

MERKELDÄMMERUNG

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Liminal Germany

The last few years in Germany, like elsewhere in the West, have been a bit strange. On the surface, everything seems to be going rather well. The economy has been chugging along with the country having the largest trade surplus in the world for three years. Unemployment is at near-record lows and real wages have been increasing.¹ State finances are solid—budgetary surpluses have been used to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio. In light of this economic strength, even though it took nearly six months to form a new government after the September 2017 Bundestag elections, few seemed to notice. Various crises bubbled up periodically, but nothing has been too dramatic. Syria? Brexit? Trump? The Alternative for Germany (AfD)? The diesel scandal? Chancellor Angela Merkel would always be there to take care of things.

Much, however, had been brewing underneath the surface. Expectations were mounting for increased spending on domestic social programs, affordable housing, and infrastructure after years of relative austerity. Responses to the simmering external challenges that had been put on hold for much of 2017 and 2018 because of the election campaign and the caretaker government had to be formulated. Despite hopes from some quarters that the British will pull back from the 2016 decision, Brexit in some form will likely happen during the current parliamentary term. Given the possibility of a transitional phase or delay, it is uncertain how much of a negative impact this will have on the German or European economy—but negative it will be at one point.² Illiberal eastern European governments in places like Hungary and Poland need to be more vigorously confronted, and the new pop-

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ulist government in Italy with its budget-busting spending plans needs to be handled. Presidents Vladimir Putin of Russia, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey, and, ever-the-wild-card Donald Trump in the U.S. (despite much wishful thinking) are not going away any time soon. Indeed, Putin's war-mongering against Ukraine was ratcheted up in late 2018. Trade restrictions (including tariffs announced by Trump in March 2018 with more threatened) and a deleterious transatlantic trade war are possible.

Looming in the background was the most dramatic event of the last parliamentary term—the migration crisis, which peaked in 2015 when Merkel modified policy and opened Germany's borders to over a million asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants. Despite some incidents such as the attacks on women in Cologne at New Year's 2016, many observers have concluded that the country's efforts to integrate these newcomers have thus far been reasonably successful.³ Nevertheless, migration and integration remain huge issues, not the least because they have spurred a backlash, specifically the empowered right-radical Alternative for Germany party and a wave of right-wing, xenophobic demonstrations such as in Chemnitz at the end of August 2018 and some violence.⁴

More structurally, many have observed that Germany's power has been rising for years. Notable instances include imposing policy preferences on other EU member states during the Eurozone crisis and the migration crisis in 2015. Millions of people are waiting to see if Germany is going to take on a bigger leadership role abroad—if it can or will help to fill the vacuum of shrinking American leadership. Nevertheless, the country has continued to deny its newfound influence and has shrunk from more conventional power projection as with the 2011 decision not to support allied efforts to oust Gaddafi in Libya. Despite some increases, it cannot even bring itself to commit 2 percent of GDP to defense spending—despite a budget surplus. It is the ever-reluctant hegemon. Yet, as much as Germans might not want to take up the mantle of leadership, the alternative—a power or leadership vacuum could be much worse with proliferating bad actors filling the void and doing substantial damage to the regional and global interests of Germany and the liberal democratic community more broadly. Until now, the country has been able to delay a reckoning or a clear acknowledgement of the reality of its increased power, as well as the obligations that come with accepting such a role. It is a kind of luxury to take your time, deciding not to decide. Germany's liminal moment is, however, coming to an end.

This long-anticipated reckoning is now at hand as the Merkel era winds down. Merkel herself probably sensed her weakened position ever since

her party's lackluster result in the 2017 election—if not already earlier with the fallout from her policies during the height of the migration crisis. At the age of sixty-four, she is currently the third-longest serving postwar chancellor with over thirteen years in power and was Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party leader for the better part of two decades, until she announced that she would not stand again for this office at the December 2018 CDU Party Congress.⁵ She might last as chancellor until the next scheduled elections in 2021, but this is unlikely once the new party boss consolidates her position over the course of 2019. Merkel's party and the country are preparing for who will come next and what kind of leadership the country needs or wants.

Certainly, the Federal Republic has had many other moments of transition with a *fin de siècle* feeling. The waning years of Chancellors Konrad Adenauer in the early 1960s and Helmut Kohl in the mid 1990s come immediately to mind. Nevertheless, something feels different currently. At those previous transitional moments, there was a clear, exciting (to many at least) alternative—leaders who articulated a novel vision, or joint project—younger politicians like Willy Brandt and Gerhard Schröder with vigor and momentum. This time, however, there is nothing and no one like that in the wings of the major parties. The current crop of CDU and SPD politicians largely preaches more of the same—only with a different face and perhaps better management at the margins. This, of course, disregards the Alternative for Germany—which has had momentum, but with a pessimistic, dystopian, and retrograde vision—as well as the Green Party, which surged over the course of 2018. Nevertheless, no one seems to want to articulate a clear vision for the country, continent, or world for which so many have been calling. It is indeed the twilight of Merkel (*Merkeldämmerung*), but what dawn (*Morgenrot*) is on the horizon? These are the issues surrounding the 2017 Bundestag election and its aftermath that this edited volume confronts.

The Campaign

As expected, the campaign was short on drama, although it was perhaps not quite as boring as the last few. There were two big developments in the nine months before election day in September 2017. First was the saga of Martin Schulz and his Social Democratic Party (SPD). A prominent social democratic politician in the European Parliament—a MEP from 1994 to 2017 and parliamentary president from 2012 to 2017 (although also

involved in the domestic party leadership), he was selected as SPD chancellor candidate in January 2017, and then replaced Sigmar Gabriel as party leader in March of that year. He seemed like an ideal choice—experienced but not sullied by a leadership role in the Red-Green or later grand coalition governments. Unlike prominent ministers or parliamentary leaders, this would allow him to criticize the out-going government and differentiate the SPD from Merkel’s CDU. At first, Schulz had massive support within the party and the electorate. In fact, he was elected party chair with an unprecedented 100 percent of the delegates and (re-elected with 82 percent in December 2017).⁶ Polling from February to April 2017 had the party at or above 30 percent—at one point even with or slightly ahead of the CDU.⁷

But, from May 2017 onwards the party began to slip in the polls. Its electoral program was full of classic social democratic themes, emphasizing justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) for all. Full employment, more jobs as part of union-negotiated wage agreements, more European governance, eliminating gender pay differences, and continuing a humane, but Europeanized migration policy were all in there.⁸ Observers considered these campaign messages to be lackluster, although better than the vague 2013 slogan (“Das Wir entscheidet”—“the we decides” for readers who had forgotten). Common posters included “Time for more justice. Time for Martin Schulz” or a picture of a woman with the message “whoever works 100 percent, should not earn 21 percent less.”⁹

Moreover, this emphasis on social justice and inequality did not resonate strongly with voters. The party tried to pivot towards a focus on migration and integration closer to election day, but this was too little too late. The many compromises that came with almost continuous governing for fifteen of the last nineteen years had taken a toll—as has competition from the other leftist and populist parties. Numerous SPD politicians expressed frustration that so many of their issues had become policy (e.g., minimum wage), but that Merkel typically got all the credit.

The second big campaign development was the strengthening of the AfD—despite all of the factional in-fighting and the leadership carousel. It had barely missed the 5 percent threshold in 2013 when it was a more Euroskeptical party and seemed to be on a downward trend after that. Then, the migration crisis and Merkel’s August 2015 decision to admit over a million people into the country brought the AfD roaring back. It had also done quite well in Landtag elections. At the time of the 2017 Bundestag election, it was in every state parliament except for Bavaria and Hesse, and entered those parliaments as well after the October 2018 elec-

tions in those states. All polls in the months before the Bundestag election had the party well over the 5 percent threshold. Thus, the success of the AfD and its entrance into the Bundestag—the first new party to do so since reunification (excluding the transformation of the Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS) into the Left Party in 2007)—was no surprise.

The AfD ran a highly professional campaign—help from the U.S. (Harris Media, which worked for the Trump campaign)¹⁰ and perhaps Russia did not hurt. Their electoral program had the expected right-populist elements with a German twist: more referendums, less lobbying, no more Euro. They advocated for a foreign policy based on interests, eliminating public support for wind energy, and social conservatism (“gender ideology is unconstitutional,” “children need fathers and mothers”). Above all, they called for migration and multiculturalism to be minimized or stopped with slogans such as “Deutsche Leitkultur statt ‘Multikulturismus,’” “Africa can’t be saved in Europe,” and “Islam does not belong to Germany.”¹¹

Unlike the other parties that had unified messaging campaigns throughout the country, the AfD micro-targeted its slogans and posters quite effectively in different states and types of communities albeit with a coordinated theme: “Trau dich Deutschland!” (Germany, dare yourself!). Deep in the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt, their posters proclaimed that the constitution had to be protected from Merkel (“Grundgesetz vor Merkel schützen!”)—referencing a conspiratorial right-wing belief that Merkel’s decision to admit the refugees and migrants in 2015 was unlawful.¹² In Bavaria, most of the posters went for the Christian Social Union’s (CSU) jugular: “Wir halten, was CSU verspricht” (We’ll deliver what the CSU only promises). An especially controversial poster depicted the legendary postwar CSU leader proclaiming “Franz Josef Strauss würde AfD wählen” (Franz Josef Strauss would vote for the AfD). In Berlin, by contrast, ads depicted two white women in swimsuits with the text: “Burkas? Wir steh’n auf Bikinis” (Burkas? We prefer bikinis). Another had a picture of women in traditional regional costumes, proclaiming: “Burkas? Wir stehn’ mehr auf Burgunder” (Burkas? We prefer Burgundies) or “Bunte Vielfalt? Haben wir schon” (Colorful diversity? We already have it). One poster depicted a pregnant white woman with the text: “Neue Deutsche? Machen wir selber” (New Germans? We’ll do that ourselves). Belying their denials of right-radicalism, they constantly parroted such themes and images. There was an image of a male same-sex couple holding a non-white baby with the “new German” message. Another contained an image of a piglet, proclaiming “Der Islam? Paßt nicht zu unserer Küche” (Islam? Doesn’t fit into our kitchen).

