's history, including their inability to form a government, their perspectives on Russia before 2022, their ideological beliefs, and the decision-making processes within the party (Umland 2013: 2; Klimkin/Umland 2022: 13-18; Fix 2018: 498-515).

Therefore, scientific papers about German political parties and their policies toward Ukraine are examined.

Much scientific research and analysis were written about German dependency on Russian gas (Umland 2013: 2). As Umland argued in 2013, the combination of the substantial economic potential of Russia with the commercial interests of certain German politicians and entrepreneurs has led to an unhealthy situation in which German companies appear to assist Moscow in reshaping the East European geo-economic landscape. The Kremlin skillfully plays on Germany's lack of knowledge, missing concern, or willful self-delusion

about the deeper motives of Russian foreign economic policies towards the other former Soviet republics (Umland 2013: 2). Therefore, there is an attempt by Russia to sway the foreign policy of Germany. Additionally, the Left Party has ties to the DDR, Soviet Union, and Russia throughout its history.

Extensive scientific research has been conducted on German foreign policy towards Russia and Ukraine. However, finding information on specific political parties and their stance on Ukraine posed a challenge. According to Essen and Umland's 2023 anthology, Germany's policy towards Russia since 1990 has been systematically examined. The book also suggests new directions in German security policy and highlights the need for timely policy corrections to prepare for future conflicts and security challenges.

In addition, Sebastian Schäffer's edited book "Ukraine in Central and Eastern Europe" provides insights into the influence of Ukraine's geopolitical location on neighboring states and Europe, as well as its impact on international politics in the region (Klimkin/Umland 2022: 13-18). While few scientific papers on this topic were available before February 24, 2022, recent publications such as *The Economist*, *Foreign Affairs*, and Chatham House continue to discuss "Germany's Ukraine Problem," "Ukraine at war: consequences for Germany" or "Can Ukraine and Germany overcome their disagreements." These topics are now frequently discussed in newspapers, scientific journals, and articles like *International Affairs Journal*, *Energy Research*, and *Social Science Journal*.

Germany has been recognized as the leader in crisis management efforts during the Ukraine conflict in 2014 and 2015. It has maintained its leadership position in the EU during and after February 24, 2022. Despite extensive scientific research on German foreign policy towards Russia and Ukraine, traditional conceptualizations of German power still need to sufficiently explain this new leadership role. Fix's analysis (2018: 498-515) offers a more nuanced understanding of German power, highlighting the importance of power as a

category in member states' relations within the EU. By applying a comprehensive taxonomy of power, Fix's analysis aims at untangling the different 'shades' of German power, arguing that German 'Machtpolitik' is much more nuanced and subtle than previous conceptualizations and theoretical schools suggest. Taking Germany and EU foreign policy during the Ukraine conflict as a case study, this article contributes a new theoretically grounded perspective to the question of German power and influence within the European Union (EU). The aim is to bring back power as a category into the analysis of member states' relations within the EU since power politics have only been tamed but have yet to be included in the European project. By combining and applying different 'shades' of power, Germany has become the central axis of policymaking between the EU and Russia during the Ukraine conflict, decisively shaping the discourse and content of EU policy toward Russia (Fix 2018: 498-515).

To sum up, the literature about Russian-German relations, the German dependency on Russian gas, the geopolitical location of Ukraine and its influence on Ukrainian politics, the Left's party historical connection to the Soviet Union and Russia, and of course, after February 24, 2022, the tendency of scientific articles rose about the foreign policy of Germany toward Ukraine, German and Ukrainian relations, but it was not observed and mentioned anything about the attitudes of German political parties toward Ukraine, especially the Left's party.

As mentioned, the Left Party in Germany is historically connected with the Soviet Union and Russia. So, the policies of this party are influenced by pro-Russian voters and politicians within the party (ASPI). It means that during the war in Ukraine in 2022-23, pro-Russian supporters in this party could influence these policies toward Ukraine. For this reason, the *purpose of this study is to find out* and close the research gap in a question about the policies of the Left Party towards Ukraine before and after the beginning of the Russian war in

2022. Additionally, it seeks to analyze the decision-making process within the party and its impact on the policies regarding Ukraine and Russia. Furthermore, the study will explore the controversies within the party that might have implications for its representation in the Bundestag.

**The research subject of this paper** is the politics, policies, and positions of Die Linke concerning Ukraine and Russia.

**The research object** is the war in Ukraine from February 24, 2022, and changes in the Left's party policies towards Ukraine and Russia.

This paper intends to describe the politics and policies of Die Linke and the positions of the party members within the party towards Ukraine and Russia.

The main research questions of the present study are:

- 1. How did Die Linke change its policies towards Ukraine before and after the beginning of the full-scale war?*
- 2. How do the various positions of party members affect their representation in the German Bundestag?*

The research aims to determine the evolution of Die Linke's politics concerning Ukraine before and after the beginning of the full-scale war during the constant controversies and conflicts within this party.

Two research hypotheses were constructed:

**Research Hypothesis 1:** The popularity of the left-wing party in Germany was influenced by the war in Ukraine in 2022, leading voters to choose alternative parties because of its stance against arming Ukraine.

**Research Hypothesis 2:** The party's ambiguous positions may lead to its absence in parliament and even the potential dissolution of the party.

## **Methodology**

To thoroughly comprehend the actions, positions, politics, and policies of the Left Party in Germany, it is imperative to delve into the intra-party decision-making process and scrutinize how power is distributed among various actors within the party (Detterbeck 2011: 117).



By studying power distribution within the party, one can gain insights into the dynamics that shape the decision-making process. This analysis will, therefore, entail studying and examining specific representatives of the party and their influence on the decision-making process. Noteworthy figures such as Sahra Wagenknecht, Oskar Lafontaine, Gregor Gysi, Martin Schirdewan, Klaus Ernst, and others will be closely scrutinized. Their roles, positions, and contributions to the decision-making process within the Left Party will be assessed and analyzed.

A comprehensive understanding of the internal dynamics and decision-making processes of the Left Party can be obtained by examining the influence and actions of these key party members. Furthermore, this analysis will elucidate the interplay between individual party representatives, their ideologies, and the resulting policies and politics of the party as a whole.

The paper is based on the analysis of the following data:

**First phase: data gathering.**

- I. Electoral programs and programmatic documents of the Left Party (Leitantrag des Bundesvorstandes, Parteitag 2022; Grundsatzprogramm 2011).
- II. Statements by high-ranking Left party members and interviews in print media.

**Second phase: analysis of the data**

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the intra-party decision-making process, power distribution, and resulting policies and politics of the Left Party in Germany, it is crucial to conduct qualitative research on party documents, speeches, and interviews of party members. Content and discourse analysis are the two suitable methods for this type of research, as they allow for inductive analysis and interpretation of textual data.

Content analysis emerged from studies of archived texts (Fram 2014; Hoffman et al. 2011: 29-35), such as newspapers, transcripts of speeches, and magazines. Ellingson noted that content analysis resides in the postpositivist typology, which allows researchers to "conduct an inductive analysis of textual data, form a typology grounded in the data [...] use the derived typology to sort data into categories, and then count the frequencies of each theme or category across data." (Tunison 2023: 596)

Discourse analysis is both a methodology and an approach to discourse analysis. It is a term used for the examination and analysis of speech and writing, though other texts which give meaning are included in the definition of discourse (Sankar 2022: 405-414).

### **Structure of the paper**

The paper is structured into *three* chapters.

*The first chapter* provides an overview of the conflict in Ukraine since 2014, including reactions of significant countries and international organizations, and establishes the topic's relevance.

*Chapter 2* analyzes the history of the Left Party's formation in Germany, its connections to the Soviet Union, and the emergence of the new Die Linke party before delving into the party's performance in the Bundestag and specific statements made by famous politicians within the party. The research also investigates the party's crises, assessing fluctuations in popularity among voters during the war in Ukraine and global energy crises. Additionally, this chapter provides the answer to the primary research questions.

*In the third chapter*, the focus will be on discussing the critical aspects related to the Die Linke party crisis summit held in Leipzig. The chapter will delve into the discussions, debates, and decisions made during the summit to address the party's challenges and internal divisions. Furthermore, it will highlight the importance of internal dialogue and unity within the party,

emphasizing the need for effective decision-making processes and consensus-building mechanisms.

## **Chapter 1. The Ukraine Crisis: An Examination of the Conflict's Origins and Relevance to Contemporary Events**

In the 1920s, Mykhola Khvylovy, a Ukrainian novelist, publicist, and political activist, coined the slogan "Геть від Москви! Дайош Європу! (In Ukrainian)" which translates to "Go away from Moscow! Give us Europe!" (Yurchuk, 2020: 146). This slogan is still relevant today due to the full-scale war Russia initiated in Ukraine. However, the conflict began in 2014 after the annexation of Crimea and the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine following the "Revolution of Dignity" or "Euromaidan" in Kyiv (Bebier, 2015: 37; 40), Russia aimed to establish closer relations with Ukraine and prevent its integration with the EU and the West. Even so, the Ukrainians wanted to strengthen ties with the EU, but Russia instigated the conflict.

The ongoing conflict, also known as the "Ukrainian crisis," has resulted in a full-scale war in Ukraine since February 24, 2022.

In response to the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, *Emmanuel Macron* President of France stated that it was a pivotal moment in European history, and the G7 nations pledged to enforce strict sanctions. A unified voice emerged, expressing condemnation and a commitment to imposing sanctions. President *Joe Biden* of the United States accused President Putin of consciously opting for a war that would result in a devastating loss of lives and immense human suffering. *Ursula von der Leyen*, the European Commission chief, held Putin accountable for reintroducing warfare to Europe. Prime Minister *Boris Johnson* of the United Kingdom accused Putin of choosing a path of bloodshed and destruction through an unprovoked attack. German Chancellor *Olaf Scholz* expressed his anger, referring to it as "Putin's war" and asserting that the Russian leader would face severe consequences for his grave mistake (BBC, 2022).

The escalation of the conflict in Ukraine elicited astonishment among world leaders and other international actors. In response, they began implementing sanctions against Russia and providing aid and weaponry to Ukraine.

However, the German foreign policy toward Ukraine and "Waffenlieferung" (weapon supply) was very controversial a few months after the full-scale war in Ukraine began. The Washington Post published an article with the title "Is Germany Letting Ukraine Down? It is Not That Simple" or "What is Wrong with Germany?" (Washingtonpost). According to The Washington Post, the foreign policy needed to be more transparent regarding the weapon supply to Ukraine, and Ukraine and several European countries neighboring Berlin are seeking answers. Germany's hesitance to assist Ukraine puts its reputation at risk, portraying it as a nation that gains substantial advantages from the current global system but is unwilling to protect it actively.

However, German President *Frank-Walter Steinmeier* defended the cautious approach of the federal government in supplying heavy weapons to Ukraine, stating that every responsible politician must consider the circumstances under which a "dramatic escalation of the conflict" could occur. He also prepared the German armed forces for "challenging times" (RND, 2023).

To clarify this statement, an analysis will be conducted on the attitudes of political parties in Germany toward supplying weapons to Ukraine.

German foreign policy displays caution in its approach to this matter. On January 19, 2023, the article about tank delivery to Ukraine was published on the official German Bundestag website. Although, for example, criticism has been directed towards Chancellor Olaf Scholz by Dr. Johann David Wadehul, the deputy faction leader of CDU/CSU, regarding his reluctance to supply Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine, the German foreign policy remains cautious in its actions toward weapons supply to Ukraine. Furthermore, he emphasized that

tanks were crucial as a formidable weapon in this context (Deutscher Bundestag, 2023).

