Bundestag election in Germany

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Election analysis

Provisional findings

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1. Key determining factors of the 2017 Bundestag election[1] in Germany

The results of the 2017 Bundestag election are ambivalent. Both major parties lost support. Of the small parties, FDP and AfD were able to mobilize support, while The Greens and The Left barely experienced notable changes. The CDU/CSU union performed best, thus constituting the largest faction with the mandate to form a government – which was nothing to be taken for granted after 12 years in power. Two options are conceivable politically: a Grand Coalition and a so-called "Jamaica coalition" consisting of the Union, FDP and The Greens, as currently governs in Schleswig-Holstein.

Even though the Union experienced its second worst election result since 1949 and the SPD its worst election result in post-War history, the comparison with the early Federal Republic is only useful from a historical perspective.

The 2017 Bundestag election results show a structural similarity to the 2009 election outcome. At the end of the 2009 Grand Coalition, the major parties had to withstand heavy losses and a historically poor performance. The "small parties" were also able to profit in that election too. The FDP, The Greens and The Left managed to record the best election results in their history. The other parties also performed above average.[2]

During the 2013 Bundestag election, there was a massive turnaround, from which the Union parties profited most with an above-average election result of 41.5%. The losers were the small parties, above all the FDP, which failed

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[1] We would like to warmly thank Forschungsgruppe Wahlen and Infratest dimap, which provided us advance results of their election survey. We expressly note that we have only assumed the data of these institutes and not their interpretations. Therefore, the information in brackets refers to the institute collecting the data. Variations in data to the provisional election results will arise through final research.

[2] In 2009, the Piraten managed to attain 2% and the NPD 1.5%.

to re-enter the Bundestag. During the 2013 Bundestag election, the AfD just missed the five-percent threshold to enter at 4.7%.

Occasionally in Germany, new parties of different origins and orientation have experienced election success. Yet, in the Federal Republic, only two parties, The Greens and The Left, have succeeded in entrenching themselves after the initial establishment phase of the party system.

Since the 1960s, none of the "other" parties[3] failed to clear the five-percent hurdle by such a narrow margin as the AfD did in 2013. With 4.7% of the second votes, the AfD was just 0.1 points behind the FDP. The 2017 election success was long in the making, however. For decades, the conditions for small parties have continuously improved, because more and more voters are ready to cast their votes for the so-called "other" parties. This development already started in the 1990s. Already in 1993 and 1997, other parties in Hamburg received over 16% of the votes cast. In 1991, nearly 10% of the votes in Bremen remained with the small parties. And in the 1994 European election, a solid 10% voted for the parties outside the parliament. In the 1990s, some of the small parties succeeded in entering parliament. More precisely, the Republicans were the first to enter the Berlin House of Representatives with 7.5% in 1989. Since that time, in addition to the Republicans, the Statt Party, the Schill Party, the DVU, the NPD, the Work for Bremen and Bremerhaven Party, the Free Voters and the Pirate Party have succeeded at the federal state level.

Over the long term, none of these parties were able to establish themselves, however, even when they were sometimes able to enter the respective parliament twice. During the federal state elections, the AfD was able to enter all federal state parliaments, sometimes with remarkable results, as in Saxony-Anhalt or Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

With the entry of the AfD, a party situated at the right end of the party

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[3] The NPD received 4.3% in the 1969 Bundestag election.

spectrum has succeeded in entering the Bundestag for the first time. Whether this leads to a "break" remains to be seen. At the federal state level, non-established parties have succeeded many times in entering parliament, though long-term success has remained out of reach as they remained unable to permanently anchor themselves in the party system. The future perspectives of the parties are impossible to predict today. The deep internal division of the AfD was evident just one day after the election. Equipped with a direct mandate, the party chairwoman, Frauke Petry, declared that she did not want to belong to the AfD faction.

Although the Union has been very positively assessed in terms of the evaluation of the Federal Chancellor, political competence, satisfaction with the government, coalition preferences, the estimation of the general and economic situation, and the objective performance data in all areas, the party has sharply lost support. One reason is the firm conviction of voters that the winner of the election was already clear. Since 1994, there has never been such a comparably high level of security. 82% were certain immediately before the election that the Union and Angela Merkel would win. Only 5% anticipated that the SPD and Schulz would win (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen). Expectations for victory had a great effect on the final results. Given the feeling that the race had already been run and that nothing more would happen, voters of the Union and SPD felt they could make different choices.