As for the other small parties, the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) garnered wide praise for its campaign performance. Its young (thirty-eight at the time of the election) party leader since 2013, Christian Lindner, was an especially exhilarating stump speaker, who seemed to hit a chord with many voters. As one psychologist concluded: “There was a real love for Lindner ... The FDP’s candidate is seen as a modern TV star, even like a kind of 007, who can engender change. A kind of dream team is the result: the proven Merkel and a mini German Macron that gives her a helping hand.”¹³ The party’s campaign platform diverged some from classically liberal emphases on lower taxes, although abolishing the solidarity surcharge (known as the “Soli” and put in place in the early 1990s to pay for the costs of reunification in eastern Germany) and fostering entrepreneurship were mentioned. Instead, a variety of reforms to the state administration, education, and the European Union were highlighted. The most attention, however, was devoted to digitalization and preparing for the next phase of economic development.¹⁴ This last theme permeated their ads and posters, which heavily profiled Lindner in various GQ model poses—black-and-white, in a suit and no tie, or suit jacket off. Messages included “Vererben wir nicht Schulden sondern Chancen” (We should not bequeath debts, rather chances), “Bildung: Unser Jugendwort des Jahres” (Education: our youth word-of-the-year); “Digital First: Bedenken Second” (Digital first, reservations second), and “Die Digitalisierung ändert alles. Wann ändert sich die Politik?” (Digitalization is changing everything. When will politics change?).¹⁵

The Green’s pink and green advertisements with the yellow sunflower logo were somewhat memorable and certain better than the warped cardboard posters and forgettable messages of the 2013 campaign. Playing with Willy Brandt’s famous phrase, one poster stated: “The Environment is not everything. But everything is nothing without the environment” (Umwelt ist nicht alles. Aber ohne Umwelt ist alles nichts)¹⁶ Others included “Nobody gets more from less Europe” (Von weniger Europa hat keiner mehr), “Healthy food does not come from a sick nature” (Gesundes Essen kommt nicht aus einer kranken Natur), and, striving for middle class votes “There should not be an ‘or’ between the environment and the economy” (Zwischen Umwelt und Wirtschaft gehört kein oder).¹⁷ The Left Party utilized the same kinds of ads as in previous campaigns (at least there is brand consistency) with a unified message centered on respect. Examples included “Respekt: Rente mit Niveau” (Pensions at a high level); “Miete und Energie Bezahlbar für alle” (Rent and energy affordable to all); and as a reminder of the SPD’s earlier alleged policy sell out of

poorer Germans “Respekt: Mindest-Sicherung statt Hartz IV” (A guaranteed minimum income instead of Hartz IV).¹⁸

Finally, the CDU’s effort disappointed. Unlike 2013, when the campaign fetishized images of Merkel and her hands (the famous *Raute*), the CDU/CSU de-emphasized the chancellor this time around. It appeared that she was perceived as a liability at least for advertising purposes. Indeed, never a fan of campaigning, she was even more absent than usual from the campaign trail. One of her last big rallies in Munich was marked by protests and heckling. The CDU also “innovated” with a gimmicky campaign venue in central Berlin full of interactive, digital displays (“the pulse of the German economy” replete with a large beating heart) and high-tech information touting the party’s successes, especially with the economy. This “accessible and interactive platform” (*das begehbare Programm*) did not really work and must have cost a fortune.¹⁹

The Christian Democrats’ campaign platform rested on touting previous achievements and a record of good management. Given their good—even exemplary—stewardship of the economy, one could understand why the party made this choice. Indeed, such an economic record is what politicians’ dreams are made:

Table 0.1: German Economic Performance, 2009-2019

Year	Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	Budget Deficit/Surplus (% GDP)	Public Debt (% GDP)*	Unemployment Rate (harmonized)
2009	-5.56	-3.23	75.38	7.64
2010	3.95	-4.22	84.68	6.97
2011	3.72	-0.96	83.98	5.83
2012	0.69	-0.03	86.52	5.38
2013	0.60	-0.14	81.50	5.24
2014	1.93	0.33	81.92	4.99
2015	1.50	0.64	77.89	4.63
2016	1.86	0.82	74.70	4.13
2017	2.54	1.20**	71.67	3.60***
2018	2.29		68.66	3.73****
2019	1.90			3.66****

Sources: <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics>

* <https://knoema.com/vuuebne/germany-government-debt-forecast-2015-2020-and-up-to-2060-data-and-charts>

** <https://tradingeconomics.com/germany/government-budget> *** November 2017.

**** projections: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/375209/unemployment-rate-in-germany/>

In their planned government platform for 2017-2021 they listed goals such as good jobs and fair pay, strengthening internal security, pushing for free trade, and fostering innovation and digitalization (obviously a big buzzword in this political cycle).²⁰ Otherwise the slogans were “For a Germany

in which we live well and happily” (Für ein Deutschland in dem wir gut und gerne leben) and, simply, if a little heavy-handed: “Successful for Germany” (Erfolgreich für Deutschland).²¹

In sum, the campaign was a relatively short, low-drama affair. The eventual outcome was mooted for a while, or at least since the SPD started its slide in the early summer and the AfD’s support ticked upwards. The television debate between Schulz and Merkel in early September had the two candidates mostly agreeing—one newspaper’s headline even read “Two Candidates, One Opinion.”²² Again, the SPD candidate had a real problem trying to differentiate his party from a government of which it was a part. There were some interesting exchanges about the refugee crisis, but overall concurrence. Notably, Merkel made it clear that large numbers of migrants would likely not be admitted in the future, but stood by her 2015 decision.

Two final notes about the campaign are pertinent. First, the term *Wutbürger* (enraged citizen) frequently surfaced. Although this was an older formulation (2010 word-of-the-year), it seemed to capture the mood of much of the electorate in 2017.²³ Indeed, there was a pervasive sense that segments of the population (especially men and eastern Germans) were quite angry and vocal with expressions of their bitterness—especially regarding migration/integration, the fast pace of demographic and cultural change, but also about stagnant incomes and growing inequality despite the good economy over the last decade. Again, this was not just a German peculiarity—similar sentiments in most western countries have been observed and help to explain the rise in support for various populist movements.

Second, in a surprising move given her years of opposition, Merkel allowed the Bundestag to vote on same-sex marriage in late June 2017. The Greens, followed quickly by the FDP and SPD proclaimed earlier that month that legalizing same-sex marriage would be a condition of any coalition agreement with the CDU/CSU. On 27 June, Merkel unexpectedly indicated that she would allow a vote of conscience in the Bundestag (where party discipline does not apply). Three days later on 30 June, a two-thirds majority of deputies voted for marriage equality, although 75 percent of CDU/CSU caucus (225 deputies) including Merkel herself voted no versus every single SPD, Green, and Left Party member who voted for the legal change. For the record, some prominent CDU/CSU members who voted for marriage equality included Ursula von der Leyen, Peter Altmaier, Jens Spahn, and Peter Tauber. Merkel’s maneuver eliminated a sticking point to eventual coalition negotiations and neutralized a potential wedge issue for the “hot” phase of the campaign. Incidentally, a very large

majority of the German population (75 percent and even 73 percent of CDU supporters) supported marriage equality at that time.²⁴

An Uncertain Outcome

Unlike the campaign, election night on 24 September 2017 was rather more exciting. The banner headlines were the entrance of the AfD with 12.6 percent of the vote and ninety-four seats (13.3 percent) of the total. Despite surveys long predicting its entrance into parliament, the AfD over-performed its polling averages, ended up winning three direct mandates in southeastern Saxony, and became the third-largest fraction in the new parliament. In light of the eventual grand coalition (GroKo), it is also the largest opposition party—a position that provides a degree of power and leverage—control of the parliament’s influential budget committee (Haushaltsausschuss) for example. The FDP also had a good night with 10.7 percent of the vote and 11.3 percent of the seats. Lindner was definitely one of the winners and gave a stellar performance in the televised *Elefantenrunde* of party leaders right after the election was called (Merkel looked tired, Schulz belatedly showed some spunk, the Green Katrin Göring-Eckhardt was impressive; everyone teamed up on the AfD participant, Jörg Meuthen). The Liberals’ eighty seats were not enough combined with the CDU/CSU total to form a repeat of the 2009-2013 center-right coalition. The Greens and Left did slightly better than in 2013, but did not significantly increase their support.

Participation was up almost 5 percent from 71.5 percent of the electorate in 2013 to 76.2 percent. The use of postal ballots continued to rise to 28.6 percent from 24.3 percent in 2013 and 9.4 percent in 1990, largely driven by an increase in voters living abroad, especially in Switzerland and other EU member states. Older voters disproportionately preferred the two catch-all parties. Men expressed a greater preference for the AfD (16.3 percent to 9.2 percent of women), FDP, and Left Party, whereas women disproportionately supported the CDU/CSU and Greens. Support for the SPD was even from a gender perspective.²⁵

The governing catch-all parties (*Volksparteien*) had a bad night. They ended up 2 to 5 percent below where they were averaging in polls in the weeks and months before election day.²⁶ Pollsters did record a rather precipitous drop in support just in the days before the vote—to the benefit of the smaller parties, particularly the AfD, which went from a longer-term average of 7 to 10 percent up to over 12 percent. There is no clear expla-

nation for why this late-breaking development occurred. Some argued that certain media outlets had increased coverage of issues like migration, crime, and integration, which then boosted the salience of these concerns and thus support for the AfD. No one observed substantial meddling by the Russians or other actors. Some commentators even noted that there was more intervention from U.S. right-wing actors than from Russia.²⁷

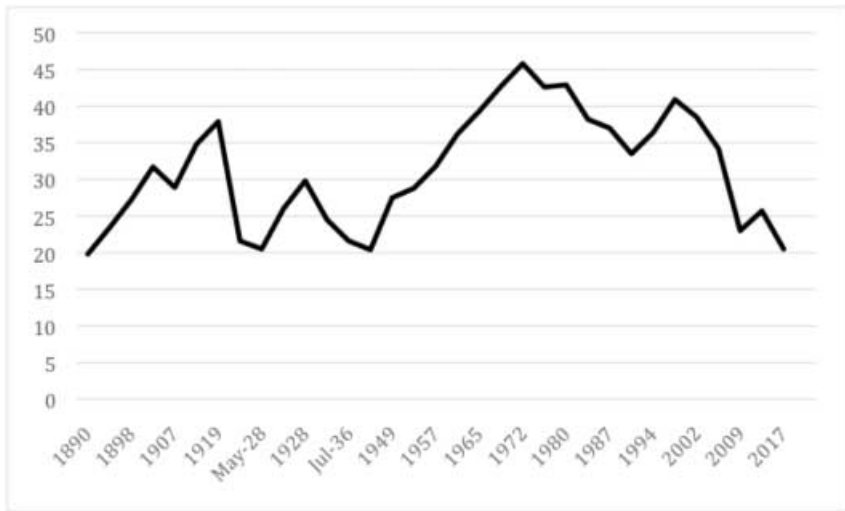
Table 0.2: Bundestag Election Results, 2017 and 2013