Wadepful argued against Germany acting alone, as Poland and Finland had expressed intentions to deliver Leopard 2 tanks. He accused the Chancellor of adopting a unilateral approach, branding Germany as a hindrance and a "drag" among its NATO allies. He also pointed out that Germany still possessed a 200 older Leopard 1 tank stock that could be swiftly dispatched to Ukraine (Deutscher Bundestag, 2023).

In response, the SPD emphasized the importance of future decisions at Ramstein and criticized the Union's motion as an attempt to create unrest ahead of the NATO defense ministers' meeting. They emphasized the clear majority in the Bundestag to support Ukraine with weapons. They highlighted Ukraine's need for additional combat tanks to secure victory and regain control of occupied territories (Deutscher Bundestag, 2023).

The Greens and the FDP expressed support for delivering combat tanks, while the Ampel coalition had yet to reach a consensus. The Greens acknowledged the positive step taken by providing 40 Marder armored personnel carriers but stressed the necessity of coordinated use of armored and combat tanks. The FDP warned against Scholz's resistance and emphasized the importance of strong military support for Ukraine as a united response against any attempts to dismantle its system (Deutscher Bundestag, 2023).

In contrast, *the Left Party* rejected supplying Leopard tanks to Ukraine and instead called for a diplomatic peace initiative. Dietmar Bartsch, the leader of the Left Party, argued that escalating the arms race would only lead to further conflict and emphasized the need to return to diplomacy. Bartsch also highlighted the agreements reached on grain deliveries and exchanging prisoners of war as evidence of the effectiveness of diplomacy and pointed out that the military approach would not lead to victory, particularly considering Russia's status as a nuclear power (Deutscher Bundestag, 2023).

## **1.1 Die Linke's Position on the War in Ukraine: Analysis of the Party's Stance and Responses to the Conflict**

Due to its historical connections and ideological affiliations, the Left Party's response to the Russian war in Ukraine has raised doubts and uncertainties. The party's origins are rooted in the Soviet Union and communist ideology, which has led to suspicion of its alignment with Putin's agenda. Moreover, there have been claims that the Left Party and Putin agreed until 2022, suggesting that NATO's actions provoked Putin to initiate the war (TAZ, 2022).

The Left Party's stance on the Ukrainian conflict has raised skepticism due to its historical ties to communism. There are concerns that the party may lean towards Russia and not provide full support for Ukraine's sovereignty or NATO's efforts against Russian aggression. Some argue that the party's emphasis on diplomacy instead of a more assertive response is subject to criticism. However, others interpret their calls for diplomatic initiatives as an attempt to avoid taking a firm stance against Russia. The Left Party's perspective on the Ukrainian conflict has generated debate and discussion within the political community. While party supporters advocate for a considerate approach that considers historical context and prioritizes peaceful solutions, there are concerns about the party's true intentions and dedication to ensuring Ukraine's protection. Moreover, the broader implications of the party's position on the geopolitical stage need to be carefully examined. (CNN, 2021; BBC News, 2021). The Left Party has been represented in the Bundestag, the German federal parliament, and has received a significant share of the votes in several federal elections.

So, the Left Party has been a presence in the German federal parliament, known as the Bundestag, and has garnered a substantial share of the votes in various federal elections. However, its position and actions regarding the

Ukrainian war have raised doubts and uncertainties. Due to its historical connections and ideological affiliations, the Left Party's response to the Russian war in Ukraine has faced scrutiny. Due to its origins in the Soviet Union and adherence to communist ideologies, doubts have been raised regarding the Left Party's alignment with Putin's agenda. There have been suggestions of a prior agreement between the Left Party and Putin until 2022, implying that NATO's actions may have provoked Putin to initiate the war.

There are doubts and criticisms surrounding the Left Party's position on the conflict in Ukraine, with critics expressing skepticism about the party's sympathies leaning toward Russia. Such suspicions arise from their historical alignment with Soviet policies and ongoing support for Putin's regime, which raises questions about their commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and NATO's efforts to counter Russian aggression.

The party's perceived reluctance to confront Russia and emphasis on diplomatic solutions have also faced criticism from those advocating for a more assertive response to the conflict. Some argue that the Left Party needs to fully grasp the gravity of the situation and recognize the urgent need to support Ukraine against Russian aggression. At the same time, skeptics view their calls for diplomacy as an attempt to avoid taking a firm stance against Russia's actions.

The Left Party's stance on the Ukrainian war has sparked divisions and debates within the political landscape, with party supporters advocating for a nuanced approach that considers historical context and prioritizes peaceful resolutions. However, critics question their motivations and dedication to Ukraine's security, expressing concerns about the potential broader implications of their stance within the geopolitical landscape.

Despite these controversies, the Left Party remains represented in the Bundestag and has secured a significant share of the votes in several federal elections. However, its popularity among voters has fluctuated over time,



influenced by various factors, including its stance on critical issues such as the Ukrainian conflict and internal conflicts and divisions.

## **Chapter 2. The Evolution of The Left Party: A Historical Perspective**

The historical analysis of the Left Party will be made to analyze the policies toward Russia and Ukraine, the Left Party, from its emergence of this party till today.

In 1945 in the Soviet part of Germany, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Germany, or Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, had the most members within the party; it stood for social democracy. However, the ideology held no significance for the Soviet occupying authorities. Because of that, the KPD tried to monopolies the power in DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) or the German Democratic Republic (Malycha/ Jochen, 2009: 16-18).

For The KPD leaders, communism was an example of rule order in the Soviet Union and East Germany. So that they tried to extend its power to SPD, and most Social Democrats recognized the extent of the KPD's dependence on Moscow directives and the privileged treatment of the Communists by the military administration had become obvious (Malycha/ Jochen, 2009: 16-18). On April 1946, in Berlin, the SPD and KPD party conference was separately held, and the decision about the foundation of the new political party was made. The SED was formally founded at the "Unification Party Congress" on April 21 and 22, 1946, in the "Admiral's Palace" in Berlin. 548 social democratic and 507 communist delegates unanimously merged the SPD and KPD in the Soviet zone.

Moreover, according to Andreas Malycha and Peter Jochen (2009: 16-18), it failed to establish democratic legitimacy for its rule. During the first post-war elections, the party could not get the absolute majority in the parliament. As a result, the SED failed to gain widespread support among the people of the DDR, who were disillusioned by the party's authoritarian tendencies and lack of democratic processes. Furthermore, the SED's reputation of representing

Moscow's interests further alienated it from the people. In the early post-war years, it had the reputation of representing Moscow's interests vis-à-vis the East German population as the "Russian party" (Malycha/ Jochen, 2009: 18; 35).

The Left Party is an heir of the Socialist Unity Party or SED, which was the ruling party of the German Democratic Republic (Hudson, 2012: 83). After the Second World War, Germany was split up into the Soviet Union part of Germany the socialism as a goal of the communist policy was mentioned. The Main Slogan of KPD-Leaders was "den Weg der Aufrichtung eines antifaschistischen, demokratischen Regimes, einer parlamentarisch-demokratischen Republik mit allen demokratischen Rechten und Freiheiten für das Volk" (Volkszeitung 1945) which translates to English as "the path towards establishing an anti-fascist, democratic regime, a parliamentary-democratic republic with all democratic rights and freedoms for the people."

The SED's legacy lives on through the Left Party, which traces its roots back to the ruling party of the GDR. However, the Left Party has distanced itself from the SED and has sought to establish itself as a democratic, socialist party. The party has undergone significant ideological changes since the fall of the Berlin Wall, embracing a more democratic and progressive platform.

Despite the challenges faced by the SED and its legacy, the events surrounding its formation and eventual downfall serve as a reminder of the dangers of authoritarianism and the importance of democratic processes. Moreover, the lessons learned from the SED's failure can guide us in building more just and equitable societies.

The SED party was responsible for socialism in DDR, as was mentioned at the Second Party conference in 1952 in Berlin. (Protokoll der Verhandlungen der II. Parteikonferenz der SED, 9. bis 12. Juni 1952 in der Werner-Seelenbinder- Halle zu Berlin. Berlin 1952). Therefore, the SED party was the most suitable for the Soviet government and political regime. The ideology of

SED was crucial for the KPD leaders, and it played a considerable role in the subsequent history of this party.

The ideology of the SED party played a significant role in the history of the KPD leaders. The SED was the leading force in the DDR, and its principle of "democratic centralism," which suggests that the party "is always right," according to Eckhard Jesse, determined the party's actions. The state's law was also subordinated to the SED party, leading to the official ideology in East Germany becoming less critical. Although the political regime claimed total control, it could not consistently enforce it in every aspect of society (Jesse, 1994: 161).

According to Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich, the Soviet leaders, with the support of the SED, attempted to legally divide the people of Germany, which may have been seen as a way to consolidate power and maintain control over the population (Friedrich, 1992: 139).

To sum up, after World War II, Germany was divided into East Germany, controlled by the Soviet Union, and West Germany, owned by the Western Allies. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) had the most members in East Germany. However, the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), favored by the Soviet occupying authorities, sought to establish a socialist state and monopolize power over the SPD. This led to the formation of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in 1946, which became the sole ruling party in East Germany. The SED was determined by the principle of "democratic centralism," with the law in the state being subordinated to the party.

The SED's ideology played a crucial role in the party's history, and the party attempted to undermine the unity of the German nation by creating a legal division between different groups of people. Although the official ideology became less important over time, the political regime still claimed total control over the population (Protokoll der Verhandlungen der II. Parteikonferenz der

SED, 9. bis 12. Juni 1952 in der Werner-Seelenbinder-Halle zu Berlin. Berlin 1952; Friedrich, 1992: 139).

The SED established itself as a unity party controlling all aspects of social and political life in the GDR, with a well-defined hierarchy led by a Central Committee directed by a Politburo. The Politburo was the party's highest body and made all significant decisions for the party and the government (Stasi-Archiv). The party also controlled the Stasi, tasked with comprehensive surveillance and suppression of the population, which had a vast network of informants and spies throughout society to spy on and suppress dissidents and opposition (Stasi-Archiv).

## **2.1 Planungspolitik/planned economy**

According to the Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum, the economic policy of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) was characterized by central planning controlled by the government. However, this planned economy could have been more efficient, leading to shortages of goods and services. In comparison to West Germany and other Western countries, the economy of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was considered backward and required assistance to keep up with the market economy (Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum).

In the 1950s, the SED utilized the planned economy to transform society by creating multi-year economic and social development plans. The transition to a planned economy in 1947/48 marked a significant change in Germany's economic policy. The German Economic Commission, established in 1947, played a crucial role in central economic management (Ritter, 2002: 173-174).

The SED aimed to provide a blueprint for economic and social development through the planned economy enforced through various instruments such as the state apparatus, mass organizations, and other channels.

Therefore, the SED's planned economy was enforced through various channels, including the German Economic Commission, which became an essential instrument for central economic management. In addition, the SED declared itself a "party of a new type" and formed new parties under its control while dismantling existing bourgeois parties such as the CDU and LDPD (Ritter, 2002: 173-174).

The SED launched several multi-year plans, starting with a two-year plan in 1949/50 that was continued for 1951-1955 with a five-year plan based on the Soviet model. The second five-year plan was replaced by a seven-year plan in the fall of 1959, in line with the Soviet planning cycle. The SED and mass organizations such as the FDGB were tasked with enforcing the specifications of these plans (Ritter, 2002: 173-174).

However, the tight focus on a centralized planned economy ultimately contributed to the collapse of the GDR. The economic course set in 1948/49 led to wrong economic decisions and failed to adapt to changing circumstances. Moreover, the over-reliance on state planning and a lack of market mechanisms stifled innovation and were unable to address the underlying inefficiencies in the economy.

In summary, the SED's use of a planned economy was vital in transforming society, but it ultimately proved unsustainable. The tight control exerted by the SED and its mass organizations and the lack of market mechanisms led to inefficiencies and ultimately contributed to the collapse of the GDR.