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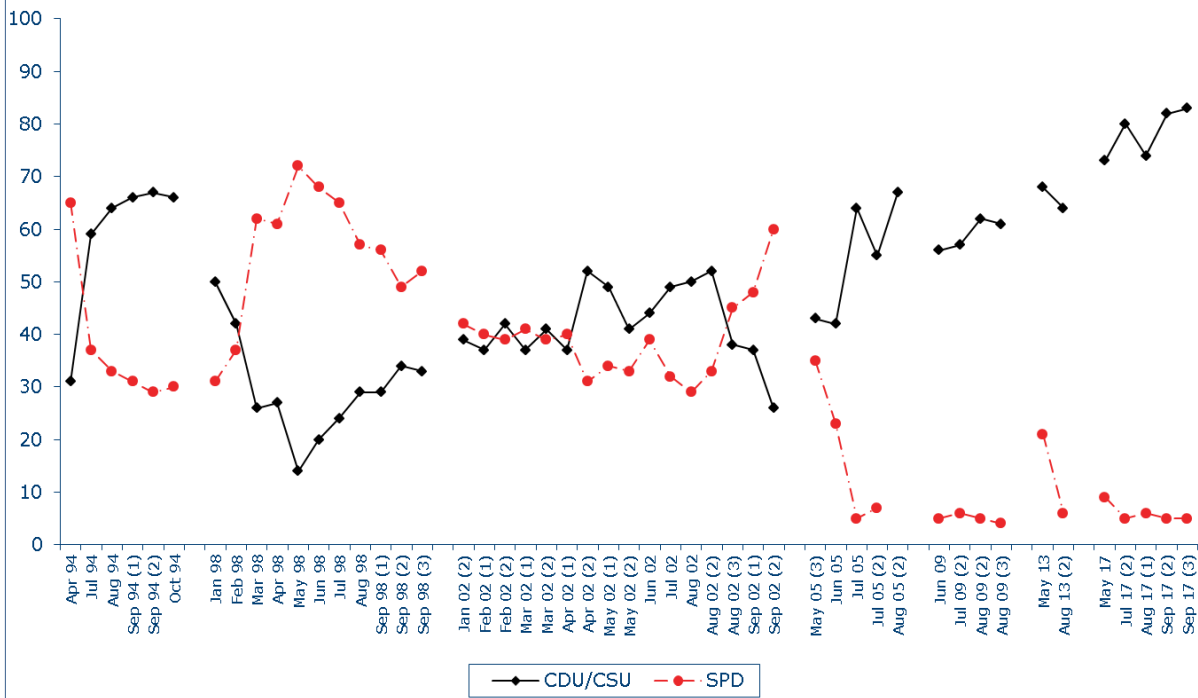
2002* CDU/CSU each with FDP, SPD with The Greens in the coalition
Information as a % of eligible voters
Source: PolitikKompass - Wahljahre im Vergleich, 1994 - 2002; June 2002, 2005/2009: Infratest dimap: DeutschlandTREND,
2013/2017: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen: Politbarometer

Even though the media classified the election campaign as boring, remarkable changes in the political mood took place over the course of the year, which had never been seen before to such an extent. After the nomination of Martin Schulz in January 2017 and his election as party chairman in March 2017, the SPD and its top candidate experienced an extraordinarily sharp upswing. The party and candidate managed to outstrip the CDU/CSU and Angela Merkel in the Infratest dimap *Sonntagsfrage* survey and in the survey on the direct election for federal chancellor. Schulz increased from a starting point of 36% in the survey on the direct election for federal chancellor to 50% in the spring. In the same period, support for Angela Merkel decreased to 34%. Yet, the top SPD candidate lost support month after month, while the Federal Chancellor steadily gained approval. At the end of the election campaign, the incumbent was around 20 points ahead of the challenger (Infratest dimap; Forschungsgruppe Wahlen).

All other benchmarks also showed a clear advantage in terms of image and competence. The Chancellor was trusted by a large majority to be capable of leading Germany in uncertain global times. She was attributed much more expertise and considered as likeable and trustworthy. The challenger won out only in the question of social justice (though by a low margin) (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen). According to Infratest dimap data, Schulz was merely considered as being closer to the people than Merkel. 72% of eligible voters were of the opinion that Angela Merkel does her job well as Federal Chancellor. Apart from AfD supporters, all other supporters rated her work positively.

The challenger did not succeed during the campaign in creating the impression that he would perform better as federal chancellor. Only 18% of respondents stated that he would be capable of doing so. Only half of SPD adherents and only 32% of all respondents were of the opinion that Martin Schulz was helpful for the performance of the SPD. This contrasted with the figures of the Federal Chancellor, whose person was assessed to be helpful by 90% of Union adherents and 70% all respondents (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen). Among Union supporters, 95% declared themselves as being for Angela Merkel (the share was 91% among Bavarian CSU voters). She also held majority support among adherents of the FDP (85%) and The Greens (62%) (Infratest dimap). The SPD thus was unable to profit from its top candidate.

The Union moreover clearly led regarding competency to solve political problems. Depending on the question of the Institute, the results vary in detail from one another, but point in the same direction: the economy, terrorism, domestic security, refugees/immigration, foreign policy, jobs, taxes or education – all are topics the Union is trusted to solve.

The SPD scores with social justice and family policy, fair wages and quality of care. The FDP shows competence in economic and tax policy, The Greens in

environmental policy. The Left, like the SPD, has competence in issues of social justice and wage policy. Measured in terms of voter shares, the competence profile of the AfD was weak. To a very slight degree (below 10%), its competence was seen in domestic security and immigration policy (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Infratest dimap). In light of the soundly positive starting situation (84% assessed the economic situation positively; Infratest dimap), it becomes evident why the Social Democrats were unable to score with the issue of social justice. Even among its own adherents, 56% said that Germany is fair. Only a minority of 16% (18% of SPD adherents) felt disadvantaged. Merely with respect to the distribution of wealth did respondents see deficits. Only 19% were of the opinion that wealth is fairly distributed (though it is not entirely clear how "wealth" was measured here; Infratest dimap). With the election campaign focus on social justice, the SPD did not speak to the attitudes of either general citizens or its own adherents.

