



An AfD Victory in Thuringia: A Deep Dive Into the 2024 state Election

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: AfD, Thuringia, Populisme

Received : 1 November

Revised : 22 December

Accepted: 20 January

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ABSTRACT

In the 2024 state election in Thuringia it was hence another final warning for Germany, with the Alternative for Germany (AfD) as overall winner. This article dives into the many contours of AfD's rise, including populism; anti-immigrant sentiment and larger societal disaffection. The AfD's rise, together with its accompanying challenges and opportunities for Thuringia if party divisions persist, these consider will have implications beyond the region for wider European politics are analyzed using a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative data analysis and qualitative insights from interviews and survey data on voter behavior and party dynamics. The results speak volumes of the nuances between today's electoral quagmire and the challenges posed by populist movements. Here, will be analysed how the AfD managed to win so many votes and offers a few suggestions on how we can tackle this rise of populism in Europe

INTRODUCTION

The Alternative for Germany (AfD) is a far-right populist political party that was established as The Euro Party and was founded in 2013. Initially the Eurosceptic party opposed the Chancellor Angela Merkel Government financial policy. Adopting an ultranationalist and anti-immigrant platform since then, it achieved a high level of support during the 2015 European migrant crisis. Nationalist rhetoric, a cuppla anti-immigrant positions, some uncertainty over multiculturalism – that sort of thing. This portrayal as an ultra-right party is reinforced by its links to the radical organizations, causing fears of a return to Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime.

Given the party's success at the polls these fears in a historical context have helped to raise concerns over its burgeoning popularity. Part of what makes AfD so interesting is that its messages tap into forms of cultural and economic dislocation that many people in Germany and other European countries are feeling – a canary in the coal mine for much larger currents at play across Europe as a whole. echoes throughout the continent, where the signs of tectonic fractures are showing themselves daily. The state sovereignty trampled by government policy is a seedbed where anti-internationalist parties such as the AfD find fertile soil.

Research in recent years and the political debate around it indicate that the AfD's increasing mainstreaming is also thanks to the way it uses digital media or alternative media to spread its populist message. The party exploits economic insecurities and public discontent on climate policies, framing itself as a voice against “elitist green agendas”, particularly those deriving from the EU. This reinforces the need to focus on socio-economic grievances while also challenging the arguments of far-right populism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rise of populist parties in Europe has received a good deal of scholarly interest. Increased economic insecurity and reaction to globalisation, especially in areas with high unemployment and significant demographic transformation, are behind the rise of populism (Yazar & Haarstad, 2023) – (Hansen & Olsen, 2022). The selection of AfD in mobilizing diversity voters is mainly related to the success of exploiting a widespread discontent among the public on migration and national identity when traditional parties CDU, SPD lost trust from their former supporters (“The Marginalised Nativism Strikes Back: Critical Discourse Analysis of the AfD Party’s Anti-Refugee Campaign in Germany,” 2023).

Studies have found that the party's anti-immigrant rhetoric appeals to voters who are concerned about changes to national identity and job insecurity. In addition, research has suggested that economic pressures intersecting with perceptions of cultural and identity threat local issues and AFDs narrative (Arzheimer & Berning, 2019).

Populism Theory

During the article's construction, populism becomes a central theoretical construct. A systematic approach explained that when a society is cloven into the pure people versus corrupt elite, populism ultimately helps draw the line

between who belongs and not. This framework has a political style and performs in such a way to emphasise the difference of people versus elite, with its language being direct or dramatic at times vulgar (McDonnell & Ondelli, 2024). In the case of right-wing populism, however, its ideology is rooted on three building blocks: The Good People, whose volkstümlich or mainstream beliefs have been ignored by a corrupt establishment (The Bad Elite) who allow outsiders to infiltrate national culture and Muslim populations serve as "the Ultimate Other" targeting all that this group consider dear. When we do so, the question becomes one of how populism translates the widespread unhappiness with a ruling class into their mantra about being only real servants and representatives of ordinary citizens. Because of this insight, the article's overarching narrative strategies, rhetorical tactics and populist themes can be examined more carefully.

METHODS

The analysis presented in this paper is based on a mixed-methods study, which analyses quantitative and qualitative data to better understand electoral dynamics in Thuringia for the 2024 state election. The quantitative aspect looks at electoral data from several election cycles, examining trends in voter turnout, changes in demographics, and shifts in party affiliation. The data comes from official government statistics and party archives, processed to reveal temporal and spatial patterns. The qualitative dimension consists of semi-structured interviews with relevant actors such as political analysts, local party officials, and voters from a variety of socio-demographic backgrounds. Also, short surveys are sent to a representative sample of Thuringian voters to supplement the interviews and fill in gaps in existing public opinion data related to key issues such as immigration, economic policies, and trust in political parties. This mixed-methods design provides a comprehensive analysis of the complex regional dynamics by triangulating data sources.