During SED rule, there were also political repressions and oppression of the opposition. Critics and opposition were imprisoned, persecuted, and forced to leave the country. However, there were also resistance movements and

protests against SED rule, especially during the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 43).

This crisis occurred just as Mikhail Gorbachev presented his major reform project for the Soviet Union, which gave hope to opposition groups throughout the Eastern Bloc and the population of the GDR. The SED wanted to become more independent from the Soviet Union, which was seen as its "big brother," and tried to assert an independence that the GDR had never really had and could not achieve then. However, this attempt was unsuccessful, and the collapse of the GDR became inevitable, ultimately leading to the reunification of Germany. Leader and the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED, Erich Honecker, tried to assert an independence that the GDR had never really had and could not achieve then. He used the slogan "Socialism in the Colors of the GDR" to promote this idea (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 43-45).

The SED had survived several crises in the past, including the one in 1953, but the one in the 1980s proved too much. The economic situation in the country was worsening, and the system was losing social acceptance. This made even SED members and officials insecure, leading to a party leadership crisis. At this time, Mikhail Gorbachev introduced his major reform project for the Soviet Union, which included the keywords "glasnost" and "perestroika." This project gave hope to opposition groups throughout the Eastern Bloc and the people of the GDR (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 43-45).

However, the SED wanted to become more independent from the Soviet Union and distance itself from its "big brother." Erich Honecker tried to promote this idea with the slogan "Socialism in the Colors of the GDR." However, this attempt to assert independence was unrealistic, as the GDR had never really been independent and could not achieve this goal then (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 43-45).

## 2.2 From SED to PDS

In response to the swift decline of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) as the party in support of the state, a special party conference was convened. Erich Honecker, the head of state and party, was removed after the 40th-anniversary celebrations of the GDR on October 7, 1989. Egon Krenz took over as his successor but later resigned from all offices due to criticism. To save the collapsing party, SED strategists looked for young and fresh party members who held critical positions to promote internal party reform. This led to Gregor Gysi's election as the new chairman at an extraordinary party conference on December 9. Wolfgang Berghofer, mayor of Dresden, and Hans Modrow, former first secretary of the SED district administration in Dresden, were elected as his deputies. They were co-initiators of the internal party reforms (Chronik der Deutschen Einheit: 16.12.1989 | Bundesregierung).

The transformation of the SED was considered necessary, beginning with changing party leaders. However, the new party leaders faced a crucial decision: whether to dissolve the SED or renew it from within. Despite this dilemma, most party members hesitated to dissolve the party and start anew. The newly elected party leader, Gregor Gysi, appealed to the members, stating that he believed the dissolution of the party and its re-establishment would be a fateful decision for the party (Chronik der Deutschen Einheit: 16.12.1989 | Bundesregierung).

Most party members followed Gysi's call for realignment with the idea of "democratic socialism." As a result, the SED was renamed the Socialist Unity Party of Germany - Party of Democratic Socialism (SED-PDS). The party dropped the incriminating name SED in preparation for the first free elections in the GDR in February 1990, no longer wanting to be associated with the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (Chronik der Deutschen Einheit: 16.12.1989 | Bundesregierung).



In conclusion, the SED underwent significant changes due to internal party reforms, including the election of new party leaders and the decision to realign with the idea of democratic socialism. The majority of party members decided to renew the party from within, leading to the renaming of the SED as the SED-PDS. These changes were made in preparation for the first free elections in the GDR in February 1990, as the party no longer wanted to be associated with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The transformation of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) into the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) involved significant changes to the party's structure and approach. The new party statute departed from the principle of "democratic centralism," allowing members to express criticism and adopting a "pluralism" approach that replaced the previous ban on parliamentary groups. The party created new platforms, working groups, and interest groups to prevent oligarchization but also aimed for continuity and preservation. The group around Gysi and Bisky rejected calls to dissolve and start anew as they risked losing control over the party apparatus, finances, and influence (Holzhauser, 2020: 91).

However, the PDS's strong identification with the GDR, which it had governed for four decades, was evident until its defeat in March 1990, marking the end of the GDR. Before the Volkskammer elections in 1990, the PDS focused on preventing further erosion and centrifugal forces, delaying decisions on defining the party's profile, such as whether to continue identifying as a communist. Gysi intentionally left the question of the party's ideology unanswered until the Volkskammer elections, after which the idea of "renewed" socialism was discredited in the eyes of many (Holzhauser, 2020: 92-93).

In 1994, the PDS faced whether to transition from opposition to government. The party became the third most potent force in state elections in East Germany and had the chance to participate in the government for the first time in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia.

However, the PDS ultimately did not join the government anywhere due to the Social Democrats' reservations about forming a coalition with the successor organization to the SED. As a result, talks in Thuringia and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania that had started were broken off in the fall of 1994 (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 65-67).

As a left-wing party in the emerging three-party system in East Germany, the PDS faced the classic question of whether or not they were willing to take on the governing responsibilities. Unlike other parties in the Federal Republic of Germany that were ready to take over the government without much internal debate, the PDS had first to clarify its role in the political system. This uncertainty of the party position led to intense debates between the reformers, who were willing to govern, and the traditionalists or orthodox, who consistently relied on fundamental opposition. Although the PDS did not enter into a formal coalition then, its position as the third most vital force in the state elections in East Germany in 1994 meant that it had to consider the possibility of governing. However, talks with the Social Democrats in Thuringia and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania broke off due to reservations about a coalition with the successor organization to the SED (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 65-67).

In contrast, the PDS had the opportunity to enter into a formal coalition with the SPD in Berlin, marking the first time it would be in power in a country consisting of an east and west part. This is significant because the PDS has consistently advocated for social benefits, which could help consolidate Berlin's finances. The political landscape has shifted significantly in the last decade, with an anti-fascist consensus partially superseding the previous anti-extremist consensus. In addition, the PDS has demonstrated its commitment to combating right-wing extremism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and violence by joining the democratic parties in passing a motion in the German Bundestag. Consequently, most of the public no longer sees the party as a left-wing extremist

group(Eckhard 2001: 58). Gregor Gysi, in his book "A look back, a step forward," emphasizes this shift in the political coordinate system.

To summarise, in 1989, due to the disintegration of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), a special party conference was held to elect new party leaders and implement internal party reforms. The new leaders faced either dissolving or renewing the SED, and most party members opted for the latter. This led to the renaming of the SED as the Socialist Unity Party of Germany - Party of Democratic Socialism (SED-PDS) and the implementation of structural changes such as the abandonment of "democratic centralism" and the creation of new platforms, working groups, and interest groups. However, the transformation of the SED into the PDS also had a conservative element, as the party aimed for continuity and preservation. Therefore, when the PDS had the opportunity to transition from opposition to the government in 1994, it had to clarify its role in the political system. Although talks with the Social Democrats in Thuringia and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania ended due to concerns about a coalition with a successor party to the SED, the PDS eventually formed a coalition with the SPD in Berlin. This marked the first time a successor party to the SED had entered a government coalition in Germany.

The PDS's 1993 program affirmed the inclusion of those who reject capitalist society, while the 2001 program draft was more moderate but still focused on changing and overcoming exploitative relationships. The PDS affirmed the inclusion of individuals who reject capitalist society in their 1993 program. In 2001, their program draft focused on changing and overcoming exploitative relationships, albeit in a more reasonable manner. The PDS operates democratically with various tendencies, including communists, and the leadership does not exclude them. However, there are tensions within the party, particularly concerning pluralism. Gysi criticized Sahra Wagenknecht from the Communist Platform for rejecting pluralism.

Eckhard (2001) argues that while Sahra Wagenknecht is a member of the PDS board, overcoming the period of internal division within the party is essential. Although some supporters of a coalition with the PDS may not want to bring up this issue, there is a big difference between offering former regime partisans who have made a credible change the opportunity to work in the new order and giving government responsibility to a party that is not a model of democratic reliability and does not fully confront its past. The PDS seems to want access to power, as evidenced by its recent statement on the wall construction, which lacked an apology (Eckhard 2001: 58-59).

During the Bundestag elections in 2002, the PDS faced a crisis, losing seats and falling below the 5% threshold. However, they made a surprising comeback in 2005 under the new name "Die Linke. PDS" as they merged with the WASG, achieving their best result with 8.7%. This victory made them the most prominent opposition group with 53 seats in the 16th German Bundestag, and they also entered a West German state parliament for the first time in 2007 (Deutscher Bundestag - Bundestagswahlergebnisse seit 1949 – Zweitstimmen).

While the WASG is often considered a split from social democracy, it is essential to note that it also had links with left-wing trade unionists and intellectuals who had ties with the PDS since the mid-1990s. Moreover, some members of the WASG had previously been part of the PDS, and Oskar Lafontaine, who had been in contact with the PDS after leaving the SPD, had also been involved in the relationship between social democracy and post-communists for some time (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 75).

In May 2005, Lafontaine announced his political return as a candidate for a left-wing "collective movement" for the upcoming federal elections, which aimed to include "social democrats, trade unionists, PDS, and WASG." Lafontaine had a positive view of the PDS and became critical of his party. This move marked a significant shift in German politics, bringing together various left-wing groups in one alliance. Despite the PDS's past issues, this alliance

allowed them to regain their footing and become a significant force in German politics once again.

In January 2005, the "Wahlalternative Arbeit und Sozialsrecht" (Election Alternative for Labor and Social Justice) was established from two groups that had formed a year earlier. These groups, which had different recruiting bases, were created in response to dissatisfaction with the labor market reforms introduced by the federal government (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 75).

In 2005, a left-wing movement rallied around the PDS, which changed its name to Left Party PDS and campaigned with sharp populist slogans against the "political class" and the "super-rich." The Left Party PDS claimed to defend the Western economic and welfare state model and the legacy of social democracy against an allegedly neoliberal "all-party coalition." The party's high survey results were seen as a defensive reaction by a conservative, reform-shy population that oscillated "between fear of the future, self-pity, and mental torpor." Some viewed the Left Party as a party of stagnation (Holzhauser, 2018: 613-615).

However, others saw it as a "new social-democratic party" that fills a representational gap for milieus that the SPD has moved away from regarding values. The Left Party was victorious in classic social-democratic groups of voters, such as the working class, those organized in unions, the unemployed, and those socialized in the 1970s. The party began to expand in the following years, albeit modestly, in the West German states and was elected to seven West German state parliaments (Holzhauser, 2018: 613-615).

In 2007, the PDS and Wahlalternative Arbeit und Sozialsrecht merged into a single party, the Left Party, despite complications with the WASG state associations in Berlin and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania announcing their intention to run independently in the state elections in 2006 (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 79-81). Ultimately, mutual competition did not threaten the merger project, and the Left Party expanded modestly in the West German states, being

elected to seven West German state parliaments (Holzhauser, 2018: 613-615). However, even if the Left Party had been invited to coalition talks, it would have faced difficulties participating due to legal regulations prohibiting two competing parties from forming joint factions.

During a joint meeting in October 2006, the executives of the two parties involved in the merger decided on the "programmatic cornerstones" and the name of the new party, which would be DIE LINKE. The merger was completed in June 2007 after delegates from both parties voted in favor of it. The new party aimed to bring about several changes, including introducing a statutory minimum wage, reversing the Hartz laws, and implementing a needs-based, non-repressive basic social security system. To finance these measures, the party proposed the reintroduction of the wealth tax, an increase in inheritance tax, and a higher top tax rate for income tax. Regarding foreign and military policy, Die Linke rejected the militarization of German foreign policy and advocated for the dissolution of NATO (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 79–81).

Despite its goals, Die Linke has faced criticism from some quarters. Detractors have accused the party of extremists and offering simplistic solutions to complex issues. Additionally, the party's willingness to work with members of the German Communist Party (DKP) has also drawn criticism. For example, allowing DKP members to run as candidates on its lists in state and municipal elections has been a point of contention. Furthermore, the party's public image has been tarnished by comments made by DKP politician Christel Wegner, who suggested reintroducing state security after a successful revolution (Oppelland/Träger, 2014: 79-81).

