

# Germany's New Right-wing Populist Party – the Alternative for Germany

A Review Essay of Nine Recent German-Language Books

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## Abstract

In the year 2017, a new political party entered Germany's parliament called 'Alternative for Germany' or AfD. Mainstream media labels the party far right, radical-right, right wing, national-conservative, populist, etc. Despite this, the AfD has tendencies towards Nazism. Nine books published between 2016 and 2018 examine the stratospheric rise of the AfD, founded in 2013. The review starts with a conservative view that examines 'what the AfD wants.' The next book discusses the 'AfD-Pegida' link. Pegida is the AfD's East-German and mostly Dresden-based street-fighting movement. The third book presents arguments on the AfD from across Germany's political spectrum. This leads to a book written as a 'letter to AfD voters'. The book outlines many inconsistencies found in the AfD's party programme and its public announcements. Since the AfD claims to protect the occident, Europe and Germany in particular against hordes of Muslims and the Islamic religion, these issues are discussed in the next book. A quick look at the ideological background of the AfD points to an analysis of the party's relationship with the media. The final two books show how the AfD seeks to conquer Germany's political centre, based on a wealth of empirical data. Overall, the nine books provide one of the first comprehensive examinations of Germany's new radical-right party drawn from recent German language books.

*Keywords:* Germany; political parties; radical-right; Nazi; AfD; Alternative for Germany

DOI: 10.5817/PC2017-3-250

Bender, Justus: *WHAT DOES THE AFD WANT?* [Was will die AfD?]. Munich: Pantheon Press. 2017. 205 pages.

Orth, Stefan and Resing, Volker et al.: *AFD, PEGIDA AND CO. – ATTACKS ON RELIGION?* [AfD, Pegida und Co.: Angriff auf die Religion?]. Freiburg: Herder Press. 2017. 207 pages.

Nawrocki, Christian and Fuhrer, Armin et al.: *AFD – FIGHTING OR IGNORING?: 14 INTELLIGENT ARGUMENTS FROM DEMOCRATS* [AfD – Bekämpfen oder ignorieren?: Intelligente Argumente von 14 Demokraten]. Bremen: Kellner Press. 2017. 139 pages.

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## 1. Introduction

This review essay examines nine recent German language books on a new political right-wing party called 'Alternative for Germany' or AfD. The AfD was elected to Germany's federal parliament in September 2017 and since then it has been represented by 92 members (Klikauer 2017). Several books on the AfD have been published between 2016 and 2018, covering a cross section of Germany's political spectrum.

## 2. The AfD – History and Programme

Written by a journalist from one of Germany's main conservative newspapers – the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung – Justus Bender asks 'what does the AfD want?'. The author has managed to get inside the AfD by attending party conferences. He was able to interview AfD members and leaders. Bender starts off by saying that some party leaders (e.g. Peter Münch) had earlier been members of a right-wing party called the 'Republicans' or REP (p. 8). Despite its rather deceptive name, the party was at Germany's extreme right-wing fringe. SS-Unterscharführer and Nazi Iron Cross medal holder Franz Schönhuber created the party. SS-Unterscharführers were what distinguished historian Goldhagen calls 'Hitler's Willing Executioners' (1996).

While REP (crypto-Nazis) and NPD (a truly Neo-Nazi party) might have been the ideological predecessors of today's AfD, these were by no means Germany's first right wing or Nazi parties. The first and most infamous was, of course, the NDSAP (1920–1945), followed by the short lived Sozialistische Reichspartei or SRP (1949–1952). After the SRP was outlawed, the next neo-Nazi party, the NPD, carried on the Nazi banner. It has been in continuous existence since 1964. Next came the Deutsche Volksunion, or DVU, which was founded as a loose political association in 1971. The DVU mutated into a fully-fledged political party in 1987. Since the party never gained any traction, it was dissolved in 2011. The aforementioned REP suffered a similar fate. It was founded in 1983 but received only 0.3% of the popular vote in a regional election in 2016. After that, the party disintegrated. Still, the question remains 'is the AfD simply a new Nazi party?'

Bender warns against viewing the AfD as 'Nazis dressed in pinstripe suits' (p. 27), arguing they are not time-travellers seeking to create a Fourth Reich – a continuation of Hitler's Third Reich (Shirer 1960). Instead, the author emphasises that 'almost all AfD members do not want a dictatorship' (p. 12). Bender also argues that AfD members simply follow 'common sense' (p. 37) and hence the party has been mocked as 'Alternative For the Dumb' and 'A F\*\*\*\* Disgrace'. The AfD's version of common sense includes xenophobia, racism, and Antisemitism. Nonetheless, AfD members, Bender claims, do not like to say 'I hate Greeks and refugees'. However, he still finds 'fantasies of racial purity' inside the AfD (p. 41). Since German Chancellor Angela Merkel has damaged the AfD's perceived racial purity by accepting middle-eastern refugees, Chancellor Merkel is called the 'enemy of the people who [is seen as having] committed high treason against Germany' [Volksverrat] (p. 44). Unsurprisingly, Bender notes 'there are even people of the radical-right inside the AfD' (p. 57). Despite stating the obvious, there is also his thesis that the AfD is Germany's first true 'internet party' (p. 61). This is based on three interlocking developments:

1. the internet, computer-based networks, websites, blogs, social media, etc. allow AfD members to network via electronic messaging (WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.);
2. the internet is not a location where in-depth thinking takes place, as the AfD's version of common sense (e.g. simplicity and stupidity) prevails;
3. it is a location where anonymity allows people to formulate their comments, ideas, resentment, hate, Antisemitism, etc.

Since the AfD is a relatively young political party and has still not established a stable organisational structure, communication via the internet remains vital for the AfD. Among the many hallucinations of the AfD and its members is the idea that Germany is governed by 'green communism and [that] a dictatorship of a minority' flourishes (p. 74) in Germany. Much of this also includes more radical ideas such as belittling Nazi crimes demeaned and reduced to 'certain outrages' [gewisse Schandtatenen] (p. 75). One of the most noticeable AfD demagogues remains regional boss Björn Höcke, who believes that 'African sexually makes them multiply like mice' (p.77). Bender mentions this. But no comment follows such straightforward AfD racism that might even be deliberately designed by Björn Höcke to conjure up images of the Nazi film 'Der Ewige Jude' – The Eternal Jew (HEART 2018).