The study fills an important gap in the existing literature, which often fails to consider essential regional discrepancies and local socio-economic conditions contributing to the success of far-right populist parties in the regions, particularly in the case of the AfD. Prior studies have focused on trends at the national level, leaving the nuanced dynamics at the state level, like those of Thuringia, untouched. What is novel about this study is that it not only presents extensive historical quantitative data, but also accompanies their analysis with rich qualitative data to provide a more holistic picture of how local dynamics unfold alongside broader national political trends.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Economic Discontent

Findings Quantitative Data: Unemployment rates data from the Federal Employment Agency are strongly indicative of an acutely fragile economic welfare situation in Thuringia. Table 1: Estimating the impact of unemployment rates on AfD support by district.

Table 1. Unemployment Rates and AfD Support in Thuringia (2024 Election)

District	Unemployment Rate (%)	AfD Vote Share (%)
Erfurt	6.5	32
Jena	7.0	35
Gera	10.2	42
Nordhausen	9.8	40
Weimar	6.3	30

Source: Federal Employment Agency, 2024; Thuringian Electoral Commission, 2024

The data show the AfD performs in regions with low turnout, and that unemployment is a correlate of vote share, suggesting voters who are pushed by economic concerns.

Interviews with voters in Thuringia produced grim qualitative findings of feelings of neglect by the established political scene that have pushed them to the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Countless Americans echoed sentiments of economic disenfranchisement, including frustration at the chronic joblessness and stagnant wages that had them feeling both locked out and sold out. In the process, not only has this economic malaise left them disillusioned with existing parties, it also means that they are open to what the right-wing AfD offers as an alternative solution to their problems.

While voters occasionally followed those behind anti-politics, they just as often put into words a widespread sense that the ongoing crisis seemed to matter little to legacy political bodies. They are suffering from job insecurity, underemployment and intensified living costs which together have outstripped their capacity to grip (Steiner, 2023). There was a strong feeling that mainstream politicians were out of touch with the working lives people and their communities. This contradiction has birthed a sense of estrangement, moving voters toward opposition which they believe can better exude their values and grievances.

In such a climate, the AfD's attention to local economic concerns has hit home with voters. The party has found a way to couch its platform in the language and experiences of everyday Germans, positioning itself as the champion of the disenfranchised. While the large amount of voters specified that, the rhetoric against globalization, protectionism and job creation being support for their local community struck a chord. They liked that the party took a stance of putting their local communities first and how they viewed that is often at odds with fringe economic interests which can seem to benefit big business while harming them.

It has not only won over voters with its focus on local economic problems but been a source of hope and empowerment for those who have been disaffected by longstanding economic difficulties. Through talking about skyrocketing unemployment and stagnant wages, the AfD was able to tell a story that would make their own voters believe in the possibility of change. The vast majority of them expressed how much this mattered to them, in some cases even more so than others who just wanted a party that acknowledged their

problems and offered actual policy solutions instead of rejecting their fears as fundamentally false or really silly.

This is reflected in the qualitative data, where voters are attracted not merely by an AfD als Sahsts (AfD as you say it); but also for their straightforward political communication which matters. Most also preferred the outspokenness of AfD rhetoric – against what many saw as the bureaucratic speak and political correctness that often emanated from mainstream parties. Speaking truthfully to voters who appreciate candor and authenticity, especially regarding the economy.

Yet, the high degree of preference for the AfD raises significant questions about some longer term issues as well. Many of the voters for whom the party has gained popularity with its emphasis on local economic issues are a risk that more broadly, the populist rhetoric, such as their stance against immigration and nationalist overtones respectively, may not completely capture all the nuances of these economy related issues they face (Gerling & Kellermann, 2022). Others worried that pursuing their own interests absent other considerations could ignore the reality of how closely tied the US is to markets worldwide and the value brought from different perspectives to a discussion.

Political Disillusionment

Quantitative Data: A Voter Turnout Comparison, which looks at drops in support for traditional parties (such as the CDU and SPD), as we can see in Figure 1.

