

## **Political party system in Germany after federal election, 2017**

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It is evident that there is one party that has spiced up public discussion in the last 5 years. It may seem that they have been at odds with all the political factions throughout the country, especially on the issue of immigration and European integration. Some claim that it is unacceptable to vote for this party as it adheres to notoriously famous Nazi racist principles, whereas others urge to reassess government's priorities and cease mass immigration by means of supporting the Alternative for Germany. So, the subject of the essay is the standing of AfD in the German parties' battlefield.

Those Europeans who tend to spend their mornings while scanning articles in newspapers and sipping their cappuccino simultaneously may even anticipate tomorrow's titles of articles. It seems it is the right time to reveal the terms ingrained in the field of contemporary political journalism that AfD concentrates public attention on. Recent columns with the tag of AfD feature words like a nation, a nation state, nationalising regions, ethnicities and the last one in the row is patriotism. Even though this essay refers to German studies, it is quite a bit of an irony to start off by quoting one of the most eminent statesmen in the world of all times who was French. Charles de Gaulle who famously declared that patriotism is when love of your own people comes first; nationalism is when hate for people other than you comes first. This quote brings some meaningful thoughts to digest and analyse the concepts of the Alternative for Germany.

Since 2013 when the Alternative for Germany rushed into political spectrum, claims of nationalism resurgence in Germany have occupied minds of both political establishment and average citizens of the country. In addition, the current socio-political trend towards right-wing movements has led to advancement in electoral support for this kind of parties. This notion implies the general idea that the rise of AfD should be considered by means of common alterations in political thinking throughout the European Continent. Moreover, anti-globalism campaigns are an issue even on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, right at the hard core of world's democracy in Washington D.C., where self-proclaimed nationalist D. Trump is in charge of the government. Not to mention Ms. Le Pen and the National Front becoming a runner-up of the 2017 French Presidential election and the growing popularity of the most prominent pro-Brexit activist in the UK Nigel Farage. In addition, Austria's far right freedom party entered a coalition government or Greet Wilders' Freedom Party that is well-known for their anti-Islam rhetoric turned out to be the second-largest party in Dutch Parliament. In effect, Germans do not stay aside, though. Consequently, it is vitally important to make intelligible the ongoing socio-political tendency on the international level

in order to explain the phenomenon of the Alternative for Germany being based on domestic German affairs.

According to the results of the last German federal election held in 2017, AfD has ranked as the third-largest party in the Parliament. In such a manner, right-wing AfD has experienced a stunning success. Conversely, the results of the 2013 Bundestag election are utterly incomparable to the ones mentioned above. They differ drastically. That time AfD was in the bottom of the list of participants of “the voting contest”. However, 2013, the time of foundation of the Alternative for Germany became a launching pad for subsequently skyrocketing the number of supporters. To add, co-founder and the leader of AfD Alexander Gauland once was a member of Germany’s major political party CDU with their head Angela Merkel who is already in her fourth term as the Chancellor. It indicates the pattern that AfD’s constituency emerges from former voters for two major parties which are presented by the Christian Democratic Union of Germany plus its sister-party the Christian Social Union in Bavaria and the Social Democratic Party. So, likewise A. Gauland who once left CDU, these people who gave their votes for the Alternative for Germany have been significantly dissatisfied with the coalition of two mass parties as well. So much for gathering supporters of AfD.

As a matter of curiosity, Federal elections in Germany that date back to September 2017 have changed Alternative for Germany from the inside. The landslide victory in 2017 surrounds the party with support of German citizens. That was the scale that they could not even dream about. The number is immense for a new-born populist party, though (There was 12,6 percent and 94 seats in Bundestag, according to “Bundeswahlleiter”). Therefore, from then on, AfD has changed their previous focus on liberal free market and criticizing the Euro as a common currency to denouncing Merkel’s migration policy while more and more refugees are seeking shelter in Germany. Moreover, this remarkable AfD’s success granted more radical nationalist politicians like Björn Höcke, Andre Poggenburg or Beatrix von Storch opportunity to gain power within the party. Their rhetoric towards reaching the objective of bringing migration to a close has spread fear in the society. For instance, Andre Poggenburg insulted Turkish community in Germany as calling them “camel herders” on February 2018. Not to mention B. Höcke who made a statement and called on Germans to make a “180-degree” turn in Germany’s history and end the guilt of Nazis for the Second World War. Also, Frauke Petry, who was considered as part of the right wing of the party and a leader of the moderate-right later on, left saying that AfD became too much right wing for her.

Finally, there might be a forecast of two scenarios. The first and the most probable one is that AfD would be still a populist party that is characterised by criticizing the current government and the rest of the political forces. It can hardly make an impact on government’s implementations

because AfD as any opposition party may scarcely be entitled to actualize their initiatives. The second one reflects the situation from the inside of the party. This implies the division in AfD between radical wing and moderate members. Subsequently, there might be even two parties standing out for anti-migrant policy in Germany, according to this script.

On the whole, returning back to Charles de Gaulle`s quote, it may be construed as the choice of people of Germany between nationalism and patriotism. To emphasize, there is a thread which has patriotism on its one end and nationalism on the other. In this case, the Alternative for Germany is a needle. The thing that everything depends on is to choose the right end of the thread for a needle.