Meanwhile, Björn Höcke's statement fits to a rather common and highly racist AfD hallucination of a flood of refugees resulting in the Islamisation of Europe. The AfD pretends that this flood creates chaos while AfD members safeguard 'order' (p. 85). Such reactionary

cravings are expressed by one of the AfD's prime right-wing intellectuals – Götz Kubischek – whom Bender visited; there he noticed a 'black garden gnome raising its hand in Hitler's fashion' (p. 89) on Kubischek's front lawn. Kubischek advocates a 'love it or leave it' (p. 91) policy that excludes not only foreigners but also Germans deemed not to fit into the AfD's *Volks-gemeinschaft* – the mythical Nazi community based on race and blood (Cohen 2017). Inside Kubischek's house, even the entry hall is ornamented with a hand-painted map of Germany's imperial Nazi Reich (p. 89), insinuating a military quest for lost lands in Eastern Europe.

One of the very few occasions where Bender mentions the rampant racist violence in Germany in recent decades occurs when he comments on the racially motivated attack on refugees in the East-German town of Clausnitz in February 2016 (p. 95). In that town, about one-hundred 'local residents' [Anwohner] blocked an arriving bus of refugees with women and crying children for hours while shouting 'We are the people' [Wir sind das Volk], and 'piss off' (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk 2016). The slogan 'We are the people' was the East-German nationalistic rallying call during Germany's unification in 1989/90. Today, it has become a national-xenophobic slogan set against virtually everyone not German. This is the political climate as of late. Bender's book hardly ever alludes to the change in the political climate in Germany, the rise of Antisemitism, or the prevalence of racist violence that has become rampant in recent years and is reported daily (cf. Bundestag 2017). Two of those who like to stir up racism, Antisemitism, and xenophobic violence from behind the scenes are AfD demagogue Götz Kubischek and Björn Höcke – who are 'close friends' [Dutzfreunde] (p. 102). Beyond that, Bender also acknowledges the many links between Germany's AfD and Austria's right-wing party, the FPÖ. AfD boss Gauland calls the FPÖ our 'natural ally'.

Both groups are unified in their xenophobic outlook exemplified by Germany's AfD leader Alexander Gauland, who believes that 'Germans do not want football star Jerome Boateng as a neighbour' – apparently because Boateng's Ghana-German heritage (p. 124). Racist hate speech such as this separate the AfD from Germany's democratic parties. The AfD likes to insult Germany's democratic parties as 'old parties' [Altparteien], implying that they belong to an old (e.g. out-dated) system. This old system is a system that the AfD, as new party, intends to eliminate (p. 177). These ideas are followed by the AfD's 'party supporters with a certain simplicity', indicating that AfD sympathisers aren't intellectual superstars (p. 180).

One is tempted to see a certain simplicity in Bender's book when itemising AfD-leader Alexander Garland's dress code in great detail. He 'nearly always wears a green tie with a yellow dog' while the former AfD-deputy Frauke Petry 'wears the collar of her blouse above her jacket to the annoyance of conservatives' (p. 201). While elaborating on fashion, what remains unrepresented is that AfD Nazi Björn Höcke argues that there is a clear difference between 'Germans on the one side' and 'Jews on the other side' (p. 205). Other than this single statement, Antisemitism remains absent from the book, as do many crypto-Nazi statements made by the members and the upper echelons of the AfD (Klikauer 2017; 2018). In the end, 'what the AfD wants' (the book's subtitle) remains somewhat unclear.

What becomes increasingly clear from the book, however, is that the AfD does not represent a clear and present danger to democracy. This is the kind of political appeasement that once failed so bitterly during the early years before the Nazi takeover. What makes

Germany's radical right different from all other European populist and right-wing parties is the Holocaust (Klikauer 2018). It was German Nazism that did it – nobody else. But for the conservative journalist Justus Bender, the AfD has next to nothing to do with their many antisemitic statements, their racism, their denial of the Holocaust, the glorification of Nazi soldiers, or the mainstreaming of fascism through trying to make Nazi terms such as 'völkisch' and 'Volksgemeinschaft' acceptable again. The AfD, so we are told, is like any other party, just a bit more to the right – just a populist party.

### 3. Germany's Catholicism and the AfD

While German conservatism appears to be accommodating, Germany's Catholics offer a more critical voice when examining the AfD, Pegida and the AfD's surrounding field of radical-right and Nazi sympathisers. Stefan Orth and Volker Resing's edited volume offers nine chapters by mostly catholic thinkers. Their edition starts with the AfD's historic origins dating back to the 'NPD and Republicans' (p. 7), while not mentioning that their ideological origins reach back to the NSDAP. One of the AfD's key calling cards is religion in the form of 'the Christian occident' that the AfD pretends to defend against 'the Islam' (p. 7) – as if there is one single homogeneous Islam.

The book argues that with the rise of 'right-wing populism in Europe, [a new] Führer seems to be much in demand' (p. 11). Europe's history and more precisely its medieval history are signified by 'burning at the stake [while] today it is the burning of refugee residences' (p. 12). Much of this occurs as the AfD claims that there is a so-called 'fear of people [of Muslims and that this fear] must be taken seriously' (p. 20). While not working towards reducing such fears, the AfD actively engineers a 'populist fear' against Muslims (p. 20). This makes the AfD a 'populist party of fear' (p. 20). The radical-right's engineering of xenophobia attacks the veneer of civilisation. On that, Andreas Püttmann notes that the 'veneer of civilisation is constantly eroded' (p. 36) by the AfD's 'anti-liberalism, anti-pluralism, anti-democratic [ideology] and its völkisch-nationalistic thinking' (p. 37).

In many cases, the merchants of fear mix xenophobia (the dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries) with the 'social-Darwinism' (natural selection's strong win over the weak) often displayed by the AfD (p. 38) just as frequently as it presents, at times, more open 'racism' (p. 40). Unlike the aforementioned conservative journalist Bender who essentially argues that the AfD is a radical right-wing version of Germany's mainstream conservative party (the CDU), the political scientist Püttmann argues that the AfD 'isn't just a more conservative CDU' (p. 42). He notes that there are many personal overlaps between Pegida and AfD but fails to mention that Pegida boss Lutz Bachmann likes to style himself after Adolf Hitler (Connelly 2015). But Püttmann notes the rampant antisemitism inside the AfD. The AfD's antisemitism is personified through 'Wolfgang Gedeon' (p. 44). For Gedeon and the AfD, it is clear who 'the enemy is' [Da steht der Feind]. This is a perceived political enemy that 'will be destroyed' (p. 47). Other political parties are no longer seen as partners in what Greek philosophy calls 'the polis' but they are enemies to be eliminated. This is the ideology of Nazi lawyer Carl Schmitt's deep hatred of democracy. Today, this

sort of enemy thinking has led to a significant change in Germany's climate. This was experienced first-hand by Cologne's mayor Heriette Reker, who only narrowly escaped a right-wing assassination attempt by an 'AfD admirer' (p. 48).