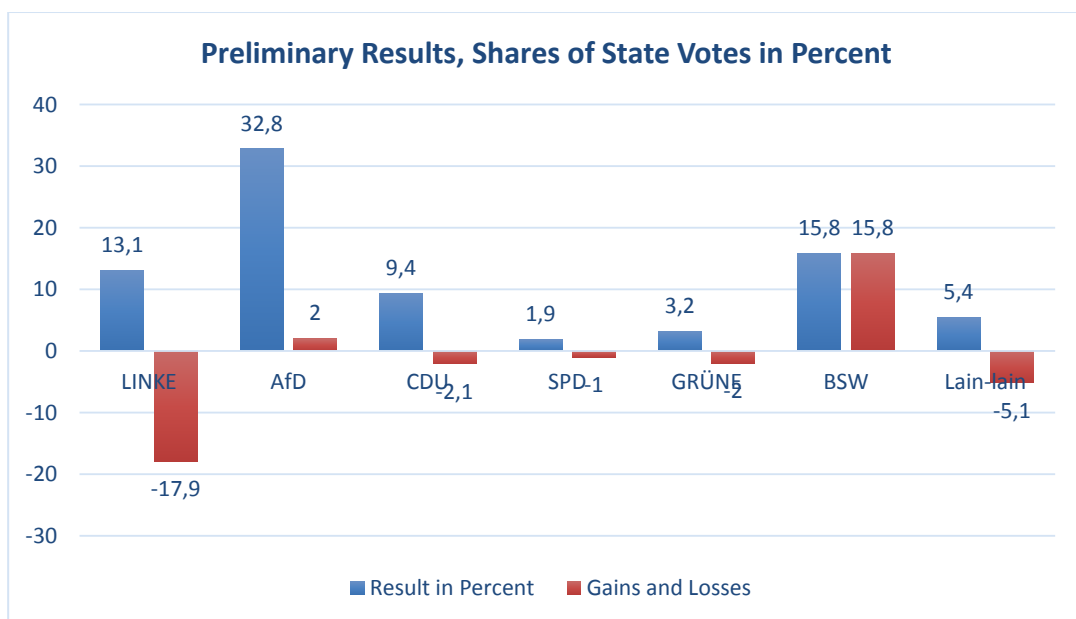


Figure 1. Election Results State Election Thuringia 2024

Source: The State Election Authority, 01.09.2024

The collapse of the establishment parties' vote share suggests a seismic upheaval in politics; voters are evidently looking for something other than business as usual.

Opinion polls carried out during the election in Thuringia showed widespread dissatisfaction with the political establishment, a trend which has

become evident to varying degrees across Germany. Bitterness was a common theme among the voters, who felt abandoned by traditional parties. The fact that such topics as job guarantees, economic stability and immigration were not dealt with made many voters feel almost betrayed. Not only has this established the AfD as an option for offering a semblance of voice to those unserved by traditional political parties, but it also serves to frame the “true representation” duty of the AfD into the picture.

Those whom she interviewed frequently sounded a theme of betrayal, that the politicians in the mainstream parties had betrayed them over and over, not listening to their concerns or their needs. There was a lot of essays from people who described their difficult financial positions, much of which they blame on these policies which can be seen to enable globalization at the expense of jobs in communities. This feeling of betrayal created a lot of anger and made voters wonder exactly what the timeless parties that had previously governed were doing wrong.

And when it came to immigration, big swaths of voters aired worries about shifting cultures and those newcomers potentially overburdening social services. They thought that the old parties had ducked telling them the truth about immigration, with politically correct platitudes being heard instead of an honest assessment of their problems. The thinness of transparency and responsiveness contributed further to disillusion, pushing would-be voters into the direction of a radical right party, like the AfD as they perceive its addressment of these issues more straightforward.

And the AfD has tapped into that dissatisfaction by painting a story of the AfD being the voice of everyday people. They offer themselves to the German electorate as the anti-political establishment champion who will really stand for ordinary Germans. It struck a chord with voters who felt like the political elite were taking them for granted and ignoring them, tapping into their disillusionment and turning it into votes. By focusing its platform on the interests of these voters—protecting jobs, preserving national identity and controlling immigration—the AfD has positioned itself as a front-runner in addressing the issues that mainstream parties apparently do not care about.

And, furthermore, the AfD communication strategy along those lines has helped solidify its position as a populist actor. The party uses a easy and often evocative language that sits out of the more opaque traditional terminology. The AfD, they felt, told it like it is and did not attempt to whitewash the very real problems that were plaguing them. This direct style appeals both to voters and it fosters a sense of authenticity and relatability that is missing in much of contemporary politics.

Qualitative insights from surveys also suggest that many AfD backers see the party as a correction to what they consider a political failure. The electorate in overwhelming numbers rejected the status quo, hoping to find a new political force that would put their needs and values above those of the power brokers and statisticians who have controlled most levels of government for generations. This yearning for an authentic man of the people is central to the

AfD's appeal and reflects a theme seen in other countries where populist movements have taken root as support for traditional parties crumbles.

But the AfD's ascent, like the FN's before it, is not just a momentous shift in voter mood but an alarming challenge to German democracy. Whilst the party's anti-elitist message and nationalist agenda might appeal to certain sections of society, they run the risk of dividing society even further and perpetuating a culture of protesting. If political elites are going to rise to these challenges, they must connect in substantive ways on the actual concerns of voters and take strides to address some of the root causes of frustration. This can happen through traditional parties regaining the trust of the people and by them providing more unconditional political dealing with one another, so that it is expanded to act not only on an understanding that goes over party policy points as in case of a populist appeal like those espoused by AfD.

