The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of a large crowd of people. Many individuals are holding German national flags (black, red, and gold horizontal stripes). In the lower right portion of the image, a person is holding a white flag or banner that features a black swastika symbol. The overall scene suggests a historical or contemporary political gathering.

# **PAST SHADOWS**

## **GERMAN POPULISM TODAY**

**James M. Skidmore, University of Waterloo**  
**21 January 2020**

**[jamesmskidmore.com/presentations](http://jamesmskidmore.com/presentations)**

## Overview

What is going on in Germany?

What is populism again?

What German words will be popping up?

What is the historical/political context?

What is the AfD (Alternative for Germany)?

What is the impact on German politics?

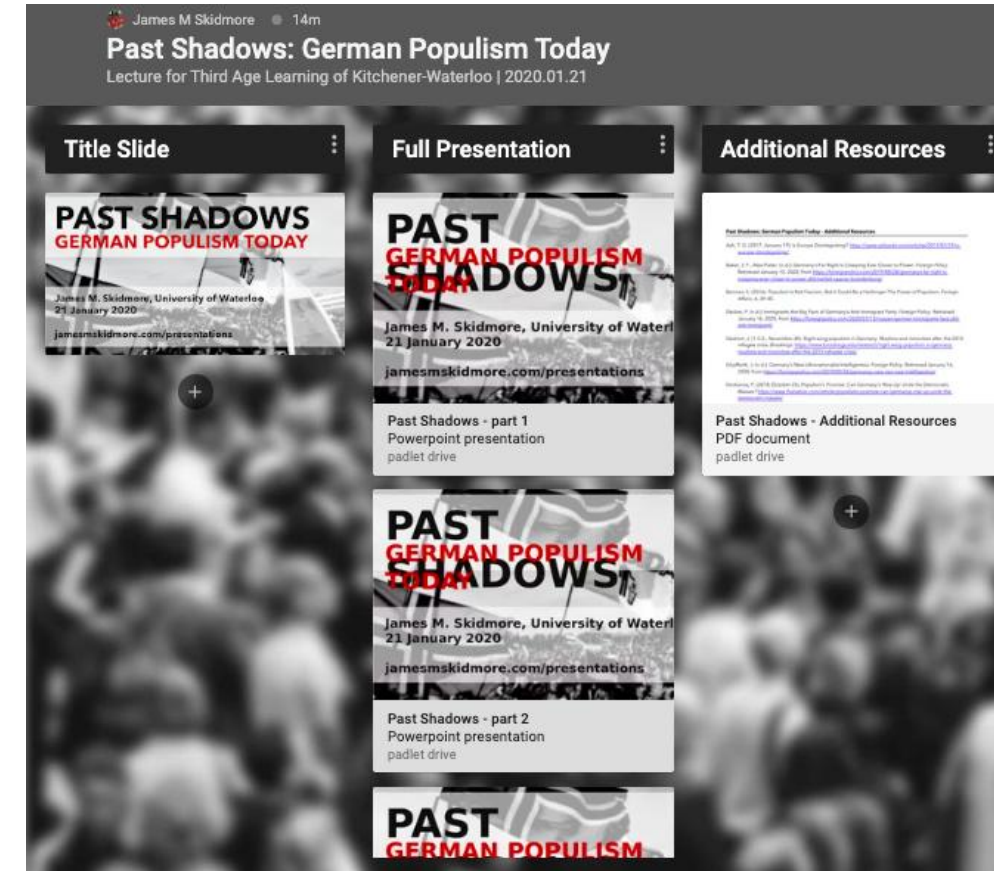
What have we learned?

# Resources

[jamesmskidmore.com/presentations](https://jamesmskidmore.com/presentations)

- This slide deck
- Some resources informing this presentation

[skidmore@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:skidmore@uwaterloo.ca)



## Question 1

**What is  
going on in  
Germany?**

**What is going on in Germany?**

What is populism again?

What German words will be popping up?

What is the historical/political context?

What is the AfD (Alternative for Germany)?

What is the impact on German politics?

What have we learned?

## Question 2

What is going on in Germany?

**What is populism again?**

What German words will be popping up?

What is the historical/political context?

What is the AfD (Alternative for Germany)?

What is the impact on German politics?

What have we learned?

