Bardh LIPA
Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny w Krakowie
ORCID: 0000-0002-9280-6807

Analysis of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) through the lens of four distinct profiles: radical, niche, anti-establishment, and party reputation, 2013–2017

Abstract: After the 2017 election, the radical right *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) became the Bundestag's third-largest party. While the rise of the AfD drew scholarly interest, most publications analyzing its evolution were published during a period when the party was undergoing transition, the euro-crisis had decreased in prominence, and the party was going through an inner conflict between liberals and radicals. This article seeks to provide a systematic examination of how these developments have impacted the party from 2013 to 2017 and endeavors to answer the question of whether the AfD has become more mainstream by utilizing the framework devised by Akkerman et al. (2016) to assess party transformation along four key dimensions: 1) shifts in radical positions on key issues; 2) shifts from a niche to a socioeconomic-focused party; 3) shifts in the anti-establishment profile; and 4) shifts in party reputation. Through an analysis of internally and externally oriented material such as electoral manifestos, party documentation, published interviews with AfD leaders, and press releases, the article shows that the AfD has not shifted toward the mainstream. Instead, the party became more radical on the first three dimensions while demonstrating signs of mainstreaming on the fourth dimension in order to avoid legal action.

Key words: mainstreaming, radical, niche, anti-establishment, extreme reputation

Introduction

The radical right parties in Germany have been unable to build a stable support base. Since WWII, there have been four waves of such parties, each with its emergence and demise (Williams, 2006, p. 116). Although they enjoyed local success, that support declined in the years to come. Since 2013, however, factors such as the eurozone crisis, refugee crisis, immigration policies, factionalism, leadership transitions, and local and national election results have contributed to significant changes in Germany's societal and political landscape. As a result, during the 2017 German federal elections, the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) made political history by garnering nearly six million votes (12.6 percent), up from 4.7 percent in 2013. It also became the third-largest party in the Bundestag, with a solid performance in both eastern and western Germany. "Far-right AFD success shocks Germany," read one headline (Euronews, 2017).

The AfD's relationship with its voters is weak, and Cas Mudde doubts it will remain the third force in German politics, but he calls it a "stunning success" (Mudde, 2017). A study published almost two years before the 2017 elections concluded that the AfD's viability depends on convincing German voters that it is not a one-issue party (Grimm, 2015, p. 274). It is worth noting that by early 2015, the eurozone crisis had lost much

of its urgency, and the party shifted its focus to broadening its programmatic profile and shredding its image as a single-issue party (Arzheimer, 2015, p. 9). Taking into consideration the case selection criteria of a major 2016 study examining the extent to which radical right-wing populist parties have become mainstream, the AfD was not selected as a case study because only parties that had already achieved electoral breakthroughs and for whom national office is a realistic long-term option were chosen. However, due to the results of the 2017 German federal elections, internal conflict between ordoliberals and radicals (Grimm, 2015, p. 274), and the fact that the majority of studies on the AfD's development were published during the party's formative and transformational stages, the AfD makes an interesting and timely case study for the chosen theoretical framework.

To assess whether the AfD has moved into the mainstream, four dimensions will be used: (1) radical party, (2) niche party, (3) anti-establishment party, and (4) the extreme right reputation. These dimensions include the extent to which the AfD can be classified as a radical, niche, or anti-establishment party, as well as the AfD's extreme reputation. Further, in contrast to mainstream parties, radical right-wing populist parties have (1) non-centrist programs that focus on social and cultural issues instead of economic and political issues, (2) programs that focus on social and cultural issues instead of economic and political issues, and (3) anti-establishment political views. As per the general framework, radical right populist parties are identified as simultaneously radical, niche, and anti-establishment political parties with an extreme right reputation (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 116).

