We the People?
Dangers and Lessons for Europe on the Rise of the AfD in Germany

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ANOTHER EUROPE IS POSSIBLE

EUROPE for the many

GLOSSARY

PEGIDA (Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes)
Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of Europe
Founded by Lutz Bachmann in 2014, this group has held rallies mainly in the East German city of Dresden and has garnered a lot of media attention as well as serving to galvanise other far-right groups.

Bundestag
German Federal Parliament

Landtag
State Parliament

Verfassungsschutz (VS)
Office for the Protection of the Constitution

Grundgesetz
German constitution

Junge Alternative (JA)
AfD youth group

Der Flügel
The Wing
Right-wing extremist party wing centred around Björn Höcke, head of the Thuringian AfD, and Andreas Kalbitz, chairman of the Brandenburg AfD

Prüffall
Test case
These include organisations which are not clearly extremist, but for which there are 'actual indications' of anti-constitutional efforts so that the Verfassungsschutz must examine the corresponding suspicion.

Verdachtsfall
Suspected case
If the suspicion is confirmed that anti-constitutional efforts have been made the group of persons is to be classified as an object of observation; this gives the VS the ability to also use extensive Intelligence resources for further observations.

Lügenpresse
Lying Press / Fake News
The accusation that the established press lies and acts in the service of dubious powers against the people.

Das Volk
The people
Historically charged term alluding to the entirety of the German nation. The use of the term *Volk* by AfD reveals a troubling understanding of the very nature of Germany itself as an ethnically homogenous, white political space - overwhelmed by 'intruders' endangering the true Germans.

Volkspartei
People's party
The term Volkspartei is used to describe a party that is open in principle to voters and members of all social classes and different worldviews.

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INTRODUCTION

Prof Mary Kaldor

The rise of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) is one of those 'morbid symptoms' described by Gramsci when the 'old is dying and the new cannot be born.' The 'old' is the statist model of fuel intensive industrial development that could be said to have reached its apogee in the former East Germany where the AfD's power base is located. The 'new' is what is required to overcome these morbid symptoms.

This report is part of a project undertaken at the Centre for Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit at the London School of Economics and the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna that aims to understand what is happening in Europe today and to uncover visions of the 'new'. The project combines a mapping of different conceptions of the European political landscape that inform a series of 'moments of dialogue' workshops and conferences where alternative visions of the 'new' are discussed and debated. The dominant political discourse in Europe today, based on the status quo and an assumption of the 'naturalness' of neo-liberal economic doctrines, is currently under challenge both from newly emerging right-wing extremist parties and, at the same time, a new wave of progressive activism that envisages a new green, socially just, diverse and feminist Europe. The project monitors and records these developments. The recent *Dawn of a Europe of Many Visions* report, based on a mapping of election manifestos during the May 2019 European elections, demonstrates that these elections were the first European elections where competing visions of Europe supplanted national preoccupations.

This report is about the genesis, evolution, and tendencies of the AfD in Germany. It shows how the party emerged out of two recent crises of the EU – the euro-crisis and the migration influx – though its roots lay in the legacy of the East German model, the long period of austerity and ever growing regional inequalities, as well as the failure of left parties to address these issues. It began as a demand for the return of the Deutschmark and has proceeded along similar lines to other right-wing extremist parties in Europe. It has built up its base in the in the 'left behind' declining areas of the fomer East Germany. Its main supporters are older white men. It has constructed a crisis narrative aimed at scape-goating migrants, Muslims, 'foreigners', the 'other'. It upholds conservative values while displaying much of the same transgressive inconsistent behaviour that characteristic of similar phenomena elsewhere, for example, Trumpism or Brexitism. In the German context, it alarmingly downplays the role of memory and history, thereby marginalising the significance of the Holocaust rather than denying it outright. And, paradoxically, it makes use of the language of 1989, referring to 'peaceful revolution' and the slogan 'Wir sind das Volk' ('We are the people'). Moreover, the AfD are ambiguous and inconsistent on whether it advocates withdrawal from the European Union, but at a minimum seeks to transform it into what it calls a 'Europe of the fatherlands'.

The AfD did well in the European elections and may even enter power in the one or two states in the East in the forthcoming elections. Nevertheless, the report maintains that, up to now, the German political system has succeeded in containing the AfD as a consequence of embedded human rights, the *cordon sanitaire* drawn round the AfD by other parties, and the refusal to countenance historical revisionism. But further crises in the European political space could easily offer up more avenues for the AfD. The report concludes that what is required is a mobilisation of the young, women, and of diverse communities as well as the kind of new policies that are needed to reform the European Union and to tame globalisation.

The story of the rise of the AfD in the most economically successful country in Europe is a sobering expression of the widespread nature of contemporary 'morbid symptoms' and their European and global character. But it also offers an important argument for the kind of transformation that is required if the 'new' is to be born.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report draws out the dangers ahead for Europe and Germany, but also emphasises how there are positive lessons to be garnered from the German experience of tackling extremism.

POSITIVE LESSONS: HOW GERMANY CONTAINED THE AfD

• **Deeply embedded human rights.** Unlike Austria, or other states where the far right have been in government, Germany has not had to test how successfully its liberal democratic institutions withstand the pressure of authoritarian parties gaining power. However, its exceptionally strong constitutional defence of human rights, the separation of powers and the rule of law, created following the experience of fascism in 1949, means it has strong institutional protections for liberal democratic rights and freedoms.

• **Containment policy of the democratic parties.** German political parties have placed a *cordon sanitaire* around the AfD. As the party has moved further and further to the right, it has become increasingly difficult for the CDU to entertain the idea of a coalition along the lines of the ÖVP-FPÖ alliance in Austria. While there have been persistent rumours of the CDU moving in this direction, they have hitherto maintained a containment policy. This is significant because, while the rise of the far right is often seen as a failure on the part of the left to attract discontented voters, it can equally be a failure of the centre and centre-right to challenge the rise of right wing extremism and defend democracy.

• **Contest historical revisionism but offer a forward-looking vision.** The German experience is similar to other countries in Europe insofar as 'memory politics' has been an important area of struggle and mobilisation for the far right. This is, of course, an acutely sensitive subject in the German context and creates a challenge for progressives and democrats. Historical revisionism must be tackled while at the same time anti-fascists should not get locked into battles overs past events - a forward looking message and vision will be key.

• **Mobilise the younger generation, minorities, and women.** Older men are strikingly more likely to support the AfD than younger people, women or minorities. The mobilisation of these groups will be important to maintaining a robust democratic majority in German society. Taking more active steps to ensure German institutions reflect the diversity of German society will be important to creating an inclusive politics.

DANGERS AHEAD: CONTINUED RISKS FOR GERMANY, EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

• **Unresolved regional inequalities.** Uneven economic development between the old East and West Germany, which feeds into important demographic differences regarding the age of populations on either side of this divide, has been a key factor in the growth of the AfD. A persistent failure to address these inequalities through an expansive state investment programme has fed resentment and discontent, which far right populists have capitalised on. If these are left unresolved, then the problem will persist.

