

Europas Zukunft

Weniger Macht für Brüssel

21.09.2013 · Im Wahlkampf wurde die Chance vertan, darüber zu reden, welches Europa wir wollen. Zu oft heißt es, der Nationalstaat habe ausgedient. Doch wer die Dezentralität lobt, ist kein schlechter Europäer. Ein Kommentar.

Von [Rainer Hank](#)

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Nach der Wahl ist vor der Wahl. Oft und zu Recht ist kritisiert worden, dass in diesem Bundestagswahlkampf, der jetzt zu Ende ist, die große Chance verschenkt wurde, mit den Bürgern über das Thema: „Welches Europa wollen wir?“ zu debattieren. Verpasst ist verpasst; da hilft alles Lamentieren nicht. Die nächste Chance lugt schon um die Ecke: Im Mai sind Wahlen zum Europaparlament; und danach gibt es auch eine neue EU-Kommission. Vorher muss – nach bald fünf Jahren Euro- und Europa-Krise – dringend über ein paar Dinge geredet werden.

Wo soll die Macht sein in Europa – bei den Mitgliedsländern oder bei der Zentrale in Brüssel? Das wollte der Thinktank „Open Europe Berlin“ vergangene Woche von den Deutschen wissen, und die Antwort ging eindeutig in Richtung Dezentralität; nur 26 Prozent plädieren für Zentralisierung (im Jahr zuvor waren es noch 37 Prozent). Kanzlerin Angela Merkel mit ihrer feinen Spürnase scheint das gerochen zu haben. Seit Wochen bereitet sie eine semantische Kehrtwende vor, welche die Nationalstaaten stärkt und das Geraune von „mehr Europa“, „Fiskalunion“, „europäische Wirtschaftsregierung“ und so fort zurücknimmt. Grund dafür ist gewiss auch Merkels bittere Enttäuschung über Kommissionspräsident Manuel Barroso, den sie einst selbst ins Amt gehievt hatte. Aber viel wichtiger sind eine Reihe systematischer Gründe, die eine Stärkung der Nationalstaaten und ihrer Parlamente als überlegene Strategie zur europäischen Integration ausweisen. Wer die Dezentralität lobt, ist kein schlechter Europäer.

Der Bundestag auf dem Weg der Selbstentmachtung

Souveränität und Subsidiarität heißen die vergessenen Grundprinzipien Europas. Allzu lange wurde gedankenlos nachgeplappert, der Nationalstaat habe ausgedient, Souveränität müsse nolens volens abgegeben werden. Als ob der Nationalstaat per se böse oder irgendwie hinterwäldlerisch geworden sei. Als ob es

irgendwo auf der Welt ein gelungenes Beispiel supranationaler Staatlichkeit gäbe. Es geht nicht um die Hingabe an deutsche oder französische Gefühlsduselei, sondern um ein in Jahrhunderten fein ausbalanciertes System demokratischer Repräsentation und Machtdelegation, das den Bürgern maximale politische Mitbestimmungsrechte in ihrem Land offeriert.

Allzu viel Souveränität ist im Lauf der Krise faktisch schon an ad hoc geschaffene Brüsseler Fiskalinstitutionen (EFSF, ESM) abgegeben worden. Das neue deutsche Parlament sollte nachdenken, ob es diesen Weg der Selbstentmachtung in Richtung einer Fiskal- und Transferunion weitergehen will. Wenn Merkel jüngst zu Protokoll gab, man müsse über die Rückübertragung von Zuständigkeiten von Brüssel auf die Mitgliedstaaten reden, trifft sie den Punkt. Auch ein Kanzler Steinbrück, sollte er die Regierung bilden, könnte daran Gefallen finden.

Das Subsidiaritätsprinzip: ein Lob auf kleinere Gemeinwesen

Neben der Souveränität ist es das Prinzip der Subsidiarität, das dringend gestärkt werden muss. Es stammt aus der (ebenfalls vergessenen) katholischen Soziallehre und lautet so: „Es verstößt gegen die Gerechtigkeit, das, was die kleineren Gemeinwesen leisten und zu gutem Erfolg führen können, für die übergeordnete Gemeinschaft in Anspruch zu nehmen.“ Seinen Widerhall findet dieses Prinzip in den Erkenntnissen der modernen Finanzwissenschaft, wonach der Nutzen öffentlicher Leistungen stets am höchsten und die Kosten am niedrigsten sind, wenn diese Leistungen dezentral bereitgestellt werden. Dezentrale Demokratie und lokale Fiskalautonomie gehören zusammen. Die holländische Regierung hat daraus jüngst den Grundsatz abgeleitet, wenn irgendwie möglich, müsse national entschieden werden; nur wenn es gar nicht anders gehe, sei Brüssel am Zug.

Es liege in der Natur des Systems staatlicher Wirtschaftskontrolle, nach Zentralisierung zu streben, schrieb der Liberale Ludwig von Mises Mitte der vierziger Jahre: „Die Bürokraten vermehren sich und sind eifrig bestrebt, die Handlungsfreiheit des einzelnen Bürgers einzuschränken.“ Ein wenig hat sich der Wind in den vergangenen Wochen zum Positiven gedreht.

Schuldenkrise

Der Euro – eine Ehe

21.09.2013 · Zwei von drei Deutschen haben Angst, als Steuerzahler am Ende die Kosten für die Euro-Krise tragen zu müssen. Sie fragen sich, ob das Ringen zwischen Politik und Ökonomie zu einer Transferunion führen wird.