## Question 2

### What is populism again?

- Belief in a **unified** people with a **general will**
- Anti-establishment: the **people vs. elites**
- Popular sovereignty: **direct rule** by people
- **Anti-pluralism**: clashes with liberal democracy
- Little or no ideology (“**thin ideology**”)
- Thrives on **grievance** and confrontation
- **Contextual** – a country’s culture + history matter

## Question 3

What is going on in Germany?

What is populism again?

**What German words will be popping up?**

What is the historical/political context?

What is the AfD (Alternative for Germany)?

What is the impact on German politics?

What have we learned?

### Question 3

What  
German  
words will  
be popping  
up?

Willkommenskultur  
Heimat Historikerstreit  
Vergangenheitsbewältigung  
Pegida 68er Gastarbeiter  
Mitbürger Leitkultur  
Ossis / Besserwessis Bewegung  
Multikulti  
Integration Grundgesetz  
Volk / völkisch / Volksgemeinschaft



## Question 4

### Three periods

Third Reich

1945-1989

After 1989

What is going on in Germany?

What is populism again?

What German words will be popping up?

**What is the historical/political context?**

What is the AfD (Alternative for Germany)?

What is the impact on German politics?

What have we learned?

## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:**

**Third Reich**



One  
people,  
one  
empire,  
one leader

## Question 4

### **Historical / political context: Third Reich**

In what ways were the Nazis populists?

- Gave voice to resentment against elites and economic privilege
- Offered alternative to “Berlin political parties”
- Promoted the Volksgemeinschaft
- Idolized a charismatic leader
- Thought of themselves as a Bewegung (movement)

## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
Third Reich**

In what ways were the Nazis NOT populists?

- Nazi Party was undemocratic, authoritarian
- Third Reich was undemocratic, authoritarian
- People had no voice in government decisions
- People were subordinate to the party
- Government/party served itself, not the people

## Question 4



### Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

- How tyranny can arise and threaten humankind
- Crisis of legitimacy in Europe: “The mob hates the society from which it is excluded.”
- Resentful masses more easily manipulated (through lies, propaganda, shows of strength)
- Society resists by thinking, by not being caught up in (populist) group thinking

## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
1945-1989**

### 1949: Grundgesetz (= Basic Law)

- Article 1: “Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.” (enumeration of rights)
- Article 20: “All state authority is derived from the people.” (representative democracy)
- Article 73: “Amendments to this Basic Law affecting . . . principles laid down in Articles 1 and 20 shall be inadmissible.” (eternity clause)

## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
1945-1989**

### Vergangenheitsbewältigung

- = coming to terms with the past
- Nuremberg trials in the 1940s (denazification)
- 1950s: economic miracle
- Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of the 1960s
- Youth starts questioning older generation  
("What did you know?")
- 1979: American mini-series "Holocaust"

## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
1945-1989**

### Vergangenheitsbewältigung – early years

- Must Germany accept collective guilt?
- What place should the crimes of the Third Reich occupy in German national identity?
- Franz-Josef Strauss, 1960s: "A people that have brought about such economic achievements have the right not to hear about Auschwitz anymore."



## Question 4

### **Historical / political context: 1945-1989**

#### Vergangenheitsbewältigung – 1980s

- Bitburg cemetery (visit of Ronald Reagan, 1985)
- President Richard von Weizsäcker, 1985:
  - “May 8 was a day of liberation.” (not capitulation)
  - “Every German was able to witness what his Jewish compatriots had to suffer.” (people were aware)
- Historikerstreit (= historians’ dispute, 1980s): were the crimes of the Third Reich singular? Could German history/identity be normalized?

## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
1945-1989**

68er (= generation of 1968)

- 1968 revolutions: critiques of tradition, capitalism, Vietnam War
- 68er added critique of National Socialism
- Aversion to German cultural pride
- Violent streak (Red Army Faction)
- Rise of peace and environmental movements (e.g. The Greens)

## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
After 1989**

### German Reunification

- Euphoria, then resentment (both sides)
- Osis and Besserwessis (cf. Besserwisser)
- Social and economic dislocation in the east
- Increased migration from former Soviet bloc

“We are one people”



## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
After 1989**

### Migration issues

- Violence, particularly in east, against migrants
- Early 2000s: new German citizenship laws
- Debates: Integration / Mitbürger / Multikulti
- Leitkultur
- 2015: refugee crisis (1.5 million asylum seekers)
  - Willkommenskultur and backlash

## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
After 1989**

### Backlash - East

- Economic decline (e.g. coal production)
- Social dislocation with unification



## Question 4

Historical /  
political  
context:  
After 1989

### Backlash - Pegida

- Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (founded 2014)





## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
After 1989**

## Backlash – Cologne New Year's Eve 2015



Women's flash mob against male violence against women, Cologne, 9 January 2016

## Question 4

**Historical /  
political  
context:  
After 1989**

### Other issues

- Yugoslav wars
- European integration – adoption of the Euro
- German language reforms and concerns
- German pride (e.g. World Cup 2006)
- German victimhood
- Early 2010s: Euro crisis
- Dieselgate (Volkswagen)



## Question 5

What is going on in Germany?

What is populism again?

What German words will be popping up?

What is the historical/political context?

**What is the AfD (Alternative for Germany)?**

What is the impact on German politics?

What have we learned?

## Question 5

### What is the AfD?

AfD = Alternative für Deutschland (est. 2013)

- Dominates right-wing parties (Republikaner; Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
- 2013: Euro protest party
  - Mut zur Wahrheit (courage [to uphold] truth)
- 2014: populist/rightward shift
  - Mut zu Deutschland (courage [to uphold] Germany)
- 2015: opposition to Willkommenskultur

## Question 5

**What is the  
AfD?**

### AfD positions

- Anti-immigration
- Anti-Islam
- Anti-Euro
- Anti-European “overreach” into national affairs
- Anti-multiculturalism
- Pro-German
- Pro-traditional values (e.g. nuclear family)

## Halftime Show

*Hear why  
people are  
turning to  
Arendt for  
insight into  
current  
political  
crises.*

## Annual Grimm Lecture

# Thinking Itself is Dangerous: Reading Hannah Arendt Now

Samantha Rose Hill

(Assistant Director, Hannah Arendt Center)

**Thursday, March 19, 2020 – 7pm**

Balsillie School (corner of Erb & Caroline)

More information & registration (optional):

**[www.wcgs.ca](http://www.wcgs.ca)**

## Question 5

### What is the AfD?

#### 7.2 German as Predominant Culture instead of Multiculturalism

Leitkultur

The AfD is committed to German as the predominant culture. This culture is derived from three sources: firstly, the religious traditions of Christianity; secondly, the scientific and humanistic heritage, whose ancient roots were renewed during the period of Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment; and thirdly, Roman law, upon which our constitutional state is founded. Together, these traditions are the foundation of our free and democratic society, and they determine daily patterns of social interaction in society, and shape the relationship between the sexes as well as the conduct of parents towards their children. The ideology of multiculturalism is blind to history and puts on a par imported cultural trends with the indigenous culture, thereby degrading the value system of the latter. The AfD views this as a serious threat to social peace and the survival of the nation state as a cultural unit. It is the duty of the government and civil society to confidently protect German cultural identity as the predominant culture.

## Question 5

### What is the AfD?

#### 7.6.1 Islam does not belong to Germany

---

Islam does not belong to Germany. Its expansion and the ever-increasing number of Muslims in the country are viewed by the AfD as a danger to our state, our society, and our values. An Islam which neither respects nor refrains from being in conflict with our legal system, or that even lays claim to power as the only true religion, is incompatible with our legal system and our culture. Many Muslims live as law-abiding and well-integrated citizens amongst us, and are accepted and valued members of our society. However, the AfD demands that an end is put to the formation and increased segregation by parallel Islamic societies relying on courts with shari'a laws. The AfD wishes to curb a trend towards religious radicalisation amongst Muslims, and these turning into violent Salafists or terrorists.

#### 7.6.2 Tolerate Criticism of Islam

---

The criticism of religion, which also applies to Islam, is legitimate within the legal framework, as it is part of the basic

## Question 5

**What is the  
AfD?**

### **8.3.1 No Gender-Neutral Transformation of the German Language**

---

Currently, the German language is being transformed and redesigned to nullify gender differences in everyday speech by means of artificial and absurd constructions. The AfD rejects coined gender-neutral terms as a violation of the naturally-developed culture and traditions of our language.

