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TOWARDS THE MAINSTREAM? THE AFD AS A CASE STUDY

MA thesis

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DECLARATION

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TOWARDS THE MAINSTREAM? THE AfD AS A CASE STUDY

Bardh Lipa

ABSTRACT

The radical right-wing party, the Alternative für Deutschland, caused a political tremor in 2017 German election by changing the political landscape significantly while becoming the third largest party in the Bundestag. Also, with most of the studies that assess AfD's development being published while the party was starting to transform itself, the Euro crisis has lost its urgency, and given that party has been going through internal struggles for a while between 'liberals' and 'extremists' leads to the question on whether the AfD has shifted towards the mainstream? This dissertation works with the definition of 'mainstreaming' provided by Akkerman et al. (2016) and assess the party change along four key dimensions: 1) changes with respect to radical positions on core issues; 2) changes from a niche party to a party that focused on socioeconomic issues; 3) changes in the anti-establishment profile; and 4) changes regarding the party reputation. The research strategy adopted to this dissertation is the qualitative case study and consisted of a review of relevant literature the topic, coupled with the collection and analysis of a comprehensive range source of data. The findings from this research show that there is no sign that the AfD is shifting towards the mainstream; on the contrary, the party is tending to radicalize along first three dimensions while showing signs of mainstreaming on the fourth dimension to avoid possible juridical actions.

Keywords: *mainstreaming, radical, niche, anti-establishment, extreme reputation.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfD	Alternative für Deutschland
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CMP	Comparative Manifesto Project
CHES	Chapel Hill Expert Survey
GDR	German Democratic Republic
EP	European Parliament
SDP	Social Democratic Party of Germany
DW	Deutsche Welle
FDP	Free Democratic Party
MEP	Member of European Parliament
PEGIDA	Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendland

INTRODUCTION

With no success at the national level, the radical right-wing parties in Germany have been unable to consolidate a steady base of support. There have been four different waves of such parties since the Second World War which portray both their emergence and end over the course of time (Williams, 2006, p. 116). This means that the radical right-wing German parties experienced local success which, however, did not last and instead of getting more support during the upcoming years, a decline followed.

A breakthrough came during the German federal elections that were held in 2017 when the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) made German political history. The success of the AfD as a radical right-wing party was unprecedented. Nearly six million Germans (12.6 % of those who voted) voted for the AfD, compared to 4.7% in the 2013 federal elections. Not only that, but it also became the third largest party in the Bundestag (the German federal parliament), with a notable performance in eastern Germany while performing strongly in other parts of Germany as well. Furthermore, when a phenomenon like this occurs in a country with a past like Germany during the 40s, the developments are taken very seriously by scholars, media and politicians (Hansen & Olsen, 2018, p. 1). Media followed the victory of the AfD with headlines such as “Far-right AfD success shocks Germany” (“Far-right AfD success shocks Germany,” Euronews, 2017). Likewise, although arguing that the relationship between the AfD and its voters is weak and him being quite skeptical as to whether the AfD will possibly remain a third force in the German politics, Cas Mudde referred to it as “stunning success” (Mudde, 2017).

Be that as it may, the “stunning success” succes draws attention to the fact that the AfD has been going through internal struggles and discords for a while now. For instance, one day after the elections, the AfD suffered its first split as the leader Frauke Petry left, an act that can be seen as a public manifestation of the difficulties of the party (Chazan, 2017). Almost

two years before the 2017 German federal elections, a study concluded that the AfD's ability to become a lasting force depends on its ability to convince the German voters that it is not a single-issue party (Grimm, 2015, p. 274). The single issue was the single currency which was a unique selling point for the AfD, but it is essential to keep in mind that the Euro crisis had lost much of its urgency in early 2015, and the party focused on broadening their programmatic profile and shedding the image of being a single-issue party (Arzheimer, 2015, p. 9). Given these points, the success of the AfD in the 2017 federal elections on the one hand, and the internal discords and infighting between ordoliberal and ever louder voices of the radical right faction on the other hand (Grimm, 2015, p. 274) raises the questions as to whether the party is in the process of mainstreaming, has already gone through such a process, or have been there efforts to mainstream their agendas (always in accordance to the political landscape).

In contrast to the AfD, there is a substantial amount of research on the endeavors of other radical right-wing parties in Europe to move into the mainstream (Akkerman, Tjitske; De Lange, Sarah L; Rooduijn, Matthijs, 2016; Usherwood, 2016; Ivaldi, 2014; Jupskäs, 2016). With this in mind, referring to the case selection criteria of one of the major studies published in 2016 which deals with the degree to which radical right-wing populist parties have shifted to become a part of the mainstream. Including the factors and conditions which enable this drift to take place (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 4) the AfD itself was not included as a case study because only the parties that had already gained an electoral breakthrough and for whom national office is, at least in the longer term, a realistic option, were selected (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 21).

The situation has changed after the results of the 2017 German federal elections which in turn means that the AfD is now eligible as a case study for the chosen theoretical framework which will be elaborate below. The AfD has not been nor is not part of a coalition, therefore it is important to note that participation in the government or a coalition was not a criterion for the case selection. Equally important, when looking at previous studies on the AfD, some of them focus on the candidates of the AfD by using a scaling procedure to assess, among other things, whether the candidates are more liberal or authoritarian compared to the

candidates of different German parties (Jankowski, Schneider, & Tepe, 2017). Some studies explore the attitudes and motives of the Alternative für Deutschland voters (Berbair, Marcel, & Siri, 2015), or policy positions from the AfD program (Arzheimer, 2015). The scholars find that the AfD's political performance absorbed specific German political constellations that, among other things, explain the dropping of anti-Islam as a major campaign issue earlier on (Berbair, Marcel, & Siri, 2015, p. 157). Since 2013 the German societal and political setting has undergone significant changes which have to do with internal conditions such as party organization, factionalism, leadership change and election results at local and national level. Moreover, most of the studies of AfD development have been written and published as the party was just starting to develop and transform itself. Given these insufficiencies, the AfD might have developed in different directions over time, including radicalization and moving towards the mainstream, the latter of which will be the focal point of this thesis. All things considered, this project is an attempt to fill the existing research gap on this issue.

Because of the limits of the thesis, the history of the AfD and finally considering that mainstreaming is a prolonged process going over at least two electoral cycles the scope will be restricted on the period from the German federal election of 2013 until late 2017. The research question is: Has the AfD been moving towards the mainstream? If yes, what are the main factors that have prompted this transformation? The questions will be approached qualitatively, although when available, quantitative data is used to examine the party (such as voter's base of support and electoral results). This work will be embedded in the general framework of Akkerman, Tjitske; De Lange, Sarah L; Rooduijn, Matthijs (2016).

To measure whether the AfD has moved towards the mainstream, four dimensions will be used, namely: (1) radical party, (2) niche party and (3) anti-establishment party, (4) the extreme right reputation (Table 1), as in line with the general framework, radical right populist parties are identified as simultaneously radical, niche and anti-establishment political with an extreme right reputation (Akkerman et al. 2016, 116).

As of yet, the theoretical framework which derives from Akkerman et al. and their four mainstreaming dimensions have not been implemented in the case of the AfD to assess whether the developments in Western Europe, within the German political landscape and

changes within the party itself have induced the AfD to move towards the mainstream. Furthermore, many research articles have examined the party's historical development, election manifestos, its candidates, ties with PEGIDA and other extremist movements. At the same time, although the value of the earlier work on the AfD is undeniable, a number of them fall short as many of those studies were written and published as the party was developing (Hansen and Olsen, 2018, p. 2). The aim of this work is therefore merely to contribute to filling this gap in the literature by assessing the AfD based on the most up-to-date data in combination with four dimensions derived from the general theoretical framework. To include a broader analysis, the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (to contribute to a systematic analysis of the mainstreaming positions) and Manifesto Project Database (to assess the salience of the issues) has been complemented with the analysis of primary sources of evidence which are the AfD's 2013 and 2017 election manifestos. Additional information is drawn from a wide range of media sources. This provides the most up-to-date data from which conclusions can draw on whether the AfD has shifted toward the mainstream.

The thesis is divided into four main parts. The first chapter provides a theoretical foundation to introduce the main concepts that are used throughout the thesis. The second chapter deals with the methodological framework. The methodology chapter is followed by an introduction to the German party system and populist legacy in Germany which forms the basis for the main analysis. The empirical data is described, analyzed, and synthesized in the fourth chapter, that is followed by a conclusion which features a discussion of the main findings of this thesis while summarizing the theoretical contribution of this thesis.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter aims to outline the different theoretical concepts, theories, and models that are crucial to the chosen subject and case study. The case study is the radical right-wing populist party AfD, and the central concept is *mainstreaming*.

1.1. Defining radical right-wing populism

Although nowadays the term ‘radical right-wing populism’ is used very often in both public and scientific debate mainly because the term is associated with the emergence of new parties in Europe, it is widely acknowledged that defining populism per se is quite a challenging task and that there is an extensive debate among scholars on the topic which is still going on. As Mudde (2007) puts it, there is a terminological chaos due to the consequence of a lack of clear definitions (p. 12) leading to a lack of a general agreement on how the radical right-wing populism is defined and what are its core elements. One of the reasons for that is that many radical right-wing parties do not possess similar characteristics (Hainsworth, 2000, p. 23). The other reason is that radical parties have a tendency to rise in waves (Mudde, 2000, p. 6) and each wave keeps bringing new elements which have not been central to the radical right-wing parties in the past, specifically during the earlier waves and therefore such new elements that are part of the fourth wave have not been studied before in relation to the political landscape. The Euro-crisis, the onset of the migrant crisis in 2015, and the flexibility of the party to shift in orientation strategically used by the AfD to tackle the issues and pursue its goals place the party in the fourth wave of radical right party family.

1.1.1 Radical right as a rejection of individual and social equality

As stated above, there is a lack of agreement among scholars on how the radical right-wing populism is defined and what its core elements are. This, however, poses an important question: How is it possible to decide which definitions provided by literature are the most suitable for the research aim of this thesis?

Due to its relevance and influence in regard to the chosen theoretical framework, I will start with the basic definition provided by Akkerman et al. (2016) where ‘radical right-wing populism’ describes a group of parties that “are right-wing in their rejection of individual and social equality” (p. 5). Two main concepts stand out from this definition, specifically 1) the rejection of individual; 2) the rejection of social equality. Therefore, right-wing radical parties are just a variety of identarian politics, meaning that they display the tendencies of the people that tend to differentiate themselves from the others, whether by race, religion or tradition, to construct a line between them and the ‘others’. The same logic follows the rejection of social equality, wherein practical terms, for instance, it means that an immigrant with a different religious background cannot be treated equally with the other members of the group. Hence, the equality as such should be rejected.

In addition, as Rodriguez-Aguilera (2014) observes, in most of the cases, right-wing radical parties not only distance ‘the others’ from ‘them’, but also try to separate themselves from the party structure within the country which is often accused for betraying the values of the people and for not representing the true people (p. 178). He further argues that right-wing radical parties today are based on three core ideas: the chauvinistic and ethnic exaltation of the nation; anti-immigrant xenophobia; ‘anti-politician’, and anti-establishment populism (p. 178). He adds that right-wing radical parties show their radicalism in two ways, namely the outright rejection of non-EU immigration and, increasingly, the rejection of the EU itself (p. 178). Hence, parties take radical, non-centrist positions on issues that are central to their ideology and they are populist “in their appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense” (cited in Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 6). When applied to everyday politics, the political discussions and issues are presented in a simplified language, thereby the solution for the problem does not seem complicated in itself as it is just ‘us’ against ‘them.’

Lastly, the nativist element of radical right-wing populist parties presented by Mudde enables us to understand better the juxtaposition of ‘us’ and ‘them’ followed by the two other elements combined which are part of the ideology embraced by parties, namely authoritarianism and populism (Mudde, 2014, p. 218). Even though all three core elements are equally important and all will be elaborated as such, for this thesis the nativist element stands out mainly because of the charge it carries and since nativism according to the author is the primary ideological feature of the radical right-wing populist parties (Mudde, 2007, p. 22).

1.1.2 Nativism as the primary ideological feature of the radical right-wing parties

According to Mudde (2007), nativism forms the core of the ideology of the radical right-wing populist parties and is defined as ‘xenophobic form of nationalism’ because the nativist dimension includes a combination of both, nationalism and xenophobia (p. 22). This implies that those who are not natives and carry non-native elements, such as immigrants with a different background (the others), are perceived as a threat to the nation (Mudde, 2014, p. 218). When translated into programmatic positions, nativism leads to anti-immigration stances, and in recent years it has also led to anti-European Union and anti-Islamic stances (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 5). Akkerman et al. argue that since the early 2000s the focus has shifted to Islam as a non-native religion in Western Europe (p. 5). This shift to Islam adheres to a nativist critique on why Islamic values cannot go together with the liberal values which Western Europe is identified with, such as liberal democracy, personal freedoms, the approach towards same-sex relationships and marriage, the separation of religion and state, equality of men and women, just to name a few. Further, nativism translated into programmatic positions is causally related to the AfD on core issues on the 2017 manifesto.

Moreover, seeing how radical right-wing parties in Europe are often and increasingly referred to as populist parties, Jens Rydgren (2017) used the literature on populism to examine the extent to which it applies to the contemporary radical right-wing parties in Europe. The author argues that labeling radical right-wing parties as ‘populist parties’ it is misleading as populism is not the most relevant feature of this party family. Instead, ethnic nationalism is a key defining element of this party family. The author recommends putting an end to the

increasing trend of calling the contemporary radical right-wing parties ‘populist’ not because these parties lack populist features, but because the populist elements are not the most pertinent features of these parties (Rydgren, 2017, p. 493).

Furthermore, Rydgren argues that this party family is mainly focused on issues that are related to national identity and security, including the threat coming from immigration, Islam, multiculturalism. Also, they push the people against the political elites that are perceived as responsible for the cultural and political threat against what they view as the ideal image of their nation-state (Rydgren, 2017, p. 493). In this context, ethno-nationalism involves the idea of invigorating the nation by making it ethnically homogeneous and by returning to fundamental values.

Although nativism is often understood as ethnic nationalism and is used interchangeably with ethno-nationalism or ethnic nationalism (Arter, 2010, pp. 492-495), Aitana Guia (2016) disagrees with the use of the terms in such an improper manner. Even though she agrees that terms such as ethnic nationalism, ethno-nationalism, or mono-culture nationalism are necessary to understand distinct types of nationalism, none of them apprehend the core of nativism, and some of them may obscure non-ethnic types of nativism (p. 5). She argues that nativism should be differentiated from such concepts and the main reason to not mix nativism with ethnic nationalism is that nativism can be civic as well; and as such in Europe merges both elements, leading her to the following conclusion:

“While the duality between ethnic and civic nationalisms has been heavily criticized (Xenos 1996; Yack 1996; Özkirimli 2005: 24-26), the interpretative power of this typology has been incredibly influential. In civic nationalism, ‘the nation is defined in terms of a shared commitment to the public institutions of the state and civil society,’ while ethnic nationalism emphasizes common descent and cultural sameness (Özkirimli 2005:23). Civic conceptions of the nation can be inclusive as long as new members accept the nation’s political creed, while ethnic notions of the ‘nation’ are more exclusionary.”