Von [Holger Steltzner](#)

84,3



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Dauerhaft fehlende Wettbewerbsfähigkeit im Süden könnte für Europa den wirtschaftlichen Abstieg in die zweite Liga bedeuten - ein Szenario, das die Bank Morgan Stanley „die italienische Ehe“ getauft hat

Kann auf Dauer politisch richtig sein, was ökonomisch falsch ist? Das ist die Mutter aller Fragen im Ringen zwischen Politik und Ökonomie in der Euro-Krise. Stark ist der Wille der Politik, den Euro als Symbol der Europäischen Union zu erhalten, wie hoch auch immer die Kosten hierfür sein mögen. Aber stark sind auch die wirtschaftlichen Fliehkräfte in der Währungsunion. Hier der wettbewerbsfähige Norden mit produktiven Unternehmen, die ständig an Kraft gewinnen. Dort der wenig konkurrenzfähige Süden, wo hohe Kosten und die Rezession die Unternehmen und Staatshaushalte nach unten ziehen. Die Politik kann das nur zu einem gewissen Grad ausgleichen. Das versucht sie seit fast vier Jahren. Als in Griechenland die Euro-Krise ausbrach, wollten Politiker den Bürgern weismachen, die Schulden des wirtschaftlich kleinen Hellas' könne man im Vorbeigehen schultern. Heute zittert die Eurozone sogar vor Zypern und erklärt die Insel mit einer geringeren Wirtschaftskraft als das Saarland zum Systemrisiko.

Obwohl einer aktuellen Umfrage zufolge zwei von drei Deutschen Angst haben, als Steuerzahler am Ende die Kosten für die Euro-Krise tragen zu müssen, ist es Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel gelungen, das Thema aus dem Wahlkampf herauszuhalten. Peer Steinbrück, dem Kanzlerkandidaten der SPD, war das nur recht. Denn er und die SPD haben so gut wie allen Manövern Merkels in der Euro-Krise zugestimmt, mit dem kleinen Unterschied, dass sie lieber noch mehr Geld geben und weniger Reformen verlangt hätten. Auch die Grünen und ihr Spitzenkandidat Jürgen Trittin mieden das vermint Feld im Wahlkampf, weil sie wissen, dass die von ihnen gewünschte Vergemeinschaftung der Schulden durch Eurobonds und die Einführung einer Vermögensabgabe für die Wähler ein rotes Tuch sind.

Monetäre Staatsfinanzierung durch Notenbanken verboten

Schließlich sind die Zyperer mit einem mittleren Haushaltsvermögen von 267.000 Euro wesentlich reicher als die Deutschen, wie die Europäische Zentralbank in einer repräsentativen Umfrage zu den Vermögen der Euro-Haushalte festgestellt hat. Die Griechen sind mit 102.000 doppelt und die Italiener mit 174.000 Euro dreimal so reich wie die Deutschen, die mit 51.000 Euro die ärmsten Haushalte der Eurozone stellen.

Die schiefe Vermögensverteilung in der Eurozone hat die deutschen „Euro-Rettungspolitiker“ nicht innehalten lassen. **Im Bemühen, das Primat der Politik gegenüber der Ökonomie durchzusetzen, wurden Regeln gebeugt, Versprechen gebrochen und die Grundlagen der Währungsunion vergessen, die als eine Gemeinschaft souveräner Staaten gegründet wurde, die bewusst keine Transferunion eingegangen sind. Um die Haftung für andere Länder auszuschließen, wurde die monetäre Staatsfinanzierung durch Notenbanken verboten.** All das soll heute nicht mehr gelten. Dazu haben die Politiker allerlei Werkzeuge

ersonnen. Auf die muss man nicht näher eingehen, die Kürzel sind abschreckend genug: EFSF, LTRO, SMP, ESM, Target II, PSI, OMT, ELA und noch viel mehr.

Doch Findigkeit der Politiker setzt marktwirtschaftliche Gesetze nicht außer Kraft. Wirtschaftlichen Erfolg können Politiker nicht erzwingen. Der Staat kann auch keine Arbeitsplätze schaffen, die sich auf Dauer selbst tragen. Aber der politische Wille kann auch längerfristig die ökonomischen Entwicklungen überdecken, allerdings zum Preis laufend steigender Kosten. Ein Beispiel hierfür ist Italien. **Seit 150 Jahren sind Süd- und Norditalien in einer politischen Union vereint.** Trotzdem sind die Unterschiede zwischen Süd- und Norditalien nicht kleiner geworden. Ganz im Gegenteil: Nie war die wirtschaftliche Kluft zwischen Nord- und Süditalien größer als heute.

Defizit- und Überschussländer entwickeln sich weiter auseinander

In der Eurozone macht die bislang verfolgte Rettungspolitik ebenfalls den wirtschaftlich starken Norden stärker und den wirtschaftlich schwachen Süden schwächer. Das zeigen die Arbeitslosenrekorde in Griechenland, Portugal, Spanien oder Frankreich. Auch die unterschiedlichen Finanzierungsbedingungen in den Eurostaaten sind nicht die Ursache der Krise, sondern ihr Symptom. Darin drückt sich die Spaltung der Währungsunion aus. Länder wie Deutschland sind wettbewerbsfähig und kostengünstig. In anderen sind die Lohnkosten zu hoch und die Produktivität zu niedrig. **Seit dem Start der Währungsunion entwickeln sich Defizit- und Überschussländer immer weiter auseinander.** Im Vergleich zu Deutschland stiegen in Frankreich die Löhne doppelt so stark, in Italien blieb obendrein die Produktivität fast stehen. **Die Lösung kann nicht sein, dass nun gesunde Länder mehr ausgeben und teurer werden.** Die Schere zwischen Lohn und Produktivität muss dort geschlossen werden, wo die Kosten aus dem Ruder gelaufen sind. Doch davon ist in Frankreich oder Italien wenig zu sehen. Franzosen gehen weiter mit 60 in Rente, Frankreichs Staatsquote steigt weiter Richtung 60 Prozent, und Italien hat gerade die Grundsteuer kassiert.