	2017 Percent 2 nd Vote	Seats	Percent Seats	2013 Percent 2 nd Vote	Seats	Percent Seats	Percent 2 nd Vote Change (2017 v. 2013)	Percent Seat Change (2017 v. 2013)
CDU/CSU	33	246	34.7	41.5	311	49.4	-8.5	-14.7
SPD	20.5	153	21.6	25.7	193	30.6	-5.2	-9
FDP	10.7	80	11.3	4.8	-	-	+5.9	+11.3
Greens	8.9	67	9.4	8.4	63	10.0	+0.5	-0.6
Left	9.2	69	9.7	8.6	64	10.2	+0.6	-0.5
AfD	12.6	94	13.3	4.7	-	-	+7.9	+13.3
Others	5	-		6.2*	-	-		
		709			631			

Source: Bundeswahlleiter

* in 2013 All <5 % = 15.7%

The decline of the two *Volksparteien* has been on-going for decades, but was temporarily masked by the anomalous 2013 election result. With the demise of the FDP and the near miss from the AfD that year, a record high over 15 percent of the vote went to parties below the 5 percent threshold. This artificially inflated the parliamentary delegations of the parties that did make it over the threshold, particularly the two catch-all parties. But, in 2017, the longer-term decline continued. The CSU went from 7.4 to 6.2 percent of the national vote, but from 49.3 to 38.8 (a 10.5 percent decline) in Bavaria, the only state in which it competes. CDU support fell from 34.2 to 26.8, a 7.4 percent decline. Put differently, both the CDU and CSU lost over a fifth of their 2013 support level. At 20.5 percent, the SPD had its worst outcome since 1949 or 1890 when it got 19.8 percent (in May 1924 it achieved 20.5 percent, and November 1932 20.4 percent). It lost 21 percent of its 2013 support. To be just a bit melodramatic, the party has not seen such a poor electoral performance since Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Laws were in place before 1890!

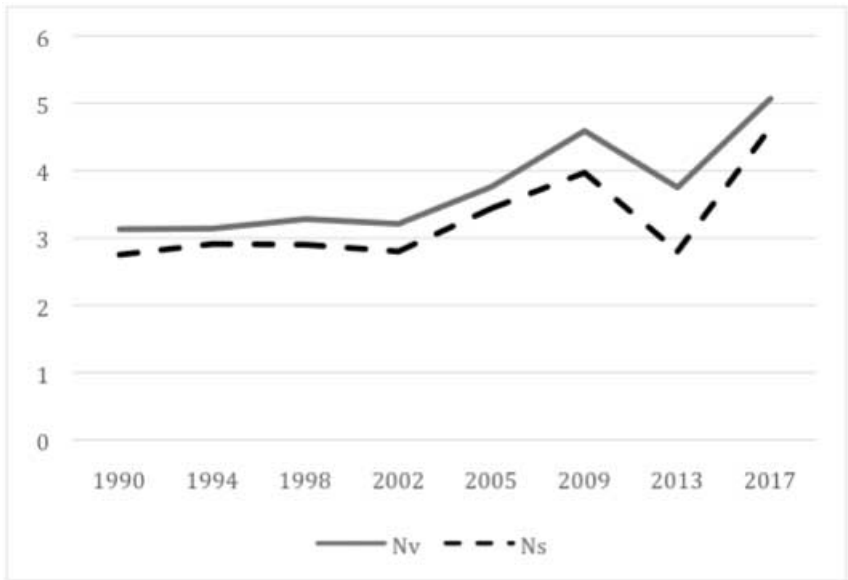
Figure 0.1: SPD Share of the Vote since 1890

Sources: https://www.bundestag.de/blob/190454/782a532c7e19aa9cd5119e62ca77a260/wahlen_kaiserreich-data.pdf; <https://www.bundestag.de/blob/190456/f8d637d1039a06a614cff0264f8b5d10/reichstagswahlergebnisse-data.pdf>; Bundeswahlleiter

The nineteenth electoral period (2017–2021) will have the most fragmented Bundestag in the post 1949 period, with six party fractions and seven parties (differentiating between the CDU and CSU, which are legally distinct parties but always caucus together). According to the effective number of party calculation,²⁸ the parliament now has 4.64 effective parties based on seats (5.07 based on votes)—a figure not seen since the Weimar Republic. Even the first election of 1949, when a new party system was emerging, produced only 3.53 effective parties based on seats. This is cause for concern because the country is rapidly approaching the extreme (rather than moderate) multiparty category. Given the almost six months without a new government, it is evident how difficult this fragmentation is making coalition formation. Moreover, two fractions—the ideologically radical Left Party and the AfD—are currently not considered acceptable coalition partners (*koalitionsunfähig*). Together they comprise almost a quarter of the Bundestag (23 percent) and with 163 seats between them, have more than the SPD. No wonder it is difficult for the four mainstream fractions to form a coalition when a government needs 50 percent of the seats, but can work with only about 75 percent of the total. This is reminiscent of postwar Italy where the Christian Democrats (DC) ruled seemingly in perpetuity because 20–40 percent of the legislature was controlled by antisystem parties (communist or neofascist). This was also a

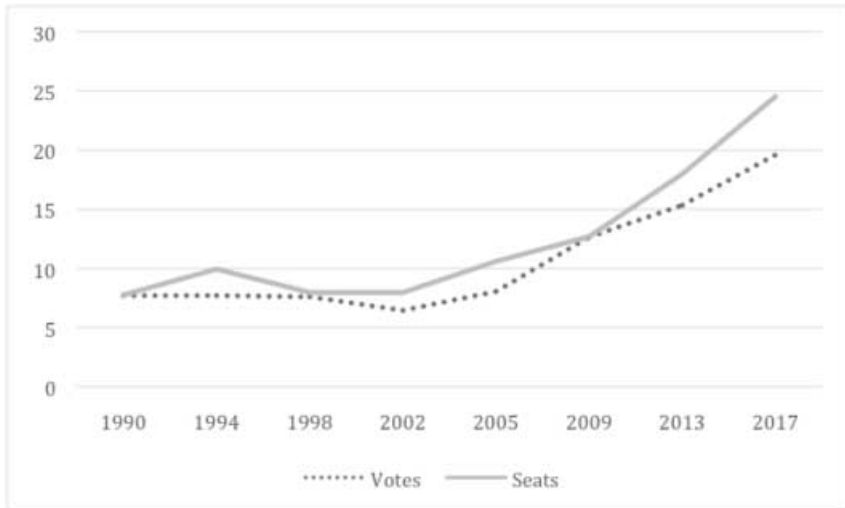
recipe for endemic corruption, which led eventually to the dramatic demise of the colloquially deemed “First Republic” in the early 1990s. Another parallel would be Austria, with its long history GroKos (forty of seventy-three years since 1945, but twenty-three of the last thirty-one years), which empowered the right-populist Freedom Party.

Figure 0.2: Effective Number of Parties Based on Votes and Seats over Time

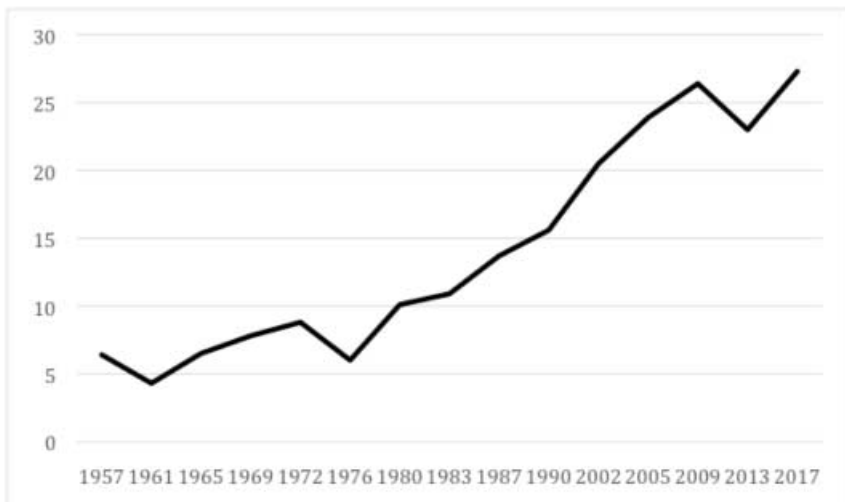


Unsurprisingly, electoral volatility has also increased considerably as of late and is now well beyond the 8.6 long-term average.²⁹ Yet, note that the increase has really only been marked since the early 2000s. The decline of the SPD and the splintering of the left was largely a consequence of neoliberal Red-Green government policies in the early 2000s. Ironically, these reforms contributed greatly to putting the economy on a better footing, ending the declinist “sick man of the euro” narrative, and laying the basis for the export boom of the last decade. Given the strong economy and public finances, one would think that the parties presiding over this situation would benefit and volatility would be moderate. But, that was not the case.

One driver of increased volatility is the increasing propensity of voters to split their first (constituency) and second (party list) vote. Although the trend goes back to the 1980s, it has really taken off since reunification and especially this century. A record 27.3 percent of voters split their ballots, a boon to the smaller parties, especially the Greens and FDP. In fact, 56 per-

Figure 0.3: Volatility Based on Votes and Seats over Time

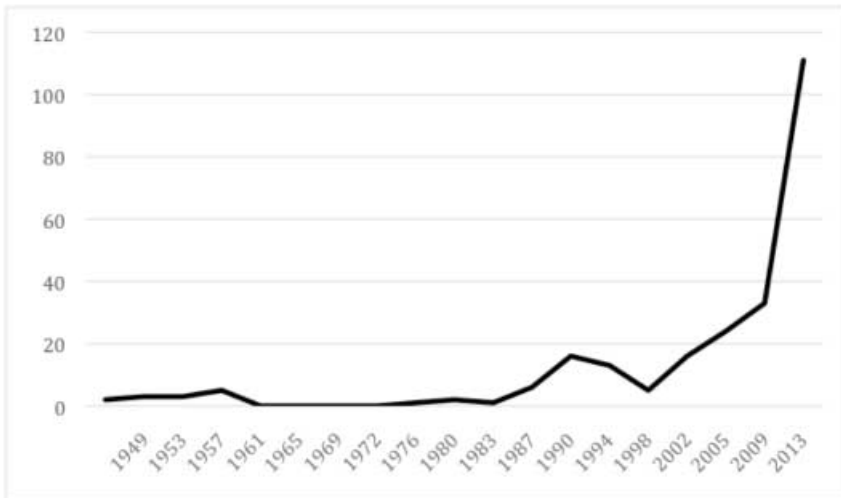
cent of those who gave their second vote to the Liberals, chose another party with their first vote—likewise for 48 percent of Green voters. This unprecedented incidence of tactical voting behavior shows declining loyalty at least to the two catch-all parties.