• **New 'shocks' could allow a far right advance.** The rise of the AfD was triggered by two clear exogenous shocks. First, the initial trigger for their growth was the Eurozone crisis and resulting opposition to bailouts of southern European economies. Second, their further growth spurt, and shift to the extreme right, was inspired by the refugee crisis. A further exogenous shock - e.g. another financial crisis, war or ecological disaster in Europe or the European neighbourhood - could undermine the containment policy.

• **Reforming the EU and globalisation is critical to confronting the far right advance.**

Although both the financial and refugee crises can be seen as externally conduced shocks, they also exposed severe failings in the structure of European governance. In both cases, a negative feedback loop emerged as the inability of the institutions to cope with these shocks produced crises that fed into nationalist sentiment. This, in turn, provided a further political block to creating institutions capable of dealing with these crises. As this suggests, the rise of the AfD, with its rejection of the Euro and demand for a 'Europe of the fatherlands', underlines the risk 'not reforming' poses to the EU. Even as the rise of nationalism makes this more difficult, reform efforts must continue.

• **Temptation of slow-burn adaptation to anti-immigrant and anti-Islam sentiment.** Across all sides of the political spectrum the temptation to adapt to anti-immigrant and anti-Islam sentiment exists. The correlation between impoverished economic geography and the rise in right wing populist sentiment can lead social democrats and the left to mistakenly take up anti-immigrant standpoints. For the centre-right the loss of voters to their far right provides a clear incentive to move to the far right. The role of civil society will be important in ensuring democratic parties resist this temptation to adapt.

THE RISE OF THE AfD

OVERVIEW

Ideologically and programmatically, the AfD joins the growing family of European right-wing populist parties. Its main features are its 'anti-establishment' orientation and its claim to represent the 'true' will of the people, which is expressed, among other things, in the demand for 'more direct democracy' and the stylisation of their work as a form of resistance against a supposedly dictatorial system (the 'left green opinion dictatorship'). These are classical features of the new right-wing populism in Europe. By investigating the arguments and narratives that the AfD have drawn on, and how the German public have responded, we can identify lessons for the rest of Europe on how to tackle these threats to democracy, the rights of minorities and the rule of law.

Key aspects of the AfD story can be outlined as follows:

• **Ethno-nationalist 'radicalisation'.** The AfD, which was founded in 2013, began its life as a movement opposed to the Euro currency and its market-liberal orientation. The AfD, in particular, objected to any German underwriting of the bailouts to crisis-hit economies during the Eurozone debt crisis. These aspects have lost their importance in the AfD's core armoury of arguments. The refugee crisis of 2015 and after saw the party adopt increasingly hard line positions on asylum and immigration policy, which have become their central political calling card. The AfD also holds highly conservative positions on family and social policy. In socio-economic policy, on the other hand, there are differences within the party between advocates of a more market-liberal or a more protectionist line. The AfD manages to appeal to a broad class of voters, from conservative middle-class voters to disenfranchised protest voters (who may have previously elected parties such as the Left or SPD), and right-wing extremists that would formerly have voted for fringe right-wing parties.

• **A significant and ominous moment for post-war Germany.** The AfD has a deeply worrying significance in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany as the first party on the far right of the party system that has been able to gain prominence nationwide. Following the abatement of the initial wave of right-wing extremism at the beginning of the 1950s and the second wave at the end of the 1960s, a third wave followed in the early 1980s. However, none of these previous right-wing populists and right-wing extremists - from the Republicans to the Schill Party to the reinvigorated NPD – succeeded beyond local and regional elections. Nonetheless, there are reasons to believe that these unsuccessful attempts to establish radical right parties in Germany had lasting effects among voters. Previous successes of radical right parties on a local level, regardless whether they occurred in East or West Germany, are still today a very accurate predictor of success of the AfD (Schwandner and Manow, 2017).

• **'Left newcomers' have not performed as well as the AfD.** Measured by the extent and speed of its establishment, the AfD also clearly outperforms the two left-wing newcomers in German politics - the Greens in the 1980s and the PDS/Die Linke since the 1990s. Although the Greens today are experiencing an exceptionally strong rise in support in some opinion polls, this is based on a long process of accumulating support and influence. In contrast, the AfD's rise is relatively rapid - even if it can be reasonably hoped that they have reached the peak of their support (see 'How have the German public responded?'). Within four years it secured seats in the parliaments of all 16 German states in addition to the Bundestag and the European Parliament. Winning 12.6 percent of votes in the national elections of 2017, it now holds 91 of 709 seats in the Bundestag. With this result, the AfD is currently the third largest party in German politics and with the current government consisting of a coalition between the Social Democrats (SPD), and Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU), the AfD forms the largest opposition group in the German Bundestag.

Bernd Lucke   Frauke Petry   Jörg Meuthen   Alexander Gauland

PARTY HISTORY & ELECTION RESULTS: THE TURN TO THE EXTREME RIGHT

Upon their initial launch the AfD took a strongly nationalistic approach to any German economic support for European countries experiencing balance of payments problems and argued that the creation of the Euro was against the German national interest. This recovered arguments made by German conservatives throughout the 1990s, which were sensitive to how the creation of the Euro could undermine the country's economic interests (and led to the heavy focus in the Eurozone rules on fiscal constraint rather than an expansive fiscal policy).

Bernd Lucke, an economics professor from Hamburg, was then the most important figurehead of the new party and openly advocated for southern European countries to leave the Eurozone. In a similar fashion to the AfD's current chairman, Alexander Gauland, Lucke had previously been a member of the CDU. Under Lucke, the party developed a profile that combined market-economy liberal positions with a strong focus on the Euro issue and socio-politically conservative positions. However, while the party's overall posture was of a conservative, rather than fascistic party, the seed of far right populism had already been planted in the AfD at this time. In a 2013 interview, Lucke was already counting on votes from the right, stating that, 'basically it's good if someone votes for us and

not the NPD' (Handelsblatt, 2013).

From the beginning, Lucke viewed the inclusion of right-wing protest voters as an asset to the AfD, arguing that they were not extremists, just 'citizens voicing their frustrations'. After the party's failure in the 2013 federal elections and the simultaneous state elections in Hesse, it managed to achieve triumphant results in the European elections and three East German state elections during the summer of 2014. After these successes, Lucke could no longer resist the party's shift to the right. Lucke's defeat by Frauke Petry in the election for party chair in July 2015 led to internal schisms but in the end did not harm its electoral progress. This was not least due to the so-called 'refugee crisis' that has dominated the public debate since September 2015 and led to strong gains in the polls for the AfD. Consequently, in the spring and autumn of 2016, the party achieved record results in state elections.

Meanwhile, the internal quarrels over the direction of the party, and the relationship with external right-wing extremist groups and internal party politics that were sympathetic to them, did not cease. Again, this internal party conflict was fought along the lines of personnel power conflicts; like Bernd Lucke in 2015, Frauke Petry also lost her position in 2017. After the Bundestag elections, she declared her resignation from the Bundestag faction and the party. The party has since been led by Jörg Meuthen and Alexander Gauland as co-chairmen.