Cultural Backlash and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

Figure 2. Quantitative Data Qualitative Data Individual Surveys Before and After the Election Confirm how the AfD Attracts Xenophobic Sentiment Within its Coalition

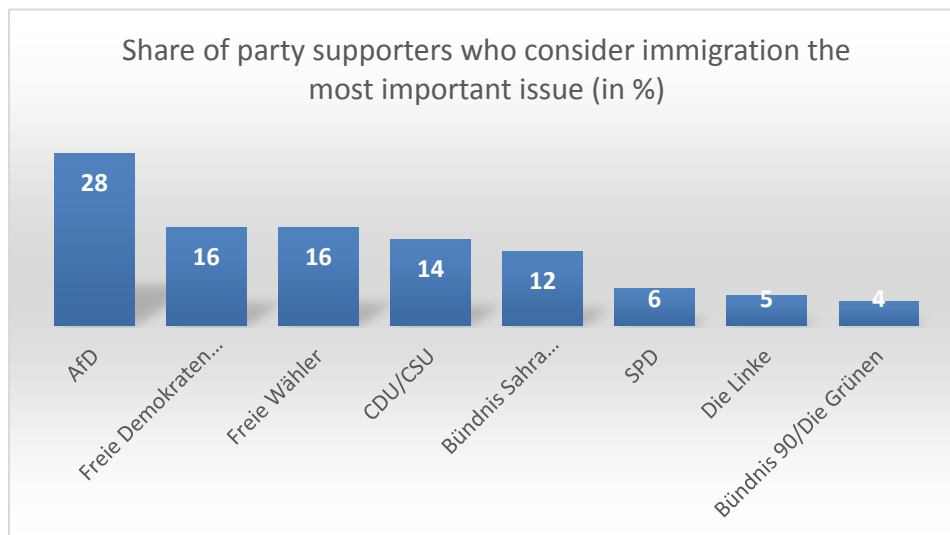


Figure 2. Immigration is a Key Concern for AfD Voters

Most of those with strong anti-immigrant views also supported the AfD, according to the data, fortifying the argument that cultural issues are key in determining voting behaviour.

After the state election in Thuringia early 2024, supporters of Alternative for Germany (AfD) expressed a variety of concerns about their cultural identity that were central to their vote. A common theme among many of the respondents was a feeling that their communities were changing too quickly demographically, fueling fears that they would either lose many of the traditional values and way of life. Language can have cultural implications as well noting That culture expresses deeply ingrained anxieties often in phenomena such as the immigrant, national identity and social cohesion.

Many of the interviews revolved around a fear that more diversity was undermining their cultural traditions, aided by an influx in new migrants. Not only were the AfD appealing to older age groups, but they were also playing to younger voters:(Böhmelt et al., 2024), with reference to why ethnolinguistic cleavages maintain deep links up until this modern era(Böhmelt et al., 2024). They expressed fears that oncoming waves were failing to assimilate and instead establishing enclaves that did not share the same norms or traditions. Many of them felt deeply vulnerable, as evidenced by recurring terms like “losing our identity,” “a culture under threat” and similar sentiment.

The interviews also revealed a sense of detachment from political elites by the average man in the street. A number of voters expressed dissatisfaction with the main conventional political parties as they felt these were divorced via reality associated with what ordinary people are struggling. This disconnect made people disaffected demanding for more leading to the rise of other options like AfD which posed as a voice for those some felt were being ignored. Voters often recounted their experiences of alienation and frustration in immigration and cultural policy discussions, making them much more likely to back a party that had pledged to take seriously these sentiments.

The messaging of the AfD about immigration, in fact, was strikingly successful among voters angry from rapid changes occurring the colors of their communities. In particular, many respondents wrote that they had been heavily impacted by the stories told about the refugee crisis that came to a head amid unprecedented arrivals in Germany in 2015. The image of refugees depicted as layabouts and criminals helped fuel the rise of the AfD. They expressed worry about implications like job and resource competition, crime and safety (which they conflated with immigrant groups)(Haas et al., 2023).

Certain voters even suggested that their backing for the AfD was not purely motivated by antipathy towards foreigners, but also had a lot to do with enhancing national esteem and self-determination. They often expressed a desire for political discourse around German culture, history and accomplishments. The mainstream parties, they said, were ignoring these issues and instead emphasizing political correctness and multiculturalism over national identity. This way, the AfD gave them something to hold on and a feeling of control over their communities.

Interviewed respondents also repeatedly stressed the importance of social networks in terms of forming opinions about the AfD. Most of his supporters mentioned conversations with family, friends and local community members to strengthen their views on immigration and national identity. This in turn led to echo chambers with peer influence increasingly intensified anti-immigrant conditions making support for the AfD narrative all the more likeable. This phenomenon has been felt more keenly in the party thanks to its shrewd use of social media – supporters can easily disseminate information and centralize around a shared mishap.