## 2.3 From 2007 till today

The creation of Die Linke, a political party in Germany, coincided with the financial crisis in Europe between 2007-2008. This crisis highlighted structural issues within the EU and the division of labor. While Germany quickly recovered due to strategies such as reducing labor costs and suppressing domestic demand, Die Linke proposed more solidaristic, egalitarian, and social alternative crisis strategies that the government excluded. These strategies included nationalizing banks, introducing Keynesian policies, strengthening public services and welfare benefits, increasing the minimum wage, banning hedge funds, and tightening financial market supervision.

Die Linke accused the SPD-Greens government of causing damage to the EU through its policies, particularly the "Agenda 2010" program, which aimed to revise the labor market and the welfare state in a neoliberal direction. The EU's austerity measures on struggling economies were seen as contradictory and destructive, and the Troika (IMF, European Commission, and ECB) were criticized for supporting these policies. Die Linke proposed solutions such as debt forgiveness, investment programs, and reducing the financial sector's power to address these issues. Their alternative approach focused on social justice and gained support in the 2009 European Parliament and federal elections, with the party winning seats and shifting the balance to the Left.

On the other hand, the SPD's shift towards neoliberalism alienated voters and led to poor election performance, losing support from the working-class voters who had previously supported them. As a result, the CDU won the most seats in the federal elections, followed by the SPD, FDP, Die Linke, Greens, and CSU. Despite Die Linke's alternative approach, the party faced criticism from some quarters for being extremist and offering simplistic solutions to complex issues (Arsaltanas, 2020: 426-428).

## **Chapter 3. Unveiling the Party/Election Program of Die Linke in 2011: A Comprehensive Analysis**

Die Linke's party program was approved during their party congress on October 23, 2011, and later confirmed through a membership vote from November 17 to December 15, 2011, with a rate of 95.81 percent. The program includes crucial points such as (Parteiprogramm 2011):

- 1. Social justice:** The Left Party calls for a redistribution of wealth and income to achieve social justice. They advocate for a minimum income, higher wages, and better working conditions.
- 2. Solidarity and peace:** The Left Party opposes war and military interventions and advocates for disarmament and international solidarity. They call for the dissolution of NATO and the EU and creating of a democratic peace order.
- 3. Democracy and civil rights:** The Left Party advocates for more democracy and civil rights. They call for the strengthening of the rights of employees and tenants as well as a reform of the political system to improve citizen participation and decision-making.
- 4. Environmental protection:** The Left Party advocates for protecting the environment and the climate. They call for an energy transition, the expansion of renewable energies, and adequate climate protection.
- 5. Anti-racism and anti-fascism:** The Left Party advocates for an open and solidary society and rejects racism and fascism. They advocate for the rights of migrants and refugees and call for the consistent fight against right-wing extremism.
- 6. Europe:** The Left Party calls for a democratic, social, and solidary Europe oriented towards the people's needs rather than the interests of banks and corporations. They advocate for the strengthening of the EU parliaments and a rejection of the Euro bailout fund.



These aspects are only a selection of the topics covered in the Left Party's 2011 party program.

Die Linke's electoral performance in Germany experienced significant fluctuations between 2011 and 2021. In the 2013 federal election, Die Linke won 8.6% of the vote and 64 seats in the Bundestag, making it the fourth-largest party in the parliament. However, in the 2014 European Parliament election, the party's support dropped to 7.4% and won only seven seats (Bundestagswahlergebnisse).

In the 2017 federal election, Die Linke's electoral performance improved, winning 9.2% of the vote and 69 seats in the Bundestag. This was seen as a significant achievement for the party, maintaining its position as the fourth-largest party in the parliament. However, in the 2019 European Parliament election, Die Linke's support dropped again to 5.5%, and the party won only five seats. The fluctuations in Die Linke's electoral performance can be attributed to various factors, including the party's position on controversial issues such as immigration and national security (Wilde, 2017).

Despite these challenges, Die Linke has played an important role in German politics, particularly in state elections. The party won seats in state parliaments and even formed governing coalitions in some states between 2011 and 2021. Moreover, the party's ability to maintain its position as the fourth-largest party in the Bundestag in the 2017 federal election was a significant achievement. However, declining support in the European Parliament election 2019 is a cause for concern.

Nonetheless, Die Linke remains an essential player in German politics, particularly at the state level, and its position on various issues continued to attract a significant base of support. The party program, approved in 2011, includes crucial points such as nationalizing banks, introducing Keynesian policies, strengthening public services and welfare benefits, increasing the minimum wage, banning hedge funds, and tightening financial market

supervision (Bundestagswahlergebnisse). Despite the fluctuations in electoral performance, Die Linke's program remains relevant and attractive to many voters, and the party's influence in German politics is likely to continue.

### **3.1 The Left Party's Presence in the Bundestag: An Examination of Political Influence and Representation**

Some controversial speeches and statements by party participants have marked the presence of Die Linke Partei in the Bundestag. Such speeches have led to lower election rates for the party. Sahra Wagenknecht is one of the most prominent personalities of the party and has often been guilty of controversial statements. She criticized the federal government's refugee policy, claiming that it endangered social peace in Germany. Wagenknecht has also taken a nationalist position towards the EU, which some have criticized as anti-European (Focus, 2022).

Gregor Gysi is a former party chairman who has also been involved in controversial statements. One of his most contentious remarks was when he criticized how Germany deals with its history, arguing that Germans are constantly reminded of their terrible past while other nations like the USA and Russia get away with their crimes (Focus, 2022). During the Kosovo War in 1999, Gysi criticized NATO for waging war against international law and even traveled to Belgrade to meet with Slobodan Milosevic. He insists on better relations with Russia but does not directly oppose NATO. According to signals, the future participation of the Left in the government should not be unsuccessful because of this issue (Holzhauser, 2021: 13).

Oskar Lafontaine, a former chairman of the party, has advocated for closer cooperation between Germany and Russia. He has also criticized the euro as a currency and proposed a return to the Deutsche Mark, which some consider economically unwise (Enders, 2022; Mitteldeutsche Zeitung, 2013). These statements have often caused excitement and discussion, not only within the

party but also in the German public. Some have seen them as necessary criticism of established positions, while others have found them controversial and inappropriate.

Overall, Die Linke Partei's presence in the Bundestag has been marked by some controversial speeches and statements by party participants. While some may see these as necessary criticism of established positions, others have found them controversial and inappropriate. How the party will navigate these issues remains to be seen going forward.

### **3.2 Ideological Stances and Policy Positions of Die Linke: An In-depth Examination of the Party's Political Standpoints and Key Figures**

**The next question is why there needs to be more clarity in the position of Die Linke regarding the war in Ukraine and their political stance towards Russia.** As was mentioned before, some politicians of Die Linke expressed their support for Russian actions on the territory of Ukraine.

However, on the official website of Die Linke in 2023, it is mentioned that: "The war must be ended immediately, Russia must withdraw its troops from Ukraine. Ukraine has the right to self-defense against Russia's aggression. Nevertheless, more arms deliveries will not end the war - only negotiations and diplomacy can do that. Instead, the danger of the war escalating and dragging on with more casualties and devastation increases". Moreover, according to the official website of Die Linke, the question: "Have you [the Left Party] been on Russia's side so far? (Are you still 'Putin sympathizers?)" and the answer is, "No, we have never understood Putin's violation of international law in the attack on Ukraine. [...] DIE LINKE criticizes Putin's policies, be it the massive erosion of democracy in Russia or Russia's role in international conflicts such as Syria or Ukraine. However, we have underestimated the level of aggression and willingness of the Russian government to initiate an act of aggression and

invade a neighboring country. We will now critically examine these misjudgments." [Die Linke, 2023]

In summary, the Linke party has strongly condemned Putin's violation of international law in the attack on Ukraine and is calling for an immediate end to the war through negotiations and diplomacy. Furthermore, the party acknowledges its previous misjudgments about the level of aggression of the Russian government towards Ukraine and will examine this critically. Despite this, the party rejects attempts by the US and EU to assert their dominance over Russia and China. Instead, it advocates for a balance of interests prioritizing stability and peace.

### **3.3 Positions of Sahra Wagenknecht, Gregor Gysi, and Martin Schirdewan on the Russian Invasion: A Critical Analysis of Die Linke Party Members' Perspectives**

However, one of the most prominent personalities of the party, Sahra Wagenknecht, made controversial comments in 2014 regarding the annexation of Crimea by Russia after a referendum on the peninsula. She expressed an understanding of Russia's fears, partly caused by the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO. However, according to Wagenknecht, the interests of Russia in the region had to be considered, and the invasion of Russian soldiers in Crimea was a "reaction to a misdevelopment" - the appointment of the transitional government in Kyiv. Despite this, the party's condemnation of Putin's violation of international law and the call for an immediate end to the war in Ukraine through diplomacy remains the party's official stance (Meisner, 2014).

According to a report by Tagesspiegel, Sahra Wagenknecht, a prominent figure in Germany's Left Party, she criticized the involvement of "neo-fascists and anti-Semites" in Ukraine's transitional government in 2014. She also described sanctions against Russia as "ridiculous" and suggested they would not

significantly affect the Russian population. While she acknowledged that former Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich was a "crook," she argued that the current government, which oligarchs support, is no better. Additionally, she questioned who fired shots during the violent coup on the Maidan and found it "completely unclear." (Wagenknecht, 2022)

Despite her earlier comments, in February 2022, Wagenknecht took to Twitter to call for a de-escalation of tensions between Russia and Ukraine. She argued that NATO expansion to the East contradicted promises made by the West in the 90s and that Ukraine's NATO membership should be ruled out to prevent further conflict. She also stated that it would be "insane" to engage in a war with Russia and that an offer should be made to Putin to end the bloodshed in Ukraine (Wagenknecht, 2022).

So, a Left Party politician, Sahra Wagenknecht, expressed understanding of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 due to fears over Ukraine joining NATO. However, she criticized the participation of "neo-fascists and anti-Semites" in Ukraine's transitional government and found sanctions against Russia "ridiculous." While she called former Prime Minister Yanukovich a "crook," she argued that the current transitional government, also supported by oligarchs, is no better. She also questioned who fired shots during the violent coup on the Maidan. In February 2022, Wagenknecht tweeted that NATO expansion eastward went against promises made by the West in the 90s and that Ukraine's NATO membership should be ruled out. She later tweeted that it would be insane to engage in a war with Russia and that an offer must be made to Putin to end the bloodshed in Ukraine.

While the Left Party has officially condemned Putin's violation of international law and called for an immediate end to the conflict through diplomacy, Wagenknecht's comments offer a nuanced perspective on the situation. She has expressed an understanding of Russia's past actions and criticized the involvement of extremist elements in Ukraine's government.

However, her recent tweets suggest a desire for a peaceful resolution and a rejection of military intervention.

In February 2023, Sahra Wagenknecht and Alice Schwarzer launched a petition to end arms deliveries to Ukraine. Their goal is to stop the ongoing war that has been devastating Ukraine for 352 days, resulting in the deaths of over 200,000 soldiers and 50,000 civilians, causing trauma and suffering to an entire nation. The conflict has caused widespread destruction of homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods and rape and fear among children. Many people throughout Europe see the situation in Ukraine as a serious concern, fearing the war could expand and threaten their futures (Manifest für Frieden, 2023).