The election results of the AfD since 2013

2013	Bundestag 4.7%, Hesse 4.1%
2014	Brandenburg 12.2%, Saxony 9.7%, Thuringia 10.6%, European elections 7.1%.
2015	Bremen 5.5%, Hamburg 6.1%
2016	Baden-Wuerttemberg 15.1%, Berlin 14.2%, Rhineland-Palatinate 12.6%, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania 20.8%, Saxony-Anhalt 24.3%
2017	Bundestag 12.6%, Lower Saxony 6.2%, North Rhine-Westphalia 7.4%, Saarland 6.2 %, Schleswig-Holstein 5.9%
2018	Bavaria 10.2%, Hesse 13.1%
2019	European elections 11%

WHO IS THE 'AfD VOTER'?

A common assumption about AfD voters is that they consist of people who have lost out, or are in fear of losing, their status in a world that is increasingly interconnected and confusing. This much discussed 'loser of modernization framework' (Schwandner and Manow, 2017) is incorrect. Economic deprivation is not a predictor of right-populist voting among the German population (Schwandner and Manow, 2017). A closer look at the AfD electorate since its inception in 2013 reveals a more nuanced picture of those that find their message appealing.

• **Former CDU voters are a central element of their support base.** The AfD managed to capture a lot of voters from the CDU/CSU: 1.05 million Germans who had elected CDU or CSU in 2013 voted for the AfD in 2017. The centre-left SPD (470,000), the Left (400,000) and the FDP (40,000) lost fewer voter to the AfD (Arab, 2017). Additionally, the increase in voter turnout since 2016 shows that the AfD was able to mobilise many former non-voters (approximately 1.2 million in total). While many international commentaries have assumed the AFD were primarily benefiting from the decline of the SPD the data shows that this is not correct. Overwhelmingly, their core base of electoral support has come from disaffected CDU voters.

• **The socio-economic dimensions of the AfD vote are complex.** With regard to the economic structure of the AfD electorate, simplistic explanations that focus on one factor alone fall short. Instead a nuanced view on the regional differences between AfD voters in East Germany versus West Germany reveals the complex and decades-old factors that make East Germany such a stronghold for the AfD. On average, the AfD achieves double the voting shares in the former East German states (including the former East Berlin) than in the Western states. In absolute

figures, however, almost two thirds of AfD votes in the 2017 Bundestag elections were cast in the West (Decker, 2018). Neither a high unemployment rate nor living in a neighbourhood with a higher proportion of foreigners corresponds to a greater willingness to vote for the AfD. In the West, the AfD scores particularly well where voters have below-average household incomes and/or work in the manufacturing industry. Workers and the unemployed, although overrepresented among AfD voters in comparison to other parties, account for only a quarter of the total AfD electorate. The remaining three quarters are salaried employees, civil servants and the self-employed. Those with middle strata educational qualifications[1] also dominate among the AfD electorate (Niedermayer and Hofrichter, 2016).

• **There is a 'migration' aspect to the rise of the AfD but it's not what you think.** Waves of population movement have been a key feature of the societal dimensions of German unification. The German newspaper *ZEIT ONLINE* has compiled data on the approximately six million moves between East and West Germany, from 1991, the first year of a unified Germany, to 2017. They show that after reunification almost a quarter of the original population of East Germany moved to the West: 3,681,649 people left. Their analysis also shows that the 2,451,176 immigrants from the West could not stop the decline of many places in East Germany. In the East, the AfD is strong in rural regions that suffer from emigration (and subsequent aging population), and the economic problems that it causes. Since reunification, more than a quarter of the East German population between the ages of 18 and 30 have migrated to the West. The result is a relative decline and stagnation of the East German population compared to West Germany. Shortly after reunification, East Germans were on average younger than West Germans. This relationship has changed radically (Bangel et al., 2019). Decades of emigration have left their mark on the East. Even in the German boom years of the

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1 Obtaining German middle strata education means leaving school after ten school years with a certificate that makes it possible to obtain recognised non-academic occupations. It does not allow for direct access to university studies.

Economic deprivation is not a predictor of right-populist voting among the German population

past, progress in the East was sluggish because the lack of social and technical infrastructure - schools, libraries, public transport - keeps people away in many regions and thus prevents a sustainable upswing. The result is frustration that has been felt politically for some time. The AfD performed particularly well in the 2017 federal elections in the administrative districts and independent towns in the east, whose population has shrunk sharply since 1991. In short, the success of the AfD is very much about 'migration', just not the type that is commonly referred to in public debate.

• **Older men are much more likely to back the AfD.** There is a strong gender and age disparity between the average voter and the average AfD voter. In the 2017 Bundestag elections, 16.3 percent of all male voters voted for the AfD as opposed to only 9.2 percent of all female voters. In total, nearly two-thirds of AfD voters were male, with no difference in distribution between East and West (Decker, 2018). In terms of age groups, the AfD is most successful in the middle age groups, ranging from 35 and 59 years of age, where it has reached 15 percent. In the youngest (18 to 24 years of age) and oldest group (over 70 years of age), on the other hand, their performance was significantly worse with 8 per cent each (figures from the representative election statistics) (Decker, 2018).

• **Unsurprisingly, AfD voters are dissatisfied and prioritise immigration.** AfD voters in general show a much higher level of dissatisfaction with the status quo and a greater proximity to right-wing extremist conviction than the average voter. The difference between the AfD and other political parties is most apparent in their migration and refugee policies. The AfD rigorously rejects Merkel's migration and refugee policies; this sentiment is almost unanimously shared by its voters (Hambauer and Mays, 2018). This dovetails nicely with the AfD's self-identification as an 'anti-establishment party' that dominates its messaging and appearance (Schwandner and Manow, 2017).

The historical progression of the AfD illustrates how the proximate cause of its rise and subsequent radicalisation lay in two successive crises: first, the debt crisis in Eurozone economies and with it the emergence of anti-bailout sentiment amongst the German population; second, the refugee crisis, which became particularly intense in the summer of 2015. While these crises might appear to be wholly exogenous, treating them as such would ignore the ways in which German society has also shaped these wider structures of European governance. The German state has been a central historical wheel of European integration - and the emergence of eurosceptic attitudes amongst parts of the German population represent an important fault line in the project. Although the causes of these crises are very different, in both cases the Byzantine nature of decision-making in Europe led to institutional roadblocks that encouraged 'beggar-thy-neighbour' policies: states resisted solidaristic measures, preferring to protect their national interests. This, in turn, increased the dysfunctions within the system, stimulating further national tensions and resentments. Although greater integration is needed to address these crises the result is a deepening reluctance on the part of states and populations to countenance such steps.

Cleavages within Europe are usually cast as primarily national. Northern states are seen as having different economic interests to southern European ones. Similarly, differences between post-communist states and those with longer histories of liberal democracy are often emphasised. While there is truth in the importance of these cleavages, they can disguise the sub-national inequalities, which have been very important to the emergence of right-wing populisms. The uneven economic and demographic development between the old East and West Germany described above is a case in point. These trends are an example of 'geographies of discontent': local areas or regions, which have experienced decline due to changing economic and demographic patterns (Dijkstra, Poelman, Rodriguez-Pose 2018). Within these regions, which exist across Europe, discontented populations have proven vulnerable to right wing populist agitation. The German experience illustrates clearly that the EU does not have a simplistic north/south or east/west divide in the way that is conventionally understood. Instead geographical inequalities within states have been key to igniting a backlash against the status quo.