## Question 5

### What is the AfD?

#### 7.4 Free Arts and Culture from the Influence of Political Parties

---

The AfD wants to push back the influence of political parties on cultural life, strengthen private, non-profit cultural foundations and civic cultural initiatives, and in general, orientate cultural policy by criteria of professional quality and economic reason instead of political opportunism. The current narrowing of the German culture of remembrance to the time of National Socialism should be opened in favour of a broader understanding of history, which also encompasses the positive, identity-establishing aspects of German history. The AfD holds the position that cultural policy should remain in the jurisdiction of the federal states. It wishes to preserve and nurture the varied cultural landscape and strengthen the efficiency of cultural institutions.



## Question 5

### What is the AfD?

#### Remarks of AfD leaders



**Alexander Gauland:** Germany had a "glorious history and one that lasted a lot longer than those damned 12 years (Third Reich). Hitler and the Nazis are just a speck of bird droppings in over 1,000 years of successful German history."



**Frauke Petry:** Officers must "use firearms if necessary" to "prevent illegal border crossings."



**Björn Höcke:** "These stupid politics of coming to grips with the past cripple us . . . We need nothing other than a 180-degree reversal on the politics of remembrance . . . We Germans, that is to say, our people, are the only people in the world who have planted a monument of shame in the heart of their capital."

## Question 5

What is the  
AfD?





## Question 5

What is the  
AfD?



## Question 5

What is the  
AfD?


”

Mein Partner und ich  
legen keinen Wert auf  
die Bekanntschaft mit  
muslimischen Einwanderern,  
< für die unsere Liebe eine  
Todsünde ist. >

“

**AfD – UNBEQUEM. ECHT. MUTIG.**

**Alternative**  
für  
Deutschland  
Landesverband Berlin





## Question 5

What is the  
AfD?



## Question 6

What is going on in Germany?

What is populism again?

What German words will be popping up?

What is the historical/political context?

What is the AfD (Alternative for Germany)?

**What is the impact on German politics?**

What have we learned?