Bald sind in der Währungsunion die Staatsschulden so hoch wie Wirtschaftsleistung. In Kürze wird die Staatsschuld 9,5 Billionen Euro betragen – und sich damit seit Beginn der Währungsunion verdoppelt haben. Dazu wurde Merkel in China eine bemerkenswerte Frage gestellt. **Die EU stellt noch 7 Prozent der Weltbevölkerung und erwirtschaftet noch 25 Prozent des Bruttoinlandsprodukts der Welt, hat aber 50 Prozent der Sozialausgaben der Welt.** Also wurde Merkel gefragt, ob die Ordnung der Demokratie eine Ordnung sei, in der man Wahlen nur dann gewinnen könne, wenn man mehr verspricht, als man finanzieren kann.

Es ist wenig wahrscheinlich, dass eine Währungsunion in Gestalt einer Transferunion Bestand haben wird. Denn falsche Anreize führen selten zu wirtschaftlichem Erfolg. **Warum soll sich in einer Transfergemeinschaft das Nord-Süd-Gefälle auflösen? Italien hat seit 150 Jahren trotz einheitlicher Steuern, Sozialgesetzen und gemeinsamer Regierung es nicht geschafft, den Süden voranzubringen.** Wie soll das ein EU-Sparkommissar schaffen, wenn die Bundesregierung nicht mal die Sanierung der Finanzen der Stadt Berlin durchsetzen kann? **Nur der Druck der Finanzmärkte kann das erzwingen.** Ohne die Zinskeule des Marktes wird es die nötigen Strukturanpassungen kaum geben. In einer Transferunion mit Eurobonds droht die italienische Spaltung. **Wer versucht, durch das Anwerfen der Notenpresse dem Zwang solider Haushaltsführung zu entfliehen, sät Inflation und erntet Misstrauen in den Euro.** **Die EZB,** die über die Bilanzen der Notenbanken in einem demokratisch nicht legitimierten Verfahren Steuergeld zwischen den Staaten umverteilt, **dürfte irgendwann von einem Parlament, einem Gericht oder dem Wähler gestoppt werden,** wohl nicht in Deutschland, aber vielleicht in Österreich, Finnland, den Niederlanden oder in Frankreich.

Zurück zu einem System mit anpassungsfähigen Wechselkursen

Politiker sagen, der Euro sei eine Frage von Krieg oder Frieden. Die „Euro-Rettung“ wird als alternativlos verkauft, obwohl es immer Alternativen gibt. **In Wahrheit hat die friedvolle Einigung Europas ohne Euro besser funktioniert.** Der Euro spart die Kosten des Währungsumtauschs, kann aber die Angleichung der Lebensverhältnisse nicht erzwingen. **Weil die Deutschen ihre Art des Lebens und Wirtschaftens den Südeuropäern nicht aufzwingen können, spricht die ökonomische Vernunft dafür, zu einem System anpassungsfähiger Wechselkurse zurückzukehren.** Überzeugte Europäer wollen aber nicht wahrhaben, dass

ihre Rettungspolitik der Idee Europas schadet, dass die Währungsunion der ökonomischen Vernunft widerspricht und Leid verursacht. **Wie geht das Ringen zwischen Politik und Ökonomie aus?**

Dazu **vier Szenarien**: zunächst **der Zusammenbruch**. Die Fliehkräfte gewinnen, der politische Wille und die ökonomische Kraft werden auch in Deutschland nicht stark genug sein. Die Währungsunion fällt auseinander. Griechenland kann die Schulden nicht länger bedienen, der Staat wird zahlungsunfähig, das Bankensystem bricht zusammen. In einem chaotischen Prozess breitet sich Misstrauen in der Eurozone aus. Im zweiten Szenario gelingt **der geordnete Ausstieg**. Der politische Wille ist nicht stark genug, die Währungsunion in ihrer heutigen Form zu erhalten. Griechenland und Zypern treten aus, erhalten Hilfe von der Gemeinschaft und Staaten wie Portugal, Spanien, Italien und Frankreich müssen ihre Banken retten. Die EZB und der Krisenfonds ESM sowie der Währungsfonds IWF werden stark in Anspruch genommen, trotz Turbulenzen läuft ein einigermaßen geordnetes Verfahren ab. In den beiden folgenden Szenarien ist der politische Wille stark genug, die ökonomischen Kräfte zu dominieren. Die Regierungen in Deutschland und Frankreich sehen ein, dass die Währungsunion nicht ohne politische Union überleben kann, **die Vereinigten Staaten von Europa entstehen**. In einer **Fiskalunion** geben die Staaten ihre Steuerhoheit an ein europäisches Finanzministerium ab, es wird **Eurobonds** geben, Transfers von Nord nach Süd, und über Eckdaten der Sozialpolitik (etwa Renteneintrittsalter) entscheidet Brüssel. **Im dritten Szenario wird alles gut**. Es kommt zur erhofften **Konvergenz**, Südeuropa wird so wettbewerbsfähig wie Deutschland, Europa gewinnt an Dynamik und etabliert sich als dritte Wirtschaftskraft neben Amerika und China.