There are three key conclusions that follow from the above:

• **Tackle regional inequalities.** Resolving regional disparities in economic performance will be central to challenging the rise of the far right. For as long as these severe uneven economic and demographic patterns persist, the far right will be able to capitalise on fostering resentment.

• **Reform of the EU is critical.** European reform should not be seen as an 'optional extra'. Without addressing the dysfunctions exposed by the sovereign debt and migration crises, European governance will create the conditions for a future crisis. The far right will start the 'next one' from a stronger position, creating a potentially very dangerous moment for European politics.

• **Rethink the current model of globalisation.** Regional inequalities, which have created these 'discontented geographies', are reflective of how globalisation has restructured societies over the last three decades. To address these imbalances thus requires rethinking the current model of globalisation. The EU, as an organisation with the size and power to reshape globalisation, can play a key role in reform efforts at a global level.

WIR SIND DAS VOLK ('WE ARE THE PEOPLE')

'Don't you care about your children?'

The language used by AfD politicians often serves to denounce established parties as 'system parties' political opponents as 'system politicians' and critical journalists as members of 'the press of lies'. The AfD claims that there exists an establishment order, the so-called 'Merkel system' comprising the political system and media, which does not represent, and even corrupts, the liberal-democratic structures of Germany. Identifying the existence of an informal establishment, conspiring against the German people, is, of course, a classical device of right wing populism (Mudde 2016).

Today the chant 'Wir sind das Volk' can be heard at many AfD rallies. Utilising the terminology of *das Volk* serves two distinct purposes for the AfD; first, by claiming the mantle of the Peaceful Revolution they underscore their claims that the current system is illegitimate, and secondly, it positions the AfD as the sole representative of an assumed ethnically homogenous *Volk*.

• The AfD relies on the myth that since 2015 Germany is in a perpetual crisis. The key tenet to denying the legitimacy of Angela Merkel's government and the current political system is the myth that Angela Merkel unilaterally opened the German borders in 2015 and invited almost one million refugees into the country. The AfD claims that this policy constituted 'rule of injustice' that the country was consequently driven into a state crisis and to the brink of collapse. Consequently, the role of the AfD must be to restore law and order.

• The AfD cleverly manipulates and draws upon the language of the democratic movements in the old East Germany. In an interview with the influential conservative newspaper FAZ in September 2018, Alexander Gauland called for a 'peaceful revolution' against the 'the political system in the sense of the party system' in Germany. The term 'peaceful revolution' refers to the Peaceful Revolution of autumn 1989 that brought down the dictatorship in the GDR. Those brave protestors coined the words 'Wir sind das Volk' ('we are the people') making clear that in their eyes the dictatorship was illegitimate and did not represent the people. The AfD is eager to draw a clear connection between their fight against a perceived dictatorial 'system Merkel' with the struggle against oppression in the GDR.

• **The AfD positions itself as the sole representative of an assumed ethnically homogenous *Volk*.** After the AfD won 13.2 % in the 2017 federal elections, Alexander Gauland said, "now that we are obviously the third strongest party… We will hunt them, we will hunt Mrs Merkel or whoever - and we will take back our country and our people" (*Spiegel Online*, 2017). This shocking use of language ('wir werden sie jagen' / 'we will hunt her') is unprecedented for a party with such a strong level of electoral support in post-war Germany and underlines the seriously corrosive and dangerous impact the AfD is having on public political discourse. Indeed, the claim that only the AfD represents *das Volk* is not only populist in its vernacular, but also reveals a more troubling understanding of the very nature of Germany itself as an ethnically homogenous, white political space - overwhelmed by 'intruders' endangering the true Germans.

• **The comments made by AfD leaders should be seen in the context of the 'New Right' take on *das Volk*.** Their view of Germany and Europe is closely aligned with the Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic and its prominent thinkers. The Conservative Revolution wanted to overcome the Weimar Republic as a democratic constitutional state and instead revive supposedly lost values: elite, leadership, God, nation, nature, order, race and ethnic community. An authoritarian dictatorship with a real mass basis was to replace enlightenment, equality, the principle of individuality, liberalism, human rights, parliamentarism, party democracy and pluralism. The most prominent thinkers of the Conservative Revolution were Carl Schmitt and Oswald Spengler (Pfahl-Traughber, 2019). Today's New Right refers to these antirepublican thinkers to argue that the *Volk* is an entity in which each and every person has his or her biologically predetermined place. Consequently, Germany, in their eyes, is not represented by the contemporary Federal Republic of Germany built on its Basic Law, as such. Rather, the 'real' Germany is a metaphysical community of destiny whose culture is unchangeable, and which must be ethnically homogenous. In this view, individual freedoms, the diversity of lifestyles, and even

'Stop Islamisation'

'culturally alien' immigration per se, are a threat and an expression of decay.

• **How does the AfD justify its racism and xenophobia?** The racism of leading AfD politicians is not limited to foreigners but is also directed against German citizens with a migrant background - especially if they have a Muslim background. They deny them the same rights, their religious freedom, and their existence in Germany, this amounts to the rejection of fundamental human equality. The AfD speaks of the 'annihilation of the German people', of the 'repopulation', and of the 'great exchange' to justify this behavior. The German people is understood as a community of destiny that is on the verge of extinction through the promotion of immigration and a multicultural society. This scenario justifies all rhetorical means for numerous and well-known AfD politicians (Kopke, 2017). In August 2017, at an election campaign event in Eichsfeld, Thuringia, Alexander Gauland exhibited a damning reaction to a statement by the Integration Commissioner of the Federal Government, and SPD politician, Aydan Özuğuz. Özuğuz, born in Hamburg as a daughter of guest workers, had told the newspaper Tagesspiegel that, "a specifically German culture, beyond language, is simply not identifiable" (Özoğuz, 2017). Gauland responded "[t]hat's what a German-Turkish woman says. Invite her to Eichsfeld and then tell her what specifically German culture is. After that she will never come here again, and we will then, thank God, be able to dispose of her in Anatolia" (Bender and Braunschweig, 2017).

The AfD *formally* reject anti-Semitism. In doing so, their attitude is similar to that of many right-wing extremists in Europe. They seek to distance themselves from anti-Semitism and make reference to a Judeo-Christian culture, which they see as a front against Islam and Muslims. However, numerous examples of the trivialisation of National Socialism stand in contradiction to the AfD's formal hostility towards anti-Semitism. In its attempts to downplay the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their importance for today's Germany, the AfD is no exception to every far right party in Germany since the end of WWII. Most of it is directed towards the German culture of remembrance (*Erinnerungskultur*) that is a pinnacle of Germany's democratic post-war culture institutionalised in German education, architecture, art and political décor.

• **Leading figure on the extremist wing of the party, Björn Höcke, claimed that the *Erinnerungskultur* has become a 'cult of guilt' about the country's Nazi past and is holding Germany back.** Speaking at the youth organisation of the AfD in Dresden in 2017 he claimed that, "we Germans […] are the only people in the world who have planted a monument to shame [Holocaust Memorial] in the heart of their capital. […] And this stupid coping policy, still paralyses us today much more than in Franz Josef Strauss' time. We need nothing other than a 180 degree turn in our politics of remembrance" (ARD-Hauptstadtstudio Berlin, 2017).