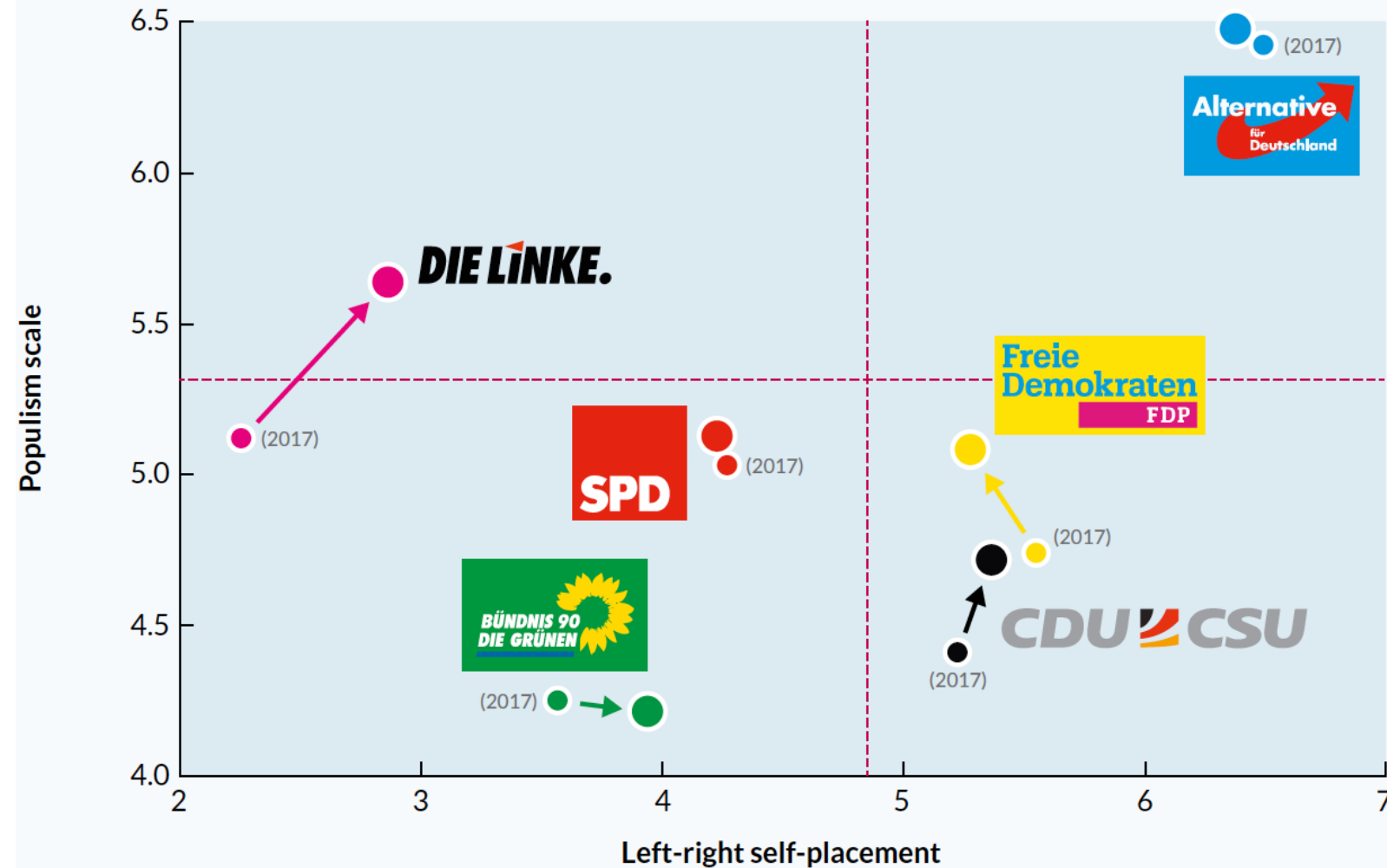
## Question 6

What is the  
impact on  
German  
politics?

# Bertelsmann Populism Barometer 2018

## Party voters by populism and left-right orientation

Significant changes since 2017 are represented by arrows.



**What  
should I call  
this slide?**

## Bertelsmann Populism Barometer 2018 - Survey

The people are often in agreement but the politicians pursue quite different goals.

Important questions should not be decided by parliament but by popular referendums.

I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialized politician.

The politicians in the German parliament need to follow the will of the people.

Political parties only want peoples' votes and do not care about their opinion.

The people in Germany agree, on principle, about what should happen politically.

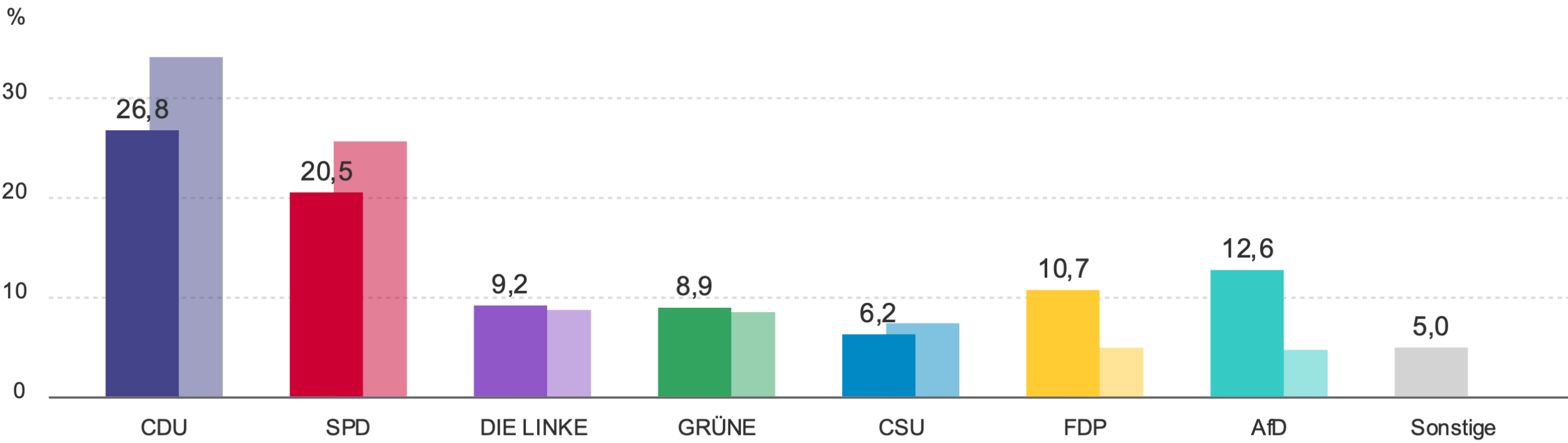
The political differences between the elite and the people are much greater than the differences among the people.