Ambivalence was displayed at the end of the election campaign with respect to immigration policy. On the one hand, its significance increased at the end of the election campaign. On the other, the issue was clearly divisive among adherents of the various parties. A sound evaluation of Angela Merkel's immigration policy is seen in the data of Forschungsgruppe Wahlen. 59% said that Germany could deal with so many refugees. The evaluation changed in a different survey. With Infratest dimap, 45% were satisfied with Angela Merkel's asylum and immigration policy, 78% of whom were adherents of The Greens and 66% of the Union. Yet 100% of AfD adherents and 64% of the FDP and 62% of The Left were dissatisfied, even if adherents of the parties were presumably unsatisfied for different reasons (Infratest dimap).
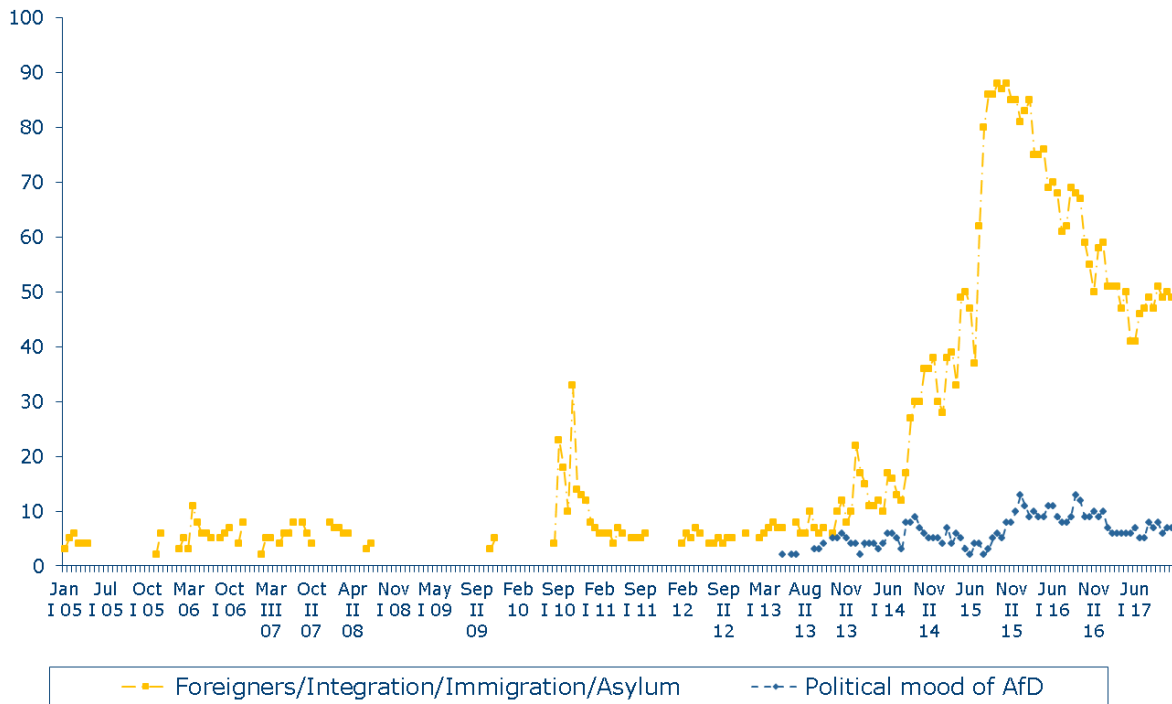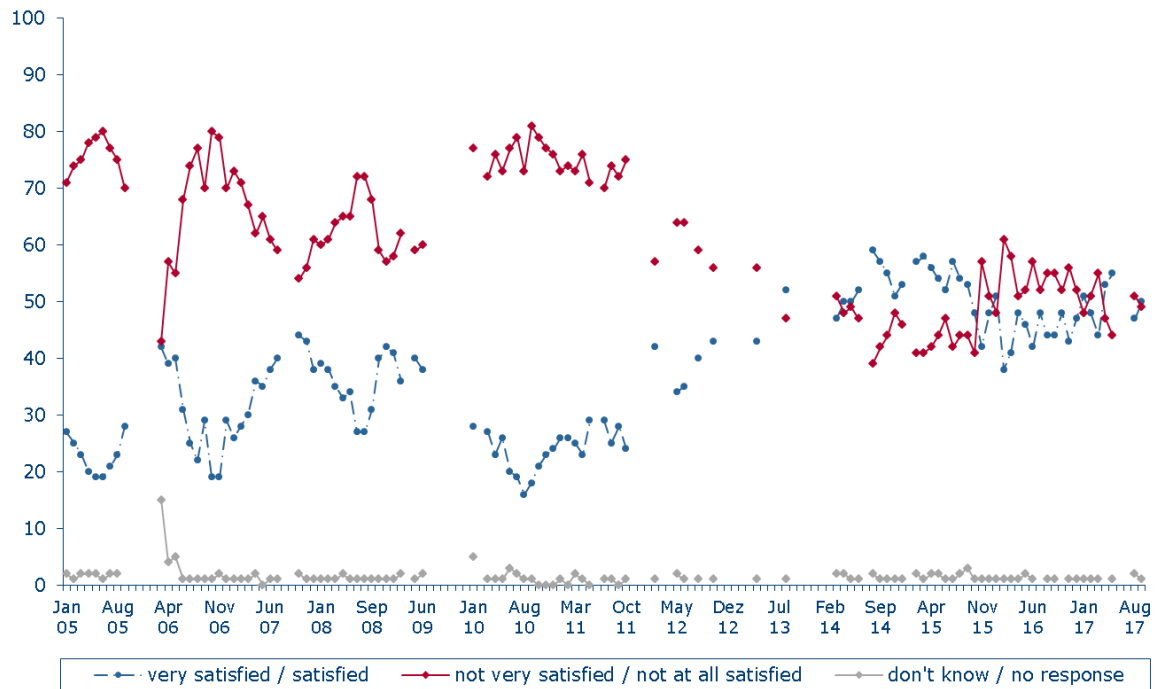
Source: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen: Politbarometer

