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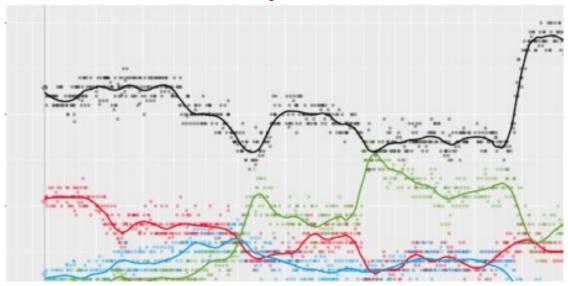
Who Won Germany's Election in 2021?

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Germany's recent election had a few surprises and will lead to a new government. Overall, Germany's recent election, held on 26th September 2021 had a participation rate of 76,6% compared to 76.2% in 2017. In other words, ¾ of Germans voted.

All in all, 25.7% voted for the center-mildly-progressive social-democratic party SPD. With that, the SPD overtook Germany's conservatives and strong-state favoring CDU – Angela Merkel's political party – sitting at 24.1%.

The environmental Green party received less than expected ending up with 14.8%. While Germany's truly neoliberal party, the FDP, did surprisingly well with 11.5%. Germany's Neo-Nazi party, the AfD lost a little bit of support arriving at 10.3%, but has established itself as a 10%-party. Finally, Germany's socialist party, the Linke, received just 4.9% but entered the parliament because the party managed to get three candidates elected in local

constituencies. This rule renders the 5% barrier obsolete. And, with a raft of micro-parties shared the remaining 8.7%.

Germany's electoral system gives every German two votes: one vote is for the local candidate in a specific electorate (first past-the-post system) while the second vote is calculated on proportional representation.

In terms of a regional distribution of voting, Germany can roughly be divided into three regions. Central and north Germany voted social-democratic (shown as red), the two southern states Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria voted for conservative (shown as black), while two former East-Germany states – Thuringia and Saxony – voted for the Neo-Nazi party AfD (shown as brown). The map is lightened up by a few green spots as Germany's environmental Green party does well in cities and in so-called university towns. Again, education plays a major role.

AfD and CDU voters tend to be less educated than neoliberal FDP, many SPD, and the vast majority of Green voters. Geeen voters have the highest proportion of university educated supporters and devotees with PhDs. Perhaps the English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was not entirely wrong when saying, *conservatives are not necessarily stupid, but most stupid people are conservatives.* Donald Trump *was not wrong either when saying, I love the poorly educated. Germany's conservatives and Neo-Nazis love them too.*

While corporate mass media pre-celebrate the SPD's Olaf Scholz as Merkel's successor and winner of the election, the electoral numbers tell a rather different story. To understand German politics one might group the six parties that have entered Germany's parliament into two blocs:

1) There is a Neo-Nazi-reactionary-neoliberal-conservative bloc consisting of the Neo-Nazi AfD, the neoliberal FDP, and Merkel's reactionary CDU;

2) The second bloc is made up of the environmentalist Green party, the traditional and moderately social-democratic SPD (Olaf Scholz's party), and the radical-social-democratic or semi-socialist Die Linke (most likely this would be Rosa Luxemburg's party – if right-wing death squad and SS predecessors would not have killed Rosa Luxemburg in 1919).

When looking at German politics from the perspective of these two blocs, one sees that the first bloc – the Neo-Nazi-reactionary-neoliberal-conservative bloc – received 45.9% of popular support. By contrast, the environmental-social-democratic bloc received

microscopically less, sitting at 45.4%. In other words, more Germans voted for the Neo-Nazi-reactionary-neoliberal-conservative bloc than for the progressive bloc.

Most interesting is the fact that Germany remains a country in which twice as many people voted for the ideological successors of those who had once built Auschwitz compared to those who were, next to Jews, inmates in Auschwitz: communists like Hermann Langbein who survived Auschwitz and wrote one of the best books ever written on Auschwitz. This is, of course, not to say that all AfD voters are Neo-Nazis and that all those who run the AfD are Neo-Nazis. The AfD has very cleverly given itself the public image – mostly represented by the Swiss-resident and lesbian Weidel – of being just another populist party. In the end, 10% voted for the AfD while barely half (4.9%) voted for the ex-communist and semi-socialist Die Linke.

In terms of who changes their vote, Merkel's CDU lost about two million voters to the SPD. The SPD has been highly successful in attracting the so-called "grey vote". These are the people over 60 years of age. This used to be the traditional voting reservoir of Germany's conservatives (the CDU).