(Guia, 2016, p. 5).

In Germany for instance, the anti-immigration discourse pushed forward by the AfD at its various stages of development uses both ethnic and civic arguments. The appeal to the German nativeness as opposed to inhabitants of Germany with another ethnic background (foreigners) falls within the ethnic understanding, while the idea of the “Christian West” and stances against Muslims and Islam per se fall within civic arguments and nativism

1.1.3 Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is defined as a strict belief in order and its stringent enforcement within society through discipline, law and order-based policies (Mudde, 2014, p. 218). Therefore, the authoritarian dimension is directly related to the attitudes and stances of political parties towards individual freedoms. Mudde has observed that populist radical right-wing parties believe that the state should have a strict legal system and those that do not obey the authorities will suffer the consequences of punishment. The issue here is that this statement is rather general and can be applied to almost every structure. Therefore, two other elements which hold a better explanatory power are more useful here, namely the obedience and the uncritical attitude. The first one is the inclination to be obedient, and the latter is about having an uncritical attitude towards the leading figures. However, the authoritarian’s submission to authority, established or not, is not absolute, automatic, nor blind (cited in Mudde, 2014, p. 23). In other words, while authoritarians will be more inclined to accept (established) authority than nonauthoritarians, they can and will rebel under certain circumstances (Mudde 2014, p. 23). Even though Mudde acknowledges that they can rebel under certain circumstances, he does not clarify under which circumstances authoritarians are inclined to rebel against the authority.

It is here that Kai Arzheimer (2015) argument becomes especially useful. Authoritarianism, he claims, goes against some of the core values of democratic regimes such as tolerance, pluralism, and the protection of minorities and their rights (p. 3). In the case of the AfD, there is a call for a strong authoritarian state and leader which goes against these values above. As found by Berbuir, Lewandowsky & Siri (2014) in their effort to sketch the socio-economic background of the AfD sympathizers and their political positions, one of the matters that they

focus on is the acceptance of authoritarian structures (p. 168). Forty-five percent of the AfD sympathizers agreed completely or tended to agree on the statement ‘Germany needs a strong leader that can quickly decide on everything,’ showing a notable desire for authoritarian politics (pp. 168-170). Moreover, the AfD sympathizers embrace authoritarian views much more than those who do not support the party (p. 171).

1.1.4 Populism

In the contemporary literature, there are many approaches to populism that interpret the phenomenon differently, among others, as an ideology, political strategy, discourse and logic (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014, p. 381). Nevertheless, this study primarily relies on the definition provided by Mudde. According to Mudde (2014), populism makes a distinction within the society by dividing it into two groups, the pure and the corrupt elite, and wants politics to reflect the general will of the people (p. 218). Most scholars accept these two concepts ("the elite" and "the people") as integral to defining populism as it is argued that there is a clash and that elites have betrayed the trust of the people (Canovan, 1999, pp. 3-6).

However, Jan-Werner Müller (2014) is one of the scholars that does not seem to appraise that much the importance of theorizations like the one provided by Mudde. He argues that a theory of populism as a means to comprehend a political phenomenon is necessary. A theory that is neither just an ideology nor a style, nor a particular kind of party or movement (p. 484). Even though the criteria to identify populist claims are essential, an account of populism as a particular sequence of actions which tend to be in line with the implications of the significant claims that populist make is also required. Thus, a simple definition of populism is not enough as it is necessary to also understand populism as a dynamic process (Müller, 2014, p. 484). Müller continues further by dismissing several of what he considers as false ways of understanding the phenomenon, such as ‘losers of modernization or globalization,’ ‘distancing social-psychological profile’ and ‘the lack of quality in policies.’ All these ways of starting to understand populism per se are false according to Müller because to a certain degree they are subjective and that such a distinction is not enough to identify politicians as populists. For example, in the case of ‘the lack of quality in policies’ where

populists are portrayed as people that make irrational and irresponsible policies to fulfill the short-term desires of the people, Müller asks the logical question about who draws the line between responsible and irresponsible policies (p. 485)?

In the absence of a new dimension from which to explore the phenomenon of populism Benjamin Moffitt and Simon Tormey (2013) criticize the four dominant conceptions of populism – as ideology, logic, discourse, and strategy – as they each post a specific problem (p. 383). They proceed by identifying the main shortcomings of the four approaches before introducing a new category of ‘political style’ as a new way of thinking about the phenomenon. One of the main approaches which are criticized is precisely the conception of populism as an ideology which is attributed to the contribution of Cas Mudde. The main issue is with the idea of ‘thin ideology’ and whether a thin ideology can become so thin as to lose its conceptual validity and utility (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014, p. 383).

Moffitt & Tormey argue that different from other ideologies such as feminism for instance, no one self-identifies as ‘populist’, there is no kind of global ‘populist movement’ and there are no key philosophers or theoreticians of populism, nor texts that seek to ‘thicken’ its ‘ideational density’ (p. 383). The conclusion is that it does not make sense to conceptualize populism as an ideology considering the ‘thinness’ of the concept. The authors do not deny the importance of ideational element that the term carries but argue that ideational elements are better conceptualized as part of populism’s political style (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014, p. 384). The concept of political style is defined as “the repertoires of performance that are used to create political relations” (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014, p. 387). Meaning that they are interested in how the performances of those involved influence the relationship between the populist leader and ‘the people,’ and vice versa (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014, p. 387).

1.2 The new versus the old

Piero Ignazi (1999) has thoroughly analyzed the third wave of radical right-wing parties, and by doing so, he has identified two types of radical right-wing parties: the old type which has

fascist associations, and the new type which has no fascist associations but has adopted ‘anti-system’ attitudes instead (pp. 3-6). To make the difference between these two different groups, Ignazi relies on two elements which are the history/ideology of the party and the attitude towards the political system. The former enables to assess whether the party has shown a connection with the fascist ideology in its original form that goes back to the period before the Second World War. The latter, the position that the party has adopted on the political system itself, can be used to determine whether the political party has an anti-system approach. Nevertheless, sometimes parties’ distance themselves from any fascist associations. In relation to this, Mudde argues that this tendency of right-wing radical parties to distance themselves from old neo-fascist parties is merely strategic in order to be more appealing for the electorate (Mudde, 2007, pp. 256-260). With that aside, this distinction is significant for two main reasons: (1) It can help to better explain and access the success of right-wing radical parties nowadays in Europe. (2) It is directly related to the fourth dimension of mainstreaming embedded in the theoretical framework, which is extreme right reputation with elements of anti-Semitic/racist expressions, and ties with extremists.

The extreme right reputation of a party is a highly relevant issue for right-wing populist parties as these parties have origins in the extreme right and hardcore nationalist subcultures. If a party has a neo-fascist origin and is qualified as an old party, then it tends not to avoid the extremist reputation, the racist/xenophobic discourse, anti-immigration positions as much as a new populist one would because of the fear of legal consequences such as being banned. Also, different from the old parties, the new populist parties tend to avoid the classic extremist reputation for office-seeking reasons. In the first category of old parties that tend not to avoid the extremist reputation are the Greek neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn and Hungary’s far-right Jobbik. The first one due to its paramilitary structure, xenophobic elements, and the actual violence against the immigrants in Greece. The latter, due to linkage to the legacy of the sinister “Arrow Cross” party (the Hungarian Nazis from the final stages of WWII) and espouses an anti-Roma, anti-gay and anti-EU agenda (Rodríguez-Aguilera, 2014, pp. 179-181).

1.3 What it means to belong to the mainstream?

The term 'mainstream' is used in different contexts and areas and as such is usually poorly defined. Looking into it from the etymological perspective and in its purest form the term refers to a set of shared values, beliefs, and approaches in a specific period which is embraced by most of the people within a group or society (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). It is certain that the substance of the term has changed depending on the time and the circumstances in which it was used and that it carries different connotations which are dependent on the observer's scope and necessity. In other words, in different political regimes and different historical periods what is 'mainstream' has meant something else in comparison with what it means nowadays in most of the European countries.

Today, in the field of political science, public debates and specifically in political parties' context to be a 'mainstream' party means to be in contrast with a radical party, an extreme right-wing, extreme left-wing party, anti-system party, anti-establishment party, and the list goes on with the 'terminological chaos' as Mudde (2017) puts it. The term 'mainstream' in the political context refers most often to political parties that are ideologically positioned on the center-left and right center spectrum, that is Christian democratic, conservative, liberal, and social democratic parties (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 7).

Also, another element which is identified by Cappocia (1999) is the loyalty of the established parties to the political system and the fact that they have no tendencies to overthrow it, which also is in line with the way political parties are ideologically positioned. In sum, a political party is in the mainstream when it is ideologically centrist, when there are no elements of radicalism and xenophobia as part of the political platform and public debate, no extreme rhetoric referring that goes back to Nazi period is shown, no ties with fascist groups, no calls for radical change of the political system itself, no radical opposition on further integration. Thus, the term 'mainstream' can encompass programmatic and positional centrism, the high salience of socioeconomic issues, and behavior and stances that show commitment to the principles of liberal democracy and to the formal and informal rules of the political game (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 7).

1.4 Mainstreaming as a process

Even though the research on the concept of ‘mainstreaming’ per se is scarce, in recent years within the extensive body of literature on radical right-wing parties, a significant number of studies related to the mainstreaming of party goals and strategies, the political discourse of radical right-wing parties and their shifting from margin towards a more mainstream kind of style has emerged. Hannah Moscovitz (2016) argues that this shift is evidenced through the example of many parties, including Austrian Freedom Party, Flemish Vlaams Belang, the Front National and the British National Party (p. 142).

Mainstreaming as a process is a crucial concept to understand the shifting of a political party from the periphery towards the center. Mainstreaming usually refers to a process of convergence of two different types of parties, mainstream parties on the one hand, and radical parties on the other (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 6). As such, the concept lacks clarity mainly because it is used to describe the changes of mainstream parties toward radical parties and changes of radical parties towards mainstream parties. According to Bomberg (2002) and Mair (2001) green parties, for instance, have become more like the mainstream left and vice versa; the former moderated their programmatic stances and adjusted their party organization, and the latter embraced environmental issues (cited in Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 6). When parties undertake changes such as moderating their stances and change their approach towards mainstream parties itself it also means that they are getting closer to the mainstream and by doing this they become more eligible to be considered as a coalition partner. Müller-Rommel observes that green parties have become “coalitionable due to these changes and have hence governed with left-wing mainstream parties” (cited in Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 6).

However, radical right-wing populist parties do not necessarily use their chance to form a coalition to become a part of the government even when such an opportunity arises. For instance, because of the results in the last German federal elections the AfD became an essential player in the German political landscape, however, on the one hand it seemed that they have no incentive to form a coalition, and on the other, mainstream parties like the one led by Merkel (CDU) decided in advance that they would not even consider the possibility

of getting in the coalition with a party such as the AfD because of what it represents (Rinke, 2017). These developments are significant because the changes in opportunities cannot explain party change (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 9). The reasons for which a radical right-wing populist party might decide not to become part of a coalition vary and are influenced by many factors such as losing the voters supports or merely being unable to adapt their policies and fear of losing their influence. This entire process gets even more complicated when one of the defining critical elements of political parties is considered, namely, the desire to get to power and govern.

Wagner and Meyer (2017) examine whether radical right parties have moderated their positions to earn greater respect or to have better chances at entering government. The authors claim that when a radical right party moderates its positions to pursue something, two main developments can take place: 1) it is likely that the radical right parties have joined the ideological mainstream of European parties; 2) as the mainstream parties see the developments and feel threatened by radical right parties because of the way they are approaching some of the issues with which the society is faced, the mainstream parties decide to act by changing their policy stances (Meyer & Wagner, 2013, pp. 84-85). This is known as the process in which mainstream parties accommodate the radical right by adopting their policy stances. The result of this process would also be a mainstreaming of the radical right in European party competition (Wagner & Meyer, 2017, p. 85). Finally, after analyzing the data, the authors conclude that mainstream parties have become more like the radical right, meaning that the shift has taken place from the center towards the margin by the mainstream parties and which was manifested by the radicalization of issue positions and issue salience. However, the authors find that this does not happen with the radical right parties, as they have been unable to find evidence that shows that radical right parties have become more moderate, which in turn means that they have kept its niche regarding policy positions over time (Wagner and Meyer, 2017, p. 97).

Mainstreaming is also conceived as a party strategy, a strategy that is designed to promote the pursuit of office, policy or votes, or a combination of these goals (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 14). The strategy can consist of one of the dimensions of mainstreaming (Table 1), or it

can be a mix of those dimensions. Radical right-wing populist parties can moderate their positions on core issues, expand their issue agenda, show more respect for the rules of the game or try to overcome their extremist reputation (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 14). The mainstreaming of the radical right-wing populist parties can occur because of the pursuit of the office, policy-seeking, and vote-seeking. These can be a trade-off, and dependent on many factors (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 11) which can be external and internal.

Party goals and strategies are defined by external and internal factors (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 10). There are two distinct types of external factors. The first type includes changes in cleavages, electoral markets and in media agendas as well as socioeconomic change and in the emergence of new policy problems in society (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 17). The second type includes changes in the political systems in which radical right-wing populist parties operate, in the structure of party competition resulting from party system change in which main competitors react (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 17). Internal factors also influence party change. These conditions include, but are not limited to, party organization, leadership and factionalism, and experiences in local and regional political arenas (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 17).

Considering the convergence attached to the concept of mainstreaming, the use of it in such a way is not adequate for this thesis. Concerning that, ‘mainstreaming’ is defined as a process in which radical parties change to become more like mainstream parties (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 14). Hence, this thesis will use the concept of mainstreaming which purely focuses on the shift from the margin toward the center.

Lastly, it is important to note that in order to trace a shift from the margin towards the mainstream it is not necessary to have an extreme shift in all of the mainstreaming dimensions (Table 1), instead, a single shift in an issue such as moderation of positions on immigration can be observed under the light of shifting towards the mainstream.