When asked about the performance of the Federal Government, the Grand Coalition performed well compared to past legislative periods. Frequently dominated by dissatisfaction with the government in the past, the share of satisfied and unsatisfied voters was about the same during this election (Infratest dimap). Likewise, when assessing the performance of the parties in the government, they are at the same level at 1.0 (Union) and 0.9 (SPD). When evaluating the parties' work outside the government, the Union at 1.7 had a lead over the SPD at 1.3 (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, scale from +5 to -5).

Satisfaction with the Federal Government January 2005 – September 2017
How satisfied are you with the work of the federal government? Are you …

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

- very satisfied / satisfied
- not very satisfied / not at all satisfied
- don't know / no response

Source: Infratest dimap: DeutschlandTREND

The party system has become more polarized within the voter landscape since 2013. AfD adherents form antipodes in all variables compared to supporters of all other parties, particularly with respect to supporters of the Union. AfD adherents constitute a delineated group with their basic vote: The majority felt themselves threatened by criminality (71% AfD, all: 39%) and they say they face disadvantages due to refugees (39% AfD, all: 12%); (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen). 68% were of the opinion that Germany is unfair (all: 38%) and 42% felt they were disadvantaged (all: 16%) and pled strongly for national borders (AfD: 85%; all: 27%). They were worried that the society is drifting further and further apart and that crime was increasing, Islam becoming more influential and German culture, language and lifestyle losing ground. More than 90% of AfD adherents agreed. At the same time, they were dissatisfied with democracy unlike any other voter group (80% AfD; all 30%) (Infratest dimap).

Regarding the preferred coalition, eligible voters were open. 40% assessed a Grand Coalition as positive, 40% a Black-Yellow coalition; a further 33% Black-Green and 30% a Jamaica coalition. Among Union adherents, 55% assessed a Grand Coalition positively and 45% a Jamaica coalition. Supporters of The Greens, 49% reported a Jamaica coalition to be good compared to 60% of FDP adherents. A majority of SPD adherents was still in favor of the Grand Coalition. 51% assessed this option positively. Even with a very poor result, 50% of SPD adherents were in favor of a Grand Coalition, 45% for the opposition (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen).

Many parties debated the issue of a change in direction. According to the findings of Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 76% of supporters of The Greens were in favor of a stronger opening of the party to the Union. A stronger emphasis on leftwing positions was deemed the right course by 36% of SPD adherents, while 18% were in favor of less leftwing positions and 38% saw no need for change. Among Union supporters, 27% were in favor of more traditional conservative content, 23% for less and 45% saw no need for change (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen).

All parties took advantage of the increased turnout to 76.2% (+4.6 points). The AfD (+1.2 million votes) and FDP (+700,000) were able to win over the most non-voters.

Each party had to decide on its own whether or not to conduct a coalition campaign. Nevertheless, coalition expectations helped to determine voter behavior in some voter groups. 39% of FDP and 26% of The Greens voters named tactical coalition considerations as the reason for their vote (Infratest dimap).

With respect to the assessment of all parties, it is evident that The Left, The Greens and the FDP were able to improve. The FDP went from -0.9 to +0.7, thus improving the most of all parties. This was also buttressed by the positive perception of its top candidate, Christian Lindner, who received a 1.0

rating overall, 3.3 among adherents. The Left was rated in the negative zone, but increased. It improved from -1.4 to -0.4, but was hardly able to profit from its top candidate Sahra Wagenknecht outside its own clientele (all: 0.2; The Left adherents: 3.0). The Greens improved over 2013 by only 0.2 points to 0.5. Cem Özdemir was rated at 0.9 overall, comparing well with Martin Schulz (1.0) and Christian Lindner. Among his own adherents, in contrast, he was somewhat weaker than the other top candidates (2.7). Despite the sound performance, the AfD was rated much more critically by all voters than in 2013. While they reached -1.4 in 2013, the figure was -2.8 in 2017, demonstrating the new polarization within the party system.

In addition to tactical coalition considerations, the FDP was thus able to profit from the personalization and changes in image in the election campaign.

In light of the solid performance of the Federal Government and the high degree of economic security and stability, the shifts in the party system appear relatively risk-free to most people. People feel they can afford to cast protest votes.