• In 2017 at the Kyffhäuser meeting in Thuringia (the yearly meeting of the extremist party wing *Der Flügel*) Alexander Gauland commented on the Nazi era from 1933 to 1945, **"we no longer have to hold these twelve years against us. They no longer affect our identity today. That is why we have the right to take back not only our country, but also our past."** Gauland went on to say that if the French and British were proud of their emperor or Prime Minister Winston Churchill, respectively, "we have the right to be proud of the achievements of German soldiers in two world wars" (*ZEIT ONLINE*, 2017). A year later, he poignantly described Hitler and the National Socialist as, "just bird shit in 1,000 years of successful German

history" (*FAZ*, 2018). Björn Höcke once said to his followers, "Thuringians! Germans! 3,000 years of Europe! 1,000 years of Germany! I won't give you up" (Monitor, 2015) a clear reference to the Third Reich that was supposed to last 'a thousand years'.

The relativisation of the Nazi past by leading AfD politicians suggests three aspects of their politics towards Nazi atrocities: first, a critical view of National Socialism is seen as an obstacle to the practice of their politics; secondly, to them judging the Nazi atrocities is a matter of a political, rather than a factual, view of history. And thirdly, it is precisely this factual view of history that is, in their hands, turned into its fundamental opposite: a distorted, ideologically motivated conception of the past that feeds racist sentiments in the here and now.

AfD COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The AfD uses racism as a very effective and deliberate communication strategy. The strategy exemplified by the statements mentioned above by Gauland and others is simple: the use of racial slurs and incendiary language is followed by relativisation and half-hearted apologies. In connection with the straw man argument of 'political correctness' the party has successfully managed to continuously push the boundaries of what can be said in a public setting. This is not an accident – an internal strategic concept from 2016 named provocation as an important tool: "The more nervous and the more unfairly the old parties react to provocations, the better," the internal paper states. "The more they try to stigmatise the AfD because of provocative words or actions, the more positive this is for the profile of the AfD. No one gives the AfD more credibility than its political opponents" (Steffen, 2017).

• **The AfD relies on traditional media to further its message.** Corresponding to their electoral successes the party has managed to raise its profile in the traditional media. AfD representatives are regulars in political talk shows and debates. This does not stop the AfD, however, maintaining its claim that the establishment media censors

their message. The AfD views journalists and the media, not as democratic and critical institutions but as instruments to further their message. There are various attempts to build a new 'free media' consisting of blogs, newspapers and influencers who are ideologically close to the AfD and disseminate their message.

• **Like other far right parties, the AfD excels at honing their message to online audiences.** In the weeks before the European parliament elections, numerous reports showed just how effectively the AfD was utilising social media to spread its message. *Der Spiegel* cites research by George Washington University researcher Trevor Davis, revealing that on Facebook the AfD was responsible for 85 per cent of all shared posts originating from German political parties. Among other things this results from the enormous output that the party generates on its Facebook channels. Since October 2018 the AfD has posted an average of over 4,000 photos per week (Diehl et al., 2019). According to research by the platform for digital liberties, netzpolitik.org, the party is also using dubious methods to boost its reach on twitter. The party is also suspected of supporting networks of fake accounts that strengthened party members with coordinated retweets (Reuter, 2019).

• **The AfD systematically stirs up anti-migrant panic to further its repressive agenda against immigrants.** A recently published study examines 242 AfD press releases from 2018 dealing with criminal offences (Hestermann and Hoven, 2019). 95% of the suspects whose nationality is mentioned are non-Germans (and almost exclusively immigrants), only 5% are Germans - and even among the few German suspects, reference is consistently made to a migrant background or the insignificance of the purported crime. Foreigners who have lived in Germany for a long time and in large numbers are not discussed: in 2018 there was not a single reference to Polish or Italian suspects. Rather, the AfD focuses on immigrants from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, which supports the central interpretation of the opening of the border in 2015 as a fatal failure of the state. By blaming the governing parties

'New Germans? We'll make them ourselves'

for the crimes committed by immigrants, the AfD accuses the political elites of ignoring the legitimate security needs of the community by treating the perpetrators with leniency - out of misunderstood benevolence, naivety and ideological stubbornness. This strategy of the party serves its demand for tougher action against immigrants and foreigners living in Germany, especially those of Muslim faith. The AfD presents itself here as the only party that is prepared to fight crime with what it sees as the right means: by closing the borders and immediately expelling criminals.

Based on these strategies the AfD has been highly successful in dominating the political debate since 2015 especially around migration and security.

IMPACT ON ESTABLISHED PARTIES

• **The German centre-right has adopted a hard line approach on migration and security in order to win back voters from the AfD.** Angela Merkel, who outside Germany is still regarded as a pro-migration political figure, has chosen to adopt a right turn on migration, cutting benefits and facilitating detention, deportation, and criminalisation of migration and human rights activists. Central to this reaction is the famous dictum by its long-time leader Franz-Josef Strauß that "to the right of the CSU there must be no democratically legitimated party!" However, the decision to adopt this hard line has not paid off for the CDU/CSU, and the Bavarian elections in 2018 especially showed that AfD voters cannot be won back so easily. This led to severe schisms within the CDU/CSU about the future direction of the parties and their positioning towards the AfD. These debates will likely be exacerbated in the future as the end of Angela Merkel's rule draws closer and with the CDU likely to lose considerably in the autumn state elections in East Germany.

• **The rise of the AfD demonstrates the helplessness of the centre-left.** The centre-left SPD is continuously tumbling in the polls and in public perception. Unable to decide between upending the governing coalition with the CDU, they largely went along with the punitive measures put forward by the CDU without making a mark in the debate. The current predicament of the SPD (the 15.5 per cent that the SPD reached in the 2019 European elections marked the worst national result for the since the imperial era) can be traced back to two developments. First, the neoliberal turn under Gerhard Schröder, and the enormous cuts to the social security net that he oversaw, alienated the party's core constituency and left the party lacking a political vision to react to the AfD's

challenges convincingly. Secondly, since 2005 the SPD has governed as the junior partner to Merkel's CDU. Merkel successfully overtook many of the socially progressive positions of the SPD, thereby minimising the party's options to make a mark while at the same time angering the SPD party base that grew increasingly critical of the coalition with the CDU.

• **The rise of the AfD coincides with the larger historical trend of the end of the *Volksparteien*.** The significant losses in the polls of the former *Volksparteien*, CDU and SPD (people's parties appealing to a wide variety of voters) points towards a deep shift of the German political landscape. In 1975, the SPD had around one million members; since then these numbers have continuously decreased, with rapid reduction setting in by the 1990s. In 2016, the SPD had 432.000 members (Niedermayer, 2017). The loss in memberships coincided with demographic change and aging of the party. In 1990 only 24.6 per cent of its members was older than 60, 46 per cent belonged to this age group in 2016. The situation of the CDU is very similar with regards to both age groups and party membership (Niedermayer, 2017). While her inner-party critics blame Merkel for the recent electoral losses, the elections results are merely the continuation of a drop in the polls beginning in the 1980s. The time of large, all-encompassing *Volksparteien* in Germany seems poised to end.

