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# 2017 German federal election and its implications for Germany and the EU

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Tuomas Iso-Markku  
Research fellow, European Union research  
programme, FIIA



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## 2017 German federal election and its implications for Germany and the EU

### Structure

1. Background and campaigns
2. Analysis of the results
3. Perspectives on the coalition negotiations
4. Implications for German EU policy



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## Background

-Germany as an 'anchor of stability' in Europe:  
Merkel in power since 2005



Angela Merkel. Source: Wikimedia Commons / European People's Party

-Since 2009: Germany's emergence as the EU's pre-eminent member state  
→ central (albeit contested) role in the EU's management of the eurozone crisis, the Ukraine crisis and the refugee crisis



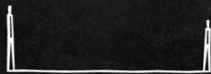
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However, vocal and growing opposition to Merkel and her government in parts of German society  
-Since October 2014: PEGIDA demonstrations in the Eastern German states

-2015/16: Germany's role in the refugee crisis; sexual delicts in Cologne; terrorist attack in Berlin  
→ heavy politicisation of asylum/migration policy



PEGIDA demonstration. Source: Wikimedia Commons / Metropolico.org



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Horst Seehofer. Source: Wikimedia Commons / Harald Bischoff

### Germany's & the refugee crisis:

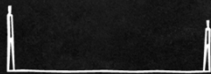
- Strong criticism of Merkel within parts of the CDU and from the part of the CSU
- Rapid rise of the AfD: notable successes in state-level elections and a steady rise in federal polls
- The government hardened its asylum policy, but Merkel was reluctant to communicate this change (admitting defeat?)



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### Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)

- founded in 2013
- German federal election 2013: 4.7 %; European Parliament election 2014: 7.1 %
- rapid development from an anti-euro party to a populist radical right party (July 2015 party congress as a watershed moment)
- Notable successes in state-level elections:  
e.g. 2014: 12.2 % (Thuringia); 2015: 6.1 % (Hamburg); 2016: 24.2 % (Saxony-Anhalt) and 20.8 % (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)



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January 2017:

-Martin Schulz of SPD as  
Merkel's challenger →  
"Schulzzug", Schulz hype

March 2017:

-Schulz's popularity at its  
peak → SPD polls 31-32  
%, CDU/CSU 32-34 %



Martin Schulz. Source: Olaf Kosinsky / kosinsky.eu

-March-May 2017: SPD defeated in three state  
elections (Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein, North Rhine-  
Westphalia) → In June 2017, SPD only polls 24 %



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### Campaign

|         |  |   |
|---------|--|---|
| CDU/CSU | "Für ein Deutschland, in dem wir gut und gerne leben." | <i>For a Germany in which we live well and happily.</i>   |
| SPD     | "Zeit für mehr Gerechtigkeit."                         | <i>Time for more justice.</i>                             |
| AfD     | "Programm für Deutschland"                             | <i>Programme for Germany</i>                              |
| FDP     | "Denken wir neu."/>"Schauen wir nicht länger zu."      | <i>Let's rethink./Let's no longer stand by and watch.</i> |
| Linke   | "Sozial. Gerecht. Frieden. Für alle."                  | <i>Social. Just. Peace. For all.</i>                      |
| Grüne   | "Zukunft wird aus Mut gemacht."                        | <i>Future is made out of courage</i>                      |



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## Campaign

-no single dominant topic → overall: a campaign devoid of content

-TV debate between Merkel and Schulz focused heavily on asylum, migration and integration as well as on Turkey → major differences between CDU/CSU and SPD hard to find

-No EU dimension; many central topics remained largely unaddressed (German-US relations, future of EU, Brexit, climate, Russia, German security and defence policy etc.)

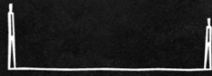


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## Results

| Party   | Percent | Change | Seats | Change |
|---------|---------|--------|-------|--------|
| CDU/CSU | 32.9    | -8.6   | 246   | -65    |
| SPD     | 20.5    | -5.2   | 153   | -40    |
| AfD     | 12.6    | +7.9   | 94    | +94    |
| FDP     | 10.7    | +6.0   | 80    | +80    |
| Linke   | 9.2     | +0.6   | 69    | +5     |
| Grüne   | 8.9     | +0.5   | 67    | +4     |

