



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung presents:

***KAS Germany Update
Current Issues in German Politics***

No. 28 No. 1 – February 2006

- I. New CDU Party Platform: freedom, justice and solidarity resting on Christian foundations**
- II. German Leadership and Concepts Prove Successful in Davos and Munich!**
- III. The Hot Debate on Nuclear Energy Production in Germany**

- I. New CDU Party Platform: freedom, justice and solidarity resting on Christian foundations**

On 20 February 2006 the **Christian Democratic Union (CDU)** met for the first time since assuming leadership in a **Grand Coalition** government. The highlight of the all-day party event, the '**Kleiner Parteitag**', was a speech by the chancellor, **Angela Merkel**. In it, she called for a debate on the party's platform, putting forward suggestions for a careful balance between freedom, justice, solidarity and Christian concepts.

The present party platform was created in 1994 in response to domestic and international changes such as German reunification and the end of the East-West conflict. Similarly, Germany is again facing new circumstances on both the home and global fronts with the lines between the two become ever more blurred. Two challenges in particular, Merkel maintained, serve as motivating factors for revising the CDU platform at this juncture: first, the changed foreign and security policy framework; and second, the future of the social market economy in a globalized world.

On the former, Merkel remarked, "we have realized that we have no conclusive answer to an entire series of questions." Issues such as the rise of international terrorism

Germany Update

groups, Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad's verbal attacks on the state of Israel, and European Union politics, have forced the party to review its stand on many foreign and security matters. On the second challenge, Merkel maintained that a majority of the population no longer feels that the traditional social market economy still functions in the fair and proper manner it had originally; instead, unemployment is continuing to increase along with company profits. Merkel pushed for further reform and new definitions, whereby the social market economy could continue to operate in and influence globalization.

Yet despite increasingly difficult circumstances, Merkel encouraged a combination of traditional CDU values and new perspectives. Rather than a complete break with the past principles, the chancellor stated, "We will retain what has proved itself over time." In this regard, Merkel advocated the continued inclusion of Christian concepts, remarking "what we need is a pragmatism which rest on firm principles. Our 'C' in CDU already offers much in this respect."

To the Christian basis, the ideals of freedom, justice and solidarity should also continue to play a strong role. In the era of globalization, however, only through daring greater freedom, can justice and solidarity again be realized in Germany. That being said, Merkel made clear that the latter values were just as important, particularly with regard to reform of the social market system. According to the chancellor, "when [solidarity] neither exists nor is made a commanding principle, national cohesion ceases. . . . We must remain a country in which solidarity is alive, without questions of material advantages."

Responsible for continuing the debate and reaching a consensus on a new platform is Ronald Pofalla. At the party meeting on 20 February, Pofalla was elected to the post of general secretary, receiving 97.4 per cent of the party vote. Already in January, he revealed the new CDU motto – "New Justice through Greater Freedom". This will become the working title for the new CDU platform in 2007, replacing the eleven-year-old program entitled "Freedom in Responsibility". By the end of 2007, Pofalla aims to present a new platform. In order to face the challenges ahead, however, it will be not only his task, but that of all members of the CDU to strike the right balance between freedom, justice, and solidarity, while maintaining its Christian basis.

II. German Leadership and Concepts Prove Successful in Davos and Munich

Following the Grand Coalition's first success at the **EU Summit** in December 2005, hopes were high for a repeat performance of strong, constructive leadership from the German government at both the annual **world economic summit in Davos, Switzerland** and the annual **NATO security conference in Munich**. Still, it remained to be seen if **Chancellor Angela Merkel** and her counterparts could move beyond the European stage to the world stage. In the end, Berlin did not disappoint. Rather, the chancellor delivered the government's message of reform and responsibility, gaining international praise along the way.

In her first appearance, Chancellor Merkel gave the opening address at the **world economic summit on 25 January 2006**. Here, she took full advantage of the opportunity to present German notions of economic reform. In the speech, Merkel's central proposition was the creation of a "**new social market economy**." On this point she noted, to translate innovative ideas into action, "the most dignified market and social economy needs to believe in the mature citizen that can exercise responsible freedom."

While the social market economy has been a hallmark of the Federal Republic for over half a century now, Berlin's approach, as presented in Davos, includes four new aspects. First, rather than fighting globalization, a greater openness must prevail. In this regard, European and international institutions could help provide order in a seeming chaotic world. Secondly, politicians must become more aware of the impact their decisions have on future generations; thus more attention must be awarded to issues of welfare and environmental preservation. "The creative imperative" was the third "novelty" of the German concept: innovation requires openness, but both require training and opportunity. Accordingly, research, training, entrepreneurial skills and competition between ideas must be given higher priority within Europe. Lastly, a central, but also new role for the state in economic affairs was proposed. Although it believed in greater market liberalization and less bureaucracy, Berlin also advocated that more specific rules be established, binding more closely economic freedom to individual responsibility.