First, a political party is considered mainstream if its ideology is centrist, its platform and public debate are free of radicalism and xenophobia, it has no ties to fascist groups or calls for radical political change, and it does not vehemently oppose further integration. Therefore, the term can refer to programmatic and positional centralism, the prominence of socioeconomic issues, as well as behavior and stances consistent with liberal democratic principles and the formal and informal rules of the political game (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 7). On the other hand, mainstreaming refers to radical right-wing parties moderating their positions on critical issues, broadening their constituencies, adhering more strictly to the rules of the game, or attempting to overcome their extremist reputation (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 14). As a result, mainstreaming is regarded as a party strategy aimed at advancing the party's pursuit of office, policy, or votes, or a combination of these objectives, all of which can contribute to the mainstreaming of radical right-wing populist parties. These changes are influenced by a variety of factors, including cleavage shifts, electoral markets, media agendas, socioeconomic change, the emergence of new policy issues in society, changes in political systems, and changes in the structure of party competition, as well as internal factors such as party organization, leadership, and factionalism, as well as local and regional political experience (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 17). According to the first dimension of mainstreaming, radical right-wing populist parties take radical, anti-centrist positions on ideologically central issues such as European integration, immigration, integration, and law and order (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 7). This party family is primarily concerned with issues of national identity and security, such as the threat posed by immigration, Islam, and multiculturalism. They mobilize people against political elites who are perceived to be responsible for the cultural and political threat to what they see as the ideal image of their nation-state (Rydgren, 2017,

p. 493). The first dimension of mainstreaming is to examine the AfD's positions on the aforementioned issues. To chart the AfD's political positions over time, election manifestos and other party documents such as political guidelines will be analyzed.

Second, radical right-wing populist parties are niche parties because they primarily campaign on issues not part of the traditional left-right socioeconomic divide. This party family would have lost its niche status if the radical right had stayed put or moderated their positions (Wagner, Meyer, 2017, p. 7). The AfD's shifting niche status focuses attention on the second aspect of mainstreaming. The objective is to ascertain whether the AfD's policy agenda has shifted away from sociocultural issues and toward socioeconomic issues.

Thirdly, radical right-wing parties are known for their disloyalty to the political establishment, and their actions challenge the game's rules in various ways, including the media. They seek to alter not only policies, but also metapolitics, or both the formal and informal rules of the game (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 8). Finally, the party's reputation is considered. The transition away from traditional extreme-right issues such as anti-Semitism, racism, and allusions to Nazism or fascism, which began in the late 1980s in some of the older radical right-wing populist parties, is not yet complete (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 8).

The four dimensions that derive from the theoretical framework enable the formation of 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.

The case study will be based on the AfD's policy positions from 2013 to 2017, as that is when the 2017 German Federal Election was held. The AfD's continuous alterations in orientation and positions, as well as internal changes, make it challenging to identify the party's positions over time. To address this challenge, and given the AfD's evolving programmatic profile, positions, and political behavior, these stages will be divided into three time periods: (1) the formation period until the federal election in 2013; (2) the emergence of internal party disputes until the European parliament election in 2014; and (3) the end of the 2014 election until the 2017 German federal election. To assess the development of an anti-establishment profile, the period will be extended to late 2017 to determine whether the party followed or challenged the rules of the game, as the AfD entered the Bundestag at that time.

This article draws on existing literature and a diverse set of data sources, including electoral manifestos, party documentation, newspaper interviews, news information, and statements made by party representatives. To begin, the election manifestos and party documentation have been chosen for two additional reasons: 1) they are authoritative documents from which party leaders can deviate only with difficulty (Laver, Garry, 2000); and 2) they are reasonably comparable across cases and over time (Klemmensen, et al., 2007). Second, newspaper interviews, news reports, and statements made by party representatives will be used to assess changes in the agenda and positions in public debates and across Germany's regions, as well as to determine which goals have been achieved (vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking). Additionally, an analysis of

some of the party representatives' statements will reflect the party's unique characteristics, including the various positions held by different party leaders during the period examined in this case.

Conflicts between hardliners and moderates and their effect on the party's strategy and electoral success