Sources: Der Bundeswahlleiter, wahl.tagesschau.de

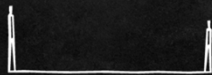


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## Results

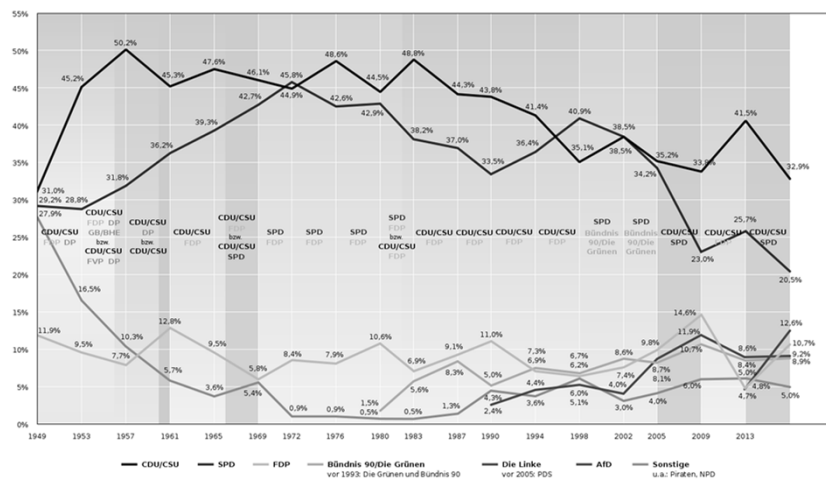
| Party   | West Germany (incl. West Berlin) | East Germany (incl. East Berlin) |
|---------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| CDU/CSU | 34.1                             | 27.6                             |
| SPD     | 21.9                             | 13.9                             |
| AfD     | 10.7                             | 21.9                             |
| FDP     | 11.4                             | 7.5                              |
| Linke   | 7.4                              | 17.8                             |
| Grüne   | 9.8                              | 5.0                              |

Sources: Der Bundeswahlleiter, wahl.tagesschau.de



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**Bundestagswahlergebnisse und anschließend gebildete Regierungen**



Graph: Wikimedia commons / Flone



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| To: AfD |               | To: FDP |               | From: CDU |               | From: SPD |               |
|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| Group   | Voters (mil.) | Group   | Voters (mil.) | Group     | Voters (mil.) | Group     | Voters (mil.) |
| Non-.   | 1.47          | CDU     | 1.62          | FDP       | 1.62          | Non.-     | 1.03          |
| CDU     | 1.04          | Non-.   | 0.83          | Non.-     | 1.62          | CDU       | 0.82          |
| Oth.    | 0.73          | SPD     | 0.55          | Dcsd.     | 1.29          | Grüne     | 0.76          |
| SPD     | 0.51          | 1st     | 0.24          | AfD       | 1.04          | Dcsd      | 0.76          |
| Linke   | 0.42          | Oth.    | 0.18          | SPD       | 0.80          | Linke     | 0.70          |
| 1st     | 0.13          | Grüne   | 0.16          | Grüne     | 0.33          | FDP       | 0.55          |
| FDP     | 0.12          | Linke   | 0.09          | Linke     | 0.20          | SPD       | 0.51          |
| Grüne   | 0.05          | AfD     | 0.08          | Oth.      | 0.20          | Oth.      | 0.20          |
| Newc.   | 0.02          | Newc.   | 0.03          |           |               |           |               |

Source: welt.de, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article169010727/Die-Waehlerwanderung-in-Bildern.html>, ARD/Infraestat dimap

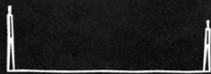


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## Analysis of the results

### A changing political landscape

- The vote share of the '*Volksparteien*' markedly smaller (CDU & SPD together only 53.4 per cent of the votes, compared to 67.2 per cent in 2013)
- A more fragmented party system: altogether six parties (four mid-sized parties)
- The emergence of a populist radical right party
- Germany catching up with the European 'mainstream'
- Complicated coalition arithmetic



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## CDU/CSU

- The result worse than expected
- Both CDU and CSU lost votes



Jens Spahn. Source:  
Wikimedia Commons / Olaf  
Kosinsky

- Merkel's last term as Chancellor(?)
- CSU's Horst Seehofer significantly weakened
  - Intra-party pressures to be expected (reaction to the bad election result, preparation for succession battles)
  - Rechtsruck vs. Linksruck (swing to the right, swing to the left?)
  - CDU/CSU will enter the coalition negotiations from a weakened position



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## SPD

- Worst result for the party since the founding of the BRD
- In line with the general European trend: social democratic/socialist parties in decline
- Big challenges:
  1. Merkel has guided her CDU towards the political centre
  2. SPD has governed together with CDU/CSU
    - difficult to act as a real challenger/alternative
- The step into the opposition is a logical reaction
- Martin Schulz remains popular within the party, but his future as party leader is unsure





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## AfD

- Has witnessed a number of internal quarrels, but this has had little impact on the party's popularity
- not a party for solutions or concrete/cohesive policies; instead, a party for protest and dissent
- Will not gain political power, but will get (even) more visibility and resources
- Pushes/tests the boundaries of the political debate
- Will the other parties isolate the AfD or treat it as 'just another party'?