The chancellor noted her own nation's responsibility in the development of such

a system, accepting that “Germany’s prosperity is key to Europe’s future.” On this she admitted that high unemployment was a challenge and that “new priorities for political action” were required to make the necessary reforms to the health, tax and financial systems in the Federal Republic. Merkel concluded, “Our target is to make Europe the most dynamic continent. But to turn the creative imperative into real innovation, that is something that we must not give up on as our future prosperity depends on it.”

A similar message of responsibility and reform was put forth by Berlin in Merkel’s speech at the **NATO security conference** on **4 February 2006**. Here again, Germany displayed strong leadership with Merkel’s statement that NATO was the first choice for the handling of all transatlantic security issues. This significant shift in German security policy ends the debate on the hierarchy between **NATO** and **ESDP**, thereby making the ESDP, at least from the German perspective, into a forum for European cooperation with, rather than emancipation from, the United States on security matters. While this policy shift was pleasing to American ears, representatives from France and Brussels were less excited. In addition, Berlin also called for a new debate on the **NATO strategic concept** by 2009. Merkel noted that greater strategy coordination between the United States and Europe outside the NATO area was needed.

The chancellor also took the recent behavior of **Iran** head-on. She stressed that Iranian officials “had crossed a red line” in pursuit of nuclear technology and that the suspicions of other nations were indeed “justified”. Merkel also renounced the recent slander by **Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad** against **Israel**, calling his words “completely unacceptable”. Moreover, to those who perceive Ahmadinejad’s words as mere rhetoric aimed at rallying the masses, she drew an analogy to Germany’s own history, offering a reminder of the possible results of underestimating the power of one man’s words.

In a little over two weeks the chancellor had confidently expressed the concepts for reform and goals of the German government in the international arena. Taking the lead and confronting challenges both domestically and internationally, not merely in words but also in actions, Merkel represented the responsibility the Grand Coalition government was calling on its economic and military counterparts to exhibit. For this approach and for its concepts, Berlin received many good reviews.

III. The Hot Debate on Nuclear Energy Production in Germany

The debate is not new. It did not begin in January 2006 at the Grand Coalition retreat, nor even within the last few years. The closest approximation of the origins of the discussion is the 1970s with the anti-nuclear movement and the founding of the **Green Party**. Yet while an exact starting date is difficult to determine, even more complicated seems to be finding its end date. While both the **Green Party** and the **Social Democratic Party** felt they had closed the book on the matter five years ago with the '**Atomgesetz**' or law on atomic energy, a combination of economic and political factors have forced the issue back to the fore, making nuclear energy once again a hot topic in Germany.

Already at the January retreat, calls for reopening the discussion on nuclear energy could be heard from prominent minister presidents such as **Peter Mueller (CDU)** of Saarland, **Christian Wulff (CDU)** of Lower Saxony and **Roland Koch (CDU)** of Hesse (See January 2005 Germany Update). At that time, the government made no firm commitment either way concerning the issue; instead, they decided to hold a special conference on energy in April at which they hope to finally end the debate. Yet, movement has already begun by both proponents and opponents of nuclear energy production in Germany.

Roland Koch has been the most outspoken and active of the advocates of nuclear power plants. The minister president of Hesse not only desires a reconsideration of the time period allotted for the phasing out of nuclear energy in Germany, but over the last few weeks both he and members of his government have suggested the possibility of building new atomic power plants.

Koch's words took on new meaning in late February when the German utilities group, **RWE**, appealed to the Hesse state government for authorization to keep 'Block A' of its Biblis nuclear power station open. According to earlier government legislation, 'Block A' was to close by 2008 and 'Block B' of the plant by 2010. Yet, **RWE** representatives argued that since 1999 over € 500 million has been invested in the plant, resulting in higher safety and operating standards. The Hesse government found in favor of **RWE**, with **Dirk Metz (CDU)**, Hesse press officer, noting, "Biblis produces clean

and safe electricity which is allocated throughout Hesse – the request of the operating company receives our strong support.”

While Hesse’s government was in favor of an extension to the time frame under which Biblis is to close, representatives of the government of the state Rhineland-Palatinate—Hesse’s neighbor to the left—are opposed. **Margit Conrad (SPD)**, minister of the environment for Rhineland-Palatinate, adamantly opposed the move, calling it “provocation without need or perspective.” **Metz** on behalf of Hesse retorted, “while at present 23 nuclear power plants are far along in the building stages and 38 more are in the planning stages, and countries like Canada have reactivated already closed nuclear plants, Ms. Conrad and the Greens have not yet come to grasp this apparent understanding.” Despite protests in both German states, the Hesse government has not reversed its stand.

This latest round is a foretaste of the factors government representatives are going to have to consider in April. With the ever-increasing price of energy, the possibility of extended interruption to gas supplies due to disputes between the Ukraine and Russia, and the plans of other major industrial nations for erecting more atomic power stations, Berlin will be forced to decide if nuclear power plants in Germany are an answer to its energy problem. In the meantime, the debate goes on.

*Text & Research:
Elizabeth J. Benning*

For comments, please contact:

Karl-Heinz Kamp
Security Policy Coordinator
karl-heinz.kamp@kas.de