These things happen in Germany as the AfD 'exaggerates' a largely invented danger of foreigners while 'hyping up fear' (p. 54) when speaking of 'the destruction of the family through a world conspiracy of the homo-lobby' (p. 55). Meanwhile, AfD functionaries call Catholic bishops 'rotten functionaries' (p. 56). They are presented as the enemy, and the AfD presents itself as the defender. The AfD follows a strict 'black and white, evil and good theme with an external enemy set against our homeland, nation, culture, and Volk' (p. 73). Much of this finds expression in the AfD's inhumanity [menschenverachtend] völkisch-nationalistic and apocalyptic position' (p. 75). Many of the AfD's conspiracy theories go even further than that. According to regional AfD boss Christina Baum, there is even a 'slow genocide of the Germans' (p. 76) based on a declining birth rate.

The book's overall message is that the Alternative for Germany is 'no alternative for Germany' (p. 78). More explicitly, the Catholic bishop of Cologne articulated, perhaps on behalf of Germany's Catholic Church as a whole, that 'we do not need such an alternative' (p. 80). Most of the book's Catholic theologians agree that the AfD is a 'reactionary' movement (p. 92). The book acknowledges that 'hate speech can quickly turn into physical violence' (p. 96). Together with Pegida, the AfD is, at least partly, responsible for a massive change in Germany's political climate. This is more prevalent in the East than in the West. As a consequence, it is not at all surprising that the most serious post-war Neo-Nazi killers (Kushner 2016) of the so-called 'NSU emerged in the Thuringia-Saxony area' (p. 97).

Next to contemporary Nazi violence like the NSU bombings and killings (which includes the murder of a policewoman), the AfD represents 'after NPD, DVU, REP, a new political party on the right fringe' (p. 102). Historically speaking, there is something that remained unmentioned in the book, namely that all of them had yet another predecessor called the NSDAP. The NSDAP had a fascist mass movement called SA. The AfD doesn't have such a mass movement, as 'Pegida isn't a social movement but an organisation that arranges well-planned and frequently conducted rallies' (p. 141). Overall, the AfD off-sider Pegida has five types of followers (p. 142):

1. culturally conservative and xenophobic people (31%);
2. well-meaning opponents of migrants (24%);
3. Islamophobic people (19%);
4. the radical right (19%, including 5% neo-Nazis); and
5. the mainstream (8%).

On the whole, however, one might say that the AfD is the parliamentary arm of Pegida. In other words, 'Pegida sympathisers in the election box' (p. 144). They feel no longer engaged by conservatives like the CDU (p. 146). Many have argued that Merkel has moved the CDU as much to the progressive side as possible (e.g. supporting minimum wage, refugee intake, etc.). Disillusioned with the CDU, many AfD sympathisers see the occident [Abendland] in danger. The occident's geographical location is found in 'western European countries...based on Latin Christianity' (p. 164). The imagined geography of the occident has been transported into modernity by pre-Nazi ideologue Oswald Spengler's 'the decline of the west' (1919). Pegida and AfD present themselves as defenders of

Spengler's occident. Simultaneously, AfD and Pegida 'reject the west's political institutions' (p. 171). They also believe that 'foreigners do not belong to our Volk' (p. 182). Both seek to prevent what the AfD calls 'Umvolkung'. This means Germany's people will be converted into some kind of other people. In the hallucinations of the AfD, the other people are an Islamic Volk.

To prevent Umvolkung, the Aryan Volksgemeinschaft needs to fight against anything and anyone non-German. In order to achieve that, 'democracy needs to be converted' (p. 183) into an imagined Volksgemeinschaft. Against that, Catholic authors make clear that 'the church rejects that [as it] rejects racism and xenophobia' (p. 184). This is different from earlier periods. Unlike in the

- 1920s when the Catholic Church supported Fascism in Italy (Ceci 2017; Kertzer 2014); the
- 1930s when the Catholic Church supported Hitler in Germany; and in the
- 1950s when the Catholic Church transported ex-Nazis to South America (the ratline, Alberge 2011),

this time around the Catholic Church – at least according to the book 'AfD, Pegida and Co. – Attacks on Religion' – positions itself clearly against a deeply anti-democratic party, the AfD. The 'AfD-vs.-democracy' debate is continued in Christian Nawrocki and Armin Fuhrer's book 'AfD – Fighting or Ignoring'. Both argue that the AfD's anti-democratic ideas are expressed in, for example, the right-wing delusion of a 'Merkel-dictatorship' (p. 7). It is also expressed in the many so-called 'embarrassing mistakes' (p. 8) and 'verbal derailments' [Entgleisungen] (p. 68). Increasingly, these so-called 'incidents' are hard to accept as being merely individual incidents. The sheer volume of these so-called embarrassing 'mistakes and derailments' have long established a distinctive pattern. Given their numbers and almost daily occurrence, these are no mistakes. Instead, they signify the true politics and ideology of the AfD.

## 4. Democracy and the AfD

Despite the many indications of the prevalence of crypto-fascistic ideologies inside the AfD, the book argues that 'the AfD does not have the character of being a fascist party' (p. 9). Perhaps the real danger comes from not recognising the danger. Still, the book maintains 'the AfD isn't like the NSDAP' (p. 10). Of course not. Even new Nazis can learn to camouflage their Nazi ideology. Still, some – like Germany's freshly re-elected foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel in early 2018 and the parliament's vice president Thomas Oppermann – have seen the AfD's true Nazi character (Aderet 2017; Al Jazeera 2017). They call a spade a spade. Germany's own AfD-Watch ([afdwatchafd.wordpress.com](http://afdwatchafd.wordpress.com)) says the AfD is a 'wolf in sheep's clothing,' camouflaging its Nazism. Today's Nazism hides, as the AfD has mastered the camouflaging of Nazism to perfection. It manages to get its Nazi ideology – völkisch, Volksgemeinschaft, etc. – into the public domain without openly appearing to be Nazis. The unchallenged headmaster of this sort of new Nazi talk by stealth is regional AfD-Führer Björn Höcke – a history teacher. Still, not seeing the danger is dangerous.