The election of the AfD can again be labelled as a protest vote. As in all other elections, they were largely supported by voters disappointed by another party. 61% said that they voted for the party out of disappointment (Infratest dimap). Top candidates likewise did not play any role regarding voting decisions. About half of voters took a long time to decide to vote for the AfD. The other half decided at short notice. These figures are also reflected in the *Sonntagsfrage* survey. In 2016, the AfD already achieved its highest approval rating, declining since then in polls parallel to the decreasing significance of the immigration issues, until landing just below the Five-Percent Hurdle in the spring of 2017. Yet, through media reporting, the topic of refugees regained relevancy, while AfD gained broad media attention.

The AfD's strategy paper prescribes scandalous statements outside the bounds of political correctness as providing the best chances of being reported in the media. This strategy appears to have worked in the media. Moreover, the AfD carried on negative campaigning in social media long before the election campaign, claiming that "Merkel's got to go." This position was not only evident online in social media but also offline in market places where campaign events of the Federal Chancellor were massively disrupted.

As was the case in other elections, AfD voters came from all political camps. They also mobilized a big share of non-voters. That these voters cannot be seen along ideological party lines is clear, as former voters of the Union, SPD, The Left and the Pirates voted for the AfD. Measured in terms of its size in the new federal states, The Left lost the most voters proportionally to the AfD. This too was not a new phenomenon. Protest voters are normally homeless politically speaking.

If one moves away from the quantitative data, qualitative studies show a specific attitude structure. In a qualitative survey, AfD-leaning eligible voters were asked questions in in-depth interviews and focus groups. In addition, distinctions in comments made in social and other media were investigated using the social listening method.

(Nearly) no common denominator can be found among those surveyed. The respondents were an extremely diverse group with different paths and reasons for supporting the AfD. Nor were there any patterns in terms of social structure. One-dimensional declarations of who supported the AfD and why therefore fall short. The party is perceived as a projection space for highly diverse wishes, needs and issues.

Nevertheless, beyond diversity, there are also similarities that are expressed in basic sentiment. Respondents frequently felt that they had not been

"heard," due both to elites and their own unique situation, as many perceived themselves to be stigmatized and alienated. At the same time, even though many responses confirmed the opposite, a classification could be made as "rightwing." One of the classic narrative patterns was that the "real" opinion of THE people was being suppressed and one "should be able to say so." The main culprit here appeared to be political correctness, which is construed as an instrument of oppression.

Conspiracy theories were also broadly disseminated, without there being any one conspiracy that everyone shares. A lot was "hinted at" without there being any specific knowledge about anything in the end. At the same time, there was also a lot of "fake news." Frequently, reality is decoupled or replaced by "alternative" stories that fit into the respondents' own worldviews, but do not stand up to review. A certain degree of closed mindedness was displayed in relation to opinions differing from their own. The respondents were looking for orientation, but without a compass.

The respondents can be best summarized by means of their feelings. Their own situation is rather unproblematic; but it is related to others and then they expect a deterioration. The anticipated deterioration was sometimes generalized, with references being made to general developments, such as globalization. Sometimes specifics were given, e.g. a potential deterioration of prospects was expected, for example, due to immigration or their own financial situation. While the climate of opinion expressed in representative surveys was dominated by confidence, trust and satisfaction, AfD respondents differed sharply in this regard. This was also evident in representative studies in which AfD adherents appeared as antipodes to all other adherents. The respondents combined fear (e.g. due to a surplus of immigration), insecurity and loss of control with the feeling that "everything is getting worse." Therefore, doubts arise when analyzing these studies as to what degree issue-oriented policy is relevant here at a time when stability and prosperity prevail in Germany according to objective criteria compared to

other countries. To attribute everything to the "refugee crisis" appears to invert causality. The refugee crisis might have been the "trigger" that made basic positions evident, mobilized them and gave them political force. But the psychological mood was latently manifest beforehand and is the result of varying frustrations that have been building up for a long time. Very broadly disseminated among the reasons for supporting the AfD is the wish to send a wake-up call.

AfD adherents differ in their attitude structure from voters of other parties. They come from all political directions and parties. They support the AfD in the expectation that the other parties will then react and take them more seriously. They are motivated to vote "in order to" achieve a reaction from others.

2. The results of the 2017 Bundestag election in Germany

The downward trend in voter participation postulated for a long time did not materialize in this election as well. Already in 2013, voter participation rose slightly. In 2017, there was a clear increase by 4.6 points to 76.2%.

The **Union parties** together earned 32.9% of the second votes, signifying a loss of 8.6% points compared to 2013. The CDU lost 7.4 points for a total of 26.8%, while the CSU earned 6.2% of the second votes (-1.2 points). The Union thus experienced its second worst result since 1949. The Union reached a similarly poor result in 2009 (33.8%) after the last Grand Coalition, when the SPD brought in its worst result ever.

The CDU and CSU also registered losses with the first votes. The CDU attained 30.2% of the first votes (-7.0 points), the CSU 7.0% (-1.1 points).

