

Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem

Faculty of Law

winter semester 2018/2019

Course: Political Culture in the European Union

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**One year right-wing AfD in the German Bundestag: is there a quantifiable influence
on the political culture?**

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Submission deadline: 17.12.2018

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1 Introductory concept definition and research question

Rising of central-right and right parties is a very common issue in nowadays Europe (cf. Davis / Deole 2017: p. 10): Not only the parties with a longer tradition like the French Rassemblement National (founded as Front National in 1972) or the Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, which radical right takeover took place in 1986 under Jörg Haider, are now stronger than ever (cf. Mudde 2007: pp. 41-42). Also the parties which were founded in the recent past got success in the elections like the 2006 founded (cf. Schellenberg 2017) Partij voor de Vrijheid under their leader Geert Wilders in the Netherlands or the Alternative für Deutschland (in the following context named as AfD), which was founded in 2013 as an Eurosceptic party.

If you compare the ideologies and policies of the central-right and right parties in Europe there are differences (cf. Schellenberg 2017) that are the result of national particularities. But there are also large similarities which are common to all. One of those similarities is the fact, that all of the central-right and right parties got a big influence on the political culture on the European and on the national levels as well.

For Almond and Verba the political culture of a nation is “the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation” (Almond / Verba 1963: p. 13). Under the preamble of political culture you can also subsume the behavior and the activities of parties in the political arena in the debate with other parties. The parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Bundestag, is a good example for a political arena where debate with other parties happen. In the following essay I want to deal with the behavior of the AfD in the German Bundestag and discuss the question, if there is a quantifiable influence on the political culture and how it turns out.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Derivation of hypotheses

During the election campaign for the Bundestag in 2017 and also in the election campaigns in the 16 states the years before the AfD wanted to profile itself as an anti-establishment-party: They argued against the public party financing and the structures, which promoting corruption on every level of the administration (cf. AfD 2017:

p. 10). Moreover they criticize the number of employees for each member of the parliament (cf. AfD 2016: p. 10). To sum it up they want to draw for their members and voters the picture of lazy, corrupt and selfish members of the Bundestag, who were only in office for their own advantages and do not care about the problems of the citizens.

There are different possibilities in the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag how members of the parliament – and especially members of the opposition parties - can participate in the parliamentary debate.

In the following discussion I want to concentrate my research on two tools:

On the one hand there are the “Minor interpellations” settled in rule 104 in the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag. With this tool a majority of 5 % of the members of the parliament or a fraction can ask “the Federal Government to furnish information on specifically designated issues” (German Bundestag 2014: p. 83). They have to reply to the minor interpellations in a written form within two weeks. This brings me to my first hypothesis:

H1: Between October 24 2017 (when the fraction of the AfD entered after its constitution the German Bundestag) and October 24 2018 there is an increase of the minor interpellations compared with the average of the time period between October 24 2016 and October 23 2017.

As I mentioned the AfD wants to draw the picture of a lazy and selfish establishment in the Bundestag. That is why they share photos of empty rows on their social channels and want to profile themselves because of their presence as hard working employees for the people (cf. Ruhose 2018: p. 2). With their communication they ignore the fact that the German Bundestag is a working parliament (cf. Stoltenberg 2013). In a working parliament the main debates were held in the committees and not in front of all members of the parliament. Often there are meetings of the committees parallel to the meetings of the assembly of all members of the parliament, so it is not possible to join both meetings. For example, in debating parliaments, like the House of Commons in Great Britain, it is usual that all topics were discussed in detail in front of all members of the parliament. Moreover here is no system which counts how long each member of the parliament is present in the debates in the Bundestag. But the partici-

pation in the namely polls of each member were recorded. Considered to these facts I want to analyze the following hypothesis:

H2: The fraction of the AfD is the fraction with the highest number of participation in the namely polls in average between October 24 2017 and October 24 2018.