One of 20th century's saddest moments in the fight against Nazism and towering symbol of appeasement and misjudgement remains the speech by SPD leader Otto Wels (1933). Wels gave his talk on the eve of the Nazi's final takeover, the 23 of March 1933 – the final destruction of democracy. Otto Wels called his address 'You Cannot Take Our Honour'. The Nazis not only took your honour, they also took everything you had, killed your family and tortured you to death. And once they were finished with you (i.e. communists and social-democrats), millions of Jewish people and virtually anyone not fitting into the Volksgemeinschaft's racial madness was on their death list. This is what Nazism means. It is not a political ideology; it is a crime against humanity. Then as today, the protestant pastor Martin Niemöller (1892–1984) was right (Stein 2003: 338),

'First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.'

The belief that 'Germany, as a country of stability, is admired globally' (p. 11) will protect you from Nazism may, once again, turn out to be a dangerous fantasy. Perhaps Sigmund Freud wasn't wrong when observing that 'the veneer of civilisation' is rather thin (Rustin 2001: 115). Nazism can easily peel it off. It has done so before. To accomplish this, neither the old Nazi nor the new Nazi need the majority of German voters. And indeed, the Nazis did not receive the majority of the German vote (Hamilton 1982) until its dictatorial regime was established and democracy was converted through a cynical legitimating act. Instead of a need to capture the majority outright, Nazi ideologies are hardly unifying. Today, 'many studies have shown that around 5.6% of the German population have an extreme-right worldview' (p. 14). This is a worldview that does not include democracy but seeks a völkisch dictatorship. The book's suggestion 'to defend democracy by debating their policies with the radical right' (p. 16) might be very honourable but it hasn't prevented Nazism in the past. Nazism only uses the rules of democracy to gain power. Democracy in itself has no value to Nazism. Democracy is merely a means – and not an end unto itself.

The book advocates that 'nothing is more dangerous than an AfD against the rest' (p. 18) approach. By arguing this, the authors do not advocate ignoring the AfD, as the book's subtitle suggests. The book seems to imply that Germany's democratic forces should not unite against the AfD. This raises the inevitable question: should one go back to the 1930s when social-democrats fought against communists and communists fought against social-democrats until the Nazis were in power?

The AfD is not a party that is with us on democracy. Rather, it is an 'against-party' (p. 21). The AfD might be against democracy but still, the book refrains from recommending that Germany's 'secret service [Verfassungsschutz] should deal with the AfD' (p. 24). It has the power to recommend court proceedings against any party seeking to destroy the constitutionality of the German state. Aligned with this is the rather risky idea that 'the majority of AfD voters aren't sympathisers of the radical-right' (p. 28). The book's message is that in the end democracy will work and eventually the AfD will vanish. But for the time being, the AfD remains a 'national-conservative' party (p. 29) with strong Nazi inclinations.



One of the AfD's very own founders – Hans-Olaf Henkel – called the AfD 'NPD light' (p. 29). Unlike the fringe-dweller NPD, the AfD received 12.6% and 92 parliamentarians in the 2017 election.

One step ahead of Germany's AfD is Austria's FPÖ, a crypto-Nazi party with a known and violent Neo-Nazi as Führer. Germany's main business daily, the *Handelsblatt* (2014), recently said about the FPÖ leader Heinz-Christian Strache: 'Mr Strache, you are a Nazi'. The book's next author and PR expert Manfred Güllner argues there are many 'myths and belittlement [about the AfD] and through that the AFA is made [to appear] acceptable' (p. 43). Such an attitude can support what Canadian education expert Henry A. Giroux recently called 'mainstreaming fascism' (2018). Mainstreaming fascism through AfD populism may well have started with highly populist moves like the AfD's burning of Euro banknotes. But such acts always come with a Nazi twist. The AfD's 'money burning' act occurred 'only a few hundred meters away from Berlin's Bebelplatz where the Nazis burned books in May 1933' (p. 46). Not to be forgotten is the old truth: at first, they burn books, then they burn people.

Needless to say, the AfD called its entry into the regional parliament of Saxony 'Paukenschlag' (p. 47). The Nazis called a right-wing *coup d'état* against the social-democratic government of Brandenburg in 1932 the 'Preussenschlag' (Spiegel 2007). Whether Paukenschlag or Preussenschlag – the words may differ – the idea remains the same. Much of the anti-democratic ideology of the AfD is represented in the following fact: 'while 75% [of German voters] trust Germany's democratic parties and 65% trust chancellor Merkel, only 31% of AfD trust Germany's political parties and only 12% trust Merkel' (p. 54). Not surprisingly, AfD-Führer Gauland calls Merkel 'Chancellor-dictator' (p. 64), while AfD MP Peter Boehringer called Germany's chancellor 'Merkel-whore' (Jakob 2018).

In a Trump-like fashion, AfD populism delivers a 'constant stream of media news' (p. 59) often focusing on the 'personalisation' of politics (p. 60). Regional AfD boss Marcus Pretzell believes 'journalism is dead – long live social media' (p. 62). For the AfD, internet websites, blogs, etc. function as echo-chambers mirroring right-wing ideologies. The hatred of the AfD against the media is often expressed in the Goebbels-like Nazi terminology (1939) of a 'lying press' (p. 63). Despite all this, many still believe the AfD is just a 'party of right-wing extremism' (p. 65) – not a crypto-Nazi party.

One of the book's most thoughtful chapters is by Charlotte Knobloch. Knobloch argues that the AfD is an Antisemitic party (IHRA 2015). Indeed, AfD MP Wolfgang Gedeon talks openly of a 'Jewish world conspiracy' (p. 68). This is straightforward Nazi ideology. And not even the AfD's 'cosmetically adjusted party programme' (p. 68) can camouflage this sort of open antisemitism. The AfD has 'racism and antisemitism as basic characteristics of its nationalistic worldview' (p. 72). Knobloch also acknowledges that for many on the right, the step from verbal antisemitism to 'active violence is short' (p. 73). Pure Nazi ideology is also called up when Gedeon talks of 'the Jew as the inner enemy of the Christian Occident' (p. 83).

Perhaps it is not all that wrong to agree with Mazyek who called 'the AfD the new de facto Nazis' (p. 87). The AfD has shifted Germany's culture towards the right. In today's Germany, there is racist and antisemitic violence. Examples of this are the fires at the 'Bergische Synagogue in Wuppertal and the Mevlana Mosque in Berlin' (p. 91), where 90 fire fighters battled the flames for hours' (p. 92). Meanwhile, the Neo-Nazi killers of the 'NSU' went on a killing spree 'undetected by Germany's police for seven years' (p. 93). Over years, the NSU

was furnished financially and logistically by Germany's secret service (Sundermann, Blickle 2016; von Bebenburg 2018). This is the racist climate in which a female witness of a racist attack – 'Marwa' (p. 97) – was stabbed to death in a German court room (Spiegel 2009).