Since its inception in 2013 until one day after the 2017 German elections, when Frauke Petry announced her resignation, the party has gone through several leadership changes. She followed Bernd Lucke's lead in declaring ambitions to found a new right-wing populist party (Siri, 2017, p. 141). Frauke Petry's decision to leave the AfD and form her own party, *Die Blaue Partei*, revealed that what appeared to be a successful radical right-wing party on the outside was experiencing internal strife and that the party was attempting to adopt two or more distinct approaches pushed forth by two distinct factions: moderates and hardliners. On the one hand, Alexander Gauland and Björn Höcke were more closely associated with extremists and were more concerned with issues such as refugees and Islam. Frauke Petry and her supporters, on the other hand, were members of the previous faction, which later sought to distance the party from the radical right. This attempt did not go well, however, as Petry confirmed when she justified her decision to leave the AfD by claiming that the radical views of other party leaders made establishing a "constructive opposition" impossible (Chase, 2017). One of the party's leaders, Alice Weidel, stated that everyone was taken aback by her choice (Chase, 2017). Despite Weidel's assertions that she was surprised by the decision, speculations emerged that the conflict between these two factions within the party had been raging for some time. Marcus Pretzel, Petry's husband and another senior AfD leader, resigned from the party, citing his "less than optimistic assessment of the AfD's likely evolution" (Chase, 2017). Later, the AfD sued its former leader, Frauke Petry, on the grounds that her new party, the "Blue Party," has a striking resemblance to the AfD's name and colors. Although the AfD registered several "marken" in 2017 to avoid such an occurrence, including "Blaue Partei" and "Blaue Wende," it did not register "Die Blaue Partei" (Hölter, 2018).

Moreover, due to internal party divisions, it is difficult to determine whether the AfD has followed an all-encompassing and well-defined strategy; however, it has undoubtedly had a single effective strategic core, which is embodied in Alexander Gauland (Franzmann, 2018, p. 9). Gauland, unlike Bernd Lucke, was hesitant to address the euro-crisis, but he changed his views tactically. Gauland's adaptability and strategic thinking established him as one of the party's most respected and influential members, which proved critical during the internal conflicts of 2015 and 2017. His clout within the party, as well as his cultural conservatism and nationalism, are inextricably linked to the AfD's strategic ability to pivot away from the European Stability Mechanism and toward an anti-modernization, antimigration agenda (Franzmann, 2018, p. 9).

Despite internal strife and divisions within the AfD, the party's electoral performance is unlikely to have been impacted by either of these factors. Interestingly, the opposite seems to be the case. The AfD's growth has been fueled primarily by intra-party disagreements and conflicts (Franzmann, 2018, p. 8). To begin, the divisions aided in

the formulation of critical issues and the AfD's programmatic profile development. The second reason is temporal, as the internal party divisions occurred during a period in which there were no Länder elections scheduled, giving the AfD months to reorganize and address internal concerns.

The AfD's 2014 political guidelines and shifting away from the single issue

In April 2013, Bernd Lucke delivered a speech at the AfD's Berlin conference in which he asserted that the AfD is not a one-issue party, a claim that academics and the media disputed at the time. A notable speech in that it stresses the importance of making changes in the aftermath of the party's initial success in the 2013 federal elections in order to ensure the party's long-term presence in German politics. This attempt to broaden its appeal beyond a single issue is evident in the *Politische Leitlinien der AfD 2014* (AfD's 2014 political guidelines). A brief history of Germany's "exceptionally successful" post-war social, political, and economic development is presented at the outset. It sets to explain the factors that contributed to that period's "extreme success" and why modern Germany has been plagued by problems and negative trends in their absence, only to establish later that they possess the effective and dependable tools required to reinstate Germany to its "extremely successful" phase. Likewise, they devote a sizable portion of their content to the European Union and the euro-crisis. There, the AfD reaffirmed its opposition to the euro and emphasized its risks, contending that the decision to use a single currency was economically and politically irrational. However, statistics indicate that Germany has benefited the most economically from the European Union's single currency, with the German economy expanding again following a brief contraction in 2008. In other words, one could argue that if Germany were to leave the eurozone solely due to a single euro-crisis, this would have been an economically and politically irrational decision. However, it is not solely a matter of economics. They argue that the euro crisis harmed democracy by depriving state legislatures of a say in the financial burdens imposed by the European Stability Mechanism, as well as the rule of law, via violations committed on two levels by national governments and the European Central Bank. The eurozone elites deceive their citizens in various ways. As a result, the AfD seeks to dismantle "the smokescreen" in order to reveal the "truth." Lastly, the AfD states that the separation of powers has also been harmed by the Federal Constitutional Court's refusal to denounce "obvious" legal violations committed by the federal government during the euro crisis, preferring instead to abdicate responsibility by filing a first-time appeal with the European Court of Justice.

On the issue of democracy, the AfD asserts that its primary objective is to safeguard and, where necessary, restore democracy and its fundamental principles. They want the German government to answer for violations of the responsibility, solidarity, transparency, and sustainability principles during the euro crisis. There is a distinct position to be taken on gender equality and quotas. They strive for the former while opposing policies that seek to eradicate sexual identity on the grounds that they believe in equal opportunity rather than equal outcomes. Instead, personal accomplishments and abilities must be the deciding factors. They regard open debate as a critical component of free expression

and opinion, but they will also ensure that free expression includes the right to criticize religion.