What people call "compromise" in politics is really just selling out on one's principles.



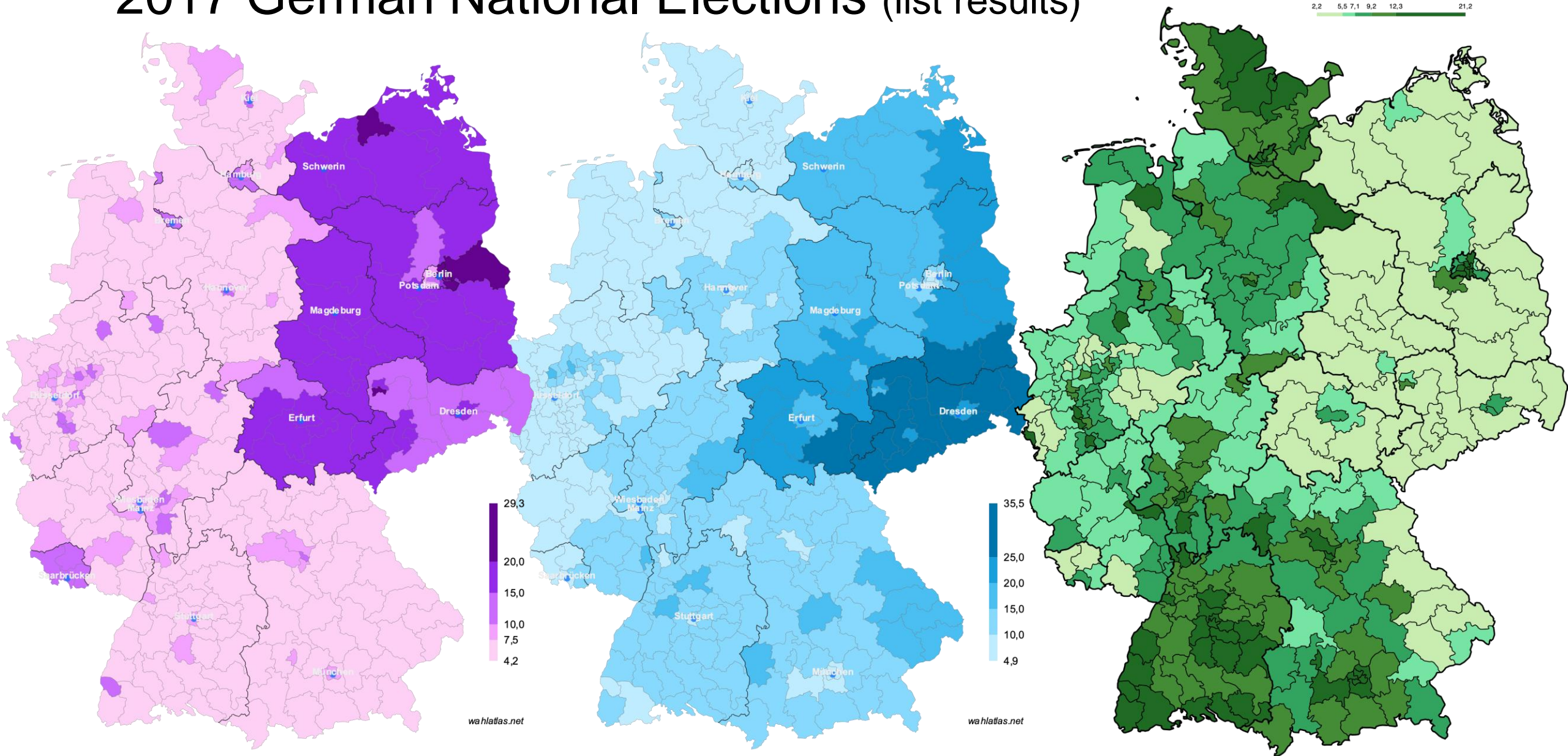
**Zweitstimmenanteile**

**Bundestagswahl 