Most illuminating are the warnings of the book's next author, former deputy chancellor Franz Müntefehring. He warns against showing tolerance towards 'racist, völkische Nazi parties, right-wing groups and individuals' (p. 100). This comes with the knowledge that '50% of [Germany's overall] voters like the AfD even though they do not necessarily vote for the AfD' (p. 108). The book's next author, Peter Radunski, argues that the 'AfD should fight against its own right-wing infiltration' (p. 110), assuming that the AfD isn't a deeply right-wing extremist party already.

By contrast, Ralf Stegner maintains that 'the AfD is a clear case for Germany's secret service' (p. 120). This can lead to a Supreme Court case against the AfD. A possible court case will, among other things, be based on the fact that 'the AfD uses arguments [that Nazis] used eighty years ago' (p. 120). He writes 'hatred, Nazi slogans and calling for violence aren't covered by free speech – hate speech remains a crime' (p. 122) in Germany. Most AfD hate speech reaches far beyond simply 'calling things by their name' (p. 126) as the AfD likes to pretend. The AfD is a party of attacks, insults, accusations and ideology. The AfD is not a party of parliamentary engagement. Not surprisingly, '93% of the people in Germany's southern state of Baden-Württemberg agree with the statement, 'the AfD is incapable of solving political problems' (p. 126). Reminiscent of the aforementioned Niemöller, the owner of the publishing house that printed the book concludes the final chapter with a dire warning. We should make sure that 'we don't wake up one morning asking how could all this have happened?' (p. 135).

## 5. Arguments against the AfD

This is exactly what happened to Stephan Hebel, who woke up one morning to learn that the AfD had received 20.8% of the public vote in the East-German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. So, Hebel wrote a 'fiery letter' [Brandbrief], now published as a book. The book warns people against the AfD because it has a 'deeply racist core based on ethnical homogeneity of the German nation' (p. 7). In Germany, this usually comes with antisemitism, racial cleansing and the Nazi's mythical Volksgemeinschaft. On the other side, the book also warns against 'cheap slogans like they are all racist' (p. 11). Interestingly, Hebel mentions that the AfD received 56,000 votes in the sparsely populated state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern with the following distribution (p. 12):

- 22,000 votes came from the CDU,
- 16,000 from the Left [ex-communists],
- 15,000 from the social-democratic SPD, and
- 3,000 from the environmental Green Party

Similar to Bender's 'what does the AfD want?', Hebel discusses 'what the AfD *really* wants?' He sees three policies: 'lowering unemployment benefits, cutting bureaucracy and raising taxes' (p. 17). Beyond such social policies, racial hatred remains the determining

factor, as ‘83% of AfD voters believe the state does more for refugees than for them’ (p. 17). Hebel convincingly argues that the ‘AfD will do nothing to solve the three issues’ (p. 19) mentioned above. The author also acknowledges that there is no large scale ‘population movement of historic proportions’ (p. 28) – one of the AfD’s favourite myths. The AfD’s second favourite is that crime will go up when refugees and migrants enter Germany. Against that sits the fact that Germany’s ‘BKA [roughly equivalent to the FBI] has acknowledged that migration neither reduces nor increases Germany’s crime’ (p. 51). In short, Hebel’s little booklet delivers plenty of counterarguments against many of the myths and ideology propagated by the AfD.

## 6. Authoritarianism and the Defenders of Europe

Propagating right-wing ideologies is by no means exclusive to the AfD. The AfD is part of Germany’s extreme right-wing. In his book ‘The Authoritarian Revolt’, Volker Weiss argues that the recent rise of the radical right was initiated by the publication of “social-democrat Thilo Sarrazin’s [book] ‘Germany Does Away with Itself’” (DW 2010). Even though the book sold more than a million copies ‘Sarrazin likes to see himself as not getting heard presenting himself as a ‘resistance fighter against the [political] mainstream’ (p. 10). His book depicts a ‘radical right-wing worldview that reaches deep into fascism’ (p. 12). Beyond ideological support, Germany’s radical right also has institutional support. Among these institutions is a think-tank called ‘Institute for State Politics’. And there are also magazines and newspaper supportive of the AfD. The party even dreams of owning its ‘own TV-station, radio-station, own newspapers and magazines’ (AfD 2017). And then there are publications like ‘Hier & Jetzt’ (p. 20). It is noteworthy that this ‘HJ’ is a reminder of the ‘HJ’, or ‘Hitler Jugend’ [Hitler Youth].

Like the radical-right in general, the AfD propagates the ideology of a ‘people’s exchange’ or *Umvolkung* (p. 21), signifying an exchange of Germans with non-Germans. It also sees Islam not as a religion but as a ‘fighting community’ [*Kampfgemeinschaft*] (p. 22). The political spectrum of the radical-right ranges from those simply advocating right-wing ideologies to the Neo-Nazi killers of the NSU (p. 24). The Neo-Nazi NSU murdered ten people, one policewoman and nine others between 2000 and 2007 (Graef 2017). While the NSU (and others of the radical-right) kill people, the AfD largely focuses on politics, ideology, engineering hatred, and radical right-wing publications. AfD boss Alexander Gauland, for example, began writing for ‘radical right-wing publication called ‘*Criticón*’ [while] he was still a member of the CDU’ (p. 30). The distance between the ‘radical-right and the more acceptable right’ (e.g. CDU) is often very small.

While Germany’s real Nazis used what it called ‘liberating nationalism’ against ‘Soviet- and US-Imperialism’ (p. 35), the AfD also seems to hate socialism and US-capitalism. But both also share a rejection of ‘decadence, as decadence reduces Germany’s chance of survival’ (p. 41). Reactionary chauvinists like Ernst Jünger, NS lawyers like Carl Schmitt (p. 48) and demagogues like Oswald Spengler (p. 49) fought similar battles. If not in person then in their writings, these ideologies transferred seamlessly from Nazi Germany into post-war Germa-

ny. And indeed, 'the young German republic had no shortage of old-Nazis' (p. 49), many of whom furnished the 'rebuilding of nationalism' (p. 53) set 'against democracy' (p. 56).

For today's far right, Germany's democracy is entrapped. It is governed by a 'cartel of the allied forces' (p. 60). Democracy is, according to AfD mythologies, 'morally imprisoned by Auschwitz' (p. 60). More than its ideological predecessors, the AfD has camouflaged its rampant anti-democratic stance and has, 'in contrast to the NPD, managed to capture larger sections of the voting population' (p. 62). Set against decadence of western liberalism is the belief that 'there is a loss of identity among Germans' (p. 72). Based on the French 'génération identitaire' (p. 98), Germany's radical-right's 'identity movement [is] known to be a recruiting ground for the AfD' (RBB 2017). Identity Nazism favours a racial Germanic identity in 'the tradition of völkisch Nationalism' (p. 73).