• **Under their new and appealing leadership the German Greens have managed to portray themselves as anti-AfD, pluralistic, cosmopolitan, and proponents of an open society.** This is grounded in their core message, based on a concern for the climate crisis, which has become one of the most important issues among German voters – largely thanks to the Fridays for Future protests that have dominated the news in recent months. Consequently, the Greens have gained strong support in urban areas and especially among young voters. For example, 33 percent of voters under 30 voted for the Greens in the 2019 European elections.

GERMAN CIVIL SOCIETY REACTION

• **There is generally strong support for democracy, the European Union and climate protection across all voters in Germany.** Before the 2019 European elections, the ARD-Deutschlandtrend[2] found that on the topic of European integration the AfD is at odds with the general population, as only 14 per cent of all voters see German EU membership as disadvantageous. A majority of all voters (52 percent) voiced a desire for greater cooperation among European countries. On the topic of climate change, a strong majority of voters (81 percent) see a very large or large need for climate protection - less than one fifth (17 percent), on the other hand, see little or no need to act. However, the majority of AfD supporters see little or no need for action on climate change (infratest dimap, 2019b). Accordingly, the AfD party programme doubts that "mankind has significantly influenced or could even control recent climate change, in particular current warming" and rejects the 2016 Paris Agreement as well as CO2 certificates trading. On the topic of Brexit, the AfD voters are an outlier compared to the members of every other party. While 49 percent of AfD voters welcomed Britain's withdrawal from the EU, only 11 percent of CDU/CSU voters were of the same opinion (infratest dimap, 2019a).

• **In May 2019, German minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer presented the statistics on politically motivated crime in Germany, commenting that he sees a 'massive problem' from the right.** The Federal Criminal Police Office recorded 36,062 politically motivated crimes in 2018. For the second time in a row, the overall number of politically motivated crimes has fallen. But politically motivated crime is still at its third highest level since the introduction of statistics in 2001. More than half of the criminal offences - around 20,400 - can be assigned to the right spectrum as opposed to nearly 8,000 crimes identified with the extreme left.

• **There has been a particularly sharp rise in the number of criminal offences labelled 'hate crimes'.** 89.1 percent of the 1800 cases of 'hate crimes' in 2018 were perpetrated by right-wing extremists. Additionally there was a rise in anti-Semitic offences by 19.6 percent compared to 2017 (tagesschau.de, 2019). There are recent examples of far-right terrorism in Germany, most notably the shooting of Walter Luebcke, a high-ranking public official of the CDU, who was killed by the former neo-Nazi Stephan Ernst, on 2 June 2019. This has obviously made the question of far-right extremism and the role of the AfD in promoting hatred and division very significant.

• **In 2018 there were already signs of public resistance against the rightward turn of the public debate.** Numerous movements by opponents of the new police laws, rent, climate and refugee activists were able to mobilise tens of thousands in nationwide demonstrations. Instead of a single shift to the right, there is now a polarization in the country as the left-wing radical to left-wing liberal camp began to find and organize itself. As a response to the Chemnitz riots, a concert was organised in Chemnitz by a broad coalition of civil society organisations on the 3rd of September against racism and the ongoing division in society. The concert was attended by an estimated 65,000 people. This was followed most notably by a demonstration in Berlin with around 250,000 participants. It was organised by the *unteilbar* ('indivisible') alliance, composed of hundreds of civil society organisations, trade unions, politicians and left-wing groups.

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2 A monthly political opinion poll conducted since 1997 on behalf of the ARD and daily newspapers of Infratest dimap. The data are collected in a representative telephone survey of around 1,000 to 1,500 randomly selected Germans entitled to vote. In addition to questions on political trends such as the Sunday question, opinions on current topics are also asked.

'Stand up against racism'

CONTAINMENT POLICY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

Reactions of the established parties can be distinguished in two different ways. First, how to react to the AfD presence in parliament on a day-to-day basis? And secondly, how to reorient the party identity in response to this new force in German politics?

The second, especially with regards to the German centre-right, is predicated upon a debate on the nature of the AfD, whether it is in its essence still a democratic party in line with the German basic law, or whether the party has successfully been captured by its extremist wing, thus ruling out any coalition in the future. They argue that a party like the AfD might be democratically elected, yet this does not make it a democratic party worthy of cooperation with other parties.

One fear that is often voiced is that a containment strategy gives the AfD the ability to position itself as the victim and thus gain more support. However, positioning itself as a victim is core to the party identity and will always be their strategy, regardless of any policy of containment or not.

The temptation of the CDU, in particular, to abandon the containment strategy will grow if the AfD continues to make advances in East German states. While the containment strategy, as evidenced by the lack of public support for AfD positions amongst a large majority of voters, is working, there is a clear danger that the party becomes the go to choice for an angry and radicalised minority. This could lay a foundation for further growth and advance in the event of exogenous shocks in the German or European political situation.

• **Until now every democratic party has ruled out a coalition with the AfD or most forms of parliamentary cooperation, as evidenced by the refusal of most MPs to elect an AfD vice-president of the Bundestag.** Every party in the Bundestag has the constitutional right to nominate one of their members to this largely bureaucratic role. However, this depends on an election by a majority of all MP's across parties. Until today a majority of MP's across the political spectrum have refused to ever vote for an AfD politician.

• **Additionally, the rule-based nature of German politics has shown the shortcomings of the AfD in running an effective political operation.** The AfD suffers from a persistent lack of professionalism and willingness to observe German electoral rules. One recent example of this is found in the Saxon state election committee. The election regulator decided on 5th July 2019 that the AfD could only run with 18 list candidates although the party had nominated a total of 61 candidates. This was due to formal deficiencies in the nomination process. If the party did well in the state elections, the AfD might not be able to fill all the seats. Later, the party lost an appeal to the German Federal Court, again because of formal shortcomings in the law suit they drew up.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CENTRE–RIGHT TO THE AfD

Although the CDU in general, and its leadership in particular, categorically rule out any form of cooperation with the AfD, there is a minority current within the CDU in favour of cooperating with them at the state level. They argue that while the AfD is evidently a far-right populist party, it nonetheless operates within the democratic system. This view contends that the AfD began as a fiscally conservative protest party that then radicalised over the course of the subsequent years and that – while there are extremist parts within the party – overall the party is not extremist. Consequently, ahead of the autumn state elections in East Germany (Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia) prominent CDU-politicians did not rule out a coalition with the AfD entirely – on the condition that the party manages to expel its extremist wing. It was only after heavy criticism – including from today's CDU leader Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer – that they took back these comments (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2018).

• **East Germany: a stronghold for the AfD where they have become a major force.** This is a status confirmed by the 1st September state elections. In Brandenburg, where the AfD were widely expected to win, they performed slightly above expectations, winning 22.5 per cent of the vote. However, whereas many predicted this would be enough to take the symbolic prize of being the largest party, a better than expected result for the SPD saw them win the state election, taking 27.5 per cent. In Saxony, the AfD saw a huge surge in support, taking 27.5 per cent of the vote, but behind the CDU on 32 per cent. This means there is a large right of centre majority, combining the CDU and AfD, which may galvanise those in the CDU keen on cooperation with the far right party. In October state elections will take place in Thuringia where the AfD is projected to win 24 percent, just behind the far-left party Die Linke which is currently governing the state in a coalition with SPD and the Greens.