Das vierte Szenario hat die Investmentbank Morgan Stanley **die italienische Ehe getauft**. Unter dem Dach einer politischen Union kommt es **nicht zur Konvergenz**. **Der Süden wird nicht wettbewerbsfähig und ist auf dauerhafte Transfers aus dem Norden angewiesen**. Die finanzielle Unterstützung laugt im Laufe der Zeit den Norden aus und nimmt ihm die Dynamik. Der Wohlstand sinkt, und Europa steigt wirtschaftlich in die zweite Liga ab. **Dieses Szenario heißt „italienische Ehe“, weil es seit der Vereinigung Italiens 1861 einen wirtschaftlichen starken Norden und einen schwachen Süden gibt. Trotz politischer Union hat es nie eine Konvergenz gegeben. Dafür eine zersplitterte und radikalisierte Parteienlandschaft.**

Wird so die Zukunft Europas aussehen? Die Staatschefs haben es in der Hand. Aber am Ende werden die Wähler in jedem einzelnen Land der Eurozone – im Süden wie im Norden – darüber entscheiden, welche Ehe sie führen wollen.

Quelle: F.A.Z.

September 20, 2013

Anti-Euro Party Gaining Steam in Germany

By [JACK EWING](#) and [MELISSA EDDY](#)

84,6

BAD HOMBURG, Germany — Europe has barely been mentioned in the German election campaign. But in the final days before Sunday's vote, a fringe party that wants to scrap the euro is gaining in the polls, threatening to scramble the country's consensus politics with **a message that has echoes of the Tea Party in America and rightist movements elsewhere in Europe.**

Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats are expected to emerge victorious from the elections. But polls are giving the upstart party, Alternative for Germany, a decent chance of winning seats in Parliament for the first time. **Its surprising strength could have an outsize effect on the shape of the next German government and help determine how far it can go in satisfying the desire among its European Union partners for more forceful steps to end the Continent's economic crisis.**

A small but committed minority of Germans see the party as the only alternative to mainstream parties too timid to admit that the euro has failed. And the party has offered a home to more socially conservative Germans who are unhappy with the way Ms. Merkel has pushed the conservative bloc to the center on social issues like gay rights.

In recent days, there has been a sense of euphoria among Alternative for Germany's supporters about its chances of winning a share of power. "I am convinced they will get into the Bundestag," said Ingrid Cook, 63, who lives in Bad Pyrmont, in northwestern Germany, and translates technical manuals for a machinery company.

Mrs. Cook said Friday that she had been handing out leaflets and working at party information stands in her area. "I have grandchildren, and I want to be able to tell them I saw the catastrophe coming and tried to do something about it," she said by telephone.

Alternative for Germany is poised to drain votes from Ms. Merkel's party and its junior partner in government, the Free Democratic Party — enough, perhaps, to prevent the Free Democrats from reaching the 5 percent of the national vote needed to return to Parliament. Such a result would leave Ms. Merkel no alternative but an awkward coalition with her main opponents, the center-left Social Democrats.

While Alternative for Germany would be too small to have much sway over policy, it could be a loud and disruptive voice in debates about measures to prevent the collapse of the euro, offering a rightist challenge to the determined centrism Ms. Merkel has pursued in her eight years as chancellor.

As it has gained in strength, the party has been trying to move beyond a fixation with abolishing the common currency and attract social conservatives by talking about issues like family policy and tax reform.

"In the past few weeks, the party has understood the need to expand beyond their image as a single-issue party and position themselves as an alternative for people who are socially conservative and no longer feel the Christian Democratic Union represents them," said Oskar Niedermayer, a political scientist at the Free University of Berlin.

Alternative for Germany is decidedly a work in progress, attracting **an eclectic group of supporters who seem to be united only by their conviction that the mainstream parties are not discussing the issues important to them.**

It remains to be seen whether the party can become a lasting force in German politics, in the same way that the Green Party emerged from the environmental movement in the 1980s, or whether, like so many other issue-driven parties in the past, it will self-destruct amid squabbles over doctrine and leadership posts.

The party's contradictions were on view at a forum it sponsored Thursday evening in Bad Homburg, a wealthy suburb of Frankfurt. One man in the audience stood up to urge the party to take a stand against same-sex marriage.

Konrad Adam, one of the party's leaders, conceded that it had no official stance on the issue. "We don't have a position on every question," Mr. Adam said, speaking from the stage of a community center.

Another man rose to say Germans should get extra votes for each child they have, as a way of rewarding people who are helping to stave off population decline.

Mr. Adam, a 71-year-old former political reporter, said he thought that was a good idea, while again cautioning that the party had no official position.

In a country that has had public health care since the 19th century, the party's rejection of government, however, is selective.

Many of the party's supporters in Bad Homburg said they thought the government should offer more financial support for families, like larger pensions for women who have forgone careers to raise their children.

The party also has some features in common with the U.K. Independence Party, whose glib, pint-quaffing leader, Nigel Farage, is shaking up British politics with a demand that Britain leave the European Union. **Though Alternative for Germany professes to be in favor of a united Europe**, there is a deep strain of mistrust toward what supporters see as remote bureaucrats in Brussels. Its members tend to see the euro as an extension of the Eurocrats' power.