Figure 0.4: Vote Splitting over Time

Source: Bundeswahlleiter

The size of this Bundestag is also massive—the largest German parliament ever. This is due to the 111 extra seats—forty-six overhanging (*Überhangmandaten*) and sixty-five compensatory mandates (*Ausgleichmandaten*). The number of overhanging mandates has increased considerably over time and especially since reunification as the number of parties gaining parliamentary representation has increased from the three that were typical from the 1960s to the 1980s. The change to the electoral law required by the Constitutional Court just before the 2013 election has made matters much worse with the addition of compensatory mandates to allow for even closer vote-seat correspondence.³⁰ According to the cube root rule of the population to determine the ideal size of a legislature, the Bundestag should have a mere 436 members. There are deleterious consequences of having such an oversized chamber—it makes it too easy to represent niche preferences and decreases the ability of parties to aggregate interests and formulate overarching legislative agendas.³¹ Moreover, these additional deputies will cost taxpayers an extra euro 51 million over the duration of this parliamentary period.³²

Figure 0.5: Overhanging and Compensatory Mandates Over Time



Long an exemplary mixed member proportional electoral system, combining single member constituencies with closed list proportional representation, the system has evolved into an over-engineered mess. Even the sacrosanct 5 percent electoral threshold—which has done much over the decades to disincentivize small, often radical parties—might also be in

jeopardy. The Federal Constitutional Court invalidated a 3 percent hurdle for European Parliament elections in 2013 and some Land courts have done likewise for local elections.³³ Such a development would further exacerbate the splintering of the Bundestag. It might be time to contemplate changes along the more majoritarian lines of Britain or France in order to engineer an advantage for larger parties. Germans would have to accept the price of lower proportionality and fewer parties gaining validating parliamentary representation.

These developments—increased volatility and the splintering of the Bundestag—represent a rather novel political context for government formation. Postwar and earlier postunification electorates were not renowned for radical course shifts and suddenly changing preferences. Things evolved slowly, even glacially and governing coalitions remained in power for long periods of time. Since 1949, the Federal Republic has had only eight chancellors. By contrast, over the same period of time, the United States has had thirteen presidents, the UK has had fourteen prime ministers, and France has had eight presidents (and seventeen prime ministers) since 1959. In fact, the only time in almost seventy years that German voters have thrown the rascals out and completely replaced a government (complete partisan alteration) was 1998. All other changes in government have been partial with a coalition partner being replaced with another, but one remaining in power (as in 1966, 1969, 1982, 2005, 2009, 2013, and 2017).

But, the fragmented Bundestag and the shrunken catch-all parties means that the traditional coalition options are not possible. Previously, one of the catch-call parties would govern with a smaller ideologically affiliated partner, as the SPD did with the FDP from 1969-1982 and then with the Greens from 1998-2005 or the CDU with the FDP from 1982-1998 and 2009-2013. This time, such an option was mathematically impossible, so Merkel initially looked to form a three-party “Jamaica” coalition—named after the colors of the Jamaican flag and the traditional colors of the German parties—CDU/CSU (black), Greens, and FDP (yellow). This attempt, however, fell apart before it was even fully negotiated, scuttled by the FDP at the end of November 2017 after several weeks of exploratory talks (*Sondierungsgespräche*). Reports pointed to an inability to agree on migration (specifically family reunification), as well as Green demands to move more quickly away from coal power. Lindner proclaimed that “It is better not to govern than to govern wrongly.”³⁴ “Jamaica-Aus” (Jamaica failure) was selected the word of the year—just ahead of “Ehe für alle” (marriage for all).³⁵ The FDP has taken a reputational and polling hit (cur-

rently down in the 8-9 percent range). There is even a new word: *lindnern*—to lindner, to back out at the last minute with the whiff of treachery and bad faith.³⁶

Thus, another grand coalition was the only possibility besides a minority government, which is deeply taboo and has never been attempted in Federal Republic, or new elections. In fact, minority governments in other parliamentary democracies have been surprisingly resilient. But, Germany is not Sweden and the dynamics of minority government are harder to accommodate in such a large country with its clout in Europe and abroad. Despite Schulz's deep reservations (he had stated that the election result rejected another grand coalition) preliminary talks started in January 2018 and formal negotiations were concluded in early February, and then voted on by SPD party members. Despite intense opposition particularly from young Socialist (Juso) leader Kevin Kühnert, 66 percent of the 450,000 or so SPD party members (including 24,000 new members just since 1 January) endorsed the agreement via postal ballot. The new government was installed in mid-March 2018.³⁷

Table 0.3: Merkel's Fourth Cabinet (2018-)

	Ministry/Title	Party
Angela Merkel	Chancellor	CDU
Heiko Maas	Foreign Office	SPD
Olaf Scholz	Finance/Vice Chancellor	SPD
Horst Seehofer	Interior	CSU
Ursula von der Leyen	Defense	CDU
Peter Altmaier	Economics	CDU
Hubertus Heil	Labor and Social Affairs	SPD
Katarina Barley	Justice and Consumer Protection	SPD
Jens Spahn	Health	CDU
Anja Karliczek	Education and Research	CDU
Julia Klöckner	Food and Agriculture	CDU
Andreas Scheuer	Transportation and Digital Infrastructure	CSU
Gerd Müller	Economic Cooperation and Development	CSU
Franziska Giffey	Family, Seniors, Women and Youth	SPD
Svenja Schulze	Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	SPD
Helge Braun	Chancellery Office	CDU

There are substantial personnel changes in Merkel's fourth cabinet even though the governing parties remain the same. In fact, only Merkel, Müller, and von der Leyen remain in the same positions. Several in-coming ministers have changed portfolios (Altmaier from the chancellery to economics, Maas from justice to the foreign office). Some have returned after several years away from the federal cabinet (Scholz, Seehofer). But, the vast majority are brand new, albeit often with deputy ministerial

(Staatssekretär) or regional/local political experience (Braun, Giffey, Heil, Karliczek, Klöckner, Scheuer, Schulze, Spahn–Barley also has less than one year of experience). Some surprise departures include Thomas de Maiziere (a Merkel confidant), Brigitte Zypries, Hermann Gröhe, Barbara Hendricks, and, above all, Sigmar Gabriel—who was SPD party leader until March 2017 and vice chancellor in the last coalition. After January 2017 when he moved from the economics to the foreign ministry, he was often more popular than Merkel herself. In another development, the interior ministry is being beefed up for Seehofer, taking up competences in building and *Heimat* (homeland)—although no one seems to know what this latter competence really means. A little more than half of the cabinet is comprised of women, and there is one other eastern German (Giffey) besides Merkel.

Initial reactions saw the partisan distribution of ministries as a major victory for the SPD, which received six out of sixteen portfolios, including the powerful finance ministry, the foreign office, labor, and justice. The influential tabloid, *Bild Zeitung* even ran a headline: “Chancellor at any price: Merkel gifts the government to the SPD” (Kanzlerin um jeden Preis: Merkel schenkt der SPD die Regierung). The SPD probably needed this to successfully sell the agreement to its members. Content-wise, the agreement was characterized as “expansionary continuity” with the parties agreeing to use a good portion of the budget surplus on programs like increased child benefits, pensions, and subsidies for (affordable) housing. There will also be an investment in broadband for all. The Soli tax will be eliminated for all but the top 10 percent of taxpayers. Refugees will be capped at 200,000 per year and family reunification will also be limited to 1,000 per month.³⁸

Moving beyond Merkel

As relieved as so many were with the new coalition agreement, it took almost six months after the election to achieve—the longest postwar Germany has gone with a caretaker government. Presiding over all of this was Angela Merkel, leading her fourth government (including three grand coalitions) since first assuming office in 2005.

Merkel has dominated German and European politics for most of this century. Her style has been quite different from other chancellors and global leaders. She exemplifies “leading from behind” with a more self-effacing and behind-the-scenes style—never dominating or hogging the

limelight like so many of her largely vanquished (male) rivals. She is not particularly charismatic and does not appear to enjoy retail politics, campaigning, or interacting with voters or the press. Moreover, she has never really been about the “vision thing.” She has seemed especially exhausted since the election—and actually since the pushback on her 2015 decision to open the country’s borders to the wave of refugees.

Merkel has greatly influenced, even transformed the CDU, as many scholars have noted.³⁹ Indeed, the policy areas in which the CDU has shifted is notable—from family policy, to same-sex marriage, to energy and environmental policy. Admittedly, when it comes to fiscal policy, the CDU has stayed true to conservative principles—the “schwarz-null” of no new state borrowing, the constitutional amendment to limit deficits, and the achievement of budget surpluses over the last few years are big successes from a conservative perspective. Mention should also be made of German pressure having effects on EU, specifically Eurozone member states to follow a similar path.

This, though, was largely the achievement of Wolfgang Schäuble, the long-serving finance minister (2009-2017) and before that in various ministerial roles from 1984 to 1991 and 2005 to 2009, as well CDU/CSU caucus chair from 1991 to 2000 and CDU leader from 1998 to 2000. But, due to his election as president of the Bundestag in October 2017, he will not be part of the next government. At seventy-six, he is rapidly approaching the twilight of his long and influential public career. Indeed, Schäuble’s transition from positions of real policy influence and power is a huge milestone and loss for Merkel, who has worked with (and sometimes against) him for her entire political career. In one regard, this transition is almost as symbolically significant as the death of Helmut Kohl—Merkel’s first political mentor—in June 2017.