2.2 Research design

For the research the official documentation and information system which could be found on the website of the German Bundestag was used. Moreover the needed information for hypothesis 2 came out of the protocols of the plenary sittings. In the case of the minority interpellations there was a focus on the parties which were not in government: Traditional it is not so common to use the tool of the minority interpellations when your own party is a part of the government, that's why 99 % (Meisner 2017) of the minority interpellations come from the opposition parties. In the 18th legislation period there were only the far-left party Die Linke (in the following context named as "Linke") and the green party Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (in the following context named as "Grüne") in the opposition. The parties AfD and the Freie Demokratische Partei (in the following context named as FDP) were only a part of the Bundestag in the 19th legislation period. For the question of the participation in the namely polls the fractions of the parties which work in the government coalition together, because they represent together 56,3 % (or absolute: 398 of 707 members) of the Bundestag, were also included. In addition to that the fractions of the conservative Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (in the following context named as CDU/CSU) and the social democratic party Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (in the following context named as SPD) are also the biggest groups which are criticized by the AfD because of their – in the eyes of the members of the AfD – bad participation in the plenary sittings.

3 Empirical Analysis

As it was said above the documentation and information system of the German Bundestag was used to collect the information. When you take a look at the table below you can see that there was a discrepancy in the period between October 2016 and

October 2017: With 64 seats (8,6 % of the votes) for the Linke and 63 seats (8,6 % of the votes) for the Grüne (cf. Decker 2017) they both got nearly the same amount of power. But the Linke used her strength more than the Grüne, because the Link initiated with 55,88 % more than the half of the minority interpellations to the government. The Grüne only initiated a bit more than 44 %. Obviously the Linke were with their 518 minority interpellations above the average of 464 minority interpellations per fraction.

Time period	24.10.2016 – 23.10.2017		24.10.2017 – 24.10.2018			
Fractions	Linke	Grüne	Linke	Grüne	FDP	AfD
Absolute number of minority interpellations of the fraction	518	409	695	426	428	486
Percentage of minority interpellations of the fraction	55,88 %	44,12 %	34,16 %	20,93 %	21,03 %	23,88 %
Average number of minority interpellations per fraction	464 minority interpellations per fraction in average		509 minority interpellations per fraction in average			

Table 1: Comparison of the minority interpellations (Source: own figure based on the information of the German Bundestag).

After the elections for the Bundestag on September 24 2017 the situation changed completely: Not only the Linke and the Grüne had a benefit after the election because of a minimal raising of their result in comparison to the election in 2013 (Linke: + 0,6 % / + 5 seats up to 69; Grüne: + 0,5 % / + 4 seats up to 67). The biggest winner of the traditional parties was on the evening of the election the FDP: After the elections in 2013 they were with a result of 4,8 % not in the situation to skip over the 5 percent hurdle and so they had to work in the extra-parliamentary opposition. It was not only for the FDP a hard incision, also for the political culture, because the FDP was one of the parties which joined the Bundestag each legislation period from the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949. With a result of 10,7 % they got 80 seats. When there is a winner of the traditional parties there is also a winner of the new and anti-establishment-parties: The AfD could rise their votes up to 12,6 % (92 seats) and so they became the third biggest fraction in the new elected Bundestag. Six months later after the coalition negotiations when the new government was in power the AfD

also became the leader of the opposition in the parliament. But if you take a look at the table you will see that the AfD was not the most active party in case of minority interpellations in the time period between October 2017 and October 2018: The Linke was also with 695 minority interpellations the biggest fraction in this time period. The average number of minority interpellations per fraction is 509. And the Linke was only the party which was above the average. On the second place there is the AfD with 486 minority interpellations. In percent it is less than a quarter of the minority interpellations in total. When the AfD with their leader Alexander Gauland announce on the evening of the elections that they want to hunt Angela Merkel and the other parties in the parliament (cf. Ruhose 2018: p. 3), the reader will guess after analyzing the table, that they are not the best hunters. Near to the AfD there are the FDP and the Grüne with 428 minority interpellations (21,03 %) respectively 426 minority interpellations (20,93 %) relative close together.