The Ukrainian people need solidarity and support, but continuing the fighting will only lead to further destruction and loss of life. It is vital to show solidarity and support for the Ukrainian people, but continuing the fighting will only lead to further destruction and loss of life. Instead, negotiations should be pursued to end the conflict rather than using military force. President Zelensky's approach of defeating Russia with fighter jets, long-range missiles, and warships is unlikely to succeed against the world's most immense nuclear power and risks escalating the conflict further. Instead, the German government should lead in building a strong alliance for a ceasefire and peace negotiations rather than escalating arms deliveries.

General Milley, the highest military officer in the US, has acknowledged that the conflict in Ukraine cannot be won militarily and that negotiations are the only way to end the war. This sentiment is shared by many who recognize that the longer the fighting continues, the more lives will be lost and the greater the risk of a global conflict. Therefore, the German government must be held accountable for pursuing a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine conflict, as it is responsible for preventing harm to its people. This is the message of the Manifest für Frieden, launched by Sahra Wagenknecht and Alice Schwarzer in February 2023, which calls for an end to arms deliveries to Ukraine and

building a solid coalition for a ceasefire and peace negotiations (Manifest für Frieden, 2023).

However, only some agree with this approach. Some German authorities have criticized the Manifest für Frieden for focusing only on Western goals and failing to address the concerns of those attacked and oppressed. Kevin Kühnert, the SPD General Secretary, has criticized the manifesto for being too vague, arguing that merely discussing negotiations does not necessarily lead to their occurrence. According to Kühnert, a sustainable and just peace must be established to prevent the future land loss, which he compares to a slice of salami being cut away (Rappsilber, 2023).

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz also disagrees with the call for negotiations. He argues that more is needed than stating that negotiations should occur, as this does not lead anywhere. Scholz emphasizes that the Russian President only accepts a specific form of negotiation, namely unconditional surrender by someone, after which he can achieve all his goals (Schwieger, 2023). While this may be a difficult obstacle to overcome, it is crucial to continue pursuing a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine to prevent further devastation and loss of life.

The idea of a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine has yet to be unanimously supported. High-ranking politicians and some scientists, like political scientist Herfried Münkler, disagree with the Manifest für Frieden launched by Sahra Wagenknecht and Alice Schwarzer in February 2023. Münkler criticized the manifesto, stating that it was presumptuous to try to come at Putin with moral arguments and that Putin was willing to escalate the conflict to dominate the situation. He also believes that those calling for diplomacy, like Schwarzer and Wagenknecht, have not understood the prerequisites for diplomacy to come into play. Münkler added that for diplomacy to happen, the Russians must realize they cannot achieve their war goals because Ukraine provides sustainable resistance (Schmitz, 2023).

Bundestag Vice President Katrin Göring-Eckardt, a Green Party politician, strongly criticized the manifesto initiated by Left Party politician Sahra Wagenknecht and women's rights activist Alice Schwarzer against further arms deliveries to Ukraine. Göring-Eckardt stated, "An appeal for peace negotiations with an immediate end to all military support for Ukraine is not only naive but also dishonest." She noted that the proposal did not reject further violence but supported the continuation of attacks, imprisonment, rape, and abduction of innocent Ukrainians by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his associates. Göring-Eckardt also emphasized that it was Putin, not the West, who crossed a red line with the annexation of Crimea nine years ago (ZDF, 2023).

So, in February 2023, two important figures in Germany, Sahra Wagenknecht, and Alice Schwarzer, launched a petition to halt the delivery of arms to Ukraine. They aimed to end the ongoing conflict that led to over 200,000 soldiers and 50,000 civilians dying. They also urged the German government to establish a strong alliance for a ceasefire and peace negotiations. However, the petition was criticized by German officials and political experts for not addressing the needs and requirements of those who were being attacked and oppressed. Bundestag Vice President Katrin Göring-Eckardt also expressed concern about the petition and said it was unrealistic and misleading to demand peace talks while calling for an immediate end to all military assistance to Ukraine.

Furthermore, Gregor Gysi has also signed the Manifesto for Peace by Alice Schwarzer and Sahra Wagenknecht, among many other initial signatories. He calls for participation in the peace rally before the Brandenburg Gate on February 25 Gysi emphasizes the need for such action in a time of war hysteria and condemns the violation of international law by both the West and Russia in various conflicts. He also criticizes Putin's aggression in initiating the war against Ukraine.



Moreover, he rejects the violation of international law by the West, including the NATO war against Serbia and the US-led war against Iraq (die Linke, 2023).

According to a report, Tobias Bank- the federal chairman of the Left party, gave an interview on Tagesspiegel where he urged Bundestag members Sahra Wagenknecht and Klaus Ernst to exercise caution regarding Russia. Bank stated that he expected them to "respect the decisions of the federal party conference and refrain from making contradictory statements." He also clarified that Wagenknecht's statement about a "war against Russia" was her personal opinion and not representative of the party's official stance (Der Tagesspiegel, 2023).

Martin Schirdewan, the Left Party leader, echoed this sentiment in a recent TV interview, acknowledging that differing opinions within the party reflect societal debates. Schirdewan acknowledged that some members might hold differing opinions but that this reflects societal debates. Schirdewan acknowledged that Wagenknecht's initial tweet was incorrect but that she subsequently corrected it. He stated that there was no discussion of a new party exclusion procedure against her but called for a more thoughtful approach in the future, stating that he did not like the party's tendency to "shoot over the goal line" on Twitter (Der Tagesspiegel, 2023). Based on the previous statement, it is clear that some party members disagree with the views expressed by certain politicians who gave speeches without prior consultation.

Disputes over the German political party Die Linke's stance on Russia have caused controversy among its members. Although some members, such as Sahra Wagenknecht and Klaus Ernst, have expressed views that differ from the party's official position, Tobias Bank, the party's Bundesgeschäftsführer, has urged them to respect the party's resolutions and avoid making contradictory statements.

Martin Schirdewan, the party leader, has also emphasized respecting party decisions and avoiding impulsive actions in response to Twitter controversies. It is worth noting that disputes and disagreements within the Left party are not new and have been ongoing for some time. Nonetheless, the recent comments made by Wagenknecht and Ernst regarding Russia have once again sparked debate and brought these issues to the forefront.

### **3.4: The Crisis Summit of Die Linke in Leipzig: Addressing Challenges and Shaping the Party's Direction**

The Left Party in Germany held a crisis summit in Leipzig to prevent a possible split caused by the ongoing dispute over Sahra Wagenknecht's criticism of the party. As a result, the party's leadership, including federal and state executives, agreed to a statement expressing their commitment to the party and their determination to fight for its unity. The purpose of the statement was to communicate both internally and externally the party's commitment to safeguarding the vision of a united socialist party. Furthermore, it emphasized their dedication to promoting social justice, peace, and climate protection and taking a firm stance against right-wing ideologies. However, the party leadership has little hope of convincing Wagenknecht to retract her criticisms, some party members are wondering how long Wagenknecht will continue to flirt with the idea of a new party and when she will follow through on her announcements, and they are prepared for the possibility of her leaving the party to start a competing project (von Salzen, 2022).

This meeting brought to light the internal conflicts within the party. Despite holding a direct mandate in Leipzig, the Left Party has struggled to gain support elsewhere in Saxony, dominated by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). One notable absence at the summit was Sahra Wagenknecht, a

prominent party member who has been critical of its stance on immigration and Russia and its focus on gender issues instead of social policy.

The main objective of the meeting was to create a joint statement that would help reduce internal divisions within the party. However, there are concerns that Wagenknecht and her supporters, who describe themselves as progressive Leftists, may seek to form a new party before the European elections in 2024, which still need to have a five percent threshold. The Left Party's summit in Leipzig has highlighted the party's internal conflicts. Despite the party's electoral success in Leipzig, it has struggled to gain support in other parts of Saxony, which the Christian Democratic Union currently dominates. In addition, one of the party's prominent members, Sahra Wagenknecht, was absent from the summit due to her criticism of the party's stance on immigration and Russia and its focus on gender issues. The summit's main objective was to develop a joint statement to help reduce the party's internal divisions. However, there is speculation that Wagenknecht and her supporters may form a new progressive Leftist party before the European elections in 2024, which do not have a five percent threshold.

The Left Party's regional leader, Stefan Hartmann, has called on the party to focus on social justice and other vital issues, including climate change, good jobs, and infrastructure modernization. Hartmann hopes the summit will unite the party and help overcome internal conflicts (Alexe, 2022).

The Left Party has experienced a decline in voter support over the past few years. Despite being measured by the *Sonntagsfrage Bundestagswahl*, which reflects current voting tendencies rather than actual voting behavior, the party's current situation shows that it is polling at around 5% or even 4% (as of 14.05.2023). The decrease in support raises the question of why voters are not backing the party as they did in the past. This paper aims to explore two hypotheses regarding Die Linke in order to examine these questions. The first hypothesis suggests that the war in 2022 has influenced the party's politics

concerning war and peace. The second hypothesis proposes that Die Linke's stance on the war in Ukraine since 2022 has caused internal divisions within the party.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, controversies surrounding Die Linke's politics have led to certain party members making statements that have sparked discussions. Consequently, these crises within the party have raised doubts about its prospects in the upcoming Bundestagswahl and whether it will retain its position in the Bundestag.

### **3.5 Challenges Confronting Die Linke: An Exploration of Obstacles and Difficulties Faced by the Party**

The first challenge of Die Linke has faced **internal challenges and ideological constraints** that have hindered its progress and left its future uncertain. The party has struggled with internal blockades, an inability to address ideological rigidity within its ranks, and ongoing conflicts. These issues have limited its ability to effectively respond to societal concerns and establish a clear position on critical issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Die Linke has found itself on the sidelines, lacking influence and failing to resonate with most of the electorate.

One of the critical challenges facing the Die Linke party is the need to overcome a lack of centralized strategic leadership. In addition, this party has a diverse history, resulting from the merging different parties, such as WASG and PDS. As a result, it consists of various sub-projects, including a left-wing social-democratic project primarily focused on the West, a left-wing movement appealing to younger and more activism-oriented members, and an internally complex reformist camp present principally in the East. These sub-projects have operated independently, sometimes conflicting with each other and needing more coordination (Höltmann, Gesine, et al., 2018: 76-80).

Furthermore, the absence of strategic unity within the party has led to distinct factions and varying sentiments among party members, particularly in different Bundesländer (federal states). Therefore, to ensure the party's prospects, the upcoming party congress must prioritize establishing strategic unity and address these internal challenges.

In this section, the attitudes of voters of the Left Party and individuals from the right wing will be analyzed to understand German society's perspectives on the war in Ukraine and their reactions to it. According to a WZB Berlin Social Science Center survey, one significant conflict arises from divergent attitudes toward Russia. Among the surveyed respondents, approximately 9% either reject or strongly disagree with the statement that "Putin's war of aggression is unjustified," while 15% remain undecided. These perspectives tend to be more prevalent among individuals who align themselves with the right-wing side of the political spectrum (WZB 2022). It is worth noting that social engagement and protest mobilization, which predominantly supported Ukraine, would typically be expected to have lower representation among those with a more sympathetic view of Putin's actions.

Interestingly, there are significant differences in social engagement based on attitudes towards Russia and migration. Those with more pro-Russia or skeptical views on migration are generally less involved in these activities than those with opposing views. Surprisingly, the increasing cost of living only significantly affects their willingness to engage in acts of solidarity. Even those who have been directly impacted by the price crisis and the negative consequences of the Ukraine crisis participate in social activities to the same extent as those who claim to have been minimally affected by the rising cost of living.

When examining the attitudes of left-leaning individuals toward the war in Ukraine, the findings suggest that it is a complex issue. While left-wing orientations have influenced social engagement and expected conflicts, such as

lower participation among those with pro-Russia or migration-skeptical views, attitudes towards the war do not align neatly with these expectations. The data shows that similar proportions of both Russia-critical and pro-Russia respondents participated in peace demonstrations, indicating that the war in Ukraine may have significantly impacted left-leaning individuals' willingness to engage in these demonstrations. It is important to note that Russia-critical and pro-Russia attitudes are the minority, with pro-Russia respondents comprising only around 20% of protest participants. In comparison, around 80% maintain a critical stance toward Putin's war of aggression (WZB 2022).