1.5 Niche parties

Bonnie M. Meguid (2005) argues that although new political parties have emerged in the past 40 years, many of these new parties are just variants of the existing parties which fit in the liberal, conservative, or socialist group of parties (p. 346). However, there is a group of parties that stand out and which the author identifies as ‘niche parties’ (Meguid, 2005, p. 345). The niche party concept was introduced by Meguid himself who considers niche parties to be mainly characterized by the emphasis on a small set of issues that their mainstream rivals pay little attention to (cited in M. Meyer & Wagner, 2013, p. 1247). Meguid points out three significant ways in which niche parties are different from the mainstream parties.

First, rejection of traditional class-based orientation of politics. This means that instead of focusing on economic demands, these parties politicize sets of issues which were previously outside the dimensions of party competition (M. Meguid, 2005, p. 347). Meguid continues by providing examples of political parties such as the Green parties during the 1970s and radical right parties that have politicized issues that were neglected by their mainstream counterparts (i.e., Green parties mainly focusing on environmental issues, such as nuclear power and disarmament and environmental protection). Meyer and Wagner (2013) argue that although niche parties compete on different issues compared to mainstream rivals, this party family deliberately choose and switch between niche and mainstream profiles, in part due to strategic incentives (p. 1247). In other words, a party may decide to adopt or to drop a niche or mainstream party profile out of vote-seeking considerations (Meyer & Wagner, 2013, p. 1247). However, if a party does not suffer losses in elections, then it is less likely to change the focus of their program.

Second, the issues raised by niche parties are not only new but sometimes they do not even coincide with the existing lines of political division as niche parties appeal to groups of voters that may cross-cut traditional partisan alignments (Meguid, 2005, p. 348).

Third, which is crucial for the minimal definition of the niche parties itself is the differentiation that they make between themselves and their mainstream counterparts by limiting the number of the issues with which they deal. In other words, they are often seen as

single-issue parties by the voters because they are focused on a limited number of issues. Therefore, niche parties rely on the salience and attractiveness of their one policy stance for voter support (Meguid, 2005, p. 348).

Niche is an important concept for this thesis as through it we can assess whether the policy agenda of the AfD has emphasized sociocultural issues above all or whether it has increasingly focused on socioeconomic issues as well, which in turn would indicate that the AfD has shifted toward the mainstream on the second dimension.

1.7 Anti-establishment parties (with a stress on right-wing parties)

In general, when the term ‘anti-establishment’ is mentioned, usually it is presumed that those parties constitute a prominent threat to the regime itself and this is perceived as very negative. Even though that has proven to be true, especially in the past, the threat element it is somehow a dependent claim depending on the type of the regime itself and other factors such as the political landscape and is more practical rather than theoretical (Cappocia, 2002).

Theoretically, anti-establishment parties are the opposite of mainstream parties mainly due to the ideological distance that they have not only with the other parties but with the system itself. When defined based on their loyalty to the political system itself, anti-establishment parties fall in the list mainly because they are seen as parties whose primary goal is to overthrow the political system altogether with norms and values on which it is based (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 7). Akkerman et al. argue that two elements stand out in the case of the anti-establishment party, namely 1) their anti-establishment positions, 2) the rules of the game are challenged (p. 7).

Giovani Cappocia (2002) further clarifies the use of the concept of anti-system parties for comparative purposes in the context of democratic regimes. He develops a new typology and concludes that during the last century many political parties were wrongly classified as anti-system parties and were not correctly used in comparative analyses by scholars. He argues that while the authors have tried to conceptualize the changes that radical opposition had caused in democratic systems, the strategy most commonly followed by scholars has been that of creating new 'anti'- terms, often ad hoc and without specifying the logical

consequences of their application to different cases (Cappocia, 2002, p. 32). As Cappocia has shown, it is possible for scholars to fail in their attempts to determine the ideological position of a political party. An example of such an attempt is the research conducted by Klikauer (2018) in which he concludes that the AfD is “Germany’s new Nazi party,” (p. 625).

The findings of Cappocia are important for this thesis as in the current political environment of the European political landscape and established political parties, the emergence of new issues and new political parties calls for the need to quickly adapt strategies as a response to changes and challenges, which in turn means that the ideological shifting from margin towards center or the opposite, at least theoretically, is very likely. This shifting that occurs is also elaborated by Mudde when he talks about the challenges of circularity and criteria that we should use to be able to define different political parties. Mudde argues that there is a solution that might overcome this problem of circularity, and that is by adopting the Wittgensteinian concept of “family resemblance” (cited in Mudde, 2007, p. 13). Meaning that political parties are not entirely the same, but they still possess similar characteristics and elements (Mudde, 2007, p.13).

Although parties possess similar characteristics, there is a key difference between radical right-wing parties and extreme right parties which is determined by the type of democracy that they are opposed to. Namely, extreme right parties are against democracy in the general sense as they have displayed a similar pattern of undermining system legitimacy whereas radical right parties are against liberal democracy (Ignazi, 2003, p. 200). In relation to extreme right parties, another vital element for this thesis which will be taken into consideration is the party reputation — specifically, the extreme right reputation of a party which is essential when dealing with radical right-wing parties and trying to assess their shift from the margin towards the mainstream. Akkerman et al. argue that anti-Semitism, racism or positive references to the Nazism or Fascism are elements which are mostly associated with the parties that have an extreme right reputation. The authors admit that radical right-wing populist parties generally risk being branded as racist due to their nativist ideology and anti-immigration positions (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 278). For instance, a German party would have an extreme right reputation if it emphasizes German nationalism, referred to the

Nazi period, uses extreme rhetoric and does not distance itself from anti-Semitism and these are the criteria that will be implemented later on.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will elaborate on research questions, the research strategy was chosen to address the research objectives together with the data collection methods for analysis, including the framework for data analysis and finally, will address the potential problems and limitations of this work.

2.1 Research aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is: to assess whether the AfD is going through a phase of mainstreaming and to investigate whether the party is pursuing a more ‘mainstream’ political engagement in the western and a more ‘radical’ engagement in the eastern parts of Germany and why.

To build a comprehensive view of the research topic, the research will answer the following questions:

- 1) Has the AfD been moving towards the mainstream?
- 2) If such a shift has taken place, what are the main factors that have prompted this transformation?

The four dimensions (party reputation included) that derive from the theoretical framework enable us to form two possible suggestions: 1) the less a radical right party is still a radical, niche and anti-establishment party with an extreme reputation, the more it can be proved to have moved towards the mainstream, 2) the more a radical right party has changed its policy profile, extended its attention to socioeconomic issues and moderated its anti-establishment positions, the more it has moved towards the mainstream.

2.2 Research Strategy

The research strategy that will be used to implement the empirical research is the qualitative case study. The single-case study approach has been chosen because it allows a more in-depth analysis to assess whether and to what extent the AfD has moved towards the mainstream and also allows the use of multiple methods of data collection to achieve an in-depth understanding with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion (Yin, 2003, p. 14). This triangulation may lead to data sources that previously have not been considered and which in turn it will increase the accuracy of research results. Yin (2013) defines a case as study as:

“An empirical inquiry that

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13).

In addition, the purpose of this method is to analyze the following changes: 1) changes with respect to radical positions on core issues like immigration, EU or authoritarianism; 2) changes from a niche party to a party with a broad policy agenda that equally emphasizes sociocultural and socioeconomic issues; 3) changes in anti-establishment profile; and 4) changes with respect to an extremist reputation (Akkerman et al. p. 268).

The case analysis will build on the AfD policy positions from 2013 to 2017 as 2017 is the year when the 2017 German Federal Election took place. The challenging issue with this task lies in identifying the AfD positions at different times considering the continuous party shift in orientation and positions as well as the changes that had taken place within the party which also imply that the party programmes have been avoided when it was politically inappropriate by the AfD. As an effort to overcome this challenge and considering that the AfD programmatic profile, positions, and political behavior have developed through different stages, these stages will best be divided into three time periods, namely: (1) the formation period until the federal election in 2013; (2) the emergence of disputes within the party until the European Parliament (EP) election in 2014; (3) the end of the 2014 election until the 2017 German federal election. To assess the development of an anti-establishment profile,

however, it might be necessary to extend the period of examination of the AfD to late 2017 to evaluate whether the party respects or challenges the rules of the game as this is the period when the AfD entered the Bundestag.

2.3 Data collection methods

To answer the research questions this study builds on existing literature and a wide range sources of data such as electoral manifestos, party documentation, newspaper interviews, news information, an earlier (2017) research on the social media (focused on the AfD representatives), statements given by the party representatives, expert surveys (Chapel Hill Expert Survey) and the Comparative Manifesto Project.

Firstly, besides being a rich source of information for my analysis the election manifestos and party documentation have been chosen for two other reasons: 1) they are authoritative documents that party leaders can only depart from with great difficulty (Michael Laver; John Garry, 2000), 2) they are reasonably comparable across cases and over time (Robert Klemmensen; Sara Binzer Hobolt; Martin Ejnar Hansen, 2007). The official documents of the AfD on which I will rely on are the following:

1. The AfD Political Guidelines 2014 (Politische Leitlinien der Alternative für Deutschland).
3. European Parliament Election manifesto 2014 (Mut zu Deutschland. Für ein Europa der Vielfalt).
4. German federal election manifesto 2017 (PROGRAMM für Deutschland).

Three of the sources mentioned above are translated into English, and the last one (2017) can easily be accessed via the AfD official website. The two other sources which have been removed from the official AfD webpage and can be found on the website of Hugh Bronson who has been a member of the AfD since 2016 (<https://hughbronson.de/>).

Secondly, newspaper interviews, news information and statements given by the party representatives are going to be used to evaluate the changes in the agenda and positions in public debates and different regions within Germany, and to find which goals (vote-seeking,

office-seeking and policy-seeking) the AfD prioritizes and the strategies that it pursues (the goals and strategies have not been constant over time nor across all Germany as some have been more prominent in eastern Germany). Furthermore, the analysis of some of the statements given by the party representatives and a previously conducted research of the social media in 2017 will mirror the unique aspects of the party, including the various positions that are held by different party leaders throughout the period that this case will examine as well as the party factionalism.

Moreover, to measure the positions of the AfD on the core issues and policy positions from 2014 and 2017 and to investigate the trend in the AfD positions I will use the expert surveys as well which have been praised for three main reasons: 1) they hold “a certain weight and legitimacy”, 2) give a timely account of a party’s position, are ‘quick, easy, and comprehensive’ and 3) generate ‘highly comparable and standardized data’(Cited in Akkerman et al. p 33).

For this thesis, the most important expert survey is the one conducted by Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) which covers political parties in 31 countries. The CHES expert survey asks political scientists specializing in political parties and European integration (Polk et al. 2017). The dataset itself supplies the data on the positioning of the AfD on political ideology, European integration, and policy dimensions such as multiculturalism and immigration. Regarding policy issues, the 2017 survey focuses on the key questions facing Europe in 2017 such as EU economic coordination, populism, and migration. The data are available and obtainable at <https://www.chesdata.eu/ches-stats>. One way to measure the reliability of the AfD’s positions on core issues which are going to be applied is by checking the deviations among experts, and that task will be carried out as well.

Also, the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) database will be used to analyze the salience that the AfD attached to particular issues and to gauge how important socioeconomic issues are for the AfD. CMP is a project that measures how often parties mention a specific issue in their manifestos rather than the positions they take on these issues (Akerman et al. p. 36). It is assumed that a party gives attention to some issues and excludes some other. Thus, more

attention to some issues and neglect on others take place regardless of the party position on the issue.

2.4 Framework for data analysis

As mentioned earlier, to measure whether the AfD has moved towards the mainstream, three dimensions that derive from the theoretical framework will be used, namely: (1) radical party, (2) niche party and (3) anti-establishment party with an extreme right reputation (Table 1). These dimensions include the extent to which the AfD can be qualified as a radical, niche or anti-establishment party and the extent to which the AfD has an extreme reputation. Different from mainstream parties, radical right-wing populist parties have (1) programmatic profiles that are non-centrist, (2) programmatic profiles that evolve around sociocultural rather than socioeconomic issues and (3) an anti-establishment outlook on politics (Akkerman et al. 2016).

First, radical right-wing populist parties take radical, non-centrist positions on issues that are central to their ideology such as European integration, immigration, integration, law, and order (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 7). The first dimension of mainstreaming requires an assessment of the AfD positions on the issues above. To measure these positions of the AfD over time, election manifestos and other party documents such as political guidelines as well as expert surveys will be used. Fortunately, the CHES data set includes the AfD, and it holds information about changes in the positions of the party in the last two electoral cycles.

Second, radical right-wing populist parties are niche parties because they primarily campaign on issues that do not belong to the traditional, socioeconomic left-right dimension. If the radical right had stayed put or moderated their positions, this party family would be losing its niche status (Wagner & M Meyer, 2017, p.7). The second dimension of mainstreaming focuses on the changes in the niche character of the AfD. The goal is to assess whether the policy agenda of the AfD has emphasized sociocultural issues or whether it has increasingly focused on socioeconomic issues as well. The salience of socioeconomic and sociocultural issues will be assessed through the framework of the Comparative Manifesto Database. In

line with the theoretical framework, a distinction will be made between the traditional socioeconomic dimension and the newer sociocultural dimension (Akkerman et al. p. 37). The first category includes issues such as market regulation, economic planning, corporatism, welfare state expansion and nationalization (401 to 414 and 504 to 507 in CMP codebook). The second category includes issues such as the national way of life, traditional morality, law and order and multiculturalism (601 to 608 in CMP codebook). In summary, all of the sources above of data will be used to look for evidence that moderation has taken place in any of the dimensions of the non-mainstreamness outlined in the theoretical framework.

Third, radical right-wing populist parties are characterized by their disloyalty to the political establishment, and their behavior challenges the rules of the game in many ways, media included. They have transformative aspirations regarding not only policies but also metapolitics, i.e., the formal and informal rules of the game (Akkerman et al. 2016, p.8).

Ultimately, the party's reputation should also be taken into consideration. The move away from classic extreme right subjects such as anti-Semitism, racism, and references to Nazism or fascism, which started in the late 1980s in some of the older radical right-wing populist parties, is not yet a closed chapter for all of them (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 8).

Florian Hartleb (2015) finds that the following criteria are common to all types of anti-establishment party and as such will further facilitate the process of assessing this dimension on the case of the AfD:

- “• the doctrine that ‘there is an alternative’;
- the construction of a homogenous people (one people’s common interests in the sense of a *volonte´ general*) and a front line against the political elites and the mainstream parties;
- the image of an underdog, perpetuating the myth that they are excluded from the establishment, including the media;
- the label of an opposition party (on current issues and in the format of representative democracy, but not necessarily against the democratic system itself);
- the claim to be an unconventional political party (e.g. an anti-party party, a movement, a

leadership-based party, a party of real participation, etc.);

- the demand for forms of direct democracy (referenda, etc.);
- the promise to clean up ‘dirty politics’ (with slogans such as ‘we know the truth’) and fight against corruption and clientelism;
- the simplification or trivialisation of political issues;
- the claim to advocate on behalf of the ‘silent majority’;
- a cynical approach to politics (attacking either the morality or competence of the establishment);
- the image of a taboo-breaker with the aim of polarising the political discourse (on both issues and structural-based matters);
- an aggressive attitude towards political adversaries (conflict instead of consensus); and
- the formulation of a clear message (ideologically or pragmatically driven).”