In terms of population dynamics in Germany, the AfD positions itself as a conservative party by promoting family formation among young people. While they assert that marriage between a man and a woman is "desirable," their position on same-sex marriage is unclear. They also favor immigration to Germany of those who are willing and capable of assimilating. The AfD's 2014 European Parliament election manifesto is especially instructive in terms of comprehending the party's positions. According to the AfD's preamble, it seeks a sovereign state-based EU committed to human rights, democracy, Christian Western values, selective integration, subsidiarity, competition, and the rule of law. The AfD's reference to Christian tradition as a necessary component of German culture is the most direct link between right-wing populism and conservative Christianity (Althoff, 2018, p. 24). Further, the AfD states its opposition to excessive centralization, bureaucracy, and dirigisme within the EU and it aspires to form a group of sovereign states that work cooperatively to protect human rights and democratic values. Concerning Germany's membership in the European Union, the AfD maintains that it has no intention of withdrawing. Instead, the AfD seeks to bolster Germany's influence within the European Union. On the issue of selective integration, the program's fourth segment focuses on Turkey and its aspirations to join the European Union and it is stated unequivocally that Turkey's EU accession talks should be suspended. Concerning Germany's membership in the European Union, the AfD maintains that it has no intention of withdrawing. Instead, the AfD seeks to bolster Germany's influence within the European Union.

A distinction should be made between manifestos, and the language used in public debates, traditional news organizations, and social media. For example, the AfD's immigration policy has always been hard-line on social media platforms and election posters, and Frauke Petry, the AfD's leading spokesperson in 2015, was a vocal opponent of Merkel's immigration plan, and her populist stance, which included the concept of border checks, proved popular with voters (Lees, 2018, pp. 305–306). This suggests that the AfD's rhetoric serves a short-term populist tactical agenda and that the party's founders used a native electoral political strategy, while Lucke encouraged party members to use populist appeal to garner media attention (Franzmann, 2014, p. 474). Evidently, the use of populist rhetoric in 2013, as well as subsequent public debates and social media, but less so in the 2014 political guidelines, indicates the use of such a strategy to obscure the populist attitude.

The 2017 Manifesto for Germany and Euroscepticism as a key feature

The AfD's 2017 election manifesto is titled *Manifesto for Germany*. In the preamble, they emphasize their willingness to be receptive to other nations and cultures, "but wish to be and remain German at heart," as well as their commitment to preserving western Christian culture, shared cultural values, and historical traditions. The separation of power, the rule of law, and the primary objective of "restoring the government and all its institutions to their proper role as servants of all citizens in our country" are all examples.

When comparing the manifesto's format and content, the manifesto contains 14 chapters and is 93 pages in length, whereas the 2014 Political Guidelines are only six pages.

In terms of democracy and core values, the AfD has advocated for the implementation of a referendum along the lines of the Swiss model and has stated that any coalition agreement signed by the AfD must include this as a non-negotiable component. While the AfD has been critical of the European Union since its inception, its 2017 manifesto emphasizes the importance of reestablishing nation-state authority and opposing attempts at centralization; therefore, it is stated that the AfD opposes a unified EU Foreign and Security Policy and a unified European Foreign Service, but makes no mention of Germany's exit from the EU, which fits with their assertion that Germany should not contribute to the EU's centralization. Furthermore, it is stated that Turkey should not be accepted in the EU for "cultural and geographical reasons," suggesting that the AfD has a vision for the future of the EU.

Until 2015, the AfD was classified as a "soft" Eurosceptic party (Lees, 2018, 204). Since its inception, the AfD has advocated for Germany's withdrawal from the Euro monetary union and has not shifted its position on this issue in the 2017 manifesto, which means that until 2015, the party's most radical position on the EU was precisely that. Since 2015, the AfD's narrative has gradually evolved into a breeding ground for a more populist and critical view of Germany's political settlement as a whole (Lees, 2018, p. 305). Additionally, the AfD's 2017 manifesto states that if their proposals for significant changes to the European Union are not implemented, they will seek Germany's exit from the EU or the EU's democratic disintegration, followed by the establishment of a new European economic union. In summary, the AfD has clearly evolved over time into a more critical Eurosceptic position, preferring the EU without many of its current components. The critique of EU centralism, bureaucracy, and dirigisme, on the other hand, demonstrates that the AfD's position was not so much against the EU as it was against the currency. As a result, the AfD can be classified as a eurosceptic party that opposes Germany's current withdrawal from the EU in favor of fundamental EU reform.