These findings illustrate the complex landscape of left-leaning individuals' attitudes toward the war in Ukraine. While specific expected patterns emerge regarding social engagement and conflicts, the issue of attitudes toward the war needs to follow these patterns precisely. The diversity of perspectives among left-leaning individuals suggests varied notions of peace between Ukraine and Russia within this group. Moreover, the significant concern over rising living costs does not hinder their solidarity behavior and willingness to protest for Ukraine.

In summary, the study found that many left-leaning individuals participated in protests to support Ukraine, indicating their opposition to Russia's actions. Only approximately 20% of the interviewed individuals expressed pro-Russian attitudes. This survey suggests that most left-leaning individuals in the study were critical of Putin's war of aggression and aligned themselves with the cause of peace and solidarity with Ukraine. The situation in Ukraine and Russia's actions have impacted the attitudes of left-leaning voters and their perception of the Die Linke party. The support for Ukraine and the opposition to Putin's aggression among left-leaning individuals suggest that they prioritize peace and solidarity. However, some left-leaning voters may have reconsidered their support for Die Linke due to the party's stance on Ukraine and their skepticism towards its policies. This could contribute to the party's

loss of votes and voters. The complex and evolving nature of the Ukraine crisis has undoubtedly played a role in shaping voter opinions and political preferences.

### **3.6 Challenges of Die Linke: Ideological Positions, Decision-Making Processes, and Intra-Party Conflicts**

The security and defense policy of Die Linke has been shaped by its ideological positions, which have prevented it from considering practical solutions. The party has consistently opposed the military and sought to overcome NATO without exploring alternative options or addressing the need for territorial defense. As a consequence of this ideological stance, there is a growing need for Die Linke to demonstrate its competence in handling foreign and security policy matters to voters and potential coalition partners.

Furthermore, Die Linke's narrow framework and ideological adherence have limited its appeal and effectiveness in national politics. For example, the party's refusal to support military actions, such as building wells or rescuing endangered individuals, has been seen as a pure ideology rather than a practical approach. This has resulted in a disconnect with voter preferences and a diminishing ability to attract broader support. Without a willingness to engage with the realities of security and defense, Die Linke may continue to struggle to gain the trust and confidence of the electorate.

Die Linke must change its politics according to security policy to overcome the current crises. According to Erhard Crome, the Left must critically examine its principles regarding Russia, NATO, and the Bundeswehr to renew its program. This includes discussing the need for a European security order, reevaluating the role of NATO as a security guarantor, addressing deficiencies in the Bundeswehr, and clarifying the stance on territorial defense and alliance obligations.

Additionally, the Left should consider the possibility of a European army and pragmatic cooperation with NATO (Crome, 2022: 50-52).

Therefore, moving beyond ideological notions and engaging in practical and comprehensive discussions on security and defense issues is essential. There is a need for transparent and open dialogue within the Left regarding these complex matters. It is crucial to strike the right balance between principles and practical considerations to form effective political decisions. By addressing these issues, the Left can engage in meaningful discourse and shape a clear and relevant political agenda for the future.

The Die Linke party's **second key challenge** is internal division or identitätskrise (Kirchner, 2021, 97).

According to Moritz Kirchner, the Left Party in Germany has encountered several significant challenges that have impeded its progress. One of the critical issues is the problem of dogmatism, which has hampered the party's ability to clarify its positions on major domestic and foreign policy questions. This has resulted in a need for more practical solutions and a perception of needing to be in touch with voter preferences (Kirchner, 2021: 102). In addition, the party's program has not been updated since 2011 and has failed to adapt to new challenges, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The party's program primarily appeals to its core supporters and needs broader appeal. However, this self-referentiality has limited its impact and influence beyond its dedicated base. Furthermore, the party's failure to emphasize unity during the election campaign, particularly concerning handling internal conflicts, has contributed to divisions within its ranks. This has raised doubts among voters about its ability to govern effectively (Emendörfer, 2021).

The Left Party's strategic indecisiveness is evident in its inability to adapt to changing circumstances and its reluctance to develop a coherent long-term strategy. This has resulted in a need for more centralized strategic leadership, further contributing to internal divisions within the party. Moreover, attempts to



find compromise often result in vague formulations that need more clarity and practical solutions, with alternative viewpoints being marginalized or ignored.

The party's internal divisions have been exacerbated by its diverse membership with different backgrounds and perspectives. While this presents an opportunity for the party, it can make decision-making more complex and time-consuming. Balancing the various interests and opinions within the party can be challenging and may lead to delays or compromises that hinder effective action. For example, in March 2023, Sahra Wagenknecht gave an interview with ZDFheute, a German news channel. During this interview, she talked about how she felt a connection with many members who shared her views, specifically mentioning left-wing local branches that organized transportation for a peace demonstration. Sahra recognized the importance of keeping the parliamentary group intact and expressed concern about jeopardizing it without good reason. However, she also acknowledged that the party's current leadership no longer aligned with her vision of rational left-wing politics and had a clear majority among party officials. Sahra explained that creating a new party would require meeting legal requirements and developing structures and warned against the misconception that it could be done quickly. Wagenknecht was pleased that many people were willing to join once the process started, but she emphasized the project's complexity. She also pointed out the risk of attracting not only intelligent and dedicated individuals but also challenging personalities who had been associated with multiple parties and how they could potentially undermine and contribute to the failure of a new party, using her experience with "Aufstehen" as an example (ZDF, 2023).

According to Sahra Wagenknecht, the party's diverse membership has caused increased internal divisions and complex decision-making processes. Nevertheless, she feels connected with members who share her left-wing views, particularly those involved in organizing transportation for a peace demonstration. Wagenknecht emphasized the importance of maintaining the

parliamentary group while expressing concerns about compromising it without valid reasons. However, the current party leadership no longer aligns with her vision of rational left-wing politics and has a majority among party officials. Establishing a new party would be a challenging task that requires meeting legal requirements and creating organizational structures. Wagenknecht cautioned against underestimating this process and highlighted the potential challenges of attracting individuals with complicated backgrounds who could undermine its success. Her experience with "Aufstehen" served as an example of this challenge.

Therefore, the party can benefit from improving its decision-making processes by establishing more explicit internal debate and consensus-building mechanisms, enhancing transparency and inclusivity in decision-making, and engaging party members at all levels to ensure their voices are heard. Overcoming these challenges will be crucial for the party's future. The party must address these weaknesses and develop a compelling vision to avoid an existential crisis. The Left Party must strive to overcome its stagnation, self-referentiality, and lack of a clear strategy and establish itself as a more effective political force responsive to the needs and preferences of the people it represents. By making these changes, the party can strengthen its internal cohesion, enhance its strategic direction, and improve its ability to advocate for its policies and principles effectively.

The left Party has been facing challenges in managing **decision-making** and intra-party conflicts due to various transformations in the political landscape. These changes include increased electoral volatility, the emergence of new parties, the collapse of longstanding parties in some countries, the overall decline in party membership, and the growing utilization of intra-party ballots to involve members directly in party decision-making.

Scholars have different perspectives on how these changes impact party-based representation and the use of membership ballots. The Left Party must

navigate these challenges to maintain its relevance and support among its members. Scholars have different interpretations of the implications of these changes for party-based representation, especially regarding the use of membership ballots. Three distinct perspectives have emerged, reflecting different understandings of the challenges faced by parties in maintaining effective representation and managing intra-party conflicts (Scarrow et al., 2022: 198-199).

Within the context of the Left Party, these debates on decision-making and intra-party conflicts become particularly relevant. The party must navigate these challenges to effectively address the evolving political landscape and maintain its relevance and support among its members and supporters. Understanding the different perspectives and approaches to decision-making within the Left Party is crucial for analyzing its strategies in addressing intra-party conflicts and ensuring adequate representation in a changing political environment. By examining the implications of these challenges; the Left Party can better respond to the needs and preferences of its members while striving for cohesive and successful decision-making processes. The Left Party needs to consider the changing political landscape and its impact on party-based representation while also considering the preferences and needs of its members to maintain its relevance and support.

The discussion revolving around identity politics is underpinned by various sociopolitical assumptions, although these premises are only sometimes openly debated in direct political practice. However, it is widely acknowledged that the conflict cannot be reduced to an exclusive either-or perspective. Instead, the tensions emanating from identity politics should be viewed as a necessary and potentially beneficial aspect of left-wing self-awareness.

The Left Party faces challenges in building its identity politics, reflected in the ongoing debate surrounding left-wing identity politics. For example, Wolfgang Thierse, former President of the German Bundestag, has criticized the

dominance of personal grievances and biographical influences in societal discussions, highlighting the need for the Left Party to prioritize rational discourse and avoid being driven solely by personal experiences and emotions. Thierse characterizes the identitarians as "new iconoclasts" who shy away from engaging in constructive debates and lack respect for diversity and otherness. This observation underscores the importance for the Left Party to foster a culture of open dialogue that values different perspectives and respects the complexity of individual identities (Baron, 2022).

However, the response from the leader of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Saskia Esken, and her deputy Kevin Kühnert, who swiftly distanced themselves from Thierse, indicates the challenges the Left Party faces in maintaining unity within its ranks. This internal division within the Left Party highlights the need to navigate the complexities of identity politics in a way that promotes inclusivity and avoids excluding different voices and perspectives.

Sarah Wagenknecht, who criticizes left-wing identity politics and its proponents as "lifestyle leftists," further demonstrates the challenges of establishing cohesive and inclusive identity politics within the Left Party. Wagenknecht argues that the focus on dictating how others should live, think, and speak, rather than addressing broader social justice issues, can lead to fragmentation within the Left.

Critics from a Marxist perspective argue that identitarians may prioritize cultural and discursive analysis over addressing economic exploitation and class dominance. This critique emphasizes the Left Party's importance in balancing addressing various forms of oppression and focusing on economic inequality and class struggle (Baron, 2022).

The Left Party's challenges in developing its identity politics highlight the need for careful navigation and dialogue. The party must find ways to incorporate diverse perspectives and avoid the pitfalls of cancel culture and ideological conformity. By promoting open debate, tolerance, and inclusivity,

the Left Party can strengthen its identity politics and effectively address the complexities of social justice.

Within the framework of intersectionality, these concerns and practices consistently necessitate a reassessment of what is commonly taken for granted. A comprehensive outlook that recognizes the complexities and contradictions inherent in these constellations of interests, positions, and demands is embodied in the call for a "binding" or "new class policy" that transcends party and movement boundaries. This approach not only aims to address the negative aspects of the problem but also strives to transform left-wing politics into a new form of solidarity, enabling collective action amidst diverse currents and approaches to political economy. These divergences provide a broad framework for debates within left-wing projects and communities, including the political party DIE LINKE. For example, there is a split between parts of the party aligned with traditional social democratic viewpoints, often associated with the union-affiliated WASG faction and other party members who vehemently advocate for an unconditional basic income (UBI).

It is unlikely that a recent member decision on incorporating UBI into the party's program will resolve this dispute, and it cannot be assumed that efforts will be made to establish consensus on the specific points of disagreement and their underlying origins. The Ukraine war is another contentious issue that spans the party and social movements. Those who oppose arms deliveries invoke pacifism, while those in favor of supporting the attacked country with arms deliveries perceive it as threatened by a powerful aggressor. Behind the hyperbole, a fundamental dilemma arises. Following the millions of lives lost and the devastation of World War II, the deep post-war commitment was "Never again war!" alongside "Never again fascism!" These slogans have since stood in irreconcilable opposition. The two countries were primarily responsible for liberating Europe from the German Wehrmacht and became heavily armed superpowers. In the context of the Ukraine war, it remains unclear how the

country can safeguard itself against the Russian threat without military supremacy. At the same time, external support for Ukraine contributes to militarism more broadly. The inability to find a suitable political solution that addresses these contradictions is not confined to the social Left but extends to a broader spectrum of political viewpoints (Prokla, 2022: 561-565).