Effective Campaigning and Social Media Strategy

Quantitative Data: The AfD used social media and a ground game to bring out more voters on Election Day, most notably among those under 30.

Figure 3 shows how different types of social media usage and engagement evolved throughout the campaign.



Figure 3. AfD Most Widely Represented on Social Media
Source: Statista Research

Appearances of the federal parties/party executives and the Bundestag factions; Followers of the joint Union faction accounts of CDU/CSU were attributed to both parties; Status: February 2024

The AfD's social media strategy, meanwhile, has helped it to become a much higher-engagement party than the others – especially with younger voters. 70 percent of young voters in the 18 to 24 year age group consume AfD content – a result from data by "The Verge" that reflects the party's strong and clever use online. Figure 3—engagement moderation with age, yet striking chord with younger audience That strategy is, first and foremost, member based; it builds community and unity, which organically leads to greater mobilization and creates a powerful force unmatched in previous political campaigns. The way the AfD has been campaigning for votes could help other parties, as this with serve as a new path to reach out on young voters who are being excluded from elections results and political participation otherwise.

The importance of social media for the mobilization support to Grand Coalition, Part III, Qualitative Insights: Social media has become crucial for political engagement and mobilization, especially for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in the new political landscape. In interviews with Thuringian AfD voters after the state election of 2024, many emphasized how important social media had been in forming their views and mobilizing them to support the party. This focus on digital outlets related to what until spring was an even bigger concern – that the traditional media would be too critical of the AfD and not capture its motivations or purpose.

Many supporters said they felt that the mainstream media was hostile to the AfD and frequently reported negatively about its activities. Shortly after the election, many of those interviewed vented anger with such sentiments as accusations that their policy positions were distorted and that even the narrative about what motivated their party's leadership had been skewed. They cited examples of feeling silenced when they tried to talk about their worries on

immigration and national identity, neat-bundled away under the charge of 'racism' (which is a label incidentally I've always hated) that deepened the experience. There was a big gap between the industry and consumers that talking about technical jargon and numbers was not fitting to the needs of the public, which led them to look in other directions for a way out, social networks sites (Knopf et al., n.d.).

These fans used platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to voice their opinions, organize and coalesce around common values. Overall, interview participants commonly claimed to use social media as a means to find other people who share similar viewpoints and engage in conversations, sharing information supporting their perspectives. Their capacity to both produce and distribute content rapidly across a wide array of networks let them push back against what they saw as unflattering portrayals in the mainstream media, and gave them a feeling of control.

The interviews found social media was a forum for collaborating on grassroots initiatives. Several used their presence to organize events and rallies on the local level, as well as campaigns, building in the process a network of like-minded people who might have otherwise felt isolated in their beliefs. For example, this was particularly meaningful in areas where traditional political rallies are harder to reach or where people may feel stigmatized by their beliefs. Social media bred echo chambers that encouraged fans to stand united and voice their thoughts free from reproach.

You have to take into account, though, the AfD utilise social media very strategically as well. The wedding has got used digital marketing in a mess of how – targeting advertisements, tantalizing video, interactive posts – with some success. This has enabled the AfD to sidestep traditional media intermediaries and speak directly to voters in a way that hits them where it really hurts – in the gut, on cultural identity and immigration issues. Its web-based strategy provides a direct attribution to an audience identified only by its segment, and it taps into all segments of society.

But the dependence on social media also worries those who fear it will inadvertently contribute to fake news and filter bubbles. Several interviewees admitted that social media can spread even more extreme thoughts as well as worsen polarization. They appreciated the community and affirmation that these platforms provided, but they were also aware of the echo chamber risks associated with getting most of their news from places filled with people who agreed with them. This helps to create a downward spiral in which dissenting opinions are dismissed, and ultimately suppressed, only further stoking perceptions of division.

Media Dynamics

Quantitative Data: An investigation into media coverage of the AfD in the run-up to the election, provided a typical distribution (see graph) and confirmed that negative representations outweighed positive portrayals.