2017** Deutschland  
Endgültiges Ergebnis



■ Bundestagswahl 2017    ■ Bundestagswahl 2013

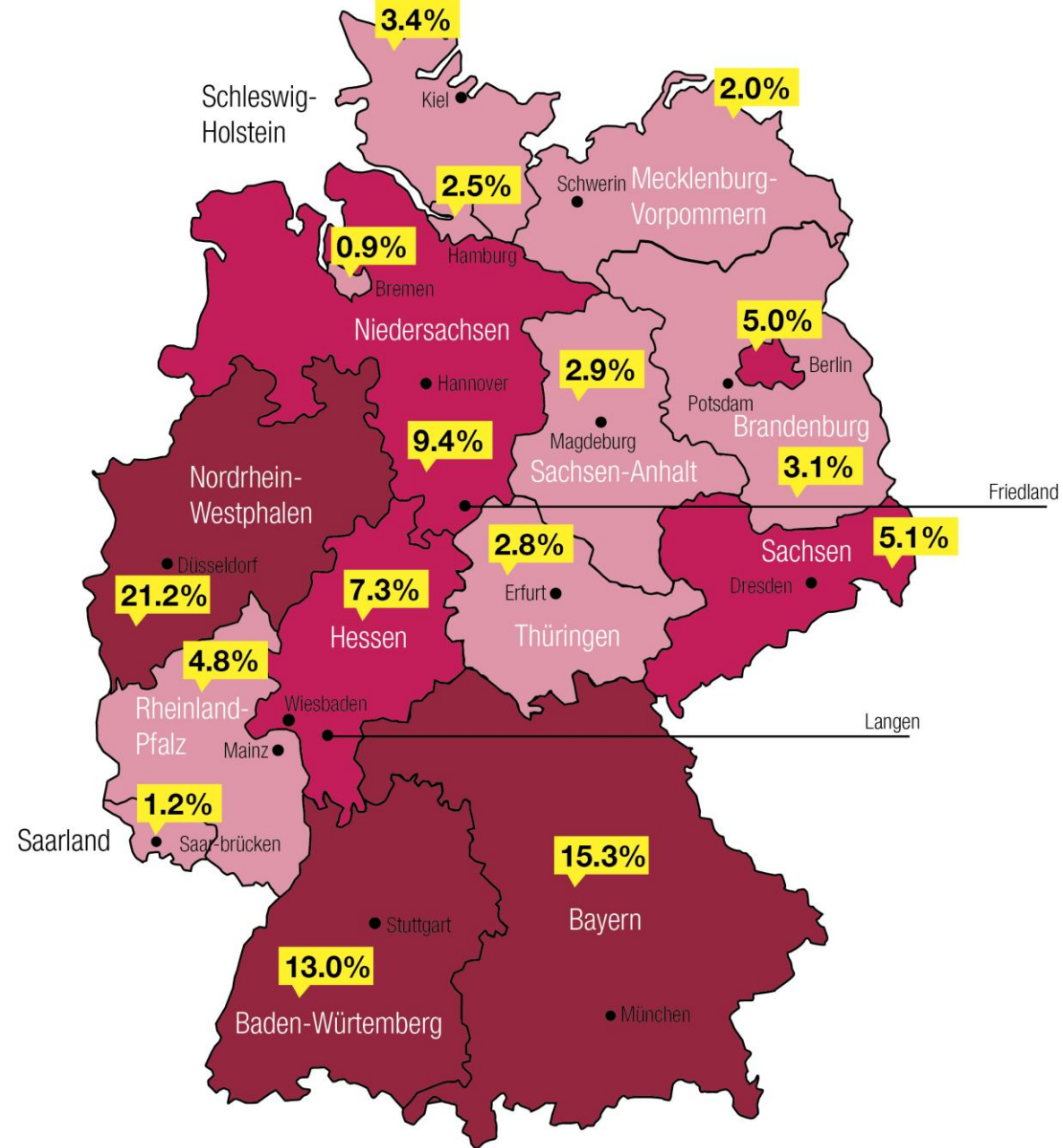
# 2017 German National Elections (list results)