Sociocultural and socioeconomic issues

The AfD has developed a reputation for offering unique policy alternatives regarding the EU, immigration, and German culture and identity preservation. For instance, the AfD proposes reestablishing border crossing points and, where necessary, raising fences and erecting similar barriers in the chapter on national security and justice. Additionally, one of the AfD's strategies for combating organized crime is to simplify the deportation of "this group of people," which the AfD refers to as foreign nationals, because foreign nationals account for the lion's share of organized crime offenders. Likewise, it is stated that in order to offset Germany's negative demographic trend, the government must act, as immigrants from other countries can cause conflict and are not a viable economic solution. The only long-term solution is to increase the indigenous population's birth rate. Clearly, the indigenous element stands out as a core value alongside their concept of traditional family and serves to differentiate immigrants from indigenous people, whereas multiculturalism is viewed as a threat to Germany's social harmony and cultural

identity. Therefore, the AfD draws a clear line between the Germanic race, multicultur-alism, and Islam (Klikauer, 2018, p. 618). As a result, Islam is viewed as an out-of-place religion in Germany, and the AfD views the growing Muslim population as a threat to the country's state, society, and values.

Chapter 9 discusses immigration, integration, and asylum. The AfD emphasizes the importance of challenging fundamental assumptions about asylum immigration and ar-gues for a distinction between political refugees and those fleeing war on the one hand, and irregular migrants on the other (*Manifesto for Germany*, 2017, p. 49). The AfD is willing to house genuine refugees fleeing conflict in their home country, but not irregular migrants. Genuine refugees, on the other hand, should leave Germany as soon as their reasons for fleeing their country lapse. Additionally, it emphasized the critical nature of addressing the issue outside the European Union by establishing new shelters and upgrading existing ones in countries in the region from which migration originates. The AfD seeks to alter the flow of immigrants to Germany from other EU member states. Rather than that, the party advocates for moderate legal immigration of highly skilled individuals willing to integrate from non-EU countries and other EU countries. Section 9.4 emphasizes the importance of integration, with assimilation viewed as the most ad-vanced form of integration worth pursuing but unable to be enforced and integration viewed as a requirement (*Manifesto for Germany*, 2017, p. 62). On the subject of citizen-ship, another nativist element is discernible. The AfD aims to put an end to the practice of automatically granting citizenship to children who do not have any German ancestors. Rather than that, they propose that German citizenship be granted only to adults, putting an end to the practice of automatically granting citizenship to children of foreign parents, a right that has allegedly been abused in the past. Citizenship should be granted to such children only if at least one parent is already a German citizen.

To summarize, the AfD has not abandoned its anti-European Union stance. However, the 2017 party manifesto prioritized anti-immigrant and nativist themes. In comparison, despite the fact that the socioeconomic dimension has increased in prominence since 2013, the data indicate that the AfD is more concerned with sociocultural issues than with socioeconomic issues. As a result, the AfD has become less of a niche party (agenda expansion), though issues like the euro and anti-EU sentiment remain important topics.

The anti-establishment profile and the extreme reputation of the party

The anti-establishment dimension and the extreme reputation of the party are critical indicators of whether it has altered its anti-establishment profile and attempted to over-come its extremist reputation. As discussed in greater detail in the theoretical framework section, parties are classified as anti-establishment due to their ideological distance from the system. Both the 2014 Political Guidelines and the 2017 Manifesto criticize Germa-ny's lack of democratic decision-making. Similar remarks are much more prevalent in public speeches, where it becomes obvious that the AfD's strategy became more overt-ly anti-establishment after 2015, with Björn Höcke organizing massive street protests against Merkel's refugee policies as head of the Thuringia party branch. Further, research found that the AfD maintains a strong anti-establishment stance, examining several cam-