In summary, the Left Party faces challenges in managing decision-making processes, addressing intra-party conflicts, and developing inclusive identity politics. Navigating these challenges requires understanding different perspectives, promoting open dialogue, and balancing various aspects of social justice. By doing so, the Left Party can maintain its relevance, support its members, and effectively address the complexities of the evolving political landscape. In addition, the party must consider its diverse membership and the challenges that arise from decentralization and balancing various interests and opinions. Finally, by fostering more explicit internal debate and consensus-building mechanisms, the party can overcome internal divisions and establish a clear strategy for its future success and relevance in German politics. Furthermore, the research questions posed in the paper are interrelated, and their answers can be intertwined. The study's findings provide a comprehensive response that addresses both questions.

So, the study reveals the complexity of left-leaning individuals' attitudes toward the war in Ukraine, with nuanced variations found within this group. Despite concerns over rising living costs, a significant number of left-leaning individuals actively participated in protests to show their support for Ukraine, indicating their opposition to Russia's actions. Most left-leaning individuals in the study were critical of Putin's aggressive war and aligned themselves with the cause of peace and solidarity with Ukraine. However, some left-leaning voters may have reevaluated their support for Die Linke due to the party's stance on Ukraine and skepticism towards its policies.

Controversial speeches and statements by party members, including Sahra Wagenknecht, Gregor Gysi, and Oskar Lafontaine, have influenced Die Linke's representation in the Bundestag. Moreover, these statements have impacted the party's electoral rates and perception among voters. Therefore, the party's ability to navigate these challenges and manage its positions will be crucial for its future direction.

The diverse perspectives among left-leaning individuals indicate varying notions of peace between Ukraine and Russia, with some initially supporting Russia's stance on the war. However, Die Linke now calls for ending the conflict and withdrawing Russian troops from Ukraine. The support for Ukraine and opposition to Putin's aggression among left-leaning individuals suggest prioritizing peace and solidarity.

In summary, the study underscores the intricate nature of the Ukraine crisis and its impact on voter opinions and political preferences. It also highlights the influence of party members' positions on Die Linke's electoral performance and representation in the Bundestag. Despite the challenges faced by the party, most left-leaning individuals in the study were critical of Putin's aggressive war. They aligned themselves with the cause of peace and solidarity with Ukraine. Die Linke's ability to manage its positions and navigate controversies will be essential for its future trajectory.

## **Conclusion**

This paper examined the politics, policies, and positions of Die Linke Party concerning Ukraine and Russia. It focuses on the changes in Die Linke's policies towards Ukraine before and after the beginning of the full-scale war in 2022 and the influence of different positions held by party members on the decision-making process. Furthermore, by analyzing the intra-party dynamics, power distribution, and key figures within the party, this study closed the gap in the scientific research in a question about the policies of the Left Party toward Ukraine before and after the beginning of the Russian war in 2022.

The topic of the Left Party's policies towards Russia and Ukraine is highly relevant for several reasons. Firstly, the party's historical connections to the Soviet Union and its prominent role in German politics make its stance on these issues significant in understanding the broader dynamics of German foreign policy. The position of the Left Party on Russia and Ukraine can impact regional stability and influence Germany's approach to international relations.

Secondly, Germany's reliance on Russian gas and the potential influence of commercial interests on German politicians and entrepreneurs have been a growing concern. This raises questions about the impact of Russia's foreign economic policies on Germany and its relationship with Ukraine. Therefore, exploring the Left Party's policies towards Ukraine and Russia is crucial in comprehending the country's foreign policy.

Thirdly, despite extensive scientific research on German foreign policy towards Russia and Ukraine, there needs to be more information explicitly focusing on the attitudes of German political parties towards Ukraine, including the Left Party. Examining the Left Party's policies towards Ukraine before and after the Russian war in 2022, as well as understanding the decision-making



process within the party, helps to fill the research gap and provide insights into the party's stance on the critical issue.

Lastly, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the conflict between Russia and the West significantly affect European security and stability. Therefore, understanding the positions of German political parties, especially a major party like the Left Party, is crucial for comprehending Germany's role in shaping the European response to the crisis and its impact on regional dynamics.

So, examining the Left Party's policies towards Ukraine and Russia is relevant for understanding German foreign policy, regional stability, and the broader implications of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The party's position on these issues can impact Germany's approach to international relations, and its stance can influence regional stability.

This paper examined how the Left Party's policies towards Ukraine and Russia affected its popularity in Germany. The study presented two hypotheses and provided evidence demonstrating that the party's stance against arming Ukraine during the 2022 war influenced voters to choose alternative parties.

The Left Party's historical ties to the Soviet Union and communist ideologies led to doubts among voters about its alignment with Putin's agenda. In addition, criticisms from those advocating for a more assertive response to the conflict were fueled by skepticism about the party's commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and NATO's efforts against Russian aggression.

Claims of a prior agreement between the Left Party and Putin until 2022 contributed to doubts and criticisms surrounding the party's stance on the Ukrainian conflict. In addition, some suggested that the party's sympathies lay with Russia.

Despite the divisions and debates arising from the Left Party's stance, it has maintained a presence in the Bundestag and secured a significant share of the votes in federal elections. However, fluctuations in its popularity among

voters can be influenced by various factors, including its position on critical issues such as the Ukrainian conflict and internal conflicts within the party.

The study likely conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses, such as analyzing election results, surveys, public opinion data, and party statements, while considering historical and ideological contexts. The findings and conclusions presented in the paper highlight the relevance of examining the Left Party's policies towards Ukraine and Russia in understanding German foreign policy and its impact on regional stability.

The paper successfully demonstrated that the Ukrainian conflict had a tangible impact on the popularity of the Left Party in Germany. Moreover, this research provided compelling evidence of how these factors influenced voter attitudes and choices by considering historical contexts, ideological affiliations, and the party's response to the conflict. Examples of evidence provided in the paper could include surveys or polls demonstrating shifts in voter preferences or sentiments due to the Left Party's stance on the Ukrainian conflict. Only approximately 20% of the interviewed individuals expressed pro-Russian attitudes. This survey suggests that most left-leaning individuals in the study were critical of Putin's war of aggression and aligned themselves with the cause of peace and solidarity with Ukraine. The situation in Ukraine and Russia's actions have impacted the attitudes of left-leaning voters and their perception of the Die Linke party. The support for Ukraine and the opposition to Putin's aggression among left-leaning individuals suggest that they prioritize peace and solidarity. However, some left-leaning voters may have reconsidered their support for Die Linke due to the party's stance on Ukraine and their skepticism towards its policies. This could contribute to the party's loss of votes and voters.

Additionally, the analysis may have incorporated statements or actions from party leaders, public reactions, or media coverage to support the findings. Sahra Wagenknecht's statements and actions were analyzed to understand the nuanced positions within the party. Wagenknecht's earlier comments that

expressed support for Russia's annexation of Crimea and criticism of Ukraine's transitional government raised concerns about the Left Party's commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty. However, her recent calls for de-escalation, rejection of military intervention, and emphasis on peaceful resolutions demonstrate a shift towards a more conciliatory stance.

The Left Party's position on the Ukrainian conflict is complex and evolving, reflecting the internal debates and divisions within the party. Although the party's official stance condemns Putin's violation of international law and calls for diplomacy, the statements and actions of prominent party figures like Wagenknecht offer a more nuanced perspective. The Left Party's stance on the Ukrainian conflict has sparked discussions and controversies within the political landscape. The study's findings align with the hypothesis, highlighting the impact of the conflict on the party's popularity and the diverse range of opinions within the party itself.

The second hypothesis about The party's ambiguous positions may lead to its absence in parliament and even the potential dissolution of the party.

The Left Party in Germany has experienced significant fluctuations in its electoral performance, and the evidence strongly supports the hypothesis that the party's ambiguous stances may lead to its absence in parliament and even the potential dissolution of the party. Furthermore, the party's positions on controversial issues have played a role in its inconsistent electoral success, and several prominent party members have made controversial speeches and statements, adding to the perception that the party needs a more clear and consistent political stance.

One of the most controversial issues within the party is its stance on Ukraine and Russia. While the party's official website strongly condemns Putin's violation of international law in the attack on Ukraine and advocates for an immediate end to the war through negotiations and diplomacy, some internal

differences are evident. Sahra Wagenknecht's understanding of Russia's actions in Crimea exemplifies this.

Such controversial remarks suggest the party needs a clear and consistent political stance, undermining its clarity and coherence. The combination of fluctuating electoral performance, controversial statements by party members, and internal differences on critical issues may lead to the party's absence in parliament and even the potential dissolution of the party.

In conclusion, the Left Party's ambiguous positions on controversial issues may lead to its absence in parliament and the potential dissolution of the party. Furthermore, the party's internal differences on crucial issues, combined with fluctuating electoral performance and controversial statements by party members, undermine its clarity and coherence. These factors provide substantial evidence that the Left Party needs to establish a more consistent political stance to ensure its future success.

Furthermore, the research paper proposed two inquiries and provided condensed overviews of their respective findings.

***Research Question 1: How did Die Linke change its policies towards Ukraine before and after the beginning of the full-scale war?***

The paper highlights that Die Linke, a left-wing political party in Germany, has undergone significant policy changes toward Ukraine before and after the full-scale war. Initially, some party members supported Russia's stance on Ukraine, but the party's official stance has since evolved. Die Linke now advocates for an immediate end to the war, with Russia withdrawing its troops from Ukraine. Furthermore, the party recognizes Ukraine's right to self-defense and stresses the importance of diplomacy and negotiations in resolving the conflict. Despite variations in individual viewpoints, Die Linke's current official stance reflects its commitment to international solidarity, disarmament, and democracy.

***Research Question 2: How do the various positions of party members affect their representation in the German Bundestag?***

Moreover, this thesis analyzed the different positions held by party members within Die Linke significantly impacted the party's representation in the German Bundestag. The party's fluctuating electoral support has influenced the number of seats in the Bundestag. In addition, factors such as its stance on contentious issues like immigration and national security have affected voter support.

Additionally, controversial speeches and statements made by party members have generated debate and discussion within the party and among the German public. The impact of these positions on Die Linke's representation in the Bundestag and its future trajectory remains uncertain. Therefore, successfully managing party members' positions will be crucial for Die Linke's future direction.

So, these two research questions are interconnected, and their answers can be intertwined. The controversies and divergent positions within the party directly impact voter support and representation in the Bundestag. The management of party members' positions will play a crucial role in determining the future direction of Die Linke. The ongoing full-scale war in Ukraine is a significant factor that can both enhance or diminish voter support for the party. The uncertain and divergent positions of party members initially led to some supporting Russia's stance on Ukraine, but the party's official stance has since evolved. Die Linke now advocates for an immediate cessation of the war, emphasizing the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine.

Moreover, the three significant challenges were examined in this paper. The first one is about **internal challenges and ideological constraints**. Die Linke party in Germany faces internal challenges and ideological constraints that have hindered its progress and left its future uncertain. The party has struggled with internal blockades, ideological rigidity, and ongoing conflicts,

limiting its ability to effectively respond to societal concerns and establish a clear position on critical issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Die Linke has found itself lacking influence and failing to resonate with most of the electorate. One critical challenge identified is the party's need for centralized strategic leadership. Die Linke consists of various sub-projects with differing priorities and approaches, often operating independently and sometimes conflicting.