(Hartleb, 2015, pp. 43-44)

The examination of goals and strategies enables us to see whether the AfD successfully developed and used strategies to either maximize their votes, seek the office, or pursue policies (the goals and strategies not been constant over time (nor across all Germany as some have been more prominent in Eastern Germany). The analysis of the election results of the 2013 and the 2017 federal elections allows us to see whether the outcomes lead to a decrease in the opportunities for office, internal developments, and how this affected the shifting of the party.

Dimensions of non-mainstreamness	Evidenced by	Indicators for mainstreaming
<i>Radical party</i>	Core positions are radical	Core positions are moderated
<i>Niche Party</i>	1) Issue agenda is limited 2) Sociocultural issues are emphasized	Issue agenda is expanded, and socioeconomic issues are emphasized more strongly
<i>Anti-establishment party</i>	1) Anti-establishment positions 2) Rules of the game are challenged	Anti-establishment positions are moderated Rules of the game are respected
<i>Extreme right reputation</i>	1) Anti-Semitic/racist Expressions 2) Ties with extremists	Anti-Semitic/racist expressions are suppressed Ties with extremists are severed

Table 1. Dimensions of mainstreaming (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 10). Edited by the author.

2.5 Limitations and potential problems

There are limitations to this research, starting with the concept of ‘mainstreaming’ which will be uniquely measured from the perspective of the radical party moving toward the mainstream and not at the mainstream parties moving to the radical end. The drawback of this approach is that the movement of the other parties will not be analyzed in order to assess how the AfD is affecting the entire party system in Germany.

Due to limited resources, the interviews of the AfD leadership have not taken as much attention as they deserve in order to assess better the impact that different approaches have had in the development of the party.

The researcher is not a native German, and his comprehension in German is not sufficient enough to analyze the texts which are in German independently. The author has tried to focus more on materials that are accessible in English and has partially relied on the contribution of German-speaking colleagues which in turn means that it cannot be guaranteed that no mistakes on interpreting have been made on this research.

3. THE GERMAN PARTY-SYSTEM: A POLITICAL AND LEGAL OVERVIEW

3.1 German party system

Germany has a multi-party system which has been dominated by two major political parties in the last five decades, the Social Democratic Party and the Christian Democratic Party. The coalitions to form the government have been frequent in Federal Germany. Currently, there are six major political parties in Germany which are also represented in the German Parliament, namely, Christian Democratic Union, Social Democratic Party of Germany, the Green Party, Free Democratic Party, The Left Party, and the newcomer the AfD. The chancellor who is the leader of the executive branch in the country is chosen by the elected representatives in the German Parliament.

Since 1949 the West Germany parliamentary system has been well institutionalized. Different from earlier federal parliaments in the past, the Bundestag has not only endured but also enjoyed growing popular support (Frankland, 1989, p. 393). In the mid-1970s, the 'model Germany' seemed to have reached perfection (Poguntke, 2012, p. 951).

First, there was the economic factor. Considering that the German economy started almost from scratch after the Second World War and in the mid-1970s the economic development in Western Germany was getting better and stronger. Secondly, a country which before and during the Second World War was ruled by the Nazi Party seemed to have reached a stage where it was turned into a model of stable party democracy (Poguntke, 2012, p. 951). This stage of stable party democracy was manifested in a very high voters turnout reaching up to 91.1 percent of the electorate in 1972 (Poguntke, 2012). The high support for the political parties also meant that there was no space left for possible radical voices that were not in line with the mainstream parties in Western Germany and that the German voters in West

Germany were supporting the way the country was governed. Being that there were two major parties almost equal in size, the government change was possible. However, Helmut Kohl's 16-year tenure in the office, which marked him out as the longest-serving of all German Chancellors since Otto Von Bismarck indicates that the party system lost some of its balance by the 1980s (Poguntke, 2012, p. 151). In contrast to what Poguntke (2012) qualifies as a 'perfection stage' of West Germany, there are other scholars such as Otto Kirchheimer (1966), Wolf-Dieter Narr (1977) and Hermann Scheer (1979) that claim the opposite for early stages of German party system, saying that Bonn was doomed to become 'Weimar', pointing out the issues of vanishing opposition, lack of ideological differences between the political parties, and the highly criticized the one-party state.

Although the two main traditional parties in Germany still enjoy high scores, the newcomers have left their mark on the German party system. A notable example is that of the Green Party. The Greens first started as an organized movement against the expansions of nuclear power, an act which laid the foundation for the establishment of the political party itself. Poguntke (2012) argues that with the advent of the Greens, the West German party system lost its balance and the Greens did not become an acceptable partner of the national government until the end of the 1980s (Poguntke, 2012, p. 953). The emergence of the Greens and their success in 1983 marked a new beginning for the West German party system.

The criticism which was earlier on directed towards the government, leading political parties and the party system were falling, mainly because the Green Party proved that the representation is possible for the newcomers that have different strategies, agendas and methods from those of the traditional parties. With that said, the Germany party system has had a succession of both good and bad experiences but has generally been quite successful in enabling Germany to shift towards a stable democracy as well as allowing and facilitating the emergence of the new parties later on. The importance of the German party system and its slow development only increases when considering that only a few contemporaries would have ventured the prediction that the German party system would fulfill what was then considered its most important and imminent functions: government formation, government

stability and, somewhat later, government alternation (cited in Poguntke, 2001, p. 4).

3.2 Populist legacy in Germany

The rise of the new radical-wing parties is a phenomenon that draws attention anywhere in Europe, but it is especially remarkable in the case of Germany because of the historical legacy of the Nazism. For instance, Germany has minimal experience with successful right-wing populist parties with steady electorate support at the national level. According to Karsten Grabow (2016), attempts to establish right-wing populist parties in Germany in the past were either locally or temporarily restricted or resulted in failure because of the resistance from the established democratic forces, including the media (p. 174). These parties have had many difficulties, and one of them was often the failure to set boundaries and detach themselves from the extremists in Germany.

The relevance of the ability to show detachment only increases when considering how the German government, political parties, and people have struggled for more than a half of a century to redefine their identity (Williams, 2016, p. 115). Precisely because of the Nazi past and the Second World War the German government has been prudent in referring to Germany as a Fatherland in the classic meaning of the term. However, Helmut Kohl the Chancellor of Germany made efforts to move forward from the past and to restore German national identity in 1982. This became known as the German *Wende* or renewal (Williams, 2016, p. 115). Although decades have passed since then, it does not mean that the political parties or movements in Germany have no constraints when it comes to the language they use to express themselves, the way they behave, and the goals that they pursue, as the German government has put a lot of effort into showing its commitment to democracy and to neutralize perils that threaten the German democratic order to prevent Nazi elements from returning to power in Germany. Article 21 of the German Basic Law is an excellent example of these efforts.

3.2.1 Article 21 of the German Basic Law

A brief examination of the German legal framework is useful in that it sets in context how legal norms can affect upon and shape the agendas as well as the patterns of engagement among political parties, especially the AfD.

Section 1 of Article 21 of the German Basic Law which refers to the political parties' states that:

“Political parties shall participate in the formation of the political will of the people. They may be freely established. Their internal organization must conform to democratic principles. They must publicly account for their assets and the sources and use of their funds.”

(Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, 2018, p. 21).

Here it is clearly stated that the internal organization of a political party must conform to democratic principles. Furthermore, in the second section of Article 21 that is directly related to the legacy of Nazim in Germany it becomes even more specific as it bans antidemocratic political parties' function in Germany:

“*Parties* that, because of their aims or the behavior of their adherents, seek to undermine or abolish the free democratic basic order or to endanger the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany shall be unconstitutional. The Federal Constitutional Court shall rule on the question of unconstitutionality.”

(Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, 2018, p. 21).

These provisions are crucial as they represent institutional constrictions for the functioning and purposes of the radical right-wing parties in Germany which in turn imposes limitations on the right-wing parties' freedom of expression. In other words, if a political party or movement threatens the current German order or gets 'out of the line,' then the banning of that party or movement can take place. Furthermore, the provisions in the German Basic Law enable the Federal Office for the protection of the Constitution which was established mainly

to deal with Neo-Nazism and communist activities and which is currently responsible for the domestic security in Germany to investigate the activities of groups in Germany in order to determine their level of threat to the democratic order (Williams, 2016, p. 115). According to a research conducted by Angela K Bourne & Fernando Casal Bertoa (2017), there have been two cases where the German political parties have been banned as they have posed a threat to the free democratic basic order in Germany (Bértoa Casal & Bourne K., 2015). Two cases were excluded from the list, namely the far-right Free German Workers Party and National List because the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that these are associations (Bértoa Casal & Bourne K., 2015, p. 9).

The first incident occurred in 1952 when the Socialist Reich Party was banned on the grounds of being a Nazi successor party as it openly expressed admiration for Hitler. What is more, one of their goals which were against the Basic Law was the idea of an exclusive blood community. The primary goal of the Socialist Reich Party was to continue what Hitler had started with his idea of social revolution (cited in Williams, 2016, p. 116)). In 1951, the party won 16 seats in the Lower Saxony assembly election, getting 11 percent of the votes. Following the outcome of the elections, Konrad Adenauer, the Chancellor of West Germany at the time whom the Socialist Reich party leaders believed to be a puppet of the Americans, initiated the banning process of the party through the Constitutional Court. The party was formally banned in 1952.

The second case was that of the Communist Party of Germany (extreme left party) which was banned in 1956 by the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany on the grounds that it used aggressive methods to achieve their political aims. Recently, in 2017, the Article 21 has been invoked against the extreme-right National Democratic Party of Germany, but the outcome was not successful as the Federal Constitutional court decided that although the political party was racist, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and xenophobic, it was not a severe threat to the German Democracy, as:

“It had a limited electoral showing during its five decades of existence. It was unable to assume leadership of the broader neo-Nazi movement, and it was not clear the

party *as such* was involved in the far-right's many acts of intimidation against asylum seekers, minorities and political opponents in recent decades.”

(Bourne & Bértoa Casal, 2017).

Article 21 of the German Basic Law is important as it means that if the AfD would act improperly towards the German order that is not allowed by the Article, then the procedures for the ban of the party can be initiated as well. Although some mainstream politicians have voiced their concerns regarding the AfD, there have been no strong or cogent reasons for banning the party so far.

4. CASE STUDY FINDINGS: DESCRIPTION, ANALYSIS, AND SYNTHESIS

The first step of retrieving empirical data for this research is based on a case study, and different sources have been used and processed altogether in order to allow an analysis of the issues raised in a set context. To measure whether the AfD has moved towards the mainstream the research focuses on four dimensions of mainstreaming outlined in the methodological framework chapter: (1) changes with respect to radical positions on core issues such as immigration, European integration, law and order (2) changes from a niche party to a party that emphasizes sociocultural but it has increasingly focused on socioeconomic issues as well; (3) changes in their anti-establishment profile; (4) changes with respect to an extremist reputation. It is in the context of these developments in which the context of this study is implemented.

4.1 The Development of the AfD

The AfD has become phenomenally successful and the significance of the party's success continues to increase despite several reasons such as the history of Germany, the fact that the AfD has entered the German political landscape as the largest opposition grouping in the Bundestag, and that both the mainstream political parties and media have had a strong disinclination and dislike towards radical right-wing parties; the latter was manifested by keeping the radical-right wing parties out of the German parliament for decades. This situation, however, proved to be a more delicate matter as neither the CDU/CSU nor SPD (with the majority of the votes in the 2017 elections) found AfD to be a favorable coalition partner (Lees, 2018, p. 296).

The party was initially established in April 2013 by German conservatives as a single-issue party which criticized the centrist policies and federal government, not to mention the Bundestag parties and their stance on the Euro crisis. The viewpoints of the AfD in the midst (of the aftermath) of several European crises (Lees, 2018, pp. 299-300) shaped its public

image, and it became to be identified with a group of disaffected CDU members including Konrad Adam, Alexander Gauland and Berndt Lucke (born 1962) who earlier on in September 2012 founded a political action group called 'Wahlalternative 2013' (an electoral alternative for the 2013 General election) which marked the early emergence of and laid the foundation for AfD itself (Arzheimer, 2015, p. 8). Wahlalternative was a pressure group that supported the 'Federation of Independent,' a fledgling umbrella organization for community-based voter associations that are often dominated by the owners of a small local business (Arzheimer, 2015, pp. 8-9). Although Germany is seen as the largest benefiter of the EU and the Euro Zone, the leaders of Wahlalternative were making claims such as "The Federal Republic of Germany is in the worst crisis of its history" or "democracy is degrading," (Gründungsaufwurf Wahlalternative, 2013).

The Wahlalternative manifesto (Gründungsaufwurf Wahlalternative 2013) which now can be accessed only in web.archive.org as a reminder of their failure had three objectives. First, they demanded that Germany should no longer support the debts of other countries (Wählen Sie die Alternative!, 2013). Second, that Germany should withdraw from the monetary union, and all other countries should be free to abandon Eurozone, restore their national currencies, or to merge into more suitable currency unions (Wählen Sie die Alternative!, 2013). Third, that any issue regarding the transfer of sovereignty of Germany in supranational bodies should require a prior referendum (Wählen Sie die Alternative!, 2013).

The failure of the "Wahlalternative 2013" together with "Federation of Independent Voters" to get more than 1% in the state election in Lower Saxony where 5% is the threshold for parliamentary representation and the conflicting views on organization and strategy (Lewandowsky, 2014, p. 2) lead to the emergence of the AfD. Enlisting the solid support of different economists, business leaders, activists, and journalists, the AfD officially discussed and approved its leadership board and party program in Berlin for the first time since its inception in 2013 (Lees, 2018, pp. 300, 301). Konrad Adam and Bernd Lucke, together with the Frauke Petry were the leaders of the newest party in Germany (Lewandowsky, 2014).

Throughout becoming visible in the German political landscape since its first congress, the party relied on the *Länder* parties and the general attitudes towards Euroscepticism as a

driving force for attracting possible voters (Lees, 2018, p. 301). As will be later elaborated but Lees mentions (Lees, 2018, p. 304) at first the AfD did not entirely conform to the orthodox template of a radical right-wing populist party but had populist tendencies that were designed to suit the needs of the nation instead. As a result, for instance, the 2014 manifesto for the EP election, which could also be considered as a manifesto of the party's contemporary contradictory nature, emphasized ordoliberalism and social market in contrast to the anti-Euro discourse of the party (Lees, 2018, p. 306). The same could be said about the political guidelines of the AfD in 2014 which will be analyzed later.