"Things were better for everybody when we had the Deutsche mark," said Antje Wegner, a retired nurse in Bad Pyrmont.

The party has had to fend off accusations that its message has attracted supporters from the extreme right. A younger man at the gathering in Bad Homburg on Thursday night complained that German social policies were encouraging the "wrong families" to have children, an apparent reference to non-Germans. Others in the audience objected to that statement, however.

Party leaders like to draw parallels with the Green Party, which grew from a protest party to become a fixture of German politics, with a large delegation in Parliament and leadership of a coalition government in Baden-Württemberg, one of the most prosperous states.

But there is also a danger that Alternative for Germany could suffer the same fate as the Pirates, whose main issue is Internet freedom. The Pirates shocked the political establishment by gaining almost 9 percent of the vote in Berlin state elections in 2011, but they have since faded and are seen as having no chance of winning seats in Parliament on Sunday.

For now, Alternative for Germany is focused on maximizing votes and not being too choosy about who joins. Some supporters have even come from a defunct Stalinist party, Mr. Adam said on the sidelines of the event in Bad Homburg. "Anyone who respects the Constitution is welcome," he said. "Why not?"

22 September 2013

Germany's European awakening

[La Repubblica](#) Rome

84,8



[Giannis Ioannou](#)

Whatever the outcome of the September 22 elections, the winner will give a new impetus to the development of European politics and correct the mistakes made by the bloc's 28 members, writes sociologist Ulrich Beck.

[Ulrich Beck](#)

In the eve of Germany's federal elections, a visitor to Berlin these days might expect the city to be raging with debate on Europe. Surely the streets are alive with Eurosceptics wailing for the return of the mark and impassioned Europeans demanding "ever closer union". In fact, Germany is oddly detached. So far [the campaign](#) has focused on US [intelligence surveillance](#), the rising [cost of energy](#) and childcare facilities. Germany, the key to solving the euro crisis, seems immune to a truly polarising dispute over alternatives, especially since none are available for free.

Since the start of the crisis, many governments across Europe have been swept from power. Germany's, on the other hand, has never looked more secure. [Germans love Merkel](#). Why? Because she asks little of them. And because Merkel is practising a new style of power politics in Europe, which I have called Merkiavellism: a combination of Machiavelli and Merkel. "Is it better to be loved or feared?" Machiavelli inquired in *The Prince*. His answer was that "one ought to be both feared and loved, but as it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting".

Merkiavelli is applying this principle in a new way. She is to be feared abroad, and loved at home – perhaps because she has taught other countries to fear. Brutal neoliberalism to the outside world, consensus with a social democratic tinge at home – that's the successful formula that has enabled Merkiavelli constantly to expand her own position of power and that of Germany as well.

‘Striking discrepancy’

They are losing their last spark of hope and trust in the national and European system of politics

There's a striking discrepancy concerning the positions of executive elites and political parties too. In most European countries there are strong Eurosceptic movements and parties giving the increasingly restless

citizenry a voice. To them the austerity politics imposed by their governments are monstrous acts of injustice. They are losing their last spark of hope and trust in in the national and European system of politics.

This, again, is not the case in Germany. Here we find a rare state of consensus. The two opposition parties, the Social Democrats and the Greens, may be challenging the detail of Merkel's austerity programmes, but have so far always voted with her in parliament. Meanwhile, two of the parties that form Merkel's government – the Bavarian CSU and the liberal FDP – are remarkably distant from their own government's position et much less enthusiastic on the European commitment to saving Greece. As a result the German debate on the eurozone crisis takes place without an opposition in parliament.

In the real world, meanwhile, the European crisis is coming to a head, and Germany finds itself faced with a historic decision. It must attempt either to revive the dream and poetry of a political Europe in the imagination of the people, or to stick with a policy of muddling through and of using hesitation as a means of coercion – until the euro do us part. Germany has become too powerful to be able to afford the luxury of indecision and inactivity. But Germany is sleep-walking down its own special path. As [Jürgen Habermas](#) puts it: "Germany isn't dancing. It's dozing on a volcano".

‘Dozing on a volcano’

And there is a final paradox: even if Germany is dozing on a volcano, even if there is no discussion on the moment of decision, the most likely outcome of the elections is going to be in favour of the next step towards a political EU. This is because most likely Merkel will return to the chancellery for a third term. Under her, I expect that there will be a silent turn to a politics of more Europe: switching positions is the key element of Merkiavelli's power politics. And saving the Euro and the EU is good for the book of history.

In the unlikely event that Merkel won't be re-elected, a red-green government would take the initiative, together with France, Italy, Spain, Poland etc, to correct the design flaw of European monetary union and take the next step in completing the political union: producing a situation in which Merkel, in opposition, constitutes the informal part of a "grand coalition".

Let's look at the German elections through the eyes of the others. In the governments, on the streets of Europe and in the corridors of Brussels everyone waits to see which way Berlin will go. 'I will probably be the first Polish foreign minister in history to say so', Radek Sikorski declared in 2011, 'but here it is: I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity.' Starting on September 23rd, the day after the elections, in one constellation or the other, the question: what Europe do we want and how do we get there? will be at the centre of German and European politics. Let's hope it is going to be ein anderes Europa, another (cosmopolitan) Europe, able to stand up for itself in a world at risk, and not eine Deutsche Bundesrepublik Europa – a German Federal Republic of Europe.