Alexander Gauland and Alice Weidel. Source: Wikimedia Commons / Metropolico.org et MAGISTER



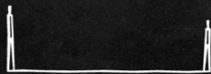
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## FDP

- a phenomenal comeback to federal-level politics after the 2013 election disaster
- so far a 'one man show' of party leader Lindner
- enters the coalition negotiations from a strong position
- 2009-2013 government term (CDU/CSU + FDP) as a negative example → will want to leave its mark on the coalition agreement



Christian Lindner. Source: Wikimedia Commons / Olaf Kosinsky



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## Linke

- no longer the biggest opposition party, no longer the only protest party
- how will the party position itself in the German political landscape?
- will it be ready/willing to cooperate with the SPD to forge a stronger opposition bloc?



Sahra Wagenknecht. Source: Ferran Cornellà



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Katrin Göring-Eckardt and Cem Özdemir.  
Source: Ralf Roletschek & Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

## Grüne

- A better election result than predicted; however, still the smallest of all Bundestag parties
- Has struggled to build its own political profile in recent years (closeness to Merkel's CDU on some issues?)
- Internally divided between pragmatic "realos" and ideological "fundis" → will be a difficult negotiation partner


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## Government negotiations



- Jamaica: political '*neuland*' at the federal level
- has only been tested at state level (Saarland 2009-2012 and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2017-) and at local level
- involves not three but four parties: CDU, CSU, FDP, Grüne
- Jürgen Trittin (Grüne) about the preconditions of a Jamaica coalition: the CDU would need to become more ecological, the FDP more social and the CSU more liberal

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-A division of labour, with each party concentrating on its core topic(s)?  
-How to find common projects?

Source: Spiegel Online, 23 October

### Der Jamaica-Check: Passen Union, FDP und Grüne zusammen?

|                                   | CDU<br>CSU | Freie<br>Demokraten<br>FDP | Grüne<br>Grüne | Match |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Einwanderungsgesetz               | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Pariser Klimaschutzabkommen       | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Abschaffung des Soli              | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Steuersenkung                     | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Kooperationsverbot abschaffen     | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Familiennachzug                   | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Obergrenze light                  | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Vermögenssteuer                   | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Kohleausstieg                     | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Deadline Verbrennungsmotor        | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Stärkung gesetzliche Rente        | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Ehegattensplitting                | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Euro-Integration                  | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Videoüberwachung flächendeckend   | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Vorratsdatenspeicherung           | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |
| Nato-Aufrüstung/Zwei-Prozent-Ziel | 😊          | 😊                          | 😊              | 👍     |

😊 Zustimmung    😞 Ablehnung    😐 Unentschieden

SPIEGEL ONLINE



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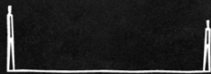
### Implications for German EU policy

- All 'Jamaica' parties are clearly pro-EU; however, there are significant differences between them regarding individual areas of EU policy:
  - FDP was a difficult coalition partner for Merkel's CDU during the eurozone crisis and continues to be sceptical of any elements of a 'transfer union'
  - According to the FDP, the ESM should not be developed into a permanent support mechanism; eurozone members should have the possibility to go bankrupt and/or exit the eurozone without leaving the EU; there should be automatic sanctions for breaking the stability and growth pact



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- Grüne emphasise solidarity within the EU/eurozone → opposite views with the FDP on developing the eurozone
- CDU/CSU is closer to the FDP; at the same time, CDU/CSU stresses the importance of Franco-German cooperation and is aware that Macron and the pro-EU forces in France need some political victories in order to survive
  - as a result, CDU/CSU is more flexible in its positions
- Asylum/migration policy is another area of potential tensions: all 'Jamaica' partners want a stronger EU role in asylum policy, but have very different preferences



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-Climate policy and foreign policy could be easier for the 'Jamaica' parties to agree on

→ all are supportive of the Paris climate agreement

→ all are ready to develop the EU's role in foreign policy

-CDU, FDP and Grüne also have a positive attitude towards small-scale institutional reforms

-Some advances in EU defence policy are possible, although this might also be an area of conflict (Grüne still have a strong pacifist current)

-All parties are open to a 'multi-speed Europe', but Germany will want it to remain open to all member states



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All in all...

-Germany is likely to retain its leading role at the EU level (Merkel's experience and personality as well as Germany's economic resources and performance as decisive factors)

-At the same time, Merkel will be more preoccupied with domestic affairs and the unity of her own coalition

-The diverging views of the potential coalition partners suggest that Germany is more likely to play the part of shaping, scaling down or blocking other member states' initiatives rather than presenting big ideas of its own



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**Thank you!**