Nonetheless, in 2013 the AfD failed to enter the Bundestag getting only 4.7% of the electorate vote in a country where the threshold is 5%. Despite not securing a position in the parliament, the defeat was considered an achievement, and therefore the AfD became the most successful emerging party in Germany (Jankowski, Schneider, & Tepe, 2016, p. 704).

There was a surge in popularity after 2013 (Lees, 2018, p. 301). In 2014, the grouping was able to secure positions (MEPs) in the EP, "albeit on a split vote" (Lees, 2018, p. 301). This coincided well with the European migration crisis offering the AfD an even more suitable platform to become more radicalized as well as generally heard in state parliament elections throughout Germany (Lees, 2018, pp. 301, 307). The party's primary focus shifted now towards immigration instead of the Euro crisis, and its abolition which was a suitable stratagem as Merkel's open-door policy was not popular among her core electorate (Lees, 2018, pp. 300-301).

Up until 2015, the criticism of the party came mainly from the moderate economists who used the language of populism for their agenda (Lees, 2018, p. 305). The conservatives and nationalists were peripheral (Lees, 2018, p. 305). This changed in 2015 when the AfD started to develop a more orthodox right-wing populist approach in the German political scene as a whole (Lees, 2018, p. 305). The changes in the program were caused by the changes in leadership since Berndt Lucke who was economically liberal was replaced by the far more conservative Frauke Petry in 2015 (Lees, 2018, p. 305). As mentioned above, her critique of the open-door policy of 2015 and 2016 received a generally positive welcome from the voters, and therefore the party was also acknowledged in state parliament elections (Lees,

2018, p. 305). Under the rule of Petry, the AfD intensified its program by taking into account the already previously apparent non-elite position on the Eurozone (Lees, 2018, pp. 305–306).

Moreover, Petry laid strong emphasis on the pre-eminence and importance of the German culture as well as the rejection of Islam within the German society (Lees, 2018, p. 306). In 2017, Petry resigned, and the AfD presented Alice Weidel and Alexander Gauland as their new leading spokespeople. The party becomes to be associated with neo-Nazis, and extreme radicalism as its power was now concentrated in the hands of more extreme nationalists (Lees, 2018, p. 305).

4.2 AfD's electoral performance in 2013

In the first phase, the AfD had to compete in the German Federal Election of 2013 to get elected into Bundestag in September 2013. While the party missed only by a small margin, it was enough to secure them state funding which would, in turn, contributed to the further enlargement and development of the AfD (Arzheimer, 2015, p. 9). In 2013, the AfD was referred to as the 'anti-euro' party and was merged with economic liberals and conservatives. It was known as the 'anti-euro' party mainly because it adhered to the demands initially put forward by Wahllalternative where the main issue was economical, specifically the dissolution of the 17-member eurozone currency union (Bleiker, 2017).

The general success of the AfD in the 2013 election was mainly because of the dissatisfaction with the way the German government dealt with the eurozone crisis. Furthermore, it adopted political stances on the European project and the Eurozone and role of Germany as its driving force (Lees, 2018, p. 299). In 2012, as reported by Germany's public international broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW) in a survey conducted by Der Spiegel, a high percentage (54%) of the interviewed said that continuing to add billions to euro rescue packages by Germany did not make any sense (Bleiker, 2017). Konrad Adam, the founding member of the AfD, saw this dissatisfaction as the source of the votes for his party as people were looking for other alternatives to the crisis since the mainstream parties were all taking the same stances towards this critical situation, and the only difference that they had was in how much money they

wanted to give out (Bleiker, 2017).

In other words, there is a gap which must be filled as on the one hand as shown by the survey there are different opinions about the issue of the euro among the people, and on the other hand, there is only one opinion among the mainstream parties represented in the parliament. Firstly, although the core single-issue was enough for the AfD to perform well in the public eye, it is apparent that being more successful as a party in Germany in the long term requires a fully developed party platform, broader scope and a more fundamental approach, since without these requirements it is almost impossible to pass the 5 % threshold alone. Secondly, the single-issue parties face one main challenge; the issue gets fixed and fades away as a problem. Looking at the current situation in Europe and Germany, that has proved to be the case.

4.3 AfD's electoral performance in 2017

The 2017 election saw the breakthrough of a populist party in the German parliament. The AfD received 12.6% of the vote and 94 seats with a voter turnout of 76.2%. The success of the party is directly related to the previous success of the 2013 elections, and the first condition that has facilitated the breakthrough of the AfD relates to changes that have taken place within the party goals, strategies, and discourse while keeping in mind the disappointment of the electorate with the mainstream parties. Especially with the decision of Chancellor Merkel in 2015 to open Germany borders for refugees (Lichfield, 2015).

The key to the AfD's significant growth lies in its exceptional transformation and the general fragility of the European Union (Lees, 2018, pp. 299-300). For instance, in a survey conducted by the German public broadcaster ZDF, although only 13 percent of the respondents believed that the AfD could solve the issue of the refugee crisis, 44 percent of respondents said that the refugees and foreigners are one of the biggest problems facing Germany (Blickle et al., 2017). A crucial element that contributed to the success of the AfD was due to the ability of the party to "mobilize previous non-voters to turn out" (Hoerner & Hobolt, 2017). The AfD got more votes than the Greens and the Left Party to become the third largest party in the German Parliament with 94 seats, while the conservatives and

center-left suffered losses, the AfD because of Saxony's most powerful party (Blickle et al. 2017).

Data from *Infratest dimap for ARD* show that 1,470,000 non-voters cast their vote for the AfD, making up to 25% of the voter migration flow for the party, 130,000 (2.2%) of which were first-time voters. Also, around 1,040,000 (18%) voters who in the past have voted for CDU/CSU have decided to support the AfD. Continuing further with 510,000 (8.6%) of voters from SPD, 420,000 (7.1%) of votes were lost by the Left Party. Furthermore, as shown by a study published by the Federal Returning Officer on the 2017 Bundestag Election, most AfD voters come from 35-44 (16%) and the 45-to-59 age groups (15%), whereas age groups with 70 and more and 18-24 supported the AfD with 8% of the votes. More than half of the AfD voters were aged from 45 and 69 years old, meaning that the youngest and the oldest age group were underrepresented (“2017 Bundestag Election: more vote splitting than ever,” STATIS, 2018).

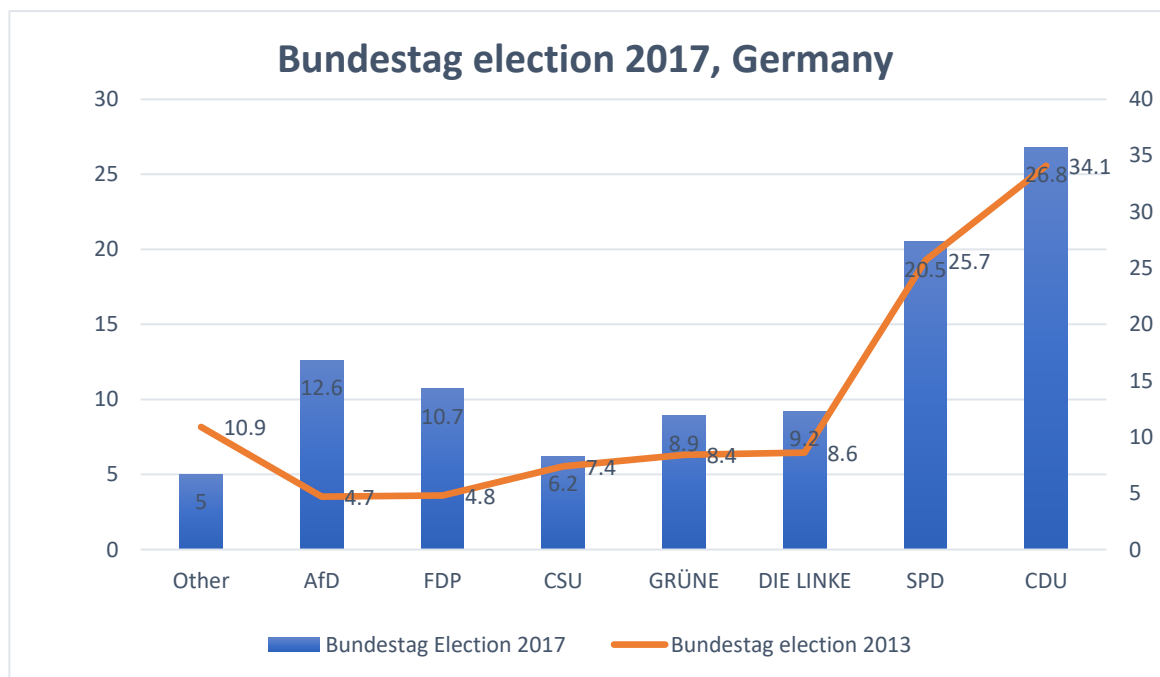


Table 3. Data retrieved from The Federal Returning Officer 2017. Created by the author.

When it comes to voting behavior by education, the highest percentage of AfD voters comes from people that have a school-leaving certificate from an intermediate-level high school (17 percent), followed by the second group made up with voters who completed vocational high

school with 14 percent (Blickle et al. 2017). On the other hand, only 7 percent of university graduates voted for the AfD, making it the lowest percentage of the voters' group when compared to four smaller parties that are represented at the German parliament. Whereas the most significant share of the group that cast their vote for the AfD works (19 percent), with the second largest group being self-employed with 12 percent (Blickle et al. 2017)

When looking at the voting behavior based on gender, the AfD supporters are mostly men and are situated in the eastern part of Germany. Women on the other hand although support the AfD less, the gap between west and east is quite high as well as in west AfD share of votes by women is just 8 percent compared to 17 percent in the east (Blickle et al. 2017).

4.4 Different engagement strategies of the AfD in the western (more 'mainstream' populist) and in the eastern (more radical) parts of Germany

As the AfD has occupied a crucial place in the new German political landscape, the division between the east and west has surfaced again. Joachim Gauck, the federal president of Germany, noted three years ago that the west was seen as the nation of compassion and tolerance and the east as the nation of hatred and racism (Richter, 2018). The conservative daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* asked: "Is Saxony still a part of Germany?" *Der Spiegel* put the word Saxony on its cover with big letters turning into brown, old-German type (translation: Nazi type) (Blickle et al. 2017). The AfD has supporters in the West as shown by the statistics. As reported by the German newspaper *Handelsblatt*, the AfD won 20,5 percent of the vote in the Eastern German states, including the former East Berlin.

In comparison, the AfD only got 10.7 percent in western Germany (Schaer, 2017). Table 2 shows the performance of the AfD in the east and west sorted by individual states in the 2013 and 2017 federal election. The performance of the AfD in 2017 in both parts of Germany is evident compared to the one in 2013, gaining more presence in the state parliaments as well. Also, in 2018 state elections in Bavaria, the AfD won 10,2 percent meaning that the party (has) entered the Bavarian state parliament for the first time.

Going back to the regional differences, it could be said that although there have been attempts to explain this phenomenon, often referring to the unequal distribution of wealth between the east and west, it is somewhat challenging to assess whether the AfD is supported more in the east because of the differences between the east and west, their positions on immigration or a combination of various factors such as the history, differences in wealth distribution and the strategies used by the political parties (especially the AfD).

In addition, the number of foreigners that live in East Germany is much lower compared to the west where there are more migrants. In the east, migrants make up 4%-9% of the population, while in West Germany the number reaches up to 25% in many parts. However, the disinclination towards migrants in the eastern part is higher, and according to experts, one of the main reasons for that can be the lack of experience of living with foreigners (Connolly, 2015). This, in turn, is manifested through anger from East Germans about mass unemployment after unification, the perceived arrogance of the West German elites and the failure to bring wages and pensions in line with the West is redirected against refugees, migrants, and foreigners (“How the far-right AfD taps into Germany's East-West divide,” Deutsche Welle, 2018). The communist past of the eastern part is the cause for these differences that are manifested even today between east and west, and the AfD is using those cracks in the east to its advantage.

For example, Björn Höcke (well known for his strong language) who is a history teacher and the leader of the AfD in the state of Thuringia prefers presenting himself as “the voice of the East” despite coming from western Germany. The former leader of the AfD Frauke Petry agrees: “Höcke is capitalizing on the dissatisfaction of citizens in the East without coming up with any proposals of his own, but in doing so he remains a non-specific projection screen for many of their wishes,” (“How the far-right AfD taps into Germany's East-West divide,” Deutsche Welle, 2018).

Sylvia Sasse, a professor of Slavic Literature at the University of Zurich has written on her blog an article titled “Die Zombie-Republik. DDR reloaded.” She claims that xenophobia

was constitutive for the GDR (Sasse, 2018). The devaluation of the others, including their brothers and sisters has served to hold the republic somehow together. In DDR the contact with foreigners, not only in the West has been observed by the secret service because they were regarded as possible dissidents (Sasse, 2018). These resentments against strangers are nowadays politically used in eastern Germany by the AfD. Sasse suspects that the anger that is expressed in the eastern part is essentially a new type of obedience, a new submission to the slogans of AfD instead of the submission to the old regime. The AfD in return interprets this new obedience as dissidence, a breakout from the mainstream (Sasse, 2018).

In addition, Robert Grimm (2015) has found that the AfD has been increasingly adopting a xenophobic, nativist and law and order rhetoric in eastern Germany (Grimm, 2015). Furthermore, during the 2014 local election campaigns in 2014 in the Eastern German states of Brandenburg, Thuringia and notably Saxony, the AfD's electoral offerings included broader communitarian nativist themes (Grimm, 2015). The AfD Saxony used those rifts between the east and west to its advantage while it drew on widespread fears about uncontrolled migration, European 'welfare tourism', bogus and criminal asylum seekers and trans-border crime, dual citizenship and demanded public referenda to decide on the building of mosques and minarets (Grimm, 2015).