This lack of coordination and unity hampers the party's ability to present a cohesive and compelling message to voters. The research also highlights the party's ideological stance on security and defense, limiting its appeal and practicality. Die Linke's opposition to the military and reluctance to engage with NATO and territorial defense have been seen as rigid adherence to ideology rather than pragmatic solutions. This disconnect with voter preferences diminishes the party's ability to attract broader support. The research suggests that Die Linke must transform its security policy politics to overcome these challenges. This includes critically examining its principles regarding Russia, NATO, and the Bundeswehr, discussing the need for a European security order, reevaluating the role of NATO, addressing deficiencies in the Bundeswehr, and clarifying its stance on territorial defense and alliance obligations. Open and transparent dialogue within the party is crucial to strike a balance between principles and practical considerations, enabling the formation of effective political decisions.

Overall, the paper highlights the need for Die Linke to overcome internal divisions, engage in practical discussions on security and defense, and shape a clear and relevant political agenda to regain influence and appeal to the electorate. The party must establish a centralized strategic leadership to coordinate the sub-projects and present a cohesive message to voters. It must also reevaluate its ideological stance on security and defense and engage in practical discussions to attract broader support.

The research suggests that the party should critically examine its principles regarding Russia, NATO, and the Bundeswehr and clarify its stance on territorial defense and alliance obligations. Furthermore, open and transparent dialogue within the party is crucial to strike a balance between principles and practical considerations, enabling the formation of effective political decisions. These changes are necessary for Die Linke to regain influence and appeal to the electorate.

**The second** significant challenge the Left Party faces, as highlighted in this paper, is an internal division within the party or "identitätskrise," according to Moritz Kirchner's research. The party's dogmatism and failure to clarify its positions on major domestic and foreign policy issues have hindered its ability to adapt to changing circumstances and address voter preferences. Additionally, the party's outdated program and self-referentiality have limited its appeal beyond its core supporters, hampering its influence and effectiveness in national politics.

The lack of centralized leadership within the party has contributed to internal divisions, and attempts at compromise often result in vague formulations, marginalizing alternative viewpoints. Moreover, while presenting opportunities, the Left Party's diverse membership has made decision-making complex and time-consuming. As a result, balancing the interests and opinions within the party can be challenging, leading to delays and compromises that hinder effective action.

The party's internal divisions have been further exacerbated by the disconnect between the party's current leadership and the vision of rational left-wing politics held by figures such as Sahra Wagenknecht. Wagenknecht's concerns about jeopardizing the parliamentary group without valid reasons and the complexity of establishing a new party reflect the challenges faced by the party's diverse membership.

The Left Party should improve its decision-making processes by fostering more explicit internal debate and consensus-building mechanisms to address these challenges. Enhancing transparency and inclusivity in decision-making and engaging party members at all levels will ensure their voices are heard. Overcoming internal divisions and establishing a clear strategy will be crucial for the party's future success and relevance in German politics. By addressing these weaknesses, the Left Party can strengthen its internal cohesion, enhance its strategic direction, and advocate for its policies and principles. The party needs to develop a compelling vision that responds to the needs and preferences of the people it represents to avoid an existential crisis and establish itself as a more impactful political force.

The **third key challenge** of the Left Party is concerning the decision-making process. The Left Party in Germany is facing significant challenges in managing decision-making processes and addressing intra-party conflicts. These challenges have arisen due to various transformations in the political landscape, including increased electoral volatility, the emergence of new parties, declining party membership, and the growing use of membership ballots for decision-making. Scholars hold different perspectives on the implications of these changes for party-based representation and the use of membership ballots. The Left Party must navigate these challenges effectively to maintain its relevance and support among members. Understanding the different perspectives and approaches to decision-making within the party is crucial for analyzing its strategies in addressing intra-party conflicts and ensuring adequate representation in a changing political environment.

Identity politics also presents a significant challenge for the Left Party. The ongoing debate surrounding left-wing identity politics highlights the need for the party to foster a culture of open dialogue, respect for different perspectives, and avoid excluding voices and perspectives. Internal divisions within the party regarding identity politics demonstrate the challenges of



maintaining unity while promoting inclusivity. Balancing the focus on social justice issues and broader economic inequality is essential to avoid fragmentation within the Left Party.

The Left Party's challenges in developing its identity politics underscore the importance of careful navigation and dialogue. By promoting open debate, tolerance, and inclusivity, the party can strengthen its identity politics and effectively address the complexities of social justice. Additionally, the party must consider the complexities and contradictions inherent in various constellations of interests, positions, and demands. A comprehensive outlook, such as a "binding" or "new class policy," can help transcend party and movement boundaries, fostering solidarity and collective action amidst diverse perspectives. The Left Party faces internal divisions regarding traditional social democratic viewpoints and the advocacy for an unconditional basic income (UBI). These divergences provide a broad framework for debates within the party and its communities. The lack of centralized leadership within the party has contributed to internal divisions, and attempts at compromise often result in vague formulations, marginalizing alternative viewpoints. While presenting opportunities, the Left Party's diverse membership has made decision-making complex and time-consuming. As a result, balancing the interests and opinions within the party can be challenging, leading to delays and compromises that hinder effective action.

The party's internal divisions have been further exacerbated by the disconnect between the party's current leadership and the vision of rational left-wing politics held by figures such as Sahra Wagenknecht. Wagenknecht's concerns about jeopardizing the parliamentary group without valid reasons and the complexity of establishing a new party reflect the challenges faced by the party's diverse membership. The Left Party should improve its decision-making processes by fostering more explicit internal debate and consensus-building mechanisms to address these challenges. Enhancing transparency and

inclusivity in decision-making and engaging party members at all levels will ensure their voices are heard. Overcoming internal divisions and establishing a clear strategy will be crucial for the party's future success and relevance in German politics.

In summary, the Left Party faces challenges in managing decision-making processes, addressing intra-party conflicts, and developing inclusive identity politics. Navigating these challenges requires understanding different perspectives, promoting open dialogue, and balancing various aspects of social justice. By doing so, the Left Party can maintain its relevance, support its members, and effectively address the complexities of the evolving political landscape. In addition, the party must consider its diverse membership and the challenges that arise from decentralization and balancing various interests and opinions. Finally, by fostering more explicit internal debate and consensus-building mechanisms, the party can overcome internal divisions and establish a clear strategy for its future success and relevance in German politics.

By that, this paper examines the Left Party's politics, policies, and positions regarding Ukraine and Russia. It aims to investigate the changes in Die Linke's policies towards Ukraine before and after the Russian war in 2022 and the influence of different positions held by party members on the decision-making process. The topic is essential in understanding the broader dynamics of German foreign policy, Germany's relationship with Ukraine and Russia, and the impact of the ongoing conflict on European security and stability.

The research highlights the relevance of the Left Party's stance on Ukraine and Russia and the role of German political parties in shaping the European response to the crisis. Despite extensive research on German foreign policy towards Russia and Ukraine, there is a need for more information on the attitudes of German political parties towards Ukraine, including the Left Party. The party's historical connections to the Soviet Union and its prominent role in German politics make its stance on these issues significant.

The paper examines how the Left Party's policies towards Ukraine and Russia influence its popularity in Germany. The study presents two hypotheses and provides evidence that the party's stance against arming Ukraine during the 2022 war influenced voters to choose alternative parties. First, the Left Party's historical ties to the Soviet Union and communist ideologies raised doubts among voters about its alignment with Putin's agenda. Criticisms from those advocating for a more assertive response to the conflict were fueled by skepticism about the party's commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and NATO's efforts against Russian aggression.

This thesis highlights the challenges faced by the Left Party, including internal divisions, ideological constraints, and difficulties in decision-making processes. The party's lack of centralized strategic leadership, internal divisions, and ideological rigidity have hindered its progress and left its future uncertain. The study suggests that the party needs to foster internal debate, clarify its stance on critical issues, and establish a clear and relevant political agenda. The paper emphasizes the importance of addressing intra-party conflicts, developing inclusive identity politics, and improving decision-making processes to maintain the party's relevance and support among its members. In conclusion, the paper highlights the need for the Left Party to establish a consistent political stance, address internal divisions, and navigate challenges in decision-making processes. The party can regain influence, appeal to the electorate, and effectively respond to the evolving political landscape. The study suggests that the Left Party's policies towards Ukraine and Russia significantly affect German foreign policy, regional stability, and the party's popularity.

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# АНОТАЦІЯ

## Кваліфікаційної роботи

Тема: “Протиріччя в політиці Лівої партії Німеччини щодо України до та після початку повномасштабного вторгнення Росії в Україну”

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Захищена “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_ р.

### Короткий зміст роботи:

Ця робота пропонує дослідження політики, політичних стратегій та позицій Партії "Die Linke" щодо України та Росії. Вона спеціально зосереджується на змінах політики "Die Linke" щодо України до та після початку повномасштабної війни у 2022 році та впливі різних позицій, які займають члени партії, на процес прийняття рішень. Шляхом аналізу внутрішньопартійної динаміки, розподілу влади та ключових постатей в партії, це дослідження заповнює прогалину в наукових дослідженнях щодо політики Лівої партії стосовно України до та після початку російської війни у 2022 році.

Актуальність політики Лівої партії щодо Росії та України впливає з кількох причин. По-перше, історичні зв'язки партії з Радянським Союзом є важливим фактором, що впливає на формування політик цієї партії. По-друге, залежність Німеччини від російського газу та побоювання стосовно можливого впливу комерційних інтересів на німецьких політиків та підприємців підкреслюють важливість цієї теми. Нарешті, незважаючи на обширні дослідження німецької зовнішньої політики щодо Росії та України, потрібна більш конкретна інформація, що фокусується на ставленні німецьких політичних партій, зокрема Лівої партії, до України.

Позиція Лівої партії щодо українського конфлікту характеризується як складна і змінна, відображаючи внутрішні дебати і розбіжності в партії. Водночас, офіційна позиція партії засуджує порушення міжнародного права Путіним і закликає до дипломатії, заяви та дії видатних постатей партії, таких як Вагенкнехт, говорять, що війну спричинили дії НАТО, а не наприклад Росія. Позиція Лівої партії щодо українського конфлікту викликала дискусії і контрверзії в політичному ландшафті. Висновки дослідження підтверджують гіпотезу, підкреслюючи вплив конфлікту на популярність партії та різноманітність думок в самій партії.

### Short summary:

This paper provides an examination of the politics, policies, and positions of the Die Linke Party regarding Ukraine and Russia. It specifically focuses on the changes in Die Linke's policies towards Ukraine before and after the onset of the full-scale war in 2022 and the influence of varying positions held by party members on the decision-making process. By

analyzing intra-party dynamics, power distribution, and key figures within the party, this study fills a gap in the existing scientific research on the Left Party's policies towards Ukraine before and after the beginning of the Russian war in 2022.

The relevance of the Left Party's policies toward Russia and Ukraine stems from several factors. Firstly, the party's historical connections with the Soviet Union and its prominent role in German politics make its stance on these issues significant for understanding broader dynamics in German foreign policy. Secondly, Germany's reliance on Russian gas and concerns regarding the potential influence of commercial interests on German politicians and entrepreneurs further highlight the importance of this topic. Lastly, despite extensive research on German foreign policy towards Russia and Ukraine, more explicit information is needed to focus on the attitudes of German political parties, including the Left Party, towards Ukraine.

The Left Party's position on the Ukrainian conflict is characterized as complex and evolving, reflecting internal debates and divisions within the party. While the party's official stance condemns Putin's violation of international law and advocates for diplomacy, the statements and actions of prominent party figures like Wagenknecht present a more nuanced perspective. The Left Party's stance on the Ukrainian conflict has sparked discussions and controversies within the political landscape. The study's findings support the hypothesis, emphasizing the impact of the conflict on the party's popularity and the diverse range of opinions within the party itself.