• **The CDU response towards the AfD will be determined by the political realities of the elections to come.** Forming a majority coalition hardly works in either of the three states anymore because of the very fragmented party landscape. In the history of the German Federal Republic Minority governments on state level have not offered a stable alternative. After the Bundestag elections the CDU attempted to forge a coalition with the Greens and the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP). After marathon negotiations, the coalition talks ultimately failed. The CDU will want to avoid a repetition of this scenario at all costs. Therefore, an alliance with the AfD might present an alluring alternative to remain in or take power. In Saxony and possibly also in Thuringia, the AfD could govern. If the CDU lets them.

• **The two vice-presidents of the CDU state parliamentary group in Saxony-Anhalt, Ulrich Thomas and Lars-Jörn Zimmer, argued in a memorandum that the CDU and AfD were pursuing similar goals.** It is a 'historical mistake' not to have defended the longing for a homeland, the paper continues. Thomas also told the "Mitteldeutsche Zeitung" that the CDU should not rule out a coalition to this effect.

• **Political realities on the local level challenge the demarcation between CDU and AfD.** Especially in East German local politics the AfD is strongly represented since the elections in the spring, having received a vote of over 20 per cent in many districts. For the CDU, this is the beginning of a balancing act between its own aspirations and local realities and there are already examples of cooperation between CDU and AfD officials on a local level.

• **Meanwhile, the AfD is calmly watching the struggle within the CDU.** 93 percent of AfD supporters have spoken out in favour of not ruling out a coalition with the CDU. AfD leader Jörg Meuthen, however, rejected a coalition after the state elections. In the long run, however, the cooperation cannot be avoided in his eyes: "I should be surprised if there is no coalition of CDU and AfD in 2025, at least at the state level." He hopes that the coalition would be a great success (Garbe, 2019).

Until now every democratic party has ruled out a coalition with the AfD and most forms of parliamentary cooperation

THE POWER STRUGGLE INSIDE THE AfD OVER ITS EXTREMIST WING

The second view on the nature of the AfD posits that the radical parts of the party, especially the right-wing extremist party wing *Der Flügel* ('The Wing') around Björn Höcke, has managed to capture large parts of the party and continues to grow its influence in other party chapters outside of Eastern Germany. It contends that this extremist part of the party cannot be demarcated from its more moderate parts that respect the German constitution, not since Frauke Petry lost her bid for power. And to persist with the argument that the AfD is a democratic or non-racist party inevitably provides window-dressing to its claim to political legitimacy.

• **Björn Höcke is one of the co-founders of Der Flügel that was founded in 2015 to steer the AfD to the far-right.** The founding document of the internal party wing is the Erfurt Resolution, which describes the AfD as a "resistance movement against the further erosion of Germany's sovereignty and identity" and as a "movement of our people against the social experiments of the last decades (gender mainstreaming, multiculturalism, educational arbitrariness)". In mid-January 2019, the *Verfassungsschutz* (VS, literally 'Constitutional Protection', referring to the state security organisation tasked with protecting liberal democracy in Germany), categorised Der Flügel and the AfD youth organization *Junge Alternative* ('Young Alternative') as a *Verdachtsfall* ('suspected case'). This means that the VS sees the activities of both inner-party institutions as a potential threat to German democracy. This assessment gives the VS the ability to use extensive intelligence resources for further observations (*WELT*, 2019).

• **An internal evaluation from 2017 debating the expulsion of Höcke from the party argued that Höcke showed a "kinship with National Socialism".** His "views on humanity contradicts universal human dignity". In addition, it found that Höcke turned "directly against the constitutional order". The similarity of his statements to those of Adolf Hitler led them to the conclusion that Höcke

should be regarded as a National Socialist and not only as a right-wing extremist (Portmann, 2017). Despite this damning conclusion, the party-internal state arbitration court in Thuringia rejected the exclusion of Höcke from the party. Höcke remained the leader of the Thuringian chapter of the AfD and his influence in the party has grown more powerful. Frauke Petry who had pursued his expulsion was pushed out of the party leadership by now chairman Jörg Meuthen, who allied with Björn Höcke and Alexander Gauland to gain power in the party.

• **There are increasing ties between the AfD and right-wing extremist groups it previously disavowed.** On 26 and 27 August and on 1 September 2018, in the East German town of Chemnitz, leading AfD politicians participated side by side with far-right hooligans, neo-fascists and leaders of PEGIDA. This broke with the previous tradition of the party distancing itself publicly from such extremist groups. The AfD also claims that it does not share a common cause with the right-wing extremist Identitarian movement that has gained recent notoriety due to alleged ties with its Austrian chapter and the terrorist behind the Christchurch massacre. In June 2016, the AfD leadership committed itself to this position. The Federal Executive Committee states in a resolution that "there is no cooperation between the Alternative for Germany Party and its divisions and the so-called Identitarian Movement"(Geisler et al., 2017). However, recent reporting revealed that AfD politicians have employed prominent members of the Identitarian movement at their offices in the German Bundestag, showing that statements of demarcation from right-wing extremists are often mere lip service (Merker, 2019).

• **Today almost one third of the approximately 33,650 AfD members are now allied with Der Flügel** (Speit, 2019) and there is plenty of evidence that *Der Flügel*, which is by now best described as a 'party within the party,' is steadily gaining more power within the party. Three East German party chairmen are all confirmed members of *Der Flügel*. In Schleswig-Holstein, the controversial and *Flügel*-aligned Doris von Sayn-Wittgenstein is now

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the head of the regional association. She was the patron of an association founded by a convicted Holocaust denier. In Bavaria, *Flügel* member Katrin Ebner-Steiner replaced the moderate faction spokesperson. After a chaotic party conference, *Flügel* man Thomas Röckemann temporarily took over in the disputed state association of North Rhine-Westphalia. At the 2019 Kyffhäuser meeting of *Der Flügel* Björn Höcke openly declared his ambitions for the national party structure declaring that "I can guarantee you that this federal leadership in this constellation will not be re-elected".

• **The AfD will have to reckon with this internal power struggle.** The two sides are fighting for supremacy across Germany and with growing intensity. Either the still democratic right-wing populists assert themselves and expel their extremist opponents or those opponents take over the AfD. But this struggle will certainly not be resolved before the state elections in the east in autumn of 2019. It depends on how Der Flügel and its aligned state chapters perform there. Whether they succeed or fail, whether they ascend to the government or not, will determine the future of the AfD, the positioning of the centre-right to it, and, by extension, the future of the German Federal Republic itself.

THE AfD AS A THREAT TO EUROPE

'A EUROPE OF THE FATHERLANDS'

On the one hand, the AfD has radicalised both in terms of its programme and attitude towards the EU and in its rejection in principle of an integrated European confederation of states. Its vision of Europe has strong white and racial overtones. On the other hand, like many far right parties in Europe it is now no longer simply an anti-EU force in the sense of supporting the break up of the union. Rather they have a far right reformist vision of a Europe of nation-states.