Many observers believe that Merkel has social democratized (although she would rather say “modernized”) the party and brought it firmly into the center, if not the center-left of the political spectrum. Others believe that all things considered, Merkel has made the party ideologically murky and amorphous. She is renowned for waiting until the last minute to commit to a policy course—widely deemed the “Merkel method.”⁴⁰ This is captured in the neologism *merkeln*—to merkel, meaning to dawdle or dither, be wishy-washy, reveal no opinion or position, and wait until the last possible moment to decide.⁴¹ In most instances and for many years, such tactical methods have worked for her—while also garnering a lot of criticism at home and abroad. Nevertheless, it has left the party lacking a coherent strategy, identity, or platform in the eyes both of many voters and CDU

party members. The party's right flank has also been exposed to new competitors—a situation that the AfD has exploited.

As noted above, Merkel herself and all political observers acknowledged her weakened position after the 2017 election. But, she soldiered on and seemed to recover her standing sufficiently by the time the new coalition was in place in March 2018. Always savvy and looking towards the future, she installed many new, younger, and largely loyal faces in the new cabinet, even if she gave up supporters such as Gröhe and de Maiziere. She retained allies like Altmaier and von der Leyen, the returning defense minister. Although long perceived to be Merkel's preferred successor, von der Leyen had never been very popular within the party or the electorate, and had seemingly lost Merkel's support. Moreover, in February 2018, Merkel installed another younger loyalist, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (widely referred to as AKK) as CDU secretary-general, the position from which Merkel herself began her takeover of the party in 1998.

After a few relatively placid months, the new government started to wobble and Merkel's position deteriorated once again. The CSU was responsible for most of these tensions as it maneuvered before the state elections in Bavaria in October. In March 2018, the party installed a new minister-president Markus Söder, as Seehofer quit to run the federal Interior Ministry—albeit remaining party leader until he decided in November 2018 to step down in January 2019.⁴² The party decided to take on the right-populists through its own rightward turn, for example decreeing the installation of crosses in government offices in Bavaria and through Seehofer pushing the older, provocative formulation that “Islam does not belong to Germany,” although he backtracked by the end of the year.⁴³ Over the course of the summer, Seehofer almost brought the government down twice, first over migration policy and then over his responses to the controversial statements of Hans-Georg Maaßen, the head of the domestic security agency.⁴⁴ An even bigger blow to the chancellor came at the end of September when the CDU/CSU caucus in the Bundestag surprisingly voted to replace the long-time parliamentary group leader (since 2005) and close Merkel ally Volker Kauder with the younger Ralph Brinkhaus (a finance and budgetary expert). All understood that this was a vote of non-confidence in Merkel's leadership.

Then, in October 2018 came the greatly anticipated state elections in Bavaria and Hesse, perceived as a kind of midterm or referendum on the national government. In Bavaria on 14 October, the result was not nearly as bad for the CSU as feared when they achieved 37.2 percent, which was 2 to 4 points better than the last pre-election polls showed, but down

from the 47.4 percent it won in 2013. The SPD did worse than expected with a paltry 9.6 percent. The Greens had an excellent night at 17.5 percent (although a little less than polling had predicted), dominating in the cities where they picked up their first ever direct mandates in Munich and Würzburg. The FDP scraped in at 5.1 percent (the Left did not make it over the threshold). Finally, the AfD secured 10.3 percent and the Free Voters 11.5 percent (+2.5). On 28 October in Hesse, the CDU gained only 27 percent (down from 38.3 percent in 2013). The SPD lost almost 11 percent coming at 19.8, the same number as the surging Greens. The AfD received 13.1 percent just slightly more than its result at the 2017 Bundestag election.

The next day, Merkel announced that she would not run again for the Christian Democratic party chair in December. She stated her intent to continue as chancellor, but added that this was her last term. This unexpected announcement immediately unleashed what had long been a repressed power struggle for control over the governing party. Unlike previous changes in party leadership such as Kohl in 1973 or Merkel in 2000 in which the machinations took place behind closed doors and the candidate was consensually endorsed at the party congress, there was an unprecedented five-week public campaign for the position.⁴⁵ A series of regional fora, endorsements for the candidates from party big wigs (like Schäuble openly advocating for his “friend” Friedrich Merz⁴⁶), and much politicking occurred.

Three serious candidates emerged. First was Jens Spahn, installed as the health minister in the current government (in an example of Merkel keeping her enemies closer). Long scheming behind the scenes, he vowed to move the party back towards the right, for instance, advocating a reimplementation of military service and totemically stating that Islam does not belong to Germany. Born in 1980 and hailing from populous North Rhine-Westphalia, Spahn is a devout Catholic and would make history being the first openly gay leader of a major country.⁴⁷ A well-known Merkel critic, he vowed to create a very different CDU. Nevertheless, party members perceived him as rather inexperienced, opportunistic, and maladroitness—at one point stating that recipients of the much criticized (by the left) Hartz IV welfare programs were not really poor.⁴⁸

Second was Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, the former minister president of the Saarland from 2011 to 2018 who is considered a younger (fifty-six) version of Merkel herself and someone who will likely maintain the chancellor’s more centrist vision for the party, including on migration policy.⁴⁹ Indeed, she has even been described as “Mini Merkel.”⁵⁰ Neverthe-

less, she has differentiated herself from the chancellor by noting that the party needs more “fire,” expressing concerns about same-sex marriage as well as dual citizenship, and wanting to more vigorously reach out to youth. She cleverly used her new position as general secretary to re-organize personnel in party headquarters and travel the country in a “listening tour” in conjunction with revisions to the party platform, which no doubt also provided excellent networking opportunities.

Finally, there was Friedrich Merz, who returned to political prominence after a sixteen-year hiatus. The sixty-three-year-old was pushed out as parliamentary caucus leader by Merkel back in 2002. In 2007, he returned to the private sector as a corporate lawyer and member of several boards, even leading the board of directors of Blackrock Germany, the world’s largest asset management company. He struggled at times, for example, awkwardly announcing that he earns over a million euros (gross) per year, amassing a modest fortune (including a private jet), but still considers himself to belong to the “upper” middle class (*gehobene Mittelschicht*). He stands for fiscal and social conservatism—wanting to simplify the tax code and being credited with coining the “Leitkultur” concept around the turn of the millennium. He would not just take the party to the right, but would be a lightning rod for all old-guard conservatives who have been sidelined by Merkel over the years. Merz represents the old-boys-club CDU—upper middle-class, religious, and very western. He was considered a member of the much-ballyhooed, all-male “Andenpakt” group of Christian Democratic politicians including Roland Koch and Günther Oettinger, both of whom openly endorsed Merz. Merz represents a return to the past. It is almost as if he wants to abolish the Merkel era, wiping the last fifteen years from the history books.⁵¹

For most of the campaign period, Kramp-Karrenbauer led Merz in the polling. At the end of November, she was ahead 38 to 29 percent, with Spahn a distant third (6 percent).⁵² Nevertheless, there were many undecided delegates, Merz performed quite well at the various regional fora, and many prominent conservatives publicly supported him. But, in the end, on 7 December in Hamburg, the delegates narrowly selected Kramp-Karrenbauer over Merz in a run-off with 52 percent (571/999) of the votes.⁵³ This result represents continuity with Merkel’s leadership—and probably ensures the chancellor at least another year in power. The CDU almost immediately gained about 3 percent in the polls and the fevered political atmosphere subsided just in time for the holidays.

Parties in Flux

To a degree, parties are always in flux, depending on the popularity or predilections of leaders, the vicissitudes of public opinion, the frequency of crises, and the ever-more competitive environment for votes. This moment in German politics, however, is unique for creating a situation in which virtually every party is in a challenging state.

The SPD stands out for being in an especially treacherous position. For years, no one has known what the party stands for. The years of governing co-responsibility (in government as a senior or junior coalition partner for seventeen out of twenty-one years since 1998) have taken a toll. It has never really been able to live down its neoliberal Hartz IV/Agenda 2010 reforms of the early 2000s, which alienated many leftist voters but laid the basis for the subsequent economic boom years. The party has also been a poor competitor against other actors. Willie Paterson has pointed out that the Social Democrats already had two epochal failures: not having integrated the Greens in the 1980s and then failing to absorb the PDS/Left in the 1990s and early 2000s. It has lost votes to Merkel's more centrist CDU and is now threatened by the AfD in many regions. It is quite possible that the rise of the AfD will be more lethal to the SPD than to any other party, including the CDU and CSU. As Jakob Augstein recently argued, the SPD was competitive when it was clearly the party of the "little guy" (*kleiner Mann*).⁵⁴ Having long ago lost this identity (perhaps when it embraced neoliberal reforms), the AfD is increasingly the mouthpiece for this segment of the electorate. In fact, AfD leader Alexander Gauland has consistently profiled the party in this manner.⁵⁵ Fears that the SPD is losing its *Volkspartei* status have been voiced repeatedly. Its horrible 20 percent result at the 2017 Bundestag election and erosion to 18, 17, and 15 percent in early 2019 polls are existential red flags. Its support among workers has tanked from 49 percent of this group in 1998 to a record low of 23 percent in 2017.⁵⁶

Instability in party leadership is both cause and consequence of these poor election results. Since 1999 (just before Merkel took over the CDU), there have been eight party chairs, including one-year stints by Franz Münterfering (two) and Schulz, but just over seven years under Sigmar Gabriel from 2009-2017, which was the longest tenure since Willy Brandt from 1964 to 1987. In April 2018, Schulz gave up the party chair to Andrea Nahles, who continued to run the party's Bundestag fraction. The first woman leader in over 150 years, she is associated with the party's left wing (in contrast to Gabriel), having risen to prominence as a critic of Schröder's

Agenda 2010. She was also minister of labor and social affairs in the last government, was secretary general of the SPD from 2009-2014, and took over as SPD fraction leader in the Bundestag after the September 2017 election. Tactically, this move signaled to the SPD base and the larger electorate that the party will move back into a more leftist position going forward. Nahles appeared to be a good choice for the party because she articulates a more leftist vision and could be more effective in countering the Christian Democrats because she is outside of the current government.⁵⁷

But, besides promoting a woman to the top job, there is no clear path forward for the party. Every option—moving left, remaining centrist, embracing some populist policies—has vociferous proponents and detractors. Admittedly, there was widespread agreement that a spell in the opposition was the best thing for the party. But, the extremely divided Bundestag after 2017 and the inability of Merkel to create a Jamaica coalition, left the country with few other options besides another GroKo. SPD leaders—at first reluctantly—rose to the occasion. All other options were worse—tolerating a minority government would have meant voting with the CDU/CSU on most bills in the absence of any impact on policy. Early elections would likely see their share of the vote decline even more if polling is to be believed. That said, the SPD has not completely imploded at the state level. Seven of sixteen current minister presidents are Social Democrats and they are in governing coalitions in eleven states. Although it lost control of North Rhine Westphalia and Schleswig-Holstein in 2017, the party's performance was not abysmal. Also, it has done a decent job of promoting up-and-comers to cabinet-level positions—Scholz, Heil, Manuela Schwesig, and Barley come to mind.