They make up 40% of German voters, and they favoured the social-democratic SPD. On the other side of the coin, almost 20% of young voters between the age of 18 and 29 voted for the staunchly neoliberal FDP. Surprisingly, the AfD's reservoir is not just old men but also men between the age of 30 and 44. Overall, the AfD remains twice as strong in former East-Germany compared to the rest of Germany.

While the SPD gained strongly from the CDU, it also gained 420,000 votes from the AfD; 520,000 from the neoliberal FDP; 820,000 from the Linke, and 700,000 from the environmental Greens. The bloodletting of the Linke to the SPD constitutes a severe hit for Germany's socialists.

Overall, the SPD has been successful in attracting conservative voters from whom it gained roughly 3 million votes (CDU, AfD, FDP) compared to just 152,000 votes from Greens and the Left. In other words, the SPD won by attracting conservative voters – not by attracting environmental voters and left-wing voters. And, the SPD also won by attracting voters who previously had not voted at all. From those, the SPD received a further 1.25 million votes.

All this is translated into political reality through the distribution of seats in Germany's parliament, the Bundestag. Replacing Merkel's CDU as the strongest party in the parliament, the SPD gets 206 seats. Merkel's CDU gets 196 seats – just ten seats less than the SPD. The environmental Greens gets 118 while the neoliberal FDP gets 92.

The Neo-Nazi AfD will have 83 seats and the semi-socialist party, the Left, will have just 39 seats. In other words, Germany's Neo-Nazis are twice as strong as the ex-communists. By historical comparison, Germany's last democratic election prior to Nazism was the November 1932 election. Despite rampant Nazi terrors, Hitler received 44% and the communists only 12%. Today's Neo-Nazis are nowhere close – Germany today is not like Weimar in 1933.

Compared to 2017, Germany's conservative lost 50 seats; the SPD gained 53 seats; Neo-Nazis lost eleven seats; neoliberal FDP gained 12 seats; the Left lost 30 seats; and the environmental Greens gained 51 seats. Four issues have been remarkable:

+ Firstly, the heavy losses of the CDU – even in local constituencies – came as a shock for the CDU and its unloved candidate Armin Laschet.

+ Secondly, the strong decline of the Linke came as a surprise just as the strong gains of the selfish, individualistic, neoliberal, "give-me-my-BMW-now" FDP.

+ Thirdly, the Greens were seen as a strong contender to replace Merkel in the weeks and months before the election. Suddenly, the party lost support.

+ Lastly, some argued, the Green's Robert Habeck would have done better than *Annalena Baerbock. Virtually, the same is said about the conservatives where Bavaria's* Markus Söder remains vastly more popular than Armin Lachet.

If one takes the aforementioned right-vs.-left bloc as a guide, Germany's conservatives have a slight majority of parliament seats (371) compared to the progressives' 363 seats. Yet, it is just eight more seats, nevertheless, it is a majority. Yet, the CDU remains unlikely to govern Germany as two options for coalition making are discussed.

German politics operates with party-indicating colours: SPD (red), Linke (red), Greens (green), FDP (Yellow), the AfD (mistakenly seen as blue but should be brown), and Merkel's conservatives (black).

Merkel's CDU shies away from a coalition with the AfD. This is based on a historical precedent. In 1933, German conservatives (black) supported Adolf Hitler (brown) in a multi-party coalition. In the 1930s, Hitler was never elected. Hitler never had 50% of voter support in a free election. In any case, German conservatives have become extremely reluctant to entertain a coalition with Germany's Neo-Nazis, the AfD. This takes out 83 seats leaving Germany's conservative bloc with just 288 seats – well below a majority to run a government. As a consequence, a progressive coalition is the more likely option. There are two options currently discussed:

1) The so-called traffic light coalition consisting of SPD (red), FDP (yellow) and Greens (green); and

2) The so-called Jamaica coalition based on the flag of Jamaica: CDU (black); Greens (green); and FDP (yellow)

Since the CDU is in the process of blaming, internal fights, and a deep crisis, recent polls have shown that Merkel's party has further declined in popularity. Its leader, Armin Laschet, is today more unpopular than a month ago. As a consequence, most people expect a traffic light coalition. SPD, FDP and Greens do know that a continuation of a CDU/SPD coalition, this time not with Merkel but with Olaf Scholz as chancellor, is still possible. A CDU/SPD coalition would have a 401 seats strong majority. Yet, after many years of that – under Merkel's leadership – Germans do not want a continuation of a CDU/SPD government. They want something different.

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