Eurokrise

Deutschland will Defizitberechnung hochhalten

84,10

22.09.2013 · Werden Sparauflagen für Spanien und andere Krisenländer durch die Hintertür gelockert? Die EU hat solche Pläne, die Bundesregierung stemmt sich dagegen.

EU-Überlegungen zu neuen Berechnungsmethoden von Haushaltsdefiziten der Mitgliedsländer stoßen bei der Bundesregierung auf Widerstand. „Die Bundesregierung lehnt Maßnahmen ab, die zu einer Aufweichung der europäischen Stabilitätsverpflichtungen führen könnten“, sagte ein Sprecher des Bundeswirtschaftsministeriums am Samstag in Berlin. Das mühsam wiedergewonnene Vertrauen der Märkte dürfe auf keinen Fall gefährdet werden. „Deshalb darf die jetzige Schätzmethode keinesfalls so verändert werden, dass die Stabilitätsanforderungen an die Länder verringert werden.“

Zuvor war bekannt geworden, dass [ein entsprechender Vorschlag der EU-Kommission derzeit in Brüssel auf Fachebene diskutiert wird](#). Das hatte der Sprecher von EU-Währungskommissar Olli Rehn am Freitag bestätigt. Eine Entscheidung sei noch nicht gefallen. Demnach geht es um die Berechnung des sogenannten strukturellen Defizits der Mitgliedsländer. Das Strukturdefizit wird bei der Beurteilung von Schuldensündern häufig herangezogen - dabei werden gegenüber dem nominalen Defizit Sonderfaktoren wie Konjunkturlinüsse ausgeblendet.

Die F.A.Z. hatte geschrieben, die von den EU-Beamten diskutierte neue Berechnungsmethode [würde vor allem Spanien und anderen südeuropäischen Ländern entgegenkommen](#). Es werde offenbar erwogen, die Methode so zu verändern, dass Krisenstaaten mit hoher Arbeitslosigkeit besser dastehen als bisher. Ihr strukturelles Defizit würde sinken. Das könnte zu mildereren Sparauflagen führen.

Die Kommission als Hüterin des Euro-Stabilitätspaktes kommt in der Krise Schuldenländern mit einer sehr breiten und detaillierten Analyse von Konjunktur- und Budgetdaten bereits entgegen. Viele Länder bekamen im laufenden Jahr wegen der Krise mehr Zeit zum Sparen. So hat Frankreich bis 2015 Zeit, sein (nominales) Defizit unter die Marke von drei Prozent der Wirtschaftsleistung zu drücken.

Quelle: FAZ.net / dpa

A victory for Merkel will only mask Germany's long-term economic problems

The German Chancellor may be considered a safe pair of hands, but the country's ascendancy is more fragile than it looks, writes Ambrose Evans-Pritchard.



Economists fret that Germany is coasting as deep structural problems build up, repeating the mistakes of Italy and Spain at the outset of monetary union.

By [Ambrose Evans-Pritchard](#) 6:00PM BST 21 Sep 2013  [202 Comments](#)

84,11

The defining picture of Germany's election is a billboard of Angela Merkel's hands, posted next to Berlin's central railway station.

There is no face. There are no words. Nothing else is needed. It is so self-evident to most citizens that their Chancellor has the safest hands on offer that the message speaks for itself.

Her approval rating has reached 70pc. It is the mirror image of Germany's unemployment rate, at a post-reunification low of 5.3pc. The rate for youth unemployment is 7.7pc — against 26pc in France, 39.5pc in Italy and 56.1pc in Spain. Germany's lead is largely thanks to the country's superb apprenticeship schemes.

Germany has reason to be complacent as it goes to the polls on Sunday, but German economists warn that this ascendancy is more fragile than it looks, an illusion of the business cycle and a China-driven global boom in machinery and capital goods that is running out of steam. Merkel is encouraging Germans to think that all is well and that nothing needs to change.

“Germany is in a fantastic position but we're squandering our competitive advantage: all the main parties want to roll back reforms,” said Christian Schulz from Berenberg Bank.

Joerg Asmussen, Germany's board member at the European Central Bank, says the country will become “the sick man of Europe again in five to 10 years” if it continues to neglect its ageing infrastructure and fails to invest more in education. Germany's top-rated university is Munich Technical, ranked 53rd in the world.

Germany's industry federation, BDI, has called for a drastic change in energy policy, warning that the €1 trillion dash for wind power, solar and other renewables is pushing power costs to levels that "endanger German competitiveness". Electricity costs 30pc more than in the rest of Europe, and twice as much as in the US. Natural gas costs four times more than in the US as the shale revolution alters the global economic landscape at lightning speed, leaving parts of Germany's chemical and plastic industry under mortal threat.

Yet during the campaign none of the main parties proposed any serious change to plans to the so-called "Energiewende" — the goal of sourcing 50pc of all power from renewables by 2030, and 80pc by 2050 — as if the problem will take care of itself.

The OECD says Germany has one of Europe's most rigid labour markets, despite the Hartz IV reforms a decade ago. It is still very hard to lay off workers, creating a barrier to technology start-up companies.

Productivity per worker grew by just 0.6pc a year from 2000 to 2010, compared with 1.4pc for other rich countries. The OECD advised Berlin to take lessons from the Australian Productivity Commission.

Germany ranks 106th for starting a firm in the World Bank's ease of doing business index. It ranks 31 for mobile broadband, 75 for soundness of banks, 127 for hiring and firing, and 139 for wage flexibility, according to the World Economic Forum index.

