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Germany

# The populist right is on the rise in Germany too

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**Against the backdrop of the persistent and increasingly acute economic and political crisis of the capitalist system, we are witnessing across Europe a rise of the populist right and the far right.**

In Germany, the AfD (Alternative for Germany), a populist party on the right and largely on the far right, is ahead of the SPD (17%), the Chancellor's party, with 20% in opinion polls (the SPD is in a coalition with the neo-liberal Greens and the hard-line neo-liberals of the FDP). Three factors are fuelling the rise of the AfD.

## A third of the population xenophobic

Even after the defeat of fascism, there is a persistent undercurrent in German society that believes in authority and is xenophobic, even racist, encompassing around a third of the population. This fact was the subject of an extensive study in 1981 (the Sinus study) and has since been repeatedly confirmed by several subsequent studies. This basic attitude stems from the "capitalist way of life" (Erich Fromm), i.e. social insecurity for a large proportion of the population, and from the religion of the system, i.e. the constantly preached and practised competition and the selfishness that stems from it.

However, for a long time, this fundamental current was unable to assert itself in politics in the form of a party. This was due in part to the absence of a charismatic leader, but above all to the fact that the Christian Democrats represented some of these ideas, and that the SPD was not a bulwark against racism either. After all, it was the SPD that allowed the right of asylum to be severely restricted in 1993 when it approved the amendment to the Constitution.

## Widespread precarious employment

The general insecurity of capitalism has been compounded over the last twenty years (in East Germany, even since the takeover by the FRG in 1990) by a marked increase in social insecurity for the bottom half of society (for the majority of the population of East Germany). For at least the last ten years, this phenomenon has been exacerbated by the spread of precarious employment, the housing crisis and, in the meantime, the climate crisis.

## Loss of party credibility

Over the last few years, people have come to realise that the onus for solving their problems lies with them (and, more specifically, with the working classes), and that this will continue to be the case in the future. Energy and food prices, for example, rose sharply last year and this year, with dramatic consequences for the public.

In recent weeks, the Heating Act has been added to this list (the law will be passed in September), so that rents and expenses for owners of single-family homes will rise considerably from next year onwards.

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The result over the last few months has been a huge surge in the loss of credibility of the "established parties". Only the AfD can profit from this deep crisis of confidence. The AfD is seen as the only real opposition, and it is exploiting this situation to the full - with the help of right-wing populist demagoguery.

This is a crisis of representation, and therefore a crisis of parties, but not yet an institutional crisis.

Die Linke is not seen as an alternative. As a reformist party, it participates in the government in three Länder (it even has the head of government in Thuringia). What's more, it is divided and could split in the near future (possibly as early as this year). With Sarah Wagenknecht at its head, this will not be a split to the left, but to the right.

27 July 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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