Die LINKE

AfD

Die Grünen



% of total refugees to be settled in each state

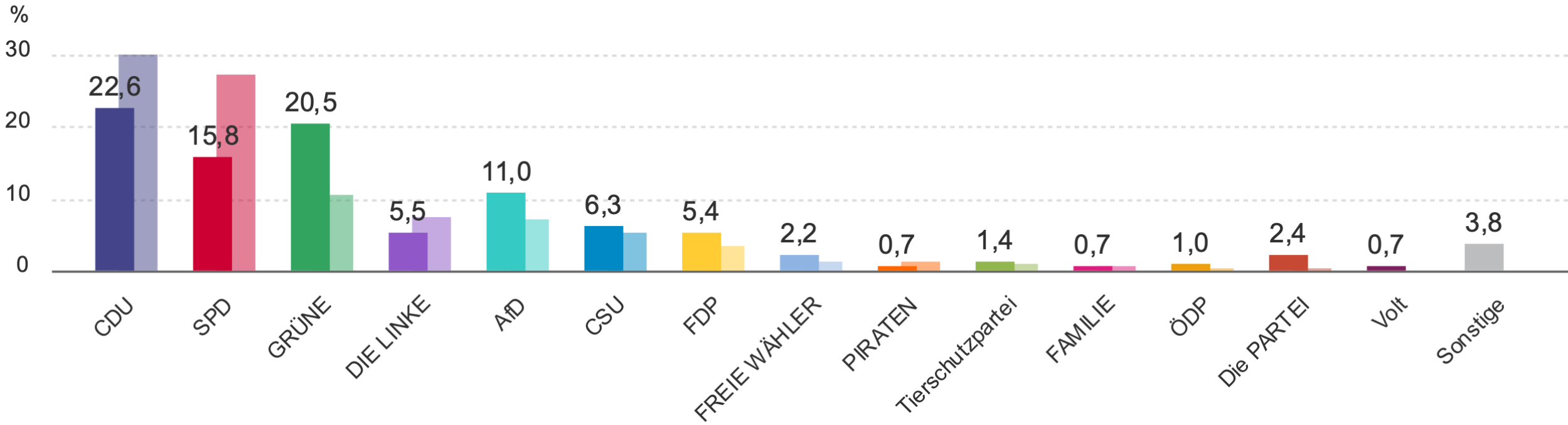
more than 10%

5 to 10%

less than 5%

Stimmenanteile

Europawahl 2019 Deutschland  
Endgültiges Ergebnis



■ Europawahl 2019      ■ Europawahl 2014



## Question 7

What is going on in Germany?

What is populism again?

What German words will be popping up?

What is the historical/political context?

What is the AfD (Alternative for Germany)?


What is the impact on German politics?

**What have we learned?**

## Question 7

**What have  
we  
learned?**

- German political culture wrestles with German identity
- AfD: populist party mixing contemporary rightwing extremism with a nationalism coloured by National Socialism
- Non-populist defence of a socially progressive Germany-within-Europe possible (The Greens)



# **PAST SHADOWS**

## **GERMAN POPULISM TODAY**

**THANK-YOU FOR  
LISTENING!**

**SKIDMORE@UWATERLOO.CA**  
**[jamesmskidmore.com/presentations](http://jamesmskidmore.com/presentations)**

## Halftime Show

*Hear why  
people are  
turning to  
Arendt for  
insight into  
current  
political  
crises.*

## Annual Grimm Lecture

### **Thinking Itself is Dangerous: Reading Hannah Arendt Now**

Samantha Rose Hill

(Assistant Director, Hannah Arendt Center)

**Thursday, March 19, 2020 – 7pm**

Balsillie School (corner of Erb & Caroline)

More information & registration (optional):

**[www.wcgs.ca](http://www.wcgs.ca)**



## Images

Title slide: By Metropolico.org - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/95213174@N08/16952024487/>, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=44345385>

Wir sind ein Volk (German reunification): courtesy of DHG

Wir sind das Volk (Pegida demonstration): courtesy of Reuters

Pro Chemnitz demonstration: Lord van Trasm

Women demonstrating in Cologne: Elke Wetzig

Alexander Gauland: Metropolico.org

Frauke Petry: Michael Luland

Björn Höcke: Alexander Dalbert