Nevertheless, 2018 was even more brutal than 2017 for the party. The results in Bavaria (9.6 percent) and Hesse (19.8 percent) were abysmal. In national polls, it is as low as 14 percent, below the Greens and the AfD, and the lowest level of support ever recorded for the party.⁵⁸ Nahles has not been able to turn things around and is losing support internally. The only saving grace is that almost all political attention was devoted to Merkel's slow retreat from the national stage and the power struggle within the CDU.

The Greens had struggled over the last few electoral cycles—at their peak around 2010 and 2011 they were polling about 20 percent, at one point more than the SPD. Commentators were even talking about them as the new leftist *Volkspartei*. A subpar 2013 result and an only slightly better 2017 one put such speculation aside. Of course, the Greens have been liminal since their founding. Their lingering 1970s new-leftist tendencies have

often made them their own worst enemy. Constant leadership, (“speaker-ship”) flux—well-known leader Cem Özdemir lost his leadership spot in early 2018—and the never-ending battle between Realo and Fundi factions, as well as some fringe policy positions (the pedophilia matter that infected the 2013 campaign) are not ways to embrace a national, *Volkspartei* identity.

But, this trajectory changed considerably for the better over the course of 2018, culminating in 17.5 percent of the vote in Bavaria, 19.8 percent in Hesse, and 19 to 23 percent in national polls—well ahead of the SPD and at one point not far behind the CDU. The Greens are currently represented in all but two state parliaments and are in governing coalitions in nine states (leading Baden-Württemberg under Winfried Kretschmann’s centrist leadership since 2011). The Greens have clearly benefitted from their opposition status at the national level, a consistent ideological profile (liberal on migration and social issues, more centrist on the economy), a crop of exciting, young-ish leaders like Robert Habeck nationally and Tarek al-Wazir in Hesse and Katharina Schulze in Bavaria, and, arguably, the increased salience of their core environmental platform (in the face of the worst drought for fifty years in 2018).⁵⁹ The continued implosion of the SPD has greatly benefitted the party, although it has also poached many voters from the CDU/CSU.

It is an open question if the Greens can continue this upward trajectory. If the Social and Christian Democrats recover, there will be fewer voters for the Greens to attract. Joining a federal coalition—either a Jamaica constellation (without Merkel), or after the next Bundestag election—will depress their oppositional profile and will alienate voters, as the inevitable cost of wielding power. They could also take a hit due to the on-going challenges (spiking consumer energy prices) implementing the much-vaunted energy transition (*Energiewende*), a signature Green issue. Their multicultural and pro-immigration stance will never attract AfD supporters and other conservatives. Green supporters are typically better-educated, middle-class westerners, which are also a finite segment of the electorate. Moreover, many Green leaders have currently moved to the center, even trying to re-appropriate traditionally conservative concerns like patriotism and *Heimat*—possibly alienating their more leftist base. Finally, the party has been benefitting from a “backlash to the backlash” effect, i.e., a response to the successes of the AfD, but this is likely temporary. Indeed, by early 2019, the party was in the 18-20 percent range. Still, this is a party to watch over the next electoral cycles.

The Left Party—like the PDS before—continues to be plagued by similar strains. In this case, however, there has always been the tension between

ideological extremism and a more pragmatic eastern German identity. This latter aspect is now threatened by the popularity of the AfD in large swaths of the former East Germany and the fact that the AfD may be taking away the protest component of the Left's support. Moreover, the Left Party is increasingly dominated by westerners and their concerns. With polls showing about the same level of support as the party achieved at the 2017 election, party leader Sahra Wagenkencht has tried to jump-start momentum by advocating for a new leftist movement "Aufstehen" (rise up) with some populist elements intended to attract voters who defected to the AfD. But, this effort has generated substantial friction within the party and has not gained much traction with voters.⁶⁰

Despite seemingly unstoppable momentum (15 to 18 percent in most late 2018 polls, but down to 12-14 percent in early 2019), the AfD also has its challenges. Headlines around the world rightfully emphasized that the entry of the party into the Bundestag marked the first time since the Nazi era that right-wing, far-right, extreme-right, right-populists (the jury is out regarding the best moniker) had achieved this feat. There was some angst that it was 1933 all over again.⁶¹ Yet, the Germans are late to this game—the list of European countries with a sizeable right-populist party is long—and there is, of course, Brexit and Trump elsewhere in the West. From this perspective, the rise of the AfD could be seen as a kind of normalization of German politics. Some have even argued that the AfD could be good for German democracy by shaking up the stultifying consensus between the two *Volksparteien*.⁶²

It is important to understand where the AfD got its votes in 2017. Of its 5.88 million votes, 1.28 million (22 percent) came from previous non-voters; 740,000 (13 percent) from the 2013 "other" category, which included parties such as the Pirates and right-radical NPD; 430,000 (7 percent) from the Left; 500,000 (8.5 percent) from the SPD; and about 1 million (17 percent) from the CDU. Yet, note that the CDU lost the majority of its 2013 voters to the FDP (1.3 million, 26 percent of the FDP's total). Of the voters who fled the SPD, the most (500,000) went to the AfD (430,000 to FDP; 400,000 to Greens and 380,000 to the Left).⁶³ Thus, it is not the case that the AfD benefitted solely from disgruntled right-wing or center-right voters. Moreover, it did particularly well in eastern Germany. With 22.5 percent of the vote there, it was the second-largest party behind only the CDU at 28.2 percent and ahead of the Left (17.4 percent) and the SPD (14.3 percent).⁶⁴ Like similar parties elsewhere, it did much better with men than women—gaining 26 percent of the eastern male vote.

The success of the AfD, however, should not be over-interpreted. There has been extensive pushback from all other quarters of the political

spectrum. This was symbolized by the “guerilla” art installation of a replica of Berlin’s Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe on a property adjacent to the eastern German home of prominent AfD politician Björn Höcke, who had deemed the original a “monument of shame.”⁶⁵ The political and social norms against right-radicalism are still largely operative.⁶⁶ In future elections, many AfD voters could return to their previous choices or fall back into the non-voting category. True, the AfD brought a campaign sophistication that eluded most of the other parties.⁶⁷ But, in future elections, competitors will emulate these tactics and neutralize this advantage.

Moreover, there were contingent factors that will not recur. After twelve years of Merkel, some voter fatigue set in. Merkel’s strategy of “social democratizing” the CDU also has generated a cost. At one point, however, Merkel, a favored target of the AfD (“Merkel muss weg”), will indeed be gone, depriving the party of this key line of attack. From another perspective, the AfD’s success was simply the political price the establishment had to pay for Merkel’s controversial decision in late summer 2015 to open the borders to the wave of migrants that entered Europe that year. Again, this policy shift was successful (more or less), humane, practical (Germany needs immigrants), but also hugely controversial in light of the sheer scale—and cost—of the challenge. Survey after survey showed that AfD voters were animated overwhelmingly by migration and related issues—but, not just AfD voters. Exit polls showed that the most important issue cited by all voters was “refugees and integration” at 44 percent, followed distantly by social injustice at 20 percent.⁶⁸ Given just how contingent AfD support was on the salience of this issue, it will be challenging for the party to maintain such a level of support as that issue recedes in importance. Balancing among the many disparate groups of supporters will likewise be challenging.

I do not want to downplay the AfD’s insidiousness. Like other right-populists they have parroted the same us/them, pure/impure, anti-pluralistic rhetoric and engaged in Islamophobia and xenophobia.⁶⁹ There is more than enough fake right-wing news, although the German authorities have been much more vigilant about this than other governments, getting Facebook, for example, to verify and curate content that could be classified as hate speech.⁷⁰ The AfD also has some extreme and bizarre policies on natalism, families, or homosexuality that likely will not resonate too widely. Even their own voters do not like party leaders like Gauland, Alice Weidel, Meuthen, or Frauke Petry (who left the party shortly after the election). Recently, there have been serious allegations of shady and

possible illegal campaign donations from abroad that have enveloped Weidel as well as Gauland.⁷¹ Worryingly, this might not affect the AfD's core supporters. As Daniel Ziblatt has noted: "Around the world, populist authoritarians claim that because 'the system' is corrupt anyway, the leaders' own corruption should be seen as a kind of virtuous one that will operate on behalf of the people."⁷²

Nevertheless, even the AfD is in a liminal place—and has been since its inception. Will it embrace right-radicalism or "merely" right-populism? Will it tolerate Holocaust-deniers, neo-Nazis, racists, and xenophobes? Or will it moderate and endeavor to take on *Volkspartei* status—what some have deemed a new "national socialism?"⁷³ Will it continue to be a protest movement or will it routinize and institutionalize? Will it become yet another eastern German identity party or will it strive for truly national appeal? Will it tend towards anti-immigrant xenophobia or euroskepticism? Will it actually deliver policy for the *kleiner Mann*? Will it continue to have extreme leadership instability and flux?

Finally, the FDP has challenges. The party has a history of surging and falling rather dramatically—14.6 percent in 2009 (its best result ever), to 4.8 percent in 2013 (losing all its seats in the Bundestag), and back to 10.7 percent in 2017. By the end of 2018 and early 2019, it is polling was lack-luster—a little below its 2017 result at 7 to 10 percent. It received only 5.1 percent (+1.8) in Bavaria and 7.5 percent (+2.5) in Hesse. Lindner had a great campaign in 2017, projecting an image of a strong, dynamic and youthful leader—but so did Guido Westerwelle in 2009. It is risky to invest so much attention in the charisma and personality of one individual party leader, who will inevitably falter. Lindner and his party took a hit after breaking off the Jamaica coalition talks in late 2017, and their polling has not really recovered. They also have been out-maneuvered by the Greens in many contexts, allowing the latter to channel the dual backlashes to the governing parties and the AfD. Moreover, if the CDU moves to the right after Merkel, the FDP could lose its neoliberal policy differentiation and the advantage (and voters) that comes with occupying this policy space.