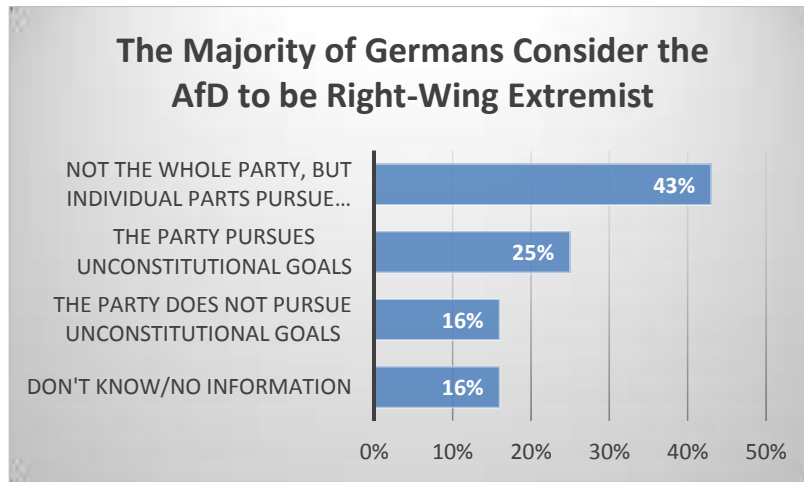


Figure 4. Opinions of Respondents on the Political Orientation of the AfD

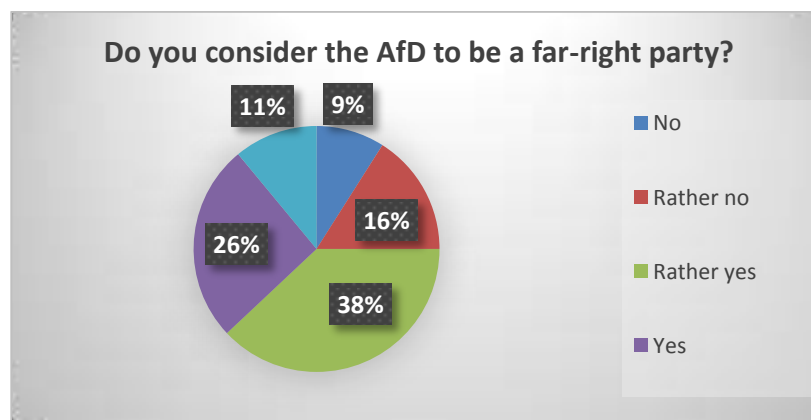


Figure 5. Basis: 1,046 respondents in Germany
 Source: Statista and /YouGov

Despite overwhelmingly negative media exposure, The Alternative for Germany (AfD) have fought through the coverage to such an extent that they can harness a potent socially constructed belief among a significant share of the electorate. This development highlights the complex tie between media portrayal and electability, illustrating how a strong communication campaign can strongly sway public perception even in the shadow of unfriendly conversation. The party will dominate the debate as long as it remains so adroit at narratively framing itself as a savior of traditional German values in times of cultural and economic crisis. The GOP is growing increasingly nationalistic in tone, and the combination of America-first patriotism, cultural preservation, and tough immigration policy appeal to many voters during a period of rapid demographic change.

Though the AfD is often described as extremist by many in the mainstream media, Bausback added that they have provided an acceptable cover story for themselves and become semi-acceptable among some civilians who feel left behind. Adherents frequently describe the AfD as being close to them, just as spoken of their concerns and fears in a changing world. It has given prominence to stories of those who believe immigration and globalization have destroyed their lives and, in doing so, made its political message sound

humane, forging an emotional connection with its own constituency. This strategy not only rebuts the prevailing negative *landera* being done, but actually reorients our very concept of that narrative to center it around resistance/empowerment against an elite political class seen as distant with all those ordinary citizens we are talking about.

Indeed, the negative media coverage paradoxically opened a political window of opportunity for the AfD in which it could package itself as a victim of the establishment. Critics targeting the party are seen as the elite by supporters, contributing to their loyalty. The AfD has tapped into this feeling by presenting itself as the new "people's party", and that it alone is strong enough to tackle truths that other parties are afraid of. In addition, the fact that he is an outsider resonates strongly with voters who are alienated by mainstream political discourse, which helps feed a powerful feeling of solidarity among his supporters.

Social media has helped to spread the message of the AfD as well as fight back against critical mainstream portrayals. Tools like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram make it easy for the party to talk right to voters without having their messages filtered or distorted by traditional media. The AfD has been particularly successful in utilizing digital platforms to distribute directed messaging, share content that encourage audience engagement and that foster discussions compatible with their ideological narrative. It helped the party grow a digital-first community, where supporters could connect with like-minded individuals who shared stories, turned up to events and got behind narratives that fit their world view.

Second, the emotional reach of the AfD's messages is as important as measured by their elicitation power. Most voters experience fear for their culture, economic future, and the feeling that traditional values are no longer respected. The release valve for these emotions is the AfD, which markets itself as a solution to migration and globalization. All of this to say... Focusing on identity politics has allowed the party to create a passionate base of supporters who feel that their way of life is being threatened. This way, the AfD skillfully turns the immigration debate into a national battle for survival and manages to turn rallies where it whips up terrified unfounded globalist fantasies just as much as it did during its one-issue Brexit campaign internship decades ago.

Results

Implications

The political fallout from the AfD's ascent, however, goes well beyond Thuringia, affecting not just Germany but also the larger European stage.