paign posters to demonstrate the AfD's anti-establishment strategy. While the posters address a variety of topics, the authors discover that they all reference the same dichotomy in which the party portrays itself as the sole bearer of truth (Berbuir et al., 2014, p. 165). Additionally, Germany's political establishment is held accountable for both the euro crisis and the decline of traditional social values (Berbuir et al., 2014, p. 173). The AfD has maintained and expanded its anti-establishment profile by self-identifying as the genuine political alternative and accusing the mainstream media of portraying them negatively. Moreover, it establishes a front line against the mainstream parties and political elite; it bears the opposition party label and claims to be distinct from the conventional group of German political parties, claiming to represent the true voice of the people; and it openly advocates for forms of direct democracy and the introduction of Swiss-style referendums in Germany. Further, it simplifies political issues by blaming the European Union, Islam, immigrants, and the political establishment.

Finally, the AfD's image as a taboo-breaker is intrinsic to its identity because it promotes issues such as National Socialist remembrance and calls for openness while seeking a more nuanced understanding of history. Given that the AfD's public anti-establishment strategy has been remarkably effective in terms of electorate appeal, particularly in East Germany, as evidenced by the data, the party has enhanced its nativist and anti-establishment profile. On the other hand, the reputation of the party is critical. Article 21 of the German Basic Law is significant because it contextualizes how German legal norms can influence, shape, and constrain the AfD's agenda and patterns of engagement by containing strict anti-extremism safeguards. The AfD has made positive references to anti-Semitism, racism, and Nazism and has maintained ties with extremists and extremist groups rather than disavowing them.

When comparing the AfD and PEGIDA in terms of political trends, both organizations benefit from the same broad political trends, particularly those concerning immigration and the refugee crisis. They all address the same issues, make similar demands, and propagandize in the same manner. The AfD and PEGIDA have repeatedly launched highly offensive attacks on state officials. Additionally, PEGIDA supporters prefer the AfD to all other German parties. Following the September 2018 murder of a man in Chemnitz (in the eastern part, allegedly by two immigrants identified as the primary suspects), a sizable number of AfD and PEGIDA supporters took to the streets in a series of protests that included clashes with police and several xenophobic attacks (Shalal, 2018). Although a few AfD members are already being monitored for suspected ties to anti-Islamic and 'right-wing extremists' (Nasr, 2018), there have been calls for Germany's domestic intelligence agency to monitor the AfD in light of "mounting evidence of its links to neo-Nazi groups," according to The Guardian (Osborne, 2018). Given these developments, the AfD leadership has grown increasingly aware of the threat to the party's existence posed by Article 21 and the possibility that an authoritarian reputation could result in a decline in electorate support. In November 2018, the AfD expelled a member of its Berlin parliamentary group for posing with some wine bottles with Hitler-themed labels in the background (Osborne, 2018). This was immediately followed by a strong reaction from the AfD's Berlin state and parliamentary group leader, who stated that "the photographs were intolerable," implying that the AfD had begun the process of "expulsing Bießmann from the party" (Osborne, 2018). Other members have been expelled

from the party following allegations that they participated in Adolf Hitler's birthday celebrations or had other ties to right-wing extremists (Briggs, 2000). Additionally, the AfD leadership has considered completely disbanding the Young Alternative (the AfD's youth organization) due to concerns that it is becoming more radicalized and eerily reminiscent of the ethno-nationalist and antiSemitic Identarian Movement (Schumacher, 2018). These developments indicate that the party is considering sanctioning members who demonstrate affiliation with extremist groups or movements.

The AfD in the Bundestag

After one year in the Bundestag, we could see that the AfD's use of provocations and going beyond commonly accepted communication standards is done to gain more public attention by "generating" more material for media use. This is evident, for example, when looking at how AfD members attempt to "embarrass" members of other political parties in the Bundestag by acting and speaking in a very opportunistic manner (Ruhose, 2019, p. 3–4). Although it is commonly assumed that political parties soften after entering parliament, this is not the case with the AfD. Instead, the AfD has engaged in combative, confrontational, and provocative rhetoric. The AfD was doing this on purpose to show their supporters that they have not abandoned the radical element that defines them just because they are in parliament (Doering, 2018). Moreover, the whole debate culture has shifted in the year that the AfD has been in the Bundestag. Members of the AfD were provocative, and they have sharply divided debate and disrupted long-standing procedures. To denigrate opponents and draw attention to themselves, they frequently interrupt debates with loud and derisive laughter. Even in the usually orderly Bundestag, such behavior is not unheard of, but the AfD has taken it to a new level.