The Contributions

At this moment of political transition and given the importance of Germany to European and global politics, leading academics have come together in this edited volume to provide their insight into the current and future trajectory of the country.⁷⁴ The book begins with Frank Decker and

Philipp Adorf's examination of the party system, in which they note that the Bundestag shifted to the right overall in 2017. A certain symmetry has now emerged in a new six-party system with three parties of the left (SPD, Greens, Left) and, now, three also on the right (CDU/CSU, FDP, AfD). After analyzing the factors that led to the election result, the authors examine the new coalition formation environment. It will take a while for the parties to adapt to the novel options: grand coalitions as in Austria, a partisan divide-spanning coalition of the center, or a Scandinavian model with coalitions from one political camp, but tolerated by an extremist party. The arrival of right-wing populism on the political stage has set many dynamics in motion, not the least of which is a necessary recalibration of the catch-all parties.

Alexander Beyer and Steven Weldon examine the media environment of the campaign to test the hypothesis that the media were responsible for the rise and success of the AfD. Based on an examination of the published content from the four most popular online media outlets, the AfD did indeed receive a disproportionate share of coverage, especially in the last phase of the campaign. Moreover, these outlets clearly reinforced the salience of migration issues in the weeks before election day, which strengthened the AfD. Yet, analysis of Google search data shows that these media were largely following public sentiment—that is, more frequent reporting on such issues was a response to demand for such stories.

Louise K. Davidson-Schmich delves into LGBTI issues during the campaign. After recounting the evolution of LGBTI rights in Germany, she analyzes the parties' positions on a range of issues deemed important by this community, including marriage and family rights, anti-discrimination measures, health, and everyday acceptance. The Left and Green parties were the most supportive across almost all issue areas with the CDU/CSU and especially the AfD the least. Overall, the campaign ignored the vast majority of these issues with the big exception of marriage equality, which was achieved in June 2017 through an open vote of the Bundestag. An important finding was the agency of a critical actor, in this case veteran Green politician Volker Beck, who had diligently campaigned for this right over many years. Next, Joyce Mushaben analyzes gender images in the presentation of Angela Merkel over four campaigns. Mushaben delves into the many stereotypes that women politicians have to traverse and how these affected, and, at times, disadvantaged Merkel over the years. This environment led her to overtly downplay the gender dimensions of her leadership, while allowing her to achieve much positive change under the surface.

Turning to the parties, Clay Clemens looks at the CDU/CSU's lackluster election campaign. Concluding that it was "ambivalent"—as manifested by the result on election day—he highlights several reasons such as internal disagreements over Merkel's "modernization" of the CDU and more general pro- and anti-Merkel camps within the party; continued fallout from her 2015 decision on migration; a campaign strategy that bizarrely bred complacency among many supporters while mobilizing skeptics; and tactical mistakes. Clemens highlights the deep internal division over strategy: the "Merkelianers'" preference to compete for the center versus opponents' position that a battle between the partisan camps (*Lagerwahlkampf*) would be the only successful path—a strategic disagreement left unresolved on election day. One might also add that sub-par campaign messaging did not help. One key slogan was "For a Germany in which we live well and gladly," which was then transformed into an awkward and widely mocked hashtag #fedidwgugl.

Andreas M. Wüst analyzes the situation of the SPD and the new grand coalition. After looking at some of the reasons for the SPD's poor performance on election day, the author outlines the twisted road the party took to agree to a continuation of the grand coalition. A detailed analysis of the coalition agreement shows just how many social democratic priorities were adopted especially in social policy—although the party was not able to push through its preferences on migration-related issues. The chapter concludes by noting the risks to the coalition partners and the German party system more generally of continuing such consensual governments in perpetuity. David Patton looks at the smaller parties and the race for third place in 2017. He outlines both structural and contingent factors behind the unprecedented success of the niche parties. Indeed, he finds that each of the four smaller parties focused on a specific issue space—the Greens on the environment, the Left party on social justice, the AfD on immigration, and the FDP on education, deregulation, and taxes. One especially interesting finding is how the Left Party is now dominated by western elements. Patton concludes by noting that government formation has not yet caught up with the more fragmented and pluralistic nature of the party system.

Because the rise of the AfD has caused so much consternation in Germany and abroad, we have included several chapters on this new party. First, Matthias Dilling tackles the issue of whether the rise of the AfD really is the threat to the Christian Democrats that so many have proclaimed. Through an analysis of the parties' campaign manifestos, as well as sophisticated statistical analyses, he concludes that contrary to popular

belief, the AfD does not really threaten the CDU/CSU. Its ideology has veered overall far to the right of the conservatives, but is also a hodge-podge of disparate ideological fragments. More importantly, its voter base is extremely heterodox and it will be hard-pressed to keep all constituencies satisfied over the medium and long term. Meanwhile, David Art notes that the party's breakthrough electoral result—largely due to Merkel's policy on refugees—shows that the strategy of containment of the far right no longer works as it once did. Despite the establishment's continued efforts to combat the party, the AfD is rapidly normalizing, as right-populist parties have throughout Europe in recent years. That said, Art does think it is plausible that the party could implode just like many right-wing precursors in previous decades. If it does not, however, the ramifications of the AfD's institutionalization will be felt far beyond Germany's borders.

Lars Rensmann begins his chapter by noting that founded just five years ago, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) represents the biggest opposition party in the German parliament. In light of this success, he addresses three questions in European comparative perspective: What is the nature of the AfD as a relevant political party in the Bundestag? What explains the AfD's rise? And what is the party's behavior and impact in parliament and thus on German politics in general? Examining party platforms over four years, Rensmann first identifies programmatic shifts that have turned the AfD from a single-issue anti-Euro party into the first radical right-wing (populist) party in the German parliament since the Nazi era—yet a party similar to other electorally successful actors of this party family in parliaments across Europe. Second, electoral results and survey data show that the political radicalization of the AfD, which continues while in parliament, has not undermined the party's appeal. To the contrary, initial electoral success and radicalization have been mutually reinforcing factors in the AfD's development. This reflects, third, a deepened polarization of political culture and party competition that is further advanced by the AfD's antagonizing strategies in parliament and mirrors European trends. The electoral support of the party's evolution towards radical right populism make it likely that the AfD seeks to transform politics in and beyond the Bundestag, and German political culture at large. In so doing, the party follows its European counterparts' strategic orientations and partakes in the Europeanization of a sociocultural "counter-revolution."

Samuel Salzborn also analyses the young AfD's recent development, focusing on antisemitism within the party—something the party would prefer to keep out of public debate. By investigating its treatment of anti-semitism, Nazism, and the politics of remembrance, Salzborn shows that

the AfD has the features of a far-right party, to a much clearer extent than might be guessed from its media image, particularly inside Germany. Next, Jonathan Olsen focuses on eastern German voters, and in particular the fortunes of the Left Party and the AfD in that region. Even though many headlines proclaimed the weak results of the two catch-all parties and the rise of the AfD, the collapse of the Left party's vote in eastern Germany was just as consequential—it has now become a more nationalized party of the radical left. Meanwhile, the AfD has poached the protest vote and is rapidly becoming the new eastern German identity party. Olsen goes on to compare and contrast the populist elements in both parties, concluding that although there is some overlap, the AfD is clearly much more populist than the Left Party is or ever was—effectively tapping into the disaffected, anti-establishment sentiment of much of the eastern electorate.

Looking beyond the country's borders, Steve Szabo provides a sober assessment of the new coalition's foreign policy. The likely situation is an international environment with as many if not more challenges than in previous years, including Turkey, Russia, and the Transatlantic relationship, as well as lingering issues with France and the European Union. These challenges, however, will be met with less capacity than in previous governments. Many relevant policy portfolios are now occupied by the coalition partners, meaning that internal disagreements within the government will result in feeble policy responses. Merkel herself is weakened and will be less able to assert influence from the chancellery. All of this likely means that the new grand coalition will be transitional and that real policy change and robust policy responses will have to await the next government and a generational turnover in leadership.

Finally, Christian Schweiger's chapter is a rather critical take on Germany's dominant leadership role in the European Union in recent years. German leadership since the Euro Crisis, including policy decisions during the refugee crisis of 2015, have greatly contributed to the severe legitimacy issues within the EU today. Schweiger faults German leadership for empowering right-populist parties throughout the continent and contributing quite a bit to the Brexit decision in 2016. He thinks Merkel must focus on creating a more inclusive agenda for the European Union through rebuilding relationships with France and Central European countries, especially Poland. If a more consensual approach is not achieved, the further disintegration of the EU is a distinct possibility.

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Notes

1. <https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesamtwirtschaftUmwelt/VerdiensteArbeitskosten/RealloehneNettoverdienste/RealloehneNettoverdienste.html>, accessed 2 December 2018. I would like to thank the IASGP and DAAD for organizing yet another outstanding study tour around the 2017 Bundestag election. I would also like to thank Georgetown University's BMW Center for German and European Studies for continued research support.
2. Eric Langenbacher, "Tschüss Perfidious Albion: German Reactions to Brexit," *German Politics and Society*, 35, no. 3 (2017): 69-85.
3. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/integrating-refugees-in-germany-an-update-a-1147053.html>, accessed 28 November 2018.
4. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-rechtsextremismus/zahlen-und-fakten-rechtsextremismus>, accessed 28 November 2018.
5. If Merkel serves as chancellor until just before Christmas 2019, she will overtake Konrad Adenauer's fourteen years and thirty days. I think it is unlikely that she will surpass Helmut Kohl's record sixteen years, twenty-six days.
6. <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/heute/abstimmung-ueber-spd-vorsitzenden-100.html>, accessed 31 January 2018
7. <https://www.wahlrecht.de/umfragen/dimap.htm>, accessed 31 January 2018.
8. <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article167574916/Das-ist-das-SPD-Wahlprogramm-im-Ueberblick.html>, accessed 1 February 2018.
9. <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article168792096/Das-ganze-Elend-der-deutschen-Politik-in-einem-Bild.html>, accessed 1 February 2018.
10. <https://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/von-trump-zur-afd-wie-eine-us-agentur-den-wahlkampf-aufmischen-will-7599188.html>, accessed 3 February 2018.
11. https://www.afd.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2017/08/AfD_kurzprogramm_a4-quer_210717.pdf, accessed 31 January 2018.
12. <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-01/angela-merkel-fluechtlingspolitik-verfassung>, accessed 3 February 2018.
13. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/germans-ahead-of-the-vote-i-ve-never-seen-so-much-hate-a-1165684.html>, accessed 3 February 2018.
14. <https://www.fdp.de/sites/default/files/uploads/2017/08/07/20170807-wahlprogramm-wp-2017-v16.pdf>, accessed 31 January 2018.
15. <http://www.wz.de/home/politik/inland/bundestagswahl/wahlplakate-im-experten-check-die-fdp-angesagte-totgesagte-1.2505604>; <http://www.rp-online.de/politik/deutschland/bundestagswahl/die-fdp-verstoess-2017-eigentlich-gegen-jede-wahlplakat-regel-aid-1.7076012>, accessed 31 January 2018.
16. <https://www.gruene.de/ueber-uns/2017/unsere-kampagne-zur-bundestagswahl-darum-gruenen.html>, accessed 31 January 2018.
17. Ibid.