The current Bundestag will consist of the overhang and levelling seats of 709

representatives, 200 (-55 seats) will be attributable to the CDU and 46 seats (-10 seats) to the CSU. The CDU earned 185 direct mandates, 6 less than in 2013. Of the CDU's 200 seats, 36 are overhang and leveling seats. The CSU holds all of its seats directly and was able to add one direct mandate compared to 2013. 7 of the 46 CSU seats are overhang seats.

In the western German federal states, the Union at 34.3% performed better than in the eastern German federal states, in which it merely achieved 27.7%. Despite losses of 10.5 points, the CSU brought in the best result for the Union in the federal states at 38.8%. The CDU earned its best second vote result in Rhineland-Palatinate at 35.9%, its worst in Berlin at 22.7%. At the electoral district level, the CDU attained its best second vote result in Cloppenburg-Vechta at 53.1%, while it had its worst second vote result in the Berlin electoral district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg-Prenzlauer Berg East at 13.9%. The Union withstood its largest second vote losses in the Saxony and Bavarian electoral districts. The Union registered its largest loss of 20.4 points in the Saxon Switzerland-East Ore Mountains District. The Union likewise achieved its best first vote result in Cloppenburg-Vechta at 57.7% (Silvia Breher). The CDU lost 8 electoral districts to the SPD, three to the AfD and one to The Left, but was also able to gain 8 electoral districts from the SPD.

The **SPD** became the second strongest party, but likewise had to absorb losses, earning its historically worst result with 20.5% of the second votes. This signifies a drop of 5.2 points. With the first votes, the SPD reached 24.6% (-4.8 points), sending 153 representatives to the German Bundestag while losing 40 seats compared to 2013. 59 seats are direct mandates, 22 seats overhang and levelling seats.

In western Germany, the SPD was able to achieve a slightly above-average result at 22.0%, while it was only the fourth strongest party in eastern Germany at 14.6%. The SPD achieved its best second vote result in Lower Saxony at 27.4%, while performing worst in Saxony, where it had only

10.5% of the second votes. At the electoral district level, the SPD performed best in Aurich-Emden with 37.8% of the second votes. In contrast, it only achieved 7.8% in the Saxon Switzerland-East Ore Mountains District. The SPD registered its largest losses in northern Germany and North Rhine-Westphalia. In Kiel and Gelsenkirchen, the losses were just over 10% points. The SPD likewise obtained its best first vote result in Aurich-Emden at 49.6% (Johann Saathoff).

After just missing the five-percent hurdle in 2013, the **AfD** is now entering the Bundestag for the first time, as the third strongest party with 12.6% of the second votes. This corresponds to a gain of 7.9% points. At the same time, the AfD holds 11.5% of the first votes (+9.6 points). The AfD is sending 94 representatives to the Bundestag, including 3 direct mandates and 11 levelling seats. The AfD obtained all the direct mandates in Saxony in the electoral districts of Bautzen I, Görlitz and Saxon Switzerland-East Ore Mountains, where it brought in its best first vote result at 37.4% (Frauke Petry). All three electoral districts were won by the CDU in 2013. As a whole, the AfD performed much better in eastern Germany at 20.5% than in western Germany, where it had 10.7% of the second votes. The AfD achieved its best second vote result in Saxony, where it narrowly became the strongest party with 27.0% (the CDU is nearly equal to the AfD at 26.9%). The AfD withstood its worst second vote result in Hamburg at 7.8%. At the electoral district level, the AfD performed best in the Saxon Switzerland-East Ore Mountains district with 35.5% and worst in Münster with 4.9%. The AfD was able to register its largest gains in the new federal states, above all in the Saxon electoral districts. In the Saxon Switzerland-East Ore Mountains district, it not only performed the best, but also gained a total of 27.6% points. In contrast, the weakest electoral districts for the AfD were in northern Germany and North Rhine-Westphalia.

The **FDP** managed to re-enter the Bundestag as the fourth strongest party with 10.7% (+6.0 points). It also attained 7.0% of the first votes (+4.6 points). The FDP is thus sending 80 representatives to parliament, without

any direct mandate but with 15 levelling seats. At 11.5%, the FDP managed in the old federal states to achieve a better second vote result than in the new federal states, where it had 7.9%. The FDP achieved its best second vote result in North Rhine-Westphalia with 13.1%. It performed worst in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern at 6.2%. At the level of the electoral districts, Düsseldorf I was the FDP's strongest electoral district, where it gained 10.6 points, attaining 19.7%. Overall, the FDP was able to register its greatest growth in North Rhine-Westphalia. In contrast, in the two Berlin electoral districts of Lichtenberg and Marzahn-Hellersdorf, the FDP only reached 5.3% each.

The **Left** was able to gain slightly, becoming the fifth strongest party with 9.2% of the second votes (+0.6 points). At the same time, it was able to achieve 8.6% of the first votes (+0.3 points). The Left received 69 seats in the Bundestag, five fewer than in 2013. Among the 69 seats, 10 are levelling seats and five direct mandates. Four of the five direct mandates stem from the Berlin electoral districts of Pankow, Treptow-Köpenick, Marzahn-Hellersdorf and Lichtenberg, which The Left traditionally wins directly. The Left was able to win the fifth direct mandate from the CDU in the Leipzig II Electoral District. The Left achieved its best first vote result in Treptow-Köpenick at 39.9% (Gregor Gysi). In eastern Germany, The Left was the third strongest party with 17.3% of the second votes, while it only received 7.2% in western Germany. It is interesting, however, that The Left lost in eastern Germany (2013: 21.2%), while gaining in western Germany (2013: 5.4%). In Berlin, The Left achieved its best result with 18.8% of the second votes, with its worst result coming in Bavaria with 6.1%. In the electoral districts, The Left performed best in Berlin-Lichtenberg with 29.3% of the second votes and worst in the Borken II Electoral District with 4.2%. The Left registered its largest losses in the new federal states, above all in Saxony-Anhalt.