Inside the AfD, the more radical right-wing has become the stronger of the AfD's main two wings: the 'völkisch-nationalistic and the national-liberal' wings (p. 87). The former is represented by André Poggenburg and Björn Höcke (p. 89), who favour Nazi slogans like 'Germany for the Germans'. They advocate that Germany needs to expand its borders. Both also like to racially abuse non-Germans. Meanwhile, AfD hate speech has entered the parliament. Recently, the AfD's racial abuse became so bad that the traditionally rather reserved president of Germany – Frank-Walter Steinmeier – was forced to intervene by saying this is 'hate speech' (Spiegel 2018).

Without never really advocating it too openly, the AfD in particular and the radical-right in general has learned to master the rhetorical art of 'deceptively placing Nazism within their ideological perception of history' (p. 114). Without directly copying 'Hitler's (1941) 'Occident Speech' [Abendland-Rede] but by insinuating virtually the same meaning [AfD off-sider], Pegida and the radical-right see themselves as defenders of the occident' (Hank 2014) demanding a 'spiritual civil war' (p. 119). For the coming völkisch-nationalistic war, they are readying 'sympathisers trained for violence' (p. 136) with the goal of 'expanding [their geographical] fighting zones' (p. 218). These have become known as 'no go areas'. These areas have been ethnically cleansed of non-Germans. To camouflage much of the more outspoken Nazism, others inside the AfD like to see themselves as 'the moderate right' (p. 144). Still, AfD and Pegida represent a new 'völkische movement with distinct cravings for violence' (p. 146). For many of the radical-right, violence is a means to establish the next nationalistic-imperial Reich seen 'as the only acceptable form of statehood' on German soil (p. 165).

Such a new Reich is designed to fight against "Jew and Nigger blood that has infiltrated Germany [vernegerter Bluteinschlag] (p. 172). Non-Germans are defamed as 'hordes without culture'" (p. 171). Not surprisingly, 'Israel isn't much loved' (p. 182) by the radical-right, nor is the USA. The AfD believes in the 'Americanisation' (p. 191) of the world. Hence, the 'USA is seen as [one of] the AfD's main enemies' (p. 197). This comes with an ideology that sees 'blood and soil as the only liveable reality of existence' (p. 204). In other words, 'modernity is the final enemy' (p. 214). In the conspiratorial hallucinations of the AfD, modernity is represented by the 'power of the Zionist lobby in Germany' (p. 224).

The radical-right also claims that Jewish people are 'basically different from us' (p. 225). Antisemitism and racism are legitimised through simplistic biological analogies like 'a goldfinch that defends its territory isn't anti-goldfinch or racist just because it defends a territory' (p. 213). To defend Germany's territory, one needs real men and not an 'effeminate

Gayrope' [verweichlichtes Gayropa] (p. 237). To overcome Gayrope, the radical-right wants 'a renaissance of nationalistic spirit' (p. 241) ready to fight against 'humanist universalism' (p. 265). This "Us" vs. "Them" thinking separated friends from enemies.

## 7. The AfD, the Radical-right and Nazism

Sebastian Friedrich argues convincingly in his book 'The AfD – Analysis, Background and Controversies' that the 'enemy features strongly because it creates cohesion' (p. 7). The enemy binds the AfD together. Not accidentally, this is also what defines the original 'Italian Fasci of Combat'. Fasci and fascism are symbolised by the leather strap binding the axe to the blade ready for combat. Like many others, Friedrich also names social-democratic author 'Thilo Sarrazin' (p. 9.) as a key influence on the AfD. Indeed, the AfD is the result of a 'sudden move to the right but the outcome of decades of right-wing tendencies' (p. 9) that also diminished the relevance of politics.

Like the real Nazis of the 1930s, the AfD 'didn't drop out of the sky' (p. 13) but has gained from the deliberate depoliticisation of society. Supportive of this is, for example, the fact that 'electoral participation dropped from 90% in the 1970s to 71% in 2017 [while] party membership in Germany's two leading parties [SPD and CDU] has halved' (p. 22) over the same period. Conceivably, depoliticisation was also supported by AfD-leader Alexander Gauland's 2002 book 'Instruction on Being Conservative' [Anleitung zum Konservativsein] (p. 25). It claimed that conservatism is an ideological attitude rather than a political one. Overall, Sebastian Friedrich's book identifies four historical periods of the AfD (p. 46), with a fifth phase to be added:

1. 2013: the founding phase – AfD presents itself as moderate;
2. early 2014: electoral success in Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg – move to the right;
3. late 2014: polarisation and frequent in-fighting over leadership positions and ideologies;
4. 2015: unhindered move towards the radical-right so-called völkisch wing; and
5. 2017: entry into the federal parliament – the völkisch wing becomes established.

The first phase started with the AfD's founding congress on the 14th of April 2013. At that time, the AfD consisted of 'national-conservatives and Christian fundamentalists' (p. 47). The failure to cross the 5% threshold meant that the AfD could not enter Germany's federal parliament in 2013. Still, receiving just below 5% (4.7%) also indicated an early electoral success and a move to the right that soon was set to follow. With the AfD's move towards the radical-right, even the real neo-Nazi party, the NPD, 'began encouraging their followers to vote for the AfD' (p. 53). In accordance with the AfD's increasing Nazism, it is not at all surprising to find that 'an AfD member said in a speech held in the town of Stockeldorf close to the city of Lübeck that the gas chambers in Dachau were put up by the Allied forces' (p. 58). Meanwhile 'another AfD member was also a member of a Nazi rock band' (p. 58).

The aforementioned Pegida is seen as 'our natural ally' (p. 61) by AfD-boss Gauland. Pegida boss Lutz Bachmann (Handelsblatt 2015) 'who likes to pose as Hitler on his Facebook postings' (p. 60) also gives 'hate speeches against migrants' (p. 61). These are positions represented by the AfD's völkische Nazi wing associated with AfD regional boss, Björn Höcke. Björn Höcke's völkisch wing is manifested in the so-called 'Erfurter Resolu-

tion' (p. 62), moving the AfD from the radical-right (AfD-Flügel 2015) ever more towards Nazism. The AfD's völkisch resolution was 'signed by 1,600 AfD members' (p. 62). This is the AfD's 'Germanic-national, anti-Islamic, anti-migration, partly anti-capitalistic, and anti-American' (p. 64) wing representing 'NS-ideology and racism' (p. 68). It likes to break long established taboos like 'questioning the Holocaust only to excuse it as a mishap a little late' (p. 70). This media strategy is designed to 'push the boundaries of what can be said [while] moving the political debate ever more towards the right' (p. 70).