Economists fret that Germany is coasting as deep structural problems build up, repeating the mistakes of Italy and Spain at the outset of monetary union.

While nobody disputes that Germany gained competitiveness in the early euro years, the question is whether this was achieved by a superior economic model or merely by screwing down wages in a "beggar-thy-neighbour" policy. This red-hot dispute scarcely intruded on the campaign.

"Real disposable income per capita in Germany has been growing at half the rate in France since the launch of the euro. They have been ripping off their own people to build up pointless trade surpluses," said Charles Dumas from Lombard Street Research.

"Their weakness is reliance on foreign demand, which is no longer forthcoming from emerging markets. They were bailed out for a while by China's excess investment, but China wants to stop doing the wrong thing," he said.

The risk for Germany is that the damage emerges just as the country's ageing crisis strikes in earnest. The European Commission expects the country's workforce to shrink by 200,000 a year this decade, replicating what happened in Japan.

The old age dependency ratio will climb from 31pc in 2010, to 36pc in 2020, 41pc in 2025 and 48pc in 2030.

"Germany faces a demographic time bomb," says Mats Persson from think tank Open Europe. Social security liabilities lift the real level of German public debt to 192pc of GDP. This compares to 146pc for Italy, which has tackled its pension threat. "Germany can't afford to underwrite the euro forever," Persson said.

German voters already sense this and seem increasingly tempted to vote for the anti-euro movement Alternative für Deutschland (AfD).

A pre-election INSA poll showed the party has reached 5pc support for the first time, the threshold for seats in the Bundestag. This is a minor earthquake. Momentum is now working in their favour, and it is widely believed that not all AfD supporters are telling pollsters the truth. "We could see a snowball effect," said Persson.

AfD may scramble the election, depriving Merkel's bloc of its expected majority. A Left-Right "grand coalition" has become more likely, though a combined front of all Left-wing parties with the Greens is also possible.

Crucially, there may now be a vocal movement in the Bundestag, with electoral legitimacy and greater press coverage, committed to breaking up the monetary union — either by German withdrawal from the euro or by forcing weaker states to leave.

This shifts the centre of political gravity in Germany, and may embolden Bavarian and East German Euro-sceptics within Merkel's alliance.

It will make it even harder for the next government to deflect populist protest over a third Greek bail-out, a second bail-out for Portugal and a rescue for Slovenia, all expected in the coming months. It may also kill any chance of debt pooling.

“There has been a lot of wishful thinking about a quantum leap in the eurozone after the elections. We see no possible scenario of a banking union that puts German money at risk,” said Persson.

If Europe's recovery gathers pace, this may not matter. But if the recovery is yet another false dawn, or it proves too little to stop the debt trajectories of southern Europe spiralling out of control, it will matter enormously. **An electoral breakthrough by AfD could be a turning point in modern European history.**

„Der Panzer Merkel siegt zum dritten Mal“

23.09.2013 · Nach Angela Merkels Triumph bekommen die Krisenstaaten noch mehr Respekt vor ihr, berichten unsere Korrespondente. Ein bisschen Angst ist auch dabei.



© Michael Martens Angela Merkels Abschneiden bei der Wahl wird genauestens beobachtet

In den morgendlichen Fernsehdauerredesendungen in **Griechenland** ist das deutsche Wahlergebnis Thema des Tages. „Ta Nea“, unter der Woche das auflagenstärkste Blatt des Landes, bildet die wiedergewählte Angela Merkel am Montag gar als gekröntes Haupt ab, vergnügt lächelnd auf einem Thron von Gold und rotem Samt sitzend. „Europa wird Merckelland“ schreibt das Blatt über den „Triumph der Königin der Sparmaßnahmen“ und zeigt sich durchaus beeindruckt von dem Erfolg [der in Griechenland so unbeliebten Regierungschefin](#).

Während alle anderen europäischen Staats- und Regierungschefs auf dem Krisenkontinent abgewählt wurden, habe Frau Merkel ihr Ergebnis sogar noch verbessern können: „Merkel ist allmächtig (...) Noch nie seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg war ein Bundeskanzler der Bundesrepublik Deutschland so mächtig in einem Europa, in dem die Rolle dieses Landes noch nie so dominant gewesen ist wie heute.“

Giorgos Tzogopoulos von der griechischen Stiftung für europäische und auswärtige Politik (Eliamep), dem bekanntesten Forschungsinstitut Griechenlands, sieht das nüchterner: „Es war ein zu erwartendes Ergebnis, auch für die Griechen. Sie haben damit gerechnet, dass Frau Merkel weiter regieren wird, ob nun mit der FDP oder einer anderen Partei“, sagte der Athener Politikwissenschaftler am Montag zu FAZ.NET. Tzogopoulos warnt seine Landsleute davor, dem deutschen Wahlergebnis allzu viel Bedeutung beizumessen: „Es ist die Aufgabe Griechenlands, die Reformpolitik weiterzuverfolgen und Ergebnisse vorzulegen, statt darauf zu warten, dass Deutschland seine Politik ändert.“ Einige Angehörige der politischen Eliten in Athen hofften zwar weiterhin auf eine stärkere Rolle des SPD-Kanzlerkandidaten Steinbrück, weil seine Partei „zumindest theoretisch“ als „pro-europäischer“ gilt, sagt Tzogopoulos. „Aber allgemein herrscht trotz des großen Interesses an der deutschen Wahl eine gewisse Gleichgültigkeit vor, weil die Griechen der Ansicht waren, dass die Politik Deutschlands gesetzt ist – ganz unabhängig davon, wer Kanzler ist.“