	State	2013 Federal election (second vote) in %	2017 Federal election (second vote) in %	% change	State elections (%)
East	Brandenburg	6.0	20.2	14.2	2014 (12.2)
	Saxony	6.8	27.0	20.2	2014 (9.7)
	Saxony-Anhalt	4.2	19.6	15.4	2016 (24.3)
	Thuringia	6.2	22.7	16.5	2014 (10.6)
	Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	5.6	18.6	13.0	2016 (20.8)
West	Baden-Württemberg	5.2	12.2	7.0	2016 (15.1)
	Bavaria	4.3	12.4	8.1	Due in 2018
	Berlin	4.9	12.0	7.1	2016 (14.2)
	Bremen	3.7	10.0	6.3	2015 (5.5)
	Hamburg	4.2	7.8	3.6	2015 (6.1)
	Hessen	5.6	11.6	6.0	2013 (4.1)
	North Rhine-Westphalia	3.9	9.4	5.5	2017 (7.4)
	Lower Saxony	3.7	9.1	5.4	Due in 2018
	Rhineland-Palatinate	4.8	11.2	6.4	2016 (12.6)
	Saarland	5.2	10.1	4.9	2017 (6.2)
	Schleswig-Holstein	4.6	8.2	3.6	2017 (5.9)
	All	4.7	12.6	7.9	–

Table 2. Percentage vote shares for the AfD in the Bundestag and state elections, by individual states, 2013–2017. Source: (Lees, 2018, p. 302)

4.5 Clashes between hardliners and moderates, the strategy of the AfD and the impact on the electoral success of the party

Recent research published by Simon T. Franzmann (2018) argues that the development of the AfD was mainly driven by the intra-party divisions and conflicts (Franzmann S. , 2018, p. 8). Since the party emergence in 2013 and until one day after the 2017 German elections when the leader Frauke Petry announced that she had resigned the party has experienced significant changes in leadership (Chazan, 2017). She followed the path of Bernd Lucke, in announcing plans to form a new right-wing populist party (Siri, 2017, p. 141). The decision of Frauke Petry to leave the AfD and form her party "The Blue Party" showed that what was perceived as a successful radical right-wing party from the outside was going through some internal struggles and that two or more different approaches within the party were taking place. In other words, there are two (or more) groups within the AfD, the moderate wing of the party on the one hand, and hardliners of the party on the other. Alexander Gauland and

Björn Höcke who belonged among the hardliners were more connected with extremists and focused more on the topics such as refugees and 'Islam,' Whereas Frauke Petry and her followers belonged to the former group which later wanted to distance the party from the radical right (even Petry's position itself has shifted from the hardliner to moderate through time on specific issues). Hence, putting effort into making it possible for the party to be perceived as a potential coalition partner in the future by addressing more topics such as the EU and economic issues (Röhlig, 2017). However, as reported by Financial Times Germany, "the initiative was soundly rejected by the rest of the party," (Chazan, 2017).

This was also confirmed by Petry herself when she justified her decision to leave the AfD by saying that extremist statements made by other party leaders make it impossible to construct a "constructive opposition," (Chase, 2017). As reported by DW, one of the leaders of the party, Alice Weidel, said that everyone was surprised by her decision (Chase, 2017). However, looking further into this, there are reports which state that the clashes between these two groups within the party had been going on for some time, despite the comments of Weidel of being surprised by the decision. Petry's husband, Marcus Pretzel, also qualified as an influential AfD leader, quit the party and stated that his decision is based on his "not very optimistic view of how the AfD is likely to develop," (Chase, 2017). Furthermore, in late February 2018, the AfD sued its former leader Frauke Petry on the basis that the name and color of the logo of her new party, the "Blue Party", are extremely similar to that of the AfD, a milder way of expressing the AfD's strong disapproval with Petry's outright "copying" (Hölter, 2018). As a report by "Bento" reveals, in 2017 the AfD had registered several 'marken' just to be on the safe side and prevent something like that from happening, including names such as "Blaue Partei" and "Blaue Wende", however, but not Die Blaue Partei which is the name that Petry's party has in German (Hölter, 2018).

The changes that were caused by the internal party splits make it difficult to say whether the AfD has had a specific strategy. However, Franzmann (2018) claims that if there is one effective strategic center within the AfD, it is crystallized in the person of Alexander Gauland (Franzmann S. , 2018, p. 9). Different from Bernd Lucke, Gauland was not keen on

discussing the euro, but he changed his mind temporarily for tactical reasons (cited in Franzmann, 2018, p. 9). The ability of Gauland to adapt and act strategically made him one of the most respected and influential people within the party and this has been decisive in the internal battles of 2015 and 2017 (Franzmann, 2018, p. 9). The strategic ability of the AfD to shift its focus from criticizing the European Stability Mechanism to an anti-modernization and anti-migration agenda is directly related to Gauland's influence within the party and his cultural conservatism and nationalism (Franzmann, 2018, p. 9).

Although the AfD development has been characterized by party splits and internal struggles, Franzmann argues that the electoral success of the party has remained unharmed for two main reasons. First, the splits were beneficial in the formation of crucial issues and shaping of the programmatic profile of the AfD (Franzmann, 2018, p. 11.) Second, the internal party splits fell into a period without any Länder elections which in return meant that the AfD had months to re-organize and overcome the internal issues (Franzmann, 2018, p.11 -12.)

4.6 The AfD 2014 political guidelines and moving away from the single issue

In April 2013, Bernd Lucke gave a speech during the AfD's conference in Berlin in which he stated that he does not view the AfD as a single-issue party, a statement that ran counter to the beliefs of the scholars and media at the time who claimed that the AfD was one. Nevertheless, changes were necessary after the initial success in the 2013 federal elections in order to guarantee the party's long-term presence in the German political landscape. In the 2014 political guidelines, the attempt to shift from a single issue to a broader spectrum of issues by the AfD becomes apparent. Furthermore, Simon T- Franzman (2016) researched the tactical agendas of the AfD which revealed that before the 2014 EP elections the AfD acted as a single-issue party whose degrees of populism varied in public (Franzmann, 2014). However, as the 2014 European Elections were approaching, the AfD decreased its use of populist appeals (Franzmann, 2014, p. 473).

A brief description followed by an analysis of the AfD's 2014 political guidelines and their approach towards immigration, the European Union and other socioeconomic and sociocultural issues will be provided below.

The Alternative for Germany starts its political guidelines (Politische Leitlinien der AfD 2014) by giving a short historical description of the "extremely successful" phase in the German history after the Second World War in social, political, and economic developments. At the same time, they point out the reasons why that specific phase was "extremely successful" and why the lack of those factors nowadays makes Germany surrounded with problems and adverse trends. They proceed by giving their solutions about those issues, as a way of saying that they have the efficient and reliable means to bring Germany to an 'extremely successful' phase again. As it is to be expected, a large part of the political guidelines refers to the European Union and the euro crisis. For instance, on this issue, the AfD reinforced their position on how the euro has been harmful and emphasized the perils that come from it:

“The euro crisis has shown that the introduction of the euro was a decision economically and politically contrary to reason. It has long been evident that the single-currency euro destroyed Europe's foundation. It generates strife and resurrects national prejudices. Welfare and peace among the member states in the eurozone are endangered.”

(Political Guidelines of the Alternative für Deutschland, 2014, p. 2).

The party believed that the decision for a single-currency was economically and politically contrary to reason. However, statistics suggest something else, as Germany is the main economic benefactor from single-currency in the entire European Union where, after a brief contraction in 2008, the German economy continued to grow (Grimm, 2015, pp. 265-266). Hypothetically speaking, if Germany would get out of Eurozone only because a euro crisis occurred once, one could argue that precisely that decision would be economically and politically contrary to reason.

The AfD argues that democracy has suffered harm in the euro crisis because parliaments of the states did not have a say in financial burdens caused by the European Stability Mechanism and that the rule of law has also suffered harm in the euro crisis because violations on two levels were committed from national governments and from European Central Bank itself (Political Guidelines of the Alternative für Deutschland, 2014, p. 2). The first has violated the Maastricht Treaty and the latter the prohibition of monetary state financing. The separation of powers has also come to harm because during the euro crisis the Federal Constitutional Court failed to denounce "obvious" legal violations made by the federal government and skipped its responsibility by appealing to European Court of Justice for the first time (Political Guidelines of the Alternative für Deutschland, 2014, p. 2).

Moreover, the AfD claims that their main aim is to preserve, and where necessary, to restore the democracy and the fundamental principles of it. They want to bring back the principles that were violated by the German government during the euro crisis, the principle of responsibility, the principle of solidarity, the principle of transparency and the principle of sustainability (Political Guidelines of the Alternative für Deutschland, 2014, p. 2).

Quite an interesting approach can be noticed when talking about the equality of the sexes and gender quotas. They strive for the former while rejecting the latter together with the policies that aim to abolish sexual identity. For them, personal achievements and abilities must be the determining factors as "the AfD believes in equal opportunity, not equal results" (Political Guidelines of the Alternative für Deutschland, 2014, p. 2).

When addressing their views on the freedom of opinion and speech, it is evident that they value the open debate as one of the most important public goods, yet they will also make sure that the "freedom of expression also includes the right to criticize religion" (Political Guidelines of the Alternative für Deutschland, 2014, p. 2).

When expressing their views on population development on Germany, the AfD presents itself as a conservative party as it wants to encourage young people to establish families. Their approach to same-sex marriage remains a little bit unclear even though they claim that the

marriage between a man and a woman is ‘desirable.’ When it comes to demographic sustainability, they also favor the immigration to Germany of "those who are willing and able to integrate themselves into [the German] society." On the other hand, the “The AfD firmly rejects immigration into the German social systems — also from EU member countries” (Political Guidelines of the Alternative für Deutschland, 2014, p. 2).

The program of the AfD for the election to the 2014 EP election is especially useful in order to get a clearer understanding of the party positions. In the preamble, it is stated that:

“The AfD strives for an EU of sovereign states supporting human rights, democracy, the values of the Christian West, selective integration, subsidiarity, competition, and the rule of law. It is against excessive EU centralism, bureaucracy, dirigisme and a common currency that leads to rescuing incompetent banks, to frustrated jobless young people and minimal pensions.”

(Courage to Stand Up for Germany - For European Diversity, 2014).

The concept of the "Christian West" remains very problematic because one might argue that there is no Christian West. There might be a Western Europe influenced by Christianity, but again, there is no uniformity on that. As Andrea Althoff (2018) finds:

“The most direct connection between right-wing populism and conservative Christianity is the AfD’s reference to the Christian tradition as the main ingredient of German culture. This German culture and Christianity are, for the AfD, under threat by Muslim immigrants and refugees and needs to be protected.”

(Althoff, 2018, p. 24).

The ‘selective integration’ part stands out as well. Based on the fourth point of the program, it is Turkey and its aspirations to join EU. For which they clearly state that EU accession negotiations with Turkey are to be stopped (Courage to Stand Up for Germany. For European Diversity, 2014, p. 2). Furthermore, the AfD gives a very dark image of the European Union and claims that there must be an alternative, their alternative! The AfD continues by pointing

out how the elites are lying the citizens of the euro zone. Therefore the AfD wants to remove “the smokescreen” and reveal the “truth.” On the issue of the European Union itself the AfD claims that it has no intentions to change the commitment of Germany towards the European Union. Instead, the AfD wants to strengthen the role of Germany in the European Union.

In addition, a distinction must be made between the manifestos and the language that is used in public debates, traditional media outlets, and social media. For instance, Charles Lee (2018) argues that the AfD’s stance on immigration had always been hardline, a position that was openly made clear via social media outlets and election posters (Lees, 2018, p. 306). Frauke Petry who had become the leading spokesperson of the AfD in 2015 was strongly opposed to Merkel’s plan, and the populist direction that she took, including the idea of identity checks at the German border, proved to be successful among the electorate (Lees, 2018, pp. 305-306).

Considering that the AfD used populist discourse in 2013 on the one hand and on the other seeing the not so strong language used in their political guidelines in 2014, the more moderate guidelines would only hide this populist attitude (Franzmann, 2014, p. 474). The analysis of Franzman suggests that the discourse used by the AfD contributes to a temporary populist tactical agenda (Franzmann, 2014, p. 474). The author claims that the founders of the party applied a naive electoral political strategy, whereas stated by the author Spiegel magazine revealed that Lucke himself encouraged party members to use populist appeal in order to attract media attention (Franzmann, 2014, p. 474).

4.7 The 2017 Manifesto for Germany

The 2017 AfD election manifesto is titled “Manifesto for Germany.” In the preamble, their claim to be open-minded towards other nations and cultures “but wish to be and remain German at heart” (AfD, 2017) stands out together with emphasis into retaining the “western Christian culture” and keeping common cultural values and historical traditions. Including as well but not limited to separation of power, the rule of law and the main goal being “when government and all its institutions once again become servants to all citizens in our country,”

(AfD, 2017). Already in the preamble, it is clear that although the AfD still mentions the one single founding issue.

When looking at the form of the manifesto and on the content itself, the manifesto has 14 Chapters and is 93 pages long in comparison to political guidelines 2014 which has only six pages. Only four pages long, Chapter 2 is titled “Europe and the Euro” and is among the three shortest chapters in the entire manifesto, whereas among the longest is Chapter 1 titled “Democracy and Core Values” and Chapter 9 on “Immigration, Integration, and Asylum.”

Regarding Democracy and Core values, the AfD voiced the introduction of the referendum based on the Swiss Model, and it is stated that this element is a “non-negotiable component of any coalition agreement signed by the AfD.” The possibility of a coalition remained opened.

4.7.1 Euroscepticism

Hansen & Olsen (2018) define a Eurosceptic party as a party which achieves votes through a platform sharply critical of the EU while at the same time promising to restore economic control to national states (p. 2).

The AfD was from the beginning skeptical towards the European Union. In 2017 manifesto it emphasizes the need to restore the powers of nation-states and to oppose efforts towards centralization. The AfD advocates the retention of the nation states, the EU is conceived of as an undemocratic entity which needs fundamental reform. In line with their claim that Germany should not contribute to the centralization of the EU, the AfD rejects the common EU Foreign and Security Policy and a common European Foreign Service but does not mention the withdrawal of Germany from the EU. Furthermore, the AfD opposed the admission of Turkey to the EU for “cultural and geographical reasons” (AfD, 2017) which in turn means that the AfD has an idea on how the EU should look like in the future as well.

Up until 2015, the AfD has been classified as ‘soft’ Eurosceptic party (Lees, 2018, p. 304). The AfD has advocated that Germany should withdraw from the EURO monetary union ever since its emergence and has not backed away from their position on this issue at the 2017 manifesto either. Meaning that the party’s most radical position on the EU until 2015 has

been precisely that. From 2015 the AfD's narrative became a breeding ground progressively for a more populist and critical approach to the entire German political settlement (Lees, 2018, p. 305). Furthermore, in the 2017 manifesto, the AfD opens up the possibility to pursue the exit of Germany from the European Union itself:

“Should we not succeed with our ideas of a fundamental reform within the present framework of the European Union, we shall seek Germany's exit, or a democratic dissolution of the EU, followed by the founding of a new European economic union.”

(Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 15)

The skeptic attitude of the AfD towards the EU is confirmed by CHES data wherein 2014 the average level of the AfD support for European Integration was 1.6 whereas in 2017 it was 1.81 (on a 7-point scale where 7 equals strongly in favor). Also, the average score on relative salience of European integration in the party's public stance was 9.5 in 2014 and 7.12 in 2017 (on a 10-point scale where 10 means that European Integration is of great importance). The average score on the degree of dissent within the party on European integration in 2014 was 1.33 and in 2017 was 2 (on a 10-point scale where 10 means that the party was extremely divided). The position of the party in 2014 on EU enlargement to Turkey was 1.37 (on a 7-point scale where 7 means strongly in favor).

Over time, the AfD has drifted towards a more critical Eurosceptic position, preferring the EU without many of the elements that it currently carries, however, the critique against the EU centralism, bureaucracy and dirigisme show that the AfD position was not against the EU per se as it was against the currency but was looking for changes within the EU, and opposing the increasing power of the European Union. Hence, the AfD can be classified as a Eurosceptic party which currently does not look for the withdraw of Germany from the EU but instead seeks a fundamental reform of the EU itself. If the fundamental reform does not take place, then the party will pursue the exit of the country from the EU.

4.7.2 Sociocultural and socioeconomic issues

The AfD has moved towards supplying unique policy alternatives on the EU, immigration, preservation of German culture and identity. For instance, in the national security and justice chapter, the AfD wants to re-establish border crossing points and wherever necessary to raise fences and set up similar barriers. In the same chapter, one of the AfD's ways to fight organized crime is by simplifying the deportation of "this group of people" referring to foreign nationals as according to the AfD "The majority of offenders in the field of organized crime are foreign nationals," (AfD, 2017). In chapter six, section 6.2 is titled "Larger Families instead of Mass Immigration" and is further elaborated as follows:

"Germany's negative demographic trend has to be counteracted. Mass immigration has a high potential for conflict and is not a viable economic solution. The only mid- and the longterm solution is to attain a higher birth rate by the native population by stimulating family policies."

(Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 40)

The native element stands out among other things as a core value jointly with their idea of traditional family and also brings about the difference between 'us' and 'them' Them being the immigrants, mainly from the Islamic states:

"In order to fight the effects of this negative demographic development, political parties currently in government support mass immigration, mainly from Islamic states, without due consideration of the needs and qualifications of the German labor market. During the past few years, it has become evident that Muslim immigrants to Germany, in particular, only attain below-average levels of education, training, and employment."

(Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 41)

The AfD advocates German as a predominant culture as opposed to multiculturalism which is 'blind' to history:

“This culture is derived from three sources: firstly, the religious traditions of Christianity; secondly, the scientific and humanistic heritage, whose ancient roots were renewed during the period of Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment; and thirdly, Roman law, upon which our constitutional state is founded.”

(Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 46)

Multiculturalism is perceived as a threat to social peace and the German cultural identity. Accordingly, the AfD makes a sharp distinction between the Germanic race and multiculturalism and Islam (Klikauer, 2018, p. 618). In line with that, Islam is seen as a religion that does not belong to Germany:

“Its expansion and the ever-increasing number of Muslims in the country are viewed by the AfD as a danger to our state, our society, and our values. An Islam which neither respects nor refrains from being in conflict with our legal system or that even lays claim to power as the only true religion is incompatible with our legal system and our culture.”

(Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 48)

The AfD claims that there is a trend towards radicalization amongst Muslims that live in Germany and this must be curbed. The AfD positions towards Islam continue expanding by allowing criticism of Islam, ending foreign financing of mosques, prohibiting full-body veiling in public spaces, rejecting the minaret the muezzin call and by abolishing theological chairs for Islam studies at German universities and to transfer those positions to the faculty of religious studies (Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 49).

Chapter 9 talks about immigration, integration, and asylum. The AfD emphasizes the need for a change in underlying assumptions in asylum immigration and argues that it is necessary to make a distinction between political refugees and people fleeing from the war on the one hand, and irregular migrants on the other (Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 49). The AfD is willing to grant shelter in Germany to the true refugees that are escaping from the war in the country of origin, but not to the irregular migrants. However, the true refugees should leave Germany as soon as the reasons for fleeing from their country are no longer valid. It is further

emphasized the need to tackle the issue outside of the European Union by setting up shelters and upgrading the existing shelters in countries in the region where migration comes from. The AfD wants to alter the immigration from other EU countries to Germany:

“The AfD, therefore, calls for a comprehensive and thorough realignment of EU legislation to regain a national course of action and to put an end to widespread misuse of rights related to the Free Movement Directive. If this should not be effective, we demand a restriction of free movement within the EU, allowing the host country to control the immigration of job-seekers and their family members.”

(Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 60).

The party supports moderate legal immigration from non-EU countries which are highly-skilled immigrants that are willing to integrate and the same is valuable from other EU countries. The importance of integration is stressed in section 9.4 which is titled “Integration is more than just Learning the German Language” where assimilation is seen as the most advanced form of integration which is worth striving for, yet, it cannot be enforced, and integration is seen as an obligation (Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 62). On German citizenship issue, the AfD wants to end the practice where children are given German citizenship automatically without any of their parents being German. Instead, they propose:

“German citizenship should only be granted to immigrants who have come of age. This will rule out the automatic granting of German citizenship to children of foreign parents, as this has been a source of considerable abuse. Such children should only receive German citizenship where at least one parent is already a German citizen.”

(Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p. 64)

The AfD has not abandoned its positions in regards the European Union; however, anti-immigrant/nativist themes have been prioritized in the 2017 party manifesto.

The CMP data from 2013 to 2017 confirm that the AfD has been increasingly more concerned with the newer sociocultural dimension than other German parties, specifically on the issue of traditional and religious moral values, law and order, national way of life, civic mindedness (defined as appeals for national solidarity) and multiculturalism as negative. Differently, although the socioeconomic dimensions have taken more space after 2013, the data confirm that the AfD has been less concerned with socioeconomic issues in comparison with the sociocultural dimension. The broader issue agenda means that the AfD has become less of a niche party, although issues such as Euro and anti-EU sentiment still are important topics.

In addition, according to CHES expert survey, on the immigration issue, the AfD's average in 2014 is 9.30 whereas in 2017 9.31 (in a 10-point scale where 10 means that they favor a restrictive policy on immigration). The same is valuable for their position on multiculturalism where the AfD scores 9.22 in 2014 in comparison to 2017 with 9.86 (in a 10-point scale where 10 means that the party strongly favors assimilation). Furthermore, the AfD strongly opposes more rights for ethnic minorities scoring 8.8 in 2014 and 8.6 in 2017 (10-point scale) and strongly promotes nationalist conceptions of society scoring 8.69 (10-point scale). On ideological question, the position of the party regarding its ideological stance in 2014 was 8.92 whereas 9.18 in 2017 (in 10-point scale, where 10 equals extreme right). The average party ideological stance on economic issues has been 8.33 in 2014 and 7.53 in 2017. (same 10-point scale). Parties on the economic right do not want the government to play an active role in the economy.

Furthermore, the relative salience of economic issues in the AfD's public stance in 2014 has been 8.46 in comparison to 2017 where it has decreased to 3.33 (in a 10-point scale where 10 equals great importance.) In 2014, on the AfD's positions on democratic freedoms and right, the average party score was 8.69 while 9.46 in 2017 (in a 10-point scale where 0 was libertarian/postmaterialist, and 10 was traditional/authoritarian.) The relative salience of traditional issues in the party's public stance has been 5.66 in 2014 and 9.28 in 2017 (in a 10-point scale where 10 equals great importance.)

Furthermore, on the expert responses to the most important issues questions in the case of the AfD, the results are as follows:

1. The most important issue for the party of the course of 2014 has been EU integration.
2. The second most prominent issue has been immigration.
3. A third most important issue has been public services vs. taxes.

Different from the 2014 survey, the 2017 survey has questions regarding populism and internal party democracy as well. On the question on direct versus representative democracy (people versus elite), the AfD scores 7.6 (in a 10-point scale where 10 means that “the people”, not the elite should make the most critical decisions. The salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric notches a 9.68 (in a 10-point scale where 10 means equals extremely important) whereas on the salience of reducing political corruption scores a 5 (10- point scale). The final question on the survey examines whether the party policy choices are controlled by members or leadership and the AfD scores 6.2 (in a 10-point scale where 10 means that leadership has complete control over party policy choices).

If we look at the expert-level data from 2017 dataset we see that there is a unity among experts when it comes to the overall orientation of the AfD’s leadership towards European Integration meaning that out of 17 experts the majority of them believes that the AfD leadership is either strongly opposed or opposed towards European Integration. The same goes for the ideological question on the position of the party regarding its overall ideological stance where unanimously the experts believe that the AfD belongs on the extreme right (with 13 nines and three 10’s.) Furthermore, most of the experts believe the clarity of the party position on economic issues is not clear, with one expert believing that the party position on economic issues is unequivocal. On the other hand, most of the experts agree, that the salience of economic issues in the party’s public stance does not hold much importance. All of them agree that the AfD belongs to the traditional/authoritarian spectrum when it comes to their views on democratic freedoms and right, valuing more order, tradition, and stability, similarly agreeing that the party position on libertarian/traditional issues is evident with one exclusion which believes that it is not that clear.

When it comes to the immigration policy the experts agree that the AfD fully supports restrictive immigration policy and strongly favors assimilation, however, with one expert believing that the AfD is opposed to a restrictive policy on the issue, although all of them agree that the salience of immigration policy is of a great importance and an issue on which the party was completely united.

On the populism and internal party democracy questions, specifically on the question about the salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric the experts wholeheartedly agree that it is imperative, however when it comes to their position on whether members or leadership has control on party policy choices the experts do not agree, as some claim that members have a say (seven) and the rest believe that the leadership has the control over policy choices. However, most of them do not agree strongly on the latter as well.

In sum, the AfD has increasingly transformed from a Eurosceptic party which was initially (Arzheimer, 2015) to a radical right party. The AfD has not given up its original positions about the EU. However it has increasingly emphasized more nativist elements which further contribute to the radical dimension of the party. Furthermore, when looking at the way the AfD has used the social media (Facebook and Twitter) it becomes clear that the party has developed a vote-seeking strategy by emphasizing more issues such as immigration although in the 2017 manifesto the immigration and economy have both taken almost equal attention. While looking at social media strategy used by the AfD Serrano et al. (2018) find that the AfD intentionally hid their economic proposals on social media and focused on immigration (Serrano et al. 2018, p. 11).

4.7.3 The anti-establishment profile

Anti-establishment dimension and the extreme reputation of the party constitute a core element to assess whether the party has changed its anti-establishment profile and if it has tried to overcome the extremist reputation. As clarified in the theoretical framework chapter,

anti-establishment parties are classified as such because of the ideological distance that they have with the system itself.

In the 2014 Political Guidelines and 2017 Manifesto, the lack of democracy in decision-making in Germany is criticized. In public speeches, similar comments are much more common. Patton (2017) finds that after 2015 the AfD followed a more openly anti-establishment strategy where Björn Höcke as head of the Thuringia party branch organized massive street protests against Merkel's refugee policies (Patton, 2017, p.4). In a 2014 study Berbuir et al. find that the AfD exhibits a strong anti-establishment attitude (Berbuir et al. 2014, p. 156) and later on the study they look at several campaign posters to illustrate the anti-establishment strategy followed by the AfD and find that although the poster broach different issues, they refer to the same dichotomy in which the party portrays itself as the only bearer of the truth (Berbuir et al. 2014, p. 165). Also, the political establishment in Germany is seen as responsible for the Euro crisis on the one hand, and the decline of traditional social values on the other (Berbuir et al. 2014, p. 173).

In line with the criteria on how to identify, an anti-establishment party outlined by Hartleb (2015) in the methodological framework chapter and looking at the 2017 Manifesto for Germany the AfD has kept and increasingly developed its anti-establishment profile because:

1. It has 'an alternative' "to the German Exit" and to offer Germany "a true political alternative" (AfD, 2017, p.5).
2. Blames the mainstream media for presenting them in a negative light (Serrano et al. 2018,3).
3. It constructs a homogenous people in terms of a general will (i.e., Islam goes against German values, German) and creates a front line against the mainstream parties and political elite as follows:

“Behind the scenes a small and powerful elite within the political parties is secretly

in charge and is responsible for the misguided development of past decades. It is this political class of career politicians whose foremost interest is to retain their own power base, status, and material well-being. It is a political cartel which operates the levers of government power, insofar as these have not been transferred to the EU.”

(Manifesto for Germany, 2017, p 7.)

4. It has the label of an opposition party and that it does not belong in the conventional group of German political parties as it claims that it is different from other parties and as such represents the real voice of the people as “our Members of Parliament have forfeited their role as true representatives of the German people” (AfD, 2017, p. 10).

5. It openly demands forms of direct democracy and advocates the introduction of referenda in Germany based on the Swiss model (AfD, 2017, p. 8).

6. It calls on the will of the majority of the people.

7. It simplifies the political issues by pointing the finger towards the Euro, Islam, immigrants, and the political elite.

8. The image of a taboo-breaker is part of the AfD as well because it pushes forwards topics such as the remembrance of the time of National Socialism and calls for openness while seeking a broader understanding of history (AfD, 2017, p 47).

9. Claims not to be part of Germany’s power elite (cited in Klikauer, 2018, p. 619).

Also, according to CHES data 2014 on the issue salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric, the AfD scores 7.77 (10-point scale where 10 equals extremely importance) whereas in 2017 there is a significant increase on the issue salience with 9.68 which means that the AfD anti-establishment rhetoric has further increased. Additionally, Hansen and Olsen (2018) while examining the voters of the AfD in 2017 federal election found that the support of the AfD by the electorate was driven only by two factors: 1) their attitudes towards immigrants/refugees; and 2) anti-establishment sentiment/satisfaction with democracy in Germany (Hansen & Olsen, 2018, p. 1). With that said, considering that the AfD’s anti-

establishment strategy in public has been remarkably effective in terms of appealing to the electorate, especially in East Germany, as confirmed by the data it is just reasonable to expect that the party has further heightened its nativist and anti-establishment profile and as such the anti-establishment dimension is a core value of the party.