Conclusion

The purpose of this single case study was to determine whether or not the AfD has entered the mainstream and, if so, to investigate the primary factors that contributed to this transition. The study's conclusion is guided by the research questions and findings, which address four dimensions:
1. Shifts in radical positions on key issues;
2. Changes from a niche party to one with a broader policy agenda;
3. Shifts in the party's anti-establishment profile;
4. Shifts in the party's extremist reputation.

Radicalness

Numerous ways in which right-wing radical parties demonstrate their radicalism have been identified in the literature, including opposition to immigration, rejection of the EU in its entirety, authoritarianism, and a greater emphasis on national identity and

security issues. 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 radicalized from 2013 to 2017. In 2015, the shift towards radicalization was sped up by the changes in leadership as the national conservative wing overpowered the liberal economic wing. Policy-wise, radicalization has occurred on key issues such as immigration, authoritarianism, and European integration. Furthermore, the AfD has further cultivated its nativist profile, especially in eastern Germany, where it has increasingly adopted xenophobic, nativist, law-and-order rhetoric where the cracks from the communist past are still open, and the AfD has used it strategically to its advantage. Even though the AfD has not changed its views on the European Union, nativist themes have been more important in the party's 2017 manifesto.

To begin with, the AfD's immigration stance has always been strict, but it became considerably stricter following Europe's 2015 migrant crisis, with the party firmly backing restrictive immigration policies while emphasizing the subject significantly more than in 2014. The party intentionally concentrated on immigration, and the AfD pushed the anti-immigration narrative forward, continually arguing that their stance on the subject was one of the primary reasons voters chose the AfD.

The second significant issue is European integration. The party's initial stances on European integration were not as strident as they became later. Initially dubbed the "anti-euro" party, the AfD's primary objective was to pull Germany out of the eurozone. Later in 2014, a sizable portion of the party's political guidelines made reference to Europe and the euro crisis, but the eurozone was not the party's core issue in the 2017 manifesto. Nonetheless, the AfD raised the possibility of Germany's leaving the European Union in its 2017 manifesto, indicating that the party has grown more Eurosceptic over time. As a result, in addition to pursuing fundamental changes within the EU, the party may seek Germany's withdrawal from the bloc if necessary fundamental reforms are not implemented.

Authoritarianism is the third central issue. In recent years, the AfD has become more authoritarian. There is a demand for a strong authoritarian state, and AfD supporters embrace authoritarian views in far greater numbers than non-AfD supporters. The 2017 manifesto makes it abundantly clear that the party's positions contradict several core democratic values, including tolerance and protecting minorities and their rights. To sum up, the AfD's positions on critical nationalist ideology issues such as immigration, European integration, and authoritarianism have become increasingly radicalized.

Niche profile

The AfD's "nicheness" is primarily determined by the degree to which it has emphasized particular issues. There are two major categories: sociocultural issues and socioeconomic issues. If a party's policy agenda evolves around sociocultural issues but increasingly emphasizes socioeconomic issues as well, the AfD's increased emphasis on the socioeconomic dimension can be considered an indicator of mainstreaming. While the AfD's niche profile has emphasized sociocultural issues in recent years, the agenda has expanded to include socioeconomic dimensions since 2013. In comparison, the importance of sociocultural issues has increased, with more visible opposition to issues such as

immigration and multiculturalism and a solid commitment to preserving German culture, identity, and assimilation. Policy concerns about the sociocultural dimension outweigh those about the socioeconomic dimension. A more expansive issue agenda indicates that the party's niche character has been altered and that it has purposefully shifted between niche and mainstream profiles in response to strategic incentives. This strategic behavior is confirmed by the AfD's use of social media, where it became clear that, even though the economy and immigration issues received nearly equal attention in the 2017 manifesto, the party purposefully concealed its economic profile in favor of immigration.