1. Democratic Norms Erode.

But in Germany, where anti-Semitism is a taboo in all parties, the growth of the AfD has alarmed democracy-watchers. Populist parties are on the rise. This has raised concerns of a possible reduction in pluralism and democratic debate by which the political spectrum may become more polarized or fragmented. The anti-immigration, right-wing party has struck a chord with German voters who have lost faith in the traditional political system, threatening the very institution of German democracy

and potentially serving as a harbinger for similar lack of trust in democracies across Europe.

2. Growing Xenophobia and Nationalism.

The AfD's anti-immigrant narrative could fan xenophobia throughout Europe, potentially consuming in society feeling and nationalist tendencies. The situation has been called a crisis of organization for social solidarity, and it poses real threats to social cohesion especially in countries with relatively significant achievement regarding multiculturalism and inclusivity. In this context the risk for hate crimes and societal division are even more likely (Brox et al., 2024).

3. Impact on EU Relations.

An invigorated far-right AfD could, in turn, transform Germany's relationship with the European Union by adopting a populist anti-European stance at variance not only with centrist governments in other traditional EU member-states France and Italy but also some central European ones. It may also open up tensions inside the EU itself as member states take separate paths in dealing with central questions.

4. Social Unrest.

The fracturing of society could lead to further social unrest, with militants on both right and left stoking the flames of polarization. This dynamic could lead to conflicts or the destabilization of regions, especially where economic grievances and cultural insecurities converge.

5. Global Ramifications.

Wherever it is coming from, the re-emergence of nationalism (though it never really went away) and populism in Europe is merely a symptom of world-wide changes that are underway. Non-European countries still have to be vigilant and continue proactively taking care of the issues that breed dissatisfaction and create a platform for radical ideologies to thrive. The consequence of more isolationism and protectionism could be far-reaching, as it may lead to a further division between countries in terms of international relations, trade and cooperation on important global issues (Hansen & Olsen, 2022).

6. Takeaways for today's political world.

But the AfD's success is instructive for political parties and stakeholders globally. Instead, the parties of tradition must focus on their economic dimensions, get back in touch with actual voters and reconsider cultural question marks. Finally, it is important to make better use of digital platforms and that we fight pseudolite with a new language to defeat extremism.

7. Anticipating Future Trends

Germany has one of the most advanced socio-economic settings in the world and yet rising from the ranks of a minor party with no seats only four years ago, the AfD's surge this time round lays bare our failures to predict and counteract populist sentiment. Globalization, economic inequality and cultural change pose tough challenges that can only be

met by policies marked by openness towards outsiders experience of social cohesion encourage.

8. A rich soil for anti-globalism

At the same time, government policies that have worsened life for ordinary people also create a breeding ground for anti-internationalist movements to re-emerge, as we saw with the AfD. The failure of government projects to deliver results may lead citizens to seek refuge in parties which promise to do whatever it takes at a national level rather than the international cooperation, thus widening a chasm that was supposed to be bridged. The implications of the AfD's rise extend far beyond Thuringia, influencing both Germany and the broader European landscape.

By investigating the emergence of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and its implications on contemporary politics, especially in a country like Indonesia, there are some important lessons that can be taken to enhance political strategy as well as party dynamics.

Social Trends Around Voter Discontent

The most important lesson from the success of AfD is to Wake up and listen, start acting accordingly. In Germany, many had the sense of feeling abandoned and were betrayed by traditional parties which has caused a significant increase of voters support toward AfD. It can be seen as a reminder of the need for political parties to constantly engage with their supporters and listen to their grievances some are regarding issues such as jobs, economy or social identity. In a country as heterogenous like Indonesia, where economic disparities and regional inequalities persist to this day, political parties need to be even more serious when it comes to engaging the mass in order to learn the intricacies of what their voters' problems are.

Populist Narratives

This is perfectly exemplified by the AfD on how populist message can have more effect under crisis or social insecurity phases. Populist narratives are then easy to be thrown to the Indonesian voters, as few other things can easily enrage Indonesians (read: cause widespread dissatisfaction) like corruption, economic stagnation or social unrest – and political actors may resort to simplistic explanations rather than engaging with complex problems. This lesson, however has a double edge – populism has the power to energize voters but also risks deepening social cleavages. Indonesian political elites should channelling populist sentiments in the right direction – they can still create more inclusive policy solutions for the real issues rather than inflaming divisions (Jylhä & Hellmer, 2020).

Effect of Communicational Strategies

The AfD provides an example of good campaigning, with relatable communication that demonstrates why plain-speaking is important. The party struck an unusually direct tone, especially in comparison to the often convoluted language of mainstream political discourse which resonated well with voters. It is important for Indonesian political parties to be clearer in their communication and to be more transparent about what they are saying so that gives credibility for the people who support them. Engagement in Social Media

aka as the AfD did: it can connect politicians and the man on street – to ensure fears do not grow too big before they are heard and answered.