A comparison of the average number of minority interpellations per fraction in the two time periods comes to the result, that the number of minority interpellations increased after the entering of the AfD to the Bundestag from 464 to 509 (+ 9,7 %). But when you want to analyze the observations you come to the conclusion, that the AfD is as the most powerful party in opposition not the most powerful in case of controlling the government with the tool of minority interpellations: The fraction of the AfD is in this question not only just on the second place, they are also below average in this question. The first hypothesis was about the general question, if there is an increase of the minor interpellations compared with the average of the time period between October 2016 and October 2017. In this general question the hypothesis can be verified, but the increasing of the minority interpellations was not an impact of the AfD. Moreover it was the impact of the Linke.

Alexander Gauland also argued on the evening of the elections that he and his party want to take back their country and their people (cf. Ruhose 2018: p. 3). It is not surprising that showing of activity in the parliament is the only way how they can fulfill their claim. The biggest political opponents of the AfD are the two biggest parties of the CDU/CSU and the SPD. Those two parties symbolize the establishment from the view of the AfD. But they do not deal with the designation establishment; they always speak about the "old parties". With this word you get also a view on their self-image:

They see themselves as a new movement without any connection to the general mechanisms of parties. To this self-image fits the plan that they want to be the fraction with the highest number of participation in the parliament.

As I mentioned in the previous part of this essay the German Bundestag is a working and not a debating parliament. It is common thing in working parliaments that not always all members of the parliament are in the plenary sitting. Moreover there is no mechanism which counts the time of being in the plenary sitting for each member. So I collect the information concerning namely polls in the parliament. Because of the personalized voting cards the employees of the German Bundestag are able to check how many members participate in the namely polls. Between October 24 2017 and October 24 2018 there were held 50 namely polls. The issues of those polls were very diverse: The members of the parliament had to decide about questions of foreign inserts of the German army, financial helps for Greece. Also questions of the integration of refugees touched the poll.

Fractions	CDU/CSU	SPD	AfD	FDP	Linke	Grüne
Absolute number of the members of the fraction	246	152	92	80	69	67
Absolute number of members who participate in the polls in average	228	139	82	74	60	62
Percentage of members who participate in the polls	92,93 %	91,13 %	89,39 %	92,48 %	86,78 %	92,84 %
Percentage of members who participate in the polls in average	90,92 %					

Table 2: Comparison of the participation in namely polls between October 24 2017 and October 24 2018 (Source: own figure based on the information of the German Bundestag).

On the first glance it is obvious that the CDU/CSU got the best result in the question of participation during the namely polls with over 90 %. On the second place there were the Greens (92,93 %) closely followed by the FDP (92,48 %). After that there is on the forth place the SPD with a percentage of members which participate in the namely polls of 91,13 %. Only on the fourth place and also below the average there are the members of the fraction of the AfD. It is impressing, because the AfD always doubts if there are enough members (quote of 50 %) to vote. On the last place there is the Linke with 86,78 %.

Due to the fact that the German Bundestag is a working parliament an average percentage in namely polls of 90,92 % is very good. Maybe the penalty of 100 € for missing a namely poll (c.f. rule 14 paragraph 2 Members of the Bundestag Act) got its influence on the high rate of voters too.

At the beginning it was said in hypothesis 2, that the fraction of the AfD is the fraction with the highest number of participation in the namely polls in average between October 24 2017 and October 24 2018. The fraction of the CDU/CSU was the fraction with the highest number of participation in namely polls. So the hypothesis can be falsified.

4 Conclusion

Referring to the research question, if there is quantifiable influence on the political culture and how it turns out, the answer is somewhere between yes and no:

On the one hand the hypothesis 1 about the minor interpellations could be verified, but this was more a result of the fact, that there were more parties in the parliament. There is no special context with the AfD. The second hypothesis could be falsified. This implies that there is no specific quantifiable influence which comes especially out of the party of the AfD.

But on the other hand you can say that there is a bigger movement in the political culture outside the German Bundestag. One example is the fact that the minister of interior and building added to his ministry when he came in power the word homeland (cf. Sierakowski 2018). There are no special tasks connected to the word homeland, but it shows the special behavior of going one step to the right side in the confrontation with right-wing parties.

Finally there is not the one right answer: At the end there is not only influence on one specific topic of the political culture caused by the AfD and other right-wing parties. Above all the impact can be seen on all levels of the political culture, but it is not always quantifiable.

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