The **Greens** were likewise able to register a slight gain of 0.5 points and had

8.9% of the second votes. In addition, The Greens achieved 8.0% of the first votes (+0.7 points). They are sending 67 representatives to the Bundestag, a gain of 4 seats, including 10 levelling seats and one direct mandate. Even though Hans-Christian Ströbele did not run again, The Greens again managed to directly win the electoral district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg-Prenzlauer Berg East (Canan Bayram, 26.3%). The Greens earned their best first vote result in the Stuttgart I Electoral District, where Cem Özdemir nevertheless lost with 29.7% to CDU candidate Stefan Kaufmann (32.0%). In the old federal states, The Greens performed better with 9.6% than in the new federal states (6.0%). The Greens attained their worst result in Saxony-Anhalt, where they only managed to have 3.7% of the second votes. In Hamburg, in contrast, 13.9% of voters voted for The Greens. In the electoral districts, The Greens were able to gain the most voters in Freiburg with 21.2%, while performing worst in Ore Mountains district I at 2.2%.

Of the small parties, only the **Free Voters** and **THE PARTY** reached 1.0%, enough to receive state financing as a party. The **NPD** only managed to get 0.4% of the votes.

3. Change of voter affiliation[4] and voter behavior[5] among various population groups during the 2017 Bundestag election

The **Union** was only able to profit marginally from the increased voter participation. 380,000 former non-voters checked the CDU and CSU box during the Bundestag election. In addition, the Union was able to win over 20,000 former SPD voters. The Union lost votes to all other parties. The largest stream of voters flowed to the FDP. 1,360,000 voters changed affiliation from the Union to the FDP. This is not astonishing in that the Union was able during the 2013 Bundestag election to win over 2 million voters

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[4] Infratest dimap
[5] Infratest dimap, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen

from the Liberals, some of whom have obviously returned. In addition, the Union lost 980,000 voters to the AfD. All other losses are much lower: 90,000 voters switched affiliation to The Left, 30,000 to The Greens.

The **SPD** was only able to gain votes from non-voters; it lost votes to all other parties. The gain of 360,000 votes from former non-voters was not enough by far to compensate the losses in other places. The SPD lost relatively equally to all parties: 470,000 voters switched from the SPD to the AfD, a further 450,000 to the FDP. 430,000 former SPD voters also switched to The Left and an additional 380,000 to The Greens.

The **AfD** gained votes from all camps. They gained the most votes from former non-voters. 1,200,000 former non-voters now checked the AfD box. From among the parties, the most voters came from the Union in absolute terms: the AfD won over 980,000 voters from the Union. In addition, they won over 690,000 votes from the other parties. Moreover, 470,000 voters switched affiliation from the SPD to the AfD and a further 400,000 came from The Left. Only 40,000 voters switched from The Greens and the FDP respectively to the AfD. The absolute figures are only somewhat meaningful, however. As the strongest party, the Union naturally lost the most voters in absolute terms. For a party such as The Left, 400,000 votes constitute a larger share of their potential voters, seen relatively, than 980,000 votes for the Union. In relation to the composition of AfD voters, the percentages vary slightly depending on the basis of calculation.

When only the additions to the AfD are considered, non-voters constitute the largest group. 31% of the voters who switched to the AfD did not participate in the 2013 elections. One-quarter came from the Union and 12% from the SPD. A further 10% voted for The Left in 2013, while 18% voted for other parties.

The situation is only different when one considers all AfD voters and not just the added voters. Here, too, former non-voters make up the largest share

with 35%. The second largest group is then the AfD voters from 2013. 24% of current AfD voters already voted for the AfD in the 2013 Bundestag election. A solid one-fifth of the AfD voters stemmed from the Union, while 10% stemmed from the SPD and 6% from The Left (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen).

The **FDP** lost only slightly (-40,000) to the AfD, and was able to win over voters from all other parties. The most votes came from the Union. 1,360,000 former Union voters gave their votes to the Liberals. A further 700,000 voters of the FDP stayed away from the voting booths in 2013, while 450,000 voters switched from the SPD to the FDP. In addition, the FDP received 140,000 votes from the other parties and 110,000 from The Greens. Only 60,000 voters switched from The Left to the FDP.

The **Left** won the most votes from the SPD. 430,000 former SPD voters now voted for The Left. In addition, The Left was able to win over 270,000 former non-voters. 170,000 voters also switched from The Greens to The Left, while a further 90,000 came from the Union. In contrast, The Left registered losses to the AfD and FDP. 400,000 voters switched from The Left to the AfD, 60,000 to the FDP.