The AfD's communication strategy 'focuses on anti-Islamism' (p. 72) while pushing 'culture... which always means German culture' (p. 74). This is the political culture that wants to 'close Madrassa' (p. 75), violating religious freedom as stipulated by Germany's constitution. An even more outspoken view comes from AfD-MP Wolfgang Gedeon who thinks the antisemitic fabrication of the '*Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a serious resource*' (p. 76) *even though it is known to be a Russian forgery drawn up in the year 1905 (USHMM 2018). Combine this with Nazism and one quickly arrives at the Volksgemeinschaft – a key Nazi concept. The AfD-Volksgemeinschaft link has even been acknowledged by Germany's most watched and most reputable TV programme, the Tagesschau (Gensing 2015) – Daily News.*

The AfD's calling upon the Nazi's Volksgemeinschaft is designed to pretend that there is this mythical safe place coming from somewhere in the past. In this place, those 'fearful of the future and threatened by neoliberalism will be protected' (p. 88). As a consequence, the AfD is successful in those regions most threatened by neoliberalism, globalisation, and industrial decline. Beyond that, the AfD also argues that wealth distribution is not upward (towards the rich) and not downward (towards workers) either. Instead, the AfD thinks that wealth is unfairly distributed from 'inside to the outside' (p. 91) meaning that wealth moves from 'workers and taxpayers' [Arbeitstiere und Zahlmeister] to those undeserving, i.e. foreigners. Hence, Björn Höcke's rallying cry is 'we will no longer be exploited' (p. 92). This might even unite the AfD's three key ideological wings, which often fight against one another. These are (p. 97):

1. the national-conservative (conservative-reactionary),
2. the national-liberal (neoliberalism and 'Hayek-club', p. 106, anti-Europe, p. 110) and
3. the völkische (Nazism) wing.

The völkische wing meets at the 'knight's castle [Rittergut] in Schnellroda in Saxony-Anhalt' in East-Germany (p. 113) with Götz Kubitschek as the main crypto-theoretical demagogue. Despite their ideological differences, there are also common issues uniting the three wings. All three factions are likely to agree on Nietzsche's 'superhuman' notion that 'the strong are superior to the weak' (p. 119). The weak are the foreigners 'who want to take things away from us' (p. 128).

## 8. Communicating Right-wing Ideologies, Populism and Nazism

Marcus Voigt's book also mentions the 'lying press'. The lying press is a key component of the political communication of the AfD. With all that, the AfD's rather sudden rise makes the party the 'most successful party in the history of Germany' (p. 7). Successful 'political

communication' (p. 9) has been vital to this success. A key element in the AfD's electoral achievement remains the ability to 'label the external enemy' (p. 18). As labelling theory suggests, this is the ability to put a label on those deemed to be enemies and thereby defining them (Wellford 1975). From the AfD's convincing communication power follows a certain 'media and populism logic' (p. 25). This logic proposes 'surprise, sensation, scandals, pretended closeness, conflict, drama, emotions, personalisation, and whatever creates news' (p. 25). Simultaneously, 'political correctness is called 'terrorism of majority opinions' (p. 27). Political correctness simply gets in the way of verbal abuse, personal attacks, outspoken racism and antisemitism.

The AfD also uses the media to cement a picture of a 'corrupt elite and since the media is part of this elite, it is also corrupt' (p. 29). Simultaneously, the party has been highly successful in 'mobilising the media for its populist cause' (p. 33). This is supported by the media 'attention given to the AfD' (p. 40) as a 'party that challenges' the status quo (p. 42). The AfD runs a sort of communicative double game. On the one hand, it accuses the media of being corrupt, part of an elite, 'disadvantaging the AfD' (p. 47). On the other hand, the AfD calls the media the 'lying press' – a distinctive Nazi word and 'one of Björn Höcke's favourite terms' (p. 88). Aligned to that, the AfD believes that Germany's public broadcasting engages in 'propaganda and hate-broadcasting' [Hetzsender] (p. 93). The exact opposite is the case. On the other hand, the AfD uses the media rather cunningly to gain popularity. Next to Germany's established media, the AfD has its own 'unofficial outlet...the Junge Freiheit' (p. 49) or Young Liberty' and it 'relies heavily on social media' (p. 50), 'especially Facebook' (p. 93) 'through which it runs electoral campaigns' (p. 94).

With this media strategy, the AfD has moved 'what can be said' (p. 78) towards the extreme right (e.g. racism, antisemitism, outspoken Nazism, etc.). It is just as an AfD official once explained, 'I get into the papers when I provoke and when I am abusive' (p. 78). The media language often 'borders on the language used during the 3rd Reich' (p. 79), i.e. Nazism. This becomes clear when regional AfD boss Björn Höcke calls upon 'a thousand years of history and a thousand years of future' (p. 79) conjuring up Hitler's dream of a 'thousand-year Reich' (Shirer 1960: 5). According to the AfD, this is a future without the so-called 'one-parties-block [of] 'old-parties' (p. 84). Under the AfD's Volksgemeinschaft, all political parties are eliminated in favour of one homogenous and above all völkische entity. The AfD's label 'old' for Germany's democratic parties seeks to pretend that the AfD is different and new.

## 9. The AfD in the Centre of Politics

Overall, the AfD's media strategy focuses on 'negativism, scandals, and entertainment' (p. 99). With this strategy, the AfD seeks to reach the political centre. Once it has reached the centre, it will move it towards the völkische radical-right. How successful this has been is analysed in Oliver Decker's chapter on 'The Uninhibited Centre', which uses quantitative data from 14 years of research on authoritarian attitudes. These attitudes have only strengthened because of an 'influx of three million ex-Germans from Russia [Russland-

deutsche] during 1989 to 1993' (p. 15). The more recent increase of migration and refugees has further enhanced such attitudes. Based on thousands of questionnaires used throughout Germany, the following picture emerges:

- 13.8% of East- and 4.8% of West-Germans want a dictatorship (p. 31);
- 12.8% in the East and 10% in the West want a new Führer (p. 31);
- 10.9% think that Jews have too much power (p. 34);
- 6.7% in the West and 5.5% in the East think Nazi crimes are overrated (p. 35).