• **The AfD rejects "taxes, in particular those which serve exclusively to finance the EU budget" at the EU level.** Additionally, the AfD supports BEPS[3] measures to combat tax dumping and tax fraud effectively via the OECD. However, it opposes such implementation at the EU level. Interestingly, the AfD also demands that the Cohesion Fund be phased out and that EU budgets be reduced to the same extent. Broadly, the AfD wants to model the EU after the European Economic Community, as it existed before the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties.

• **On Social Europe and Freedom of Movement, the AfD rejects EU regulations to social benefit entitlements, the Common European Asylum System (GEAS), and any binding refugee reception quotas for EU member states.** Additionally, the AfD strives to restrict EU-wide free movement, only admitting people into Germany who can sustain themselves financially. Furthermore, they demand the authorisation of all EU countries make tax-financed social benefits for EU citizens and their family members dependent on at least ten years of continuous employment and social insurance contributions without state subsidies. The AfD supports legislation on the posting of workers and calls for effective controls to ensure that it is complied with.

• **Unsurprisingly, protection and security play a central role in the AfD European Election program.** According to the AfD, to 'protect the

nation' means that "any immigration into Europe must be limited and controlled in such a way that the identity of the European cultural nations is preserved in all circumstances." In addition, the party calls for the reinstatement of national border controls stating that, "[i]n order to protect citizens, national border controls must be reintroduced on a permanent basis in addition to EU external border controls" (Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), 2019). The party's program for the 2019 European elections calls for the EU to be replaced by a "Europe of the Fatherlands" in which, "all nations have the right to organise themselves into sovereign states." As such, they could enter into supranational connections under international law and, "safeguard common interests as a community of states" (Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), 2019).

• **According to Gauland, the EU must be reduced 'to its meaningful core'; namely, the internal market.** While he agreed with the sentiment that the 'totalitarian apparatus' of the EU should be abolished, he saw the demands for a 'Dexit' (German exit) as utopian. He specifically referred to the chaotic circumstances of the Brexit negotiations claiming that the established media would look at a possible Dexit with a magnifying glass, regardless of the course of events, in order to put the problems in the foreground. In the end, the call for a fixed Dexit deadline was averted. Nevertheless, a radical restructuring of the EU institutions was set as a precondition for Germany to remain in the EU; otherwise, Dexit or an orderly dissolution of the EU – albeit as a 'last option' – would become necessary. These reforms include the withdrawal from the Euro currency and the replacement of the EU Parliament by a European Assembly, an assembly of a maximum of 100 delegates sent from the nation states and elected by the respective national parliaments. This assembly would have no legislative competence. Further, the AfD called for the European Court of Justice (ECJ) to be abolished and replaced by a supranational arbitration tribunal to stop the ECJ's interference in the sovereignty of nation states.

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3 Base Erosion and Profit Shifting

CONCLUSION

The AfD is here to stay. While West Germany, in parts, seems to have halted the progress of the AfD (the 2019 EP elections meant a slight loss overall for the party), it has strongly solidified its influence in the old East Germany. Meanwhile, concurrently, the extremist wing has grown stronger within the party. The CDU/CSU is divided on whether to pursue an appeasement or containment strategy - with the electoral dynamic likely to be key to how this debate will transpire. Appeasement rarely works, and the collapse of the Kurz government in Austria should be a warning sign to the CDU: governing with the likes of FPÖ and AfD is not a winning strategy for conservatives. While the rise of the far right is often presented as a failure of the left, the German experience reveals a different story. The far right have gained electorally at the expense of the CDU far more than other parties. This, in turn, requires the centre-right to advocate for a strong commitment to individual freedoms and the rule of law, and not tailor their policies to the AfD.

POSITIVE LESSONS: HOW GERMANY CONTAINED THE AfD

• **Deeply embedded human rights.** Unlike Austria, or other states where the far right have been in government, Germany has not had to test how successfully its liberal democratic institutions withstand the pressure of authoritarian parties gaining power. However, its exceptionally strong constitutional defence of human rights, the separation of powers and the rule of law, created following the experience of fascism in 1949, means it has strong institutional protections for liberal democratic rights and freedoms.

• **Containment policy of the democratic parties.** German political parties have placed a *cordon sanitaire* around the AfD. As the party has moved further and further to the right, it has become increasingly difficult for the CDU to entertain the idea of a coalition along the lines of the ÖVP-FPÖ alliance in Austria. While there have been persistent rumours of the CDU moving in this direction, they have hitherto maintained a containment policy. This is significant because, while the rise of the far

right is often seen as a failure on the part of the left to attract discontented voters, it can equally be a failure of the centre and centre-right to challenge the rise of right wing extremism and defend democracy.

• **Contest historical revisionism but offer a forward-looking vision.** The German experience is similar to other countries in Europe insofar as 'memory politics' has been an important area of struggle and mobilisation for the far right. This is, of course, an acutely sensitive subject in the German context and creates a challenge for progressives and democrats. Historical revisionism must be tackled while at the same time anti-fascists should not get locked into battles overs past events - a forward looking message and vision will be key.

• **Mobilise the younger generation, minorities, and women.** Older men are strikingly more likely

to support the AfD than younger people, women or minorities. The mobilisation of these groups will be important to maintaining a robust democratic majority in German society. Taking more active steps to ensure German institutions reflect the diversity of German society will be important to creating an inclusive politics.

DANGERS AHEAD: CONTINUED RISKS FOR GERMANY, EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

• **Unresolved regional inequalities.** Uneven economic development between the old East and West Germany, which feeds into important demographic differences regarding the age of populations on either side of this divide, has been a key factor in the growth of the AfD. A persistent failure to address these inequalities through an expansive state investment programme has fed resentment and discontent, which far right populists have capitalised on. If these are left unresolved, then the problem will persist.

• **New 'shocks' could allow a far right advance.** The rise of the AfD was triggered by two clear exogenous shocks. First, the initial trigger for their growth was the Eurozone crisis and resulting opposition to bailouts of southern European economies. Second, their further growth spurt, and shift to the extreme right, was inspired by the refugee crisis. A further exogenous shock - e.g. another financial crisis, war or ecological disaster in Europe or the European neighbourhood - could undermine the containment policy.

• **Reforming the EU and globalisation is critical to confronting the far right advance.** Although both the financial and refugee crises can be seen as externally conduced shocks, they also exposed severe failings in the structure of European governance. In both cases, a negative feedback loop emerged as the inability of the institutions to cope with these shocks produced crises that fed into nationalist sentiment. This, in turn, provided a further political block to creating institutions capable of dealing with these crises. As this suggests, the rise of the AfD, with its rejection of the Euro and demand for a 'Europe of the fatherlands', underlines the risk 'not reforming' poses to the EU. Even as the rise of nationalism makes this more difficult, reform efforts must continue.

• **Temptation of slow-burn adaptation to anti-immigrant and anti-Islam sentiment.** Across all sides of the political spectrum the temptation to adapt to anti-immigrant and anti-Islam sentiment exists. The correlation between impoverished economic geography and the rise in right wing populist sentiment can lead social democrats and the left to mistakenly take up anti-immigrant standpoints. For the centre-right the loss of voters to their far right provides a clear incentive to move to the far right. The role of civil society will be important in ensuring democratic parties resist this temptation to adapt.

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