The **Greens** likewise won over the most votes from the SPD, with 380,000 voters switching to The Greens. 230,000 former non-voters also checked the box of The Greens. The Greens were able to win over 30,000 voters from the Union, while they lost voters to all other parties, giving up 170,000 votes to The Left, 110,000 votes to the FDP and 40,000 votes to the AfD.

There are only a few surprises with respect to voter behavior among social groups. Generally, voter behavior followed the long-term trends in this election as well. Nevertheless, social structure only still explains a small portion of voter behavior. The presentation below focuses on the findings from the data provided by Infratest dimap and Forschungsgruppe Wahlen.

The Union lost an above-average number of middle-aged voters, above all men. In addition, it also lost an above-average number of self-employed voters. Otherwise, familiar patterns were on display: the Union performed better the older the voters were and Catholics voted more frequently for the Union than those without any religious affiliation.

The SPD lost relatively equally across all social groups. It still performs better among trade union members and voters with less education.

The AfD performed above average among middle-aged male voters with low to average education. It registered the most growth among these groups. It was also able to gain above-average numbers of wage earners and unemployed persons. In these two groups, The Left lost votes, contrary to its overall trend.

The Greens registered below average results among voters over 60 years of age and tended to be chosen by voters with a high degree of formal education.

The FDP was able to gain in all groups and was the above-average choice of self-employed persons.

4. The climate of opinion before the election

Even though the media spoke before the election about growing societal division and displayed an image of a divided, frightened, insecure and dissatisfied society, the mood of the population conveyed by the media and that measured in terms of the data differ greatly. A representative survey of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation[6] conducted at the start of 2017 shows that Germans were satisfied and not pessimistic before the Bundestag election.

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[6] Cf. Sabine Pokorny, 2017, *Vertrauen, Zufriedenheit, Zuversicht. Politische Einstellungen in Deutschland 2017 - Ergebnisse einer repräsentativen Umfrage. Analysen and Argumente*, Issue 267, Sankt Augustin/Berlin.

Fear dominated only in a small, well-delineated segment of potential voters. This voter milieu was sharply delineated from all other party adherents.

The survey data show the largest differences in satisfaction and fear between the Union and the AfD. Their voters are antipodes: confident Union adherents on the one side, insecure AfD adherents on the other. The AfD adherents show similarities to The Left, if at all.

Basic attitudes in the election year were characterized by optimism and satisfaction. 84% approved the statement, "Overall, I am doing well." 81% approved the statement, "You can live well in Germany". Another survey of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation on the topic of upward social mobility revealed that 33% even expected an improvement in their living conditions in the next 10 years, a further 49% expected no great changes and only 12% feared a deterioration.[7] As survey data from another institute show, economic satisfaction is high. 81% deem the economic situation in Germany to be good or very good and 78% assess their own financial situation to be (very) good.[8]

Caring for the well-being of the weak is of great importance for Germans. "We should not forget those who are worse off in Germany" is a basic tenet which 91% approve. Even when Germans consider their situation to be good, they simultaneously show compassion.

Nevertheless, there are some critical aspects. One-third of respondents are of the opinion that they can no longer say what they really think, and agree with the statement that politicians do not care about "people like myself."

In all questions, adherents of the AfD and The Left are among those who most frequently display negative attitudes. This tendency is even stronger among adherents of the AfD than voters of The Left.

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[7] Cf. Sabine Pokorny, 2017, *Gesundheit und Familie vor Arbeit und Einkommen - Studie zum sozialen Aufstieg in Deutschland. Analysen & Argumente*, Issue 247, Sankt Augustin/Berlin.
[8] Cf. Infratest dimap: DeutschlandTREND, May 2017 and September 2017.

Above all, apocalyptic scenarios are popular there: 88% of the AfD adherents approve the statement, "If this continues, I see black for Germany." 12% say this among adherents of The Greens and 15% of those of the Union. Fear is also widespread among AfD adherents: 77% are of the opinion: "You never know what the future holds, but I am often scared about what is to come." 26% of Union adherents share this vague fear of the future. In nearly all attitudes, adherents of the AfD and the Union are like antipodes. Optimism and confidence about the future on the one side, fear and doomsday scenarios on the other. Adherents of the other parties are normally between the poles. An Infratest dimap survey confirms: Overall, three-fourths of citizens feel safe in Germany, despite the danger of terrorism. Only one-third of AfD adherents affirm this, however.[9]

In an open question to all respondents as to what constitutes Germany, democracy, rights of freedom and social security were the top responses. However, security and peace were also specified with surprising frequency. Diversity, tolerance and solidarity were very important to respondents.

Among the most important personal issues, health was most crucial, followed by one's own children and family. Hence, the private spheres placed first among the most important personal issues. Among the top five answers were also three policy areas that are so important to people that they even think of these areas when asked – without any answers being suggested – as things that are important to them personally: immigration policy/a culture welcoming to outsiders/integration, (domestic) security/ fear of terror, peace/fear of war.

Regarding the future of Germany, very similar issues play a role in the eyes of the respondents. However, health was no longer in first place; rather, first place was assumed by immigration policy/a culture welcoming to outsiders/ integration, followed by domestic security/fear/fear of violence and terror. Peace/fear of war came in third place.

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[9] Cf. Infratest dimap: DeutschlandTREND, January 2017.