One year on, the AfD in the Bundestag

When looking at the AfD's behavior and actions in the Bundestag after one year in the parliament we can see that the use of provocations and going beyond commonly accepted communication standards is done to get more public attention by "producing" more content for media usage. For instance, this becomes very clear when looking at the acting/speaking in a very opportunistic manner through which the AfD members try to "embarrass" members of other political parties in the Bundestag (Ruhose, 2019, p. 3- 4). Although it is often presumed that political parties tend to soften down after becoming part of the parliament, political scientist Christoph Butterwegge argues that that is not the case with the AfD. Instead, the AfD has followed an aggressive, confrontational and provocative discourse (Doering, 2018). He adds that the AfD is doing this intentionally to demonstrate to their base of support that they have not abandoned the radical element that characterizes them just because they are in parliament (Doering, 2018). Jacqueline Westermann, a researcher at Australian Strategic Policy Institute, argues as follows:

"In the 12 months that the AfD has been in the Bundestag, it has changed the debating culture. AfD members are provocative and they have polarized debate and disrupted long-established procedures. They regularly interrupt debates with loud and derisive laughter to denigrate opponents and attract attention to themselves. While such behavior is not unheard of even in the normally ordered Bundestag, the AfD has taken it to a new level." (Westermann, 2018.)

4.7.4 Right-wing radicals of the AfD

A brief introduction of the most influential leaders of the AfD is necessary as the questions regarding their political stances, of what they represent and to which group they belong act as an effective tool to comprehend and analyze the gradual transformation of the AfD.

In 2017, Bento platform carried out a research which examined the views of the AfD's candidates, with a high probability of them being members of the Bundestag, through a systematic analysis of their social media profiles and news reports. The results of the 35 candidates were compiled in a table which included the names of the candidates, federal state, rank, and other pieces of information such as statements, biography data, and sources. The findings revealed that of the 94 candidates that were analyzed, 35 could be identified as "right-wing radicals" (Chase, 2017).

Also, it is important to note that the fundamental distinction between right and radical-right itself is not clear. The terms intersect meaning that it is difficult to establish in which sense right contrasts with radical-right. The lack of distinctness can be witnessed in the party speeches and statements. For instance, the term 'Umvolkung' which in Nazi ideology describes the process of assimilating the members of the German people, so that they would forget their language and origin, is used (Fahlbusch, 2000). There are also remarks about Merkel is seen as a traitor to the country, the fundamental rights that do not apply to Muslims in the future and the demand to end the 'guilt cult' regarding the Germans in the Second World War (cf. Wilhelm von Gottberg and Alexander Gauland) (Reißmann, 2017). Alexander Gauland, the second leading candidate of the AfD, went as far as to make a bold statement on the German role in the First and Second World War by stating that Germans "[have] the right to be proud of the achievements of German soldiers in two world wars," (Röhlig & Lakämper, 2017).

There are also increasing extremist tendencies or inclinations that are present within the party. Some reports claim that the AfD does/did not only tolerate extremists, but they preferably added them to the list of candidates for the 2017 Federal Elections (Reißmann,

2017). Moreover, the research that was published and conducted by the Bento platform which was mentioned earlier demonstrates that some of the candidates could also be easily classified as right-wing extremists (Reißmann, 2017). Thus, although one of the AfD leaders Alice Weidel points out that there have been only some isolated cases when asked about the members of the AfD giving extremist statements, it is apparent that the party has welcomed extremism rather enthusiastically. For example, this can be proved by the statements of the candidates who wanted media censorship back, one of them being Tino Chrupalla who argued that the Basic Law is “not set in stone,” and therefore it can be changed (Reißmann, 2017).

I want to suggest that the language used by the representatives of the AfD does not only emphasize the concept of right and radical-right, but it also shows that although the party had initially focused on sociocultural dimension, later on, they have shifted to the moral categorizations as well. This point can be illustrated by the examples of the statements given by several AfD figures who were analyzed by Bento. For example, Björn Höcke refers to the Memorial of the Murdered Jews of Europe, which is also known as the Holocaust Memorial, by saying the following: “The Germans are the only nation in the world who build a monument of shame in their capital,” (Röhlig & Lakämper, 2017). Höcke was also mentioned by Jens Maier who said that “this man is [his] hope” (Röhlig & Lakämper, 2017). Maier continues by stating that Höcke is afraid of the “production of mixed people” that threatens to wipe out the German national identity (Röhlig & Lakämper, 2017). After his speech, Höcke was reprimanded by the party leaders for damaging the image of the party. Notwithstanding, the internal court of the party in Thuringia decided that his speech has not violated the regulations of the party (Dubois, 2018).

In addition to Maier and Höcke, there are also other noteworthy candidates such as Enrico Komning who has several times expressed sympathy for Pegida and is accused of an unclear relationship with right-wing extremism (Biermann et al. 2016). Furthermore, in early 2014 Bernd Lucke criticized the media for praising Thomas Hitzelsperger courage in outing himself (Franzmann T. S., 2014, p. 475). Lucke noted that “given that Berlin had a gay mayor and there is an openly gay former secretary of state – not much courage is needed to come

out as gay” (Franzmann T. S., 2014, p. 475). Despite Lucke being distinguished for his position on the euro issue, he shows his conservative standpoint on social issues in this statement, nonetheless.

4.7.5 The extreme reputation of the party

The reputation of the party is a highly important issue. As clarified in the German party-system: a political and legal overview chapter the Article 21 of the German Basic Law is handy as it sets in context how legal norms in Germany can impact, shape, and limit the agenda and patterns of engagement of the AfD as it contains strict safeguards against extremism. As shown earlier, positive references to anti-Semitism, racism, Nazism or keeping ties with extremists and extremists’ groups instead of distancing itself from them have been part of the AfD.

Karsten Grabow (2016) while assessing the differences/similarities between the AfD and Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (PEGIDA) argues that both parties have come to be two sides of the same coin:

“The two organizations benefit from the same overall political trends, primarily concerning the refugee crisis. They address the same issues, they have the same demands, they share the same bogeyman and they use the same style of propaganda. AfD officials and PEGIDA speakers have repeatedly attacked representatives of the state personally and in highly offensive ways. Finally, a large proportion of PEGIDA’s followers prefer the AfD above all other German parties (Patzelt 2016b, 183–6).”

(Grabow, 2016, p. 175)

In addition, after a man was stabbed to death in Chemnitz on September 2018 (in the eastern part, supposedly by two immigrants which were identified as the main suspects) a high numbers of the AfD and PEGIDA supporters turned to streets in a series of protests where clashes with the police took place, including a number of xenophobic attacks (Shalal, 2018).

Although a few members of the AfD are being monitored for suspected links to anti-Islamic and 'right-wing extremists,' already (Nasr, 2018), there have been calls for Germany's domestic intelligence agency to monitor the AfD after "mounting evidence of its links to neo-Nazi groups" reports The Guardian (Osborne, 2018).

Considering the developments, lately, the AfD leadership has increasingly become more aware of the threat that comes from the Article 21 regarding the existence of the party itself and also because of the high possibility that an authoritarian reputation can lead to a decrease on support by the electorate. On November 2018, the AfD has expelled a member of its parliamentary group in Berlin because of a photo where the politician is seen with some wine bottles in the background with labels illustrating Hitler (Osborne, 2018). This was followed by a strong reaction from the AfD's Berlin state and parliamentary group head saying that "the photos were unacceptable" further indicating that the AfD has begun the proceedings "to expel Bießmann from the party," (Osborne, 2018). The list of the people being expelled from the party continues with other members after allegations are brought up that individual members of the party have participated in celebrations for Adolf Hitler's birthday or other cases for having ties with right-wing extremists (Chambers, 2018). Furthermore, recently the AfD leadership has taken into consideration the possibility of dissolving entirely the Young Alternative (AfD's youth organization) due to concerns that they are increasingly radicalizing and becoming more like the ethno-nationalist and anti-Semitic Identarian Movement (Schumacher, 2018). These developments indicate that the party is taking steps to penalize members that show ties with extremist groups of movements.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this single case study was to assess whether the AfD has moved towards the mainstream and if such a shift has taken place to investigate the main factors that have prompted this transformation. The conclusions from this study follow the research questions and the findings and therefore address four dimensions: 1) changes with respect to radical positions on core issues; 2) changes from a niche party to a party with a broader policy agenda; 3) changes in anti-establishment profile; and 4) changes to an extremist reputation of the party. Following is a discussion of the major findings and conclusions drawn from this research.

Radicalness

The literature has shown several ways through which the right-wing radical parties show their radicalism, including but not limited to rejection of immigration, rejection of the EU itself, authoritarianism and has been found that radical right-wing parties are focused on issues that are connected to national identity and security. Concerning that, issues that stand out on the threat for the society come from immigration, different religious background (Islam) and multiculturalism.

Regarding changes concerning radical positions on core issues, the AfD presents a case of what initially was a single-issue anti-Euro party that gradually has radicalized from 2013 up to now. In 2015, the shift towards radicalization was sped up by the changes in leadership as the liberal economic wing as overpowered by the national conservative wing. The radicalization has occurred policy-wise on core issues such as immigration, authoritarianism, and European Integration. Furthermore, the AfD has further cultivated its nativist profile, especially in eastern Germany where increasingly has adopted xenophobic, nativist, law, and order rhetoric where the cracks from the communist past are still open and the AfD is using

it strategically to its advantage. Also, although the AfD has not abandoned its positions concerning the European Union, nativist themes have been prioritized in the 2017 manifesto.

First, the AfD stance on immigration has always been hardline, but it has become even more strict after 2015 migrant crisis in Europe with the party fully supporting restrictive immigration policy while emphasizing much more the issue of immigration in comparison to 2014. The party strategically focused on immigration, and the anti-immigration discourse was pushed forward by the AfD constantly considering that their position on the issue was one of the main factors why the electorate has decided to vote for the AfD.

The second core issue is European integration which has shaped its public image initially. In the beginning, the positions of the party on European integration were not as hard as they became to be later on. Initially, the AfD was referred to as the 'anti-euro' party and that the focal aim of the party was to get Germany out of the Eurozone. Later on, in the 2014 political guidelines, a large part refers to the European and the euro crisis, however, in the 2017 manifesto, the Eurozone was not the main issue for the party. Notwithstanding, in the 2017 manifesto the AfD opens up the possibility to pursue the exit of Germany from the European Union which means that over the time the party has taken a more critical Eurosceptic position. Thus, besides looking for fundamental changes in the EU, the party eventually might pursue the exit of Germany from the EU if the implementation of the fundamental needed reforms does not occur.

The third core issue is authoritarianism. The AfD has become increasingly more authoritarian. There is a call for a strong authoritarian state, and the AfD voters embrace authoritarian views much more in comparison to those that do not support the party. From the 2017 manifesto, it becomes noticeably clear that the party positions go against some of the core values of democratic regimes, including tolerance, and the protection of minorities and their rights. To sum up, the AfD has increasingly radicalized its positions on core issues related to their nationalist ideology such as immigration, European integration, and authoritarianism.

Niche profile

‘Nicheness’ is primarily a matter of how strongly the AfD has emphasized certain issues. There are two main categories, and the first category includes sociocultural issues while the second category includes socioeconomic issues. The literature has shown that if the policy agenda of a party evolves around sociocultural issues but increasingly emphasized socioeconomic issue as well, therefore this greater emphasis by the AfD on socioeconomic dimension can be considered an indicator of mainstreaming. Concerning niche profile, although the AfD has increasingly emphasized sociocultural issues, the agenda has expanded to socioeconomic dimensions as well after 2013. In comparison, the salience of the sociocultural issues has further increased with a more noticeable resistance on issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, dedicated support for the preservation of German culture, identity, and assimilation. Thus, as confirmed by CMP data the policy issues on the sociocultural dimension are more salient than socioeconomic issues. A broader issue agenda means that the party has amended its niche character and has deliberately switched between niche and mainstream profiles due to strategic incentives. This strategic behavior is confirmed when looking at the way the AfD used social media where it became clear that although on the 2017 manifesto the economy and immigration issues had taken almost equal space, the party intentionally hid their economic profile and focused on immigration.

Anti-establishment profile

Concerning the anti-establishment dimension, the AfD has further cultivated its anti-establishment profile by holding anti-establishment positions and by challenging the rules of the game. Periodically before the 2014 EP election, the AfD has decreased its populist and anti-establishment stances strategically while in 2014, it was found that the AfD exhibits a strong anti-establishment attitude. After 2015, the AfD has followed more openly an anti-establishment strategy. Furthermore, as shown on the analytical part, the support of the

electorate for the AfD in the 2017 election was driven by anti-establishment sentiment. In line with the criteria on what constitutes an anti-establishment party it has been found that the AfD has increased its anti-establishment rhetoric continually by branding itself as ‘an alternative’, blaming the media for presenting them in negative light, constructing a homogenous general will, openly demanding direct democracy, it claims that it is different from other parties and represents the real voice of the people. In the parliament, the AfD has been increasingly less cooperative with other parties in parliament and has followed an aggressive and provocative discourse, as well as introducing obstructive methods such as interrupting debates with loud laughter which in turn means that the AfD challenges the rules of the game. In conclusion, the AfD has radicalized from 2013 up to now regarding its anti-establishment behavior, and anti-establishment behavior is a core value of the party.

Extreme Reputation

Finally, the final dimension of mainstreaming is that of a party’s reputation. In the past the AfD has shown itself to be a home for right-wing extremists, however, with respect to an extreme right reputation recently the AfD has taken some efforts to shed their extremist reputation by expelling members of the party that have had ties with extremists and looking at the possibility of dissolving entirely the Young Alternative. The AfD gives the impression that it is doing so only to avoid possible juridical actions which again shows that the AfD is acting strategically.

This work is embedded in the general framework of Akkerman *et al.* (2016). Akkerman *et al.* examined whether the established radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe have moved from the margins to the mainstream and if yes, looked at the reasons why the parties have done so. The comparative analyses explain that radical right-wing populist parties have not moved into the mainstream (Akkerman *et al.* 2016, p. 47). The individual case studies confirm that on the first dimension (radicalness) radical right-wing populist parties have remained radical in their positions on core issues (Akkerman *et al.* 2016, p. 276). On the second dimension concerning niche profiles, it is confirmed that the radical right-

wing populist parties are quite flexible, influenced by external factors, and act strategically when pursuing office (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 277). Different from the comparative analyses, the case studies confirm that one of the significant changes has occurred on the third dimension (anti-establishment) as radical right-wing populist parties' parties tend to moderate their positions and respect the rules of the game due to office-seeking and participation (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 277). Finally, on the fourth dimension (party's reputation) it has been found that radical right-wing populist parties avoid a classic extremist reputation for two main reasons: 1) out of fear of legal measures; 2) due to office-seeking and vote-seeking reasons (Akkerman et al. 2016, p. 277). As a result, the increase of radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe might push the mainstream parties to shift further towards the right.

Finally, taking all into account, the conclusions of this study confirm that the AfD has followed the overall trend of other radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe as there are no significant indicators that the AfD is shifting towards the mainstream, instead, the AfD is tending to radicalize along three dimensions. In the fourth dimension, recently the AfD is trying to detoxify its extremist reputation, and this endeavor is pushed forward out of fear of exclusion through a legal ban and possibility of being monitored by the German domestic intelligence agency.

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