18. <https://www.die-linke.de/wahlen/kampagne/>, accessed 31 January 2018.
19. <https://www.cdu.de/haus>, accessed 29 January 2018.
20. <https://www.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/170816-kurzfassung-regierungsprogramm.pdf?file=1>, accessed 1 February 2018.
21. <https://www.cdu.de/artikel/plakate-zur-bundestagswahl>, accessed 29 January 2018
22. <http://www.rp-online.de/politik/deutschland/bundestagswahl/tv-duell-2017-zwei-kandidaten-eine-meinung-aid-1.7058072>, accessed 1 February 2018.
23. See note 13.
24. <https://www.welt.de/newsticker/news1/article166052867/Umfrage-Drei-Viertel-der-Deutschen-fuer-Ehe-fuer-alle.html>, accessed 5 February 2018.
25. https://www.destatis.de/DE/PresseService/Presse/Pressekonferenzen/2018/Repr_Wahlstatistik_2017/Statement_ReprWStat_PDF.pdf?__blob=publicationFile, accessed 20 February 2018.
26. See note 7.
27. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/09/20/meddling-germany-election-not-russia-but-u-s-right-wing/676142001/>; <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/10/17/russian-propaganda-germany-effective-think/>, accessed 31 January 2018.
28. The formula is $N=1/(p^2)$; where p is the proportion of seats or votes for each party.
29. The formula is $V_t = \frac{1}{2} (P(t-1) - P_t)$; where V_t is volatility at any given year compared to the last election; P_t is the party's vote or seat share (percent) in the current time period; and P_{t-1} is the vote or seat share (percent) in the last election. For the hundred-year average volatility of 8.6, see Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair, *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability: The Stabilisation of European Electorates 1885-1985* (Cambridge, 1990), 100.
30. <https://www.bpb.de/politik/wahlen/bundestagswahlen/163311/das-neue-wahlrecht?p=all>, accessed 3 February 2018.
31. On the cube root rule, see Rein Taagepera, *Predicting Party Sizes: The Logic of Simple Electoral Systems* (Oxford, 2007).
32. https://www.focus.de/finanzen/videos/reichstag-platzt-aus-allen-naechten-so-viele-abgeordnete-wie-noch-nie-was-kostet-uns-steuerzahler-der-xxl-bundestag_id_7635560.html, accessed 1 February 2018.
33. <http://www.rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/duesseldorf/die-kleinen-parteien-feiern-das-ende-der-sperre-aid-1.7219169>, accessed 10 March 2018.
34. <http://www.dw.com/en/german-election-preliminary-coalition-talks-collapse-after-fdp-walks-out/a-41445987>, accessed 3 February 2018.
35. <http://www.dw.com/en/political-buzzword-jamaika-aus-is-german-word-of-the-year-2017/a-41711361>, accessed 3 February 2018.
36. <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/meierei-die-neue-wortschoepfung-lindnern-15306755.html>, accessed 4 February 2018.
37. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/newsblog-zum-spd-mitgliedervotum-spd-will-minister-posten-paritaetisch-besetzen/21029416.html>, accessed 9 March 2018.
38. https://www.economist.com/blogs/kaffeeklatsch/2018/02/loveless-marriage?cid1=cust/ddnew/email/n/n/2018027n/owned/n/n/ddnew/n/n/n/anna/Daily_Dispatch/email&etear=dailydispatch, accessed 7 February 2018.
39. See Joyce Marie Mushaben, *Becoming Madam Chancellor: Angela Merkel and the Berlin Republic* (New York, 2017); Sarah Wiliarty, *The CDU and the Politics of Gender in Germany: Bringing Women to the Party* (New York, 2010).
40. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-coalition-talks-everyone-loses-a-1179358.html>, accessed 3 February 2018.
41. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/04/angela-merkels-influence-now-extends-to-german-slang-merkeln>, accessed 4 February 2018.
42. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/csu-horst-seehofer-will-innenminister-bleiben-a-1237977.html>, accessed 3 December 2018.

43. <https://www.dw.com/en/seehofer-tells-islam-conference-muslims-are-a-part-of-germany/a-46489983>, accessed 3 December 2018.
44. See <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2018-06/horst-seehofer-union-asylstreit-angela-merkel>; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/11/germany-security-agency-hans-georg-maassen-explain-claims-far-right-videos-chemnitz>, accessed 30 November 2018. Maaßen contested media reports about right-radicals “hunting” down non-white people in Chemnitz at the end of August. Seehofer tried to move Maaßen into another leadership position, but massive pushback led to Maaßen’s forced retirement (which he then blamed on a conspiracy of radical left-wing forces).
45. <https://www.ardmediathek.de/ard/player/Y3JpZDovL2Rhc2Vyc3RlLmRlL3JlcG9ydGFnZSBfIGRva3VtZW50YXRpb24gaW0gZXJzdGVuL2JlYjMzMjJlLThiNDctNGE0OC1hMjQ5LTJmNzFkOTJhYjMxOQ/der-machtkampf-wer-folgt-auf-merkel>, accessed 3 December 2018.
46. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/cdu-wolfgang-schaeuble-wirbt-oeffentlich-fuer-friedrich-merz-a-1241943.html>, accessed 4 December 2018.
47. Iceland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Serbia, and Ireland have already had gay heads of government. In Germany, openly gay Guido Westerwelle (FDP) was the vice-chancellor and foreign minister between 2009 and 2013.
48. <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/nach-hartz-iv-aussagen-kritik-aus-der-cdu-jens-spahn-hat-den-bezug-zur-lebenswirklichkeit-verloren/21058884.html>, accessed 4 December 2018.
49. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/search-for-merkel-successor-leads-to-kramp-karrenbauer-a-1190391.html>, accessed 2 February 2018.
50. <http://www.bild.de/politik/inland/landtagswahlen-saarland-2017/darum-bangt-merkel-um-mini-merkel-50981516.bild.html>, accessed February 4, 2018.
51. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-10/merkel-nachfolge-cdu-vorsitz-annegret-kramp-karrenbauer-friedrich-merz-jens-spahn>; <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/friedrich-merz-und-der-cdu-vorsitz-millionaer-der-mitte-a-1239073.html>, accessed 30 November 2018.
52. <http://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Aktuelles/Politbarometer/>; <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article184885298/Forsa-Umfrage-Jeder-Dritte-findet-Merz-unangenehm-nur-jeder-Fuenfte-haelt-AKK-fuer-fuehrungsstark.html>, accessed 4 December 2018.
53. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/liveblog-kramp-karrenbauer-ist-neue-vorsitzende-der-cdu-15929379.html>, accessed 8 January 2019.
54. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/spd-und-grosse-koalition-das-macht-die-afd-zur-volkspartei-kolumne-a-1189124.html>, accessed 2 February 2018.
55. <https://www.stuttgarter-zeitung.de/inhalt.interview-mit-afd-bundesvize-gauland-die-afd-will-als-partei-der-kleinen-leute-punkten.f915c96e-4687-4f28-9b5c-596fbc15cf2b.html>, accessed 2 February 2018.
56. <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2017-09/wahlverhalten-bundestagswahl-wahlbeteiligung-waehlerwanderung>, accessed 4 February 2018.
57. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/how-merkel-has-fundamentally-changed-german-politics-a-1191422.html>, accessed 7 February 2018.
58. <https://www.wahlrecht.de/umfragen/>, accessed 30 November 2018.
59. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/27/world/europe/germany-greens-merkel-election.html>, accessed 30 November 2018.
60. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/sahra-wagenknecht-und-ihre-aufstehen-bewegung-war-s-das-schon-a-1237724.html>, accessed 1 December 2018.
61. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/29/opinion/german-election-afd.html>, accessed 2 February 2018.
62. Hans Kundnani, “Why the AfD Could Be Good for German Democracy: Will It Bring an End to the CDU-SPD Consensus?” *Foreign Affairs*, 2 November 2017, accessed 2 February 2018.

63. <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article168989573/Welche-Parteien-die-meisten-Stimmen-an-die-AfD-verloren.html>, accessed 29 January 2018.
64. https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/bundestagswahl_2017/wahlergebnisse-2017-so-haben-die-bundeslaender-bei-der-bundestagswahl-gewaehlt_id_7631289.html, accessed 4 February 2018.
65. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/23/protesters-holocaust-memorial-far-right-german-politician-afd>, accessed 2 February 2018.
66. David Art, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (New York, 2006).
67. There were reports about Trump campaign aides coming to help—and suggesting slogans like “Germany for the Germans,” which even AfD leaders rejected.
68. <https://interaktiv.morgenpost.de/analyse-bundestagswahl-2017/>, accessed 4 February 2018.
69. Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia, 2016).
70. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/11/germany-facebook/543258/>, accessed 4 February 2018.
71. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afd-spendenaffaere-alice-weidel-muss-sich-ihrer-fraktion-erklaeren-a-1239183.html>; <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/billionaire-backing-may-have-helped-launch-afd-a-1241029.html>, accessed 1 December 2018.
72. Quoted in https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2018/11/30/trumpism-is-rotten-to-its-core-and-the-stench-of-corruption-and-failure-is-everywhere/?utm_term=.d4504e131957, accessed 1 December 2018.
73. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afd-die-rechtspopulisten-und-dernationale-nationale-sozialismus-kolumne-a-1191417.html>, accessed 5 February 2018.
74. These contributions were previously publishing over the course of 2018 in *German Politics and Society* in two special issues (Spring and Summer 2018) devoted to the 2017 Bundestag election and its consequences, as well as several from the Autumn 2018 issue.