Anti-establishment profile

The AfD constructed its anti-establishment profile by taking anti-establishment positions and challenging the game's rules in terms of the anti-establishment dimension. Prior to the 2014 European Parliament election, the AfD strategically toned down its populist and anti-establishment rhetoric, but it was revealed in 2014 that the AfD maintained a strong anti-establishment stance. After 2015, the AfD took a more outspoken anti-establishment stance. Additionally, as the analytical section demonstrates, anti-establishment sentiment drove electorate support for the AfD in the 2017 election. According to the criteria for what constitutes an anti-establishment party, the AfD has consistently increased its anti-establishment rhetoric by branding itself as "an alternative," blaming the media for negative portrayals of them, erecting a homogeneous general will, openly demanding direct democracy, and claiming that it is distinct from other parties and represents the true voice of the people. In parliament, the AfD has become less cooperative with other parties, adopting an aggressive and provocative tone and employing obstructive tactics such as loud laughter to interrupt debates, implying that the AfD is challenging the game's rules. To conclude, the AfD has become increasingly anti-establishment since 2013, and anti-establishment behavior has become a core value of the party.

Extreme Reputation

Finally, mainstreaming takes into account a party's reputation. Historically, the AfD has been a haven for right-wing extremists. However, the AfD has made efforts to shed its extremist reputation by expelling members with ties to extremists and considering the possibility of dissolving the Young Alternative entirely. The AfD conveys the impression that it is doing so solely to evade legal action, demonstrating once again that the AfD is acting strategically. This work builds on the broad framework established by Akkerman et al. (2016). They examine whether or not established radical right-wing populist parties have moved from the margins to the mainstream in Western Europe, and if so, why. Comparative analyses indicate that radical right-wing populist parties have not entered the mainstream (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 47). Individual case studies confirm that radical right-wing populist parties have maintained their radical positions on critical first dimension (radicalness) issues. On the second dimension, it is confirmed that radical right-wing populist parties are quite adaptable, susceptible to external influences, and strategic in their

election campaigns (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 277). Unlike the comparative analyses, the case studies demonstrate that one of the most significant changes has occurred on the third dimension (anti-establishment), as radical right-wing populist parties have a tendency to moderate their positions and adhere to the rules of the game as a result of office-seeking and participation (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 277). Finally, it was discovered that radical right-wing populist parties avoid a classic extremist reputation for two reasons: 1) fear of legal consequences and 2) office-and-vote-seeking motivations (Akkerman et al., 2016, p. 277). Furthermore, mainstream parties may be pushed to the right due to the rise of radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe. Finally, this study's findings confirm that the AfD has followed the general trend of other radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe, as there are no significant indicators that the AfD is moving toward the mainstream; rather, the AfD is radicalizing along three dimensions. In the fourth dimension, the AfD has recently attempted to cleanse itself of its extremist reputation, a process accelerated by fear of exclusion due to a legal ban and the possibility of being monitored by Germany's domestic intelligence agency.

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Analiza Alternatywy dla Niemiec (AfD) przez pryzmat czterech odrębnych profili: radykalnego, niszowego, antyestablishmentowego i reputacji partii, 2013–2017

Streszczenie

Po wyborach w 2017 roku radykalnie prawicowa Alternatywa dla Niemiec (AfD) stała się trzecią co do wielkości partią w Bundestagu. Choć powstanie AfD wzbudziło zainteresowanie naukowców, większość publikacji analizujących jej ewolucję ukazała się w okresie, gdy partia przechodziła transformację, kryzys euro stracił na znaczeniu, a partia przechodziła wewnętrzny konflikt między liberałami a radykałami. Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu systematyczne zbadanie, w jaki sposób te wydarzenia wpłynęły na partię w latach 2013-2017, i stara się odpowiedzieć na pytanie, czy AfD stała się bardziej mainstreamowa, wykorzystując ramy opracowane przez Akkerman et al., s. 1) zmiany w radykalnych stanowiskach w kluczowych kwestiach; 2) zmiany z partii niszowej na społeczno-ekonomiczną; 3) zmiany w profilu antyestablishmentowym; oraz 4) zmiany w reputacji partii. Poprzez analizę wewnętrznych i zewnętrznych materiałów, takich jak manifesty wyborcze, dokumentacja partyjna, opublikowane wywiady z liderami AfD oraz informacje prasowe, artykuł pokazuje, że AfD nie przesunęła się w stronę głównego nurtu. Zamiast tego, partia stała się bardziej radykalna w pierwszych trzech wymiarach, wykazując jednocześnie oznaki włączania się do głównego nurtu w czwartym wymiarze, aby uniknąć działań prawnych.

Słowa kluczowe: mainstreaming; radykalna; niszowa; antyestablishmentowa; skrajna reputacja