Travelling and National Identification

To this, the AfD adds a focus on immigration and national identity that plays well with wider societal anxieties which are not specific to Germany. In Indonesia as well, those that touch on ethnic and religious diversity can trigger tensions. Political parties must negotiate these with sensitivity ensuring that there is unity without uniformity. Parties should come together under a flag of social cohesion, making space for others and allaying fears by addressing them – not selling each other down the river on grounds of identity or belonging.

The AfD's success, however, does have the benefit of reminding us all of why political accountability is important. Voters want their elected officials to address their needs and concerns, plain and simple. As in Indonesia, where political corruption and nepotism tend to undermine public credibility; parties need to focus on full transparency and accountability in conduct. Establishing public feedback mechanisms and promoting more open dialogues could be effective ways to restore trust in government and hold political elites accountable to the electorate. In analyzing the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and its implications for contemporary politics, particularly in countries like Indonesia, several valuable lessons emerge that can inform political strategies and party dynamics.

Understanding Voter Discontent

One of the most significant lessons from the AfD's success is the importance of recognizing and addressing voter discontent. In Germany, many voters felt overlooked and betrayed by traditional parties, leading to a substantial shift in support toward the AfD. This phenomenon underscores the necessity for political parties to maintain a strong connection with the electorate, actively engaging with their concerns, particularly on issues like job security, economic stability, and social identity. For Indonesia, where economic disparities and regional inequalities are prevalent, political parties must prioritize grassroots engagement to understand the unique challenges faced by their constituents.

The Role of Populism

The AfD exemplifies how populist messaging can resonate during times of crisis or uncertainty. In Indonesia, where issues like corruption, economic stagnation, and social unrest can provoke widespread dissatisfaction, political actors may leverage populist narratives to connect with disillusioned voters. However, this lesson carries a double-edged sword; while populism can mobilize support, it can also deepen societal divisions. Indonesian political leaders should strive to harness populist sentiments constructively, promoting inclusive policies that address the root causes of discontent rather than exacerbating divisions (Beresford et al., 2023).

The Impact of Communication Strategies

The AfD's effective communication strategy highlights the necessity of clear, relatable messaging. The party's straightforward approach contrasted with the often convoluted language of mainstream politics, allowing it to forge a strong connection with voters. For Indonesian political parties, adopting clear

and transparent communication can enhance credibility and foster trust among voters. Engaging through social media and local forums, as the AfD did, can help bridge the gap between politicians and constituents, ensuring that concerns are voiced and addressed promptly.

Navigating Immigration and National Identity

The AfD's focus on immigration and national identity reflects broader societal anxieties that are not unique to Germany. In Indonesia, issues related to ethnic and religious diversity can similarly provoke tensions. Political parties must navigate these issues sensitively, promoting unity while respecting diversity. Rather than using identity politics to divide, parties should advocate for policies that promote social cohesion and inclusivity, addressing fears without resorting to scapegoating.

Lessons in Political Accountability

The AfD's rise also serves as a reminder of the importance of political accountability. Voters increasingly demand that their representatives respond to their needs and concerns. In Indonesia, where political corruption and nepotism can erode public trust, parties must emphasize transparency and accountability in their governance practices. Implementing mechanisms for public feedback and fostering open dialogues can help rebuild trust and ensure that political elites remain responsive to the electorate.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The case of the 2024 Thuringia state election shows just how these economic, political and cultural forces combine to influence voter behavior. The AfD has proven a regional political force as it has tapped puzzling economic discontent, alienation from politics and cultural backlash. Naturally, the AfD are buoyed by anti-mainstream sentiment but that emotion alone does not explain the AfD's success in recent years – nor its plausible victimhood narrative.

The rise of the AfD in a context where traditional parties are increasingly failing to hold on to power, due to these changes in national mood, underlines how vital it is for political strategies be reconsidered. Re-establishing trust in the political system will depend on forging stronger links with alienated communities. A sincere attempt to address job security, economic inequality, and cultural identity provides our best chance of reconnecting with those voters who have increasingly come to see the established political entities as self-serving in ways unconnected to their lives.

In fact, the consequences of a revitalised AfD are not limited to Germany and will have far more impact on Europe as a whole. Normalisation of populist language in one EU country might have a ripple effect on other countries, and freedom movements start raising their head else where inside continent. A simple example should suffice to demonstrate this: This simply means that our political leaders must wear their thinking caps, scholars must unlearn but much more importantly learn something with sincerity and seriousness from these developments; finally civil society organizations need to engage with them critically by realizing that such mechanisms reflect deeper societal issues.

What is required to beat back the populist wave is an aggressive alleviation of the underlying grievances upon which these movements thrive. This means being completely open to discussion, inclusive in our actions and sincere about involving the public. By focusing on these strategies, political entities can move closer to building a democratic framework that is better able to withstand the ordinary stresses and strains of society, made more difficult by the riven nature of contemporary politics.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so further research is needed on the topic of An AfD Victory: A deep dive into the 2024 state election in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers.

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