People with such right-wing attitudes tend to 'prefer the AfD' (p. 40). However, AfD sympathisers also show 'a less than average level of education' (p. 69). Of all major Germany parties (CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, the Left, Greens, and now AfD), those voters wanting a dictatorship are the highest in the AfD (8.1%) and the lowest in the Greens, with just 4.5% (p. 74). Predictably, antisemitism is most prevalent in the AfD and the least in the Greens (p. 75). Those who agree with the statement 'democracy works' are the highest among CDU/CSU voters and the lowest among AfD voters (p. 81). Just under 86% of voters also state that 'Muslims make me feel insecure in my own county,' while even 24.7% in the Greens feel that way (p. 82). The same goes for the statement 'migration should be stopped': 80.3% of AfD and 23.5% of Green voters agree with this statement.

Interestingly, 48.8% of AfD voters also accept 'violence as a political means,' while only 22.6% in the SPD agree with this statement (p. 91). When it comes to actually using violence however, still 47.4% of AfD voters (the highest) and 12.7% of Green voters (the lowest) (p. 91) agree with this idea. Similarly, 'conspiracy theories' are more likely to be accepted by AfD voters (65.3%) compared to the FDP, where just 22% believe in such claptrap (p. 92). Based on their research, two distinctly different milieus emerge (p. 103):

1. an anti-democratic-authoritarian milieu and
2. a democratic milieu.

Virtually, the same milieus split Pegida supporters (p. 142) from the more democratic Germany.

## 10. Stopping the AfD

Based on this, the book discusses how to keep AfD voters inside the democratic milieu. Charlotte Theile's book – 'Can We Stop the AfD?' – elaborates on this question in detail. Of course, when AfD/Pegida followers carry symbolic 'gallows for Chancellor Merkel through German streets... neighbouring countries are worried' (p. 7). Such acts are well outside the democratic sphere. But the AfD's violence and racism goes even further than that. Since AfD racism includes the prohibition of minarets and Switzerland has such a prohibition (57.5% voted for it, p. 27), the AfD looks to Switzerland's culture of plebiscites and direct democracy. In Switzerland such xenophobic plebiscites have succeeded because the radical-right has managed to 'break down complex political issues into simple slogans' (p. 19). Especially, the Swiss People's Party [Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP] has been successful in doing this. As a consequence, the AfD likes to model itself on the SVP. The Swiss party is a national-conservative and right-wing populist party.



With an admiration for the SVP's political longevity, SVP boss Christoph Blocher met AfD boss Frauke Petry in April 2016 (p. 35). AfD and SVP agreed that their people [Völker] should be represented through a 'single people's will' [singulärer Volkswille] (p. 43). This has nothing to do with democratic theories like Rousseau's *volonté générale*. Instead, it has everything to do with a race based Aryan Volksgemeinschaft. And it isn't based on democratic principles such as 'one person – one vote' either. Instead, participation is defined by blood and race. It operates as an inclusive-exclusive mechanism in which Jews, communist, anarchist, social-democrats, trade unions, environmentalists, etc. are excluded. They are not part of the Volksgemeinschaft – a mythical homogeneity of one race.

In Switzerland, the shift to the radical-right was flanked by a move in the media. Radical positions that used to appear only in fringe publications are increasingly aired on Switzerland's main, albeit conservative, outlet the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* or NZZ (p. 50). Unlike Germany's main business daily the *'Handelsblatt'*, which takes a very strong anti-AfD stance, Switzerland's 'NZZ prints AfD positions' (p. 51). To the SVP's right are Swiss neo-Nazis that can, unlike in Germany, openly greet one another with the erected arm like Adolf Hitler once did. This is not illegal in Switzerland. It is 'outlawed in Germany' (p. 55). Like many neo-Nazis in neighbouring Germany, Switzerland's radical-right also believes 'it is natural to be a member of the *Waffen SS'* (p. 57). Germany's *Waffen SS* was responsible for the death of millions (Hurd, Werther 2016). There has never been a more inhuman and evil organisation than the *Waffen SS*.

Like many, Charlotte Theile argues that the origins of AfD lie in Sarrazin's book. Like Sarrazin, the AfD also claims that German women do not breed enough, while 'foreign women have too many children' (p. 61). This line of thinking has a long tradition inside the AfD. AfD founding member Bernd Lucke, who believed that Germany's chancellor Angela Merkel offered no alternatives, was instrumental in the creation of the AfD – 'the most dangerous party of the radical-right' (p. 62). The initial setup of the AfD as merely a neo-liberal and conservative party soon changed. Over a few short years, the AfD moved more and more 'to the radical-right' (p. 66). Its 'closeness to Nazism became ever more obvious' (p. 71). The AfD's main representative of *völkische* Nazism remains the aforementioned Björn Höcke. The history teacher Höcke demands an 'about-turn of 180 degrees in how we remember the past' (p. 71). It means that the SS is now good while Jews become once again evil. Auschwitz is no longer a death factory. In the end, the SPD's parliamentarian spokesman Thomas Oppermann was correct in calling Björn Höcke 'a Nazi' (p. 77; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2017). The book concludes that despite the AfD's recent electoral successes, 'there will not be a conservative revolution' (p. 108) of the radical-right.

## 11. Concluding Notes on the AfD – Right Wing Populism and New Nazism

To conclude, with the combined overview of nine recent books on the AfD a more or less complete picture of Germany's newest political party has emerged. The AfD is a deeply anti-democratic party that favours the racial myth of the Volksgemeinschaft over democracy.

It is not democratic pluralism but racial exclusion that furnishes its ideologies. The ideology that the AfD represents is exemplified in ‘wir sind das Volk.’ This was the rallying cry of Germany’s unification of 1989/90. This slogan has been turned into an even more nationalistic theme with the assumption that the AfD speaks on behalf of 80 million German people – das Volk – representing one will.

AfD ex-boss Frauke Petry’s favourite term ‘völkisch’ always means Volksgemeinschaft and this always means those deemed outside the Volksgemeinschaft, i.e. Jews in the past and now Jews and Muslims. Camouflaging this are attempts to portray the AfD as just another radical-right party. This supports the idea that Germany is simply catching up with other European countries that already have radical-right parties. But behind the façade of being just a conservative or populist party lurks nasty racism and antisemitism. In Germany, much of this indicates the event that defined, the holocaust. It remains history’s single most devastating event. No other party has ever sought ‘die Vernichtung der jüdischen Rasse in Europa – the eradication of the Jewish race in Europe’ and no other country has come close to fulfilling this racist nightmare. Germany remains different and the AfD is a very different party.

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