Michael Martens, Athen

Italien: „Panzer Merkel siegt zum dritten Mal“

Die italienischen Reaktionen auf das Wahlergebnis in Deutschland spiegeln **Italiens** Hoffnungen und Befürchtungen zur künftigen Haltung von Angela Merkel in der Europäischen Währungsunion wieder. Italiens Ministerpräsident Enrico Letta gratulierte Merkel zum Wahlergebnis von einem Staatsbesuch in Kanada und fügte hinzu: „Wenn die Anti-Euro-Partei nicht ins Parlament kommt, ist das ein gutes Signal“. Der Vorsitzende der mitte-links-orientierten Partei der Demokraten, Guglielmo Epifani, nutzte den Kommentar zum Wahlergebnis in Berlin, um Merkel nationalen Egoismus vorzuwerfen: Das Ergebnis verwundere nicht, weil die deutsche Kanzlerin in der Europapolitik doch allein die Interessen ihrer Wähler im Blick gehabt habe.

Ein Stimmungsbild aus [Italien](#) bieten Schlagzeilen und Kommentare in den Zeitungen. Die sonst gemäßigt-konservative Genueser Regionalzeitung „Il Secolo XIX“ gibt sich besonders dezidiert mit ihrem Titel „Der Panzer Merkel siegt zum dritten Mal“, neben einem Kommentar unter der Überschrift: „Aber nun sollte Angela nicht auf dem Europa tanzen, das in Trümmern liegt“. Die linksliberale römische Zeitung „La Repubblica“ kommentiert, mit Merkels Wahlsieg sei „Deutschland unzweifelhaft die Hegemonialmacht des Kontinents geworden - ein Ergebnis, das die deutsche Nation seit 150 Jahren ohne Erfolg anstrebte, um den Preis von Massakern und Zerstörung, und das es nun auf friedlichem Weg dank der Europäischen Union erhalten hat“.

Wie unterschiedlich die Erwartungen für die künftige Haltung Deutschlands zur Währungsunion und den Krisenländern wie Italien sind, zeigen auch diverse Zeitungsinterviews: Gegenüber der Turiner Zeitung „La Stampa“ zeigte der ehemalige Ministerpräsident und EU-Kommissar Mario Monti Genugtuung über das Ausscheiden der FDP aus dem Bundestag, weil diese Partei oft die europäische Politik behindert habe. „Deutschland wird immer bestimmt und mit einem klaren Kurs auftreten, aber etwas gelassener sein“, sagt Monti. Er erwarte sich eine Kanzlerin mit mehr Augenmerk auf die „Erfordernisse des Wachstums“, was im italienischen Jargon der Politiker mehr Nachsicht für höhere Haushaltsdefizite bedeutet.

Gegensätzlicher Meinung ist das ehemalige Direktoriumsmitglied der Europäischen Zentralbank, Lorenzo Bini Smaghi. Gegenüber der „Repubblica“ erklärt er, Merkel habe vor den Wahlen keine Spannungen haben wollen, werde nun aber vorangehen mit den Sanierungsprogrammen für Südeuropa. Es sei schwer vorstellbar, dass Deutschland den Italienern nun Haushaltsdefizite von mehr als 3 Prozent des Bruttoinlandsprodukts zugestehe.
Tobias Piller, Rom

Spanien: „Plebiszit für Merkel“

Aus **Spanien** kommen Glückwünsche für Merkel von der Schwesterpartei unter Ministerpräsident Mariano Rajoy. Sie gratulierte artig zu dem Erfolg, wie sie ihn antizipiert hatte - wenn auch nicht in dieser Klarheit. Die Schlagzeilen der Zeitungen, die sich wochenlang an oft ziemlich schiefen Vergleichen zwischen „Mutti“ und „Merkeavelli“ gütlich getan hatten, sparten derweil nicht mit Superlativen: „Plebiszit für Merkel“, „Historischer Sieg“, „Überwältigender Triumph“, ist nur eine Auswahl.

Hätten die [Spanier](#) und Portugiesen am Sonntag wählen können, dann hätten sie Peer Steinbrück in der – mutmaßlich falschen – Annahme gewählt, dass mit ihm der fordernde deutsche Austeritätskurs zu einem raschen und flexiblen Ende kommen würde. Nun setzt die Realität wieder ein mit der Hoffnung, dass vielleicht doch eine Große Koalition auch der Krisenperipherie etwas mehr Erleichterung verschaffen könnte.

In Spanien wie in **Portugal** hatte zuletzt laut Umfragen nur noch jeweils ein Fünftel der Bürger eine gute Meinung von der Bundeskanzlerin, weil sie ihr gern einen Teil der Schuld für ihre hausgemachten Schwierigkeiten gaben. Aber selbst als Stimmung ist das nicht „nachhaltig“, weil die Regierungen beider Länder es besser wissen und im Grunde das deutsche Spar- und Reformprogramm der „Agenda 2010“ kopieren. So machten sie gute Miene und sprachen, wie zum Beispiel der spanische Außenminister García-Margallo von Merkels Erfolg als einer „guten Nachricht“.

Die ganzen philosophischen Exkurse darüber, wie „deutsch“ die Europäische Union sein dürfe und wie „europäisch“ die deutsche Politik sein müsse, wird - sobald die Berliner Regierungsverhältnisse klar sind -

praktischen Erwägungen weichen. Spanien wird bis zum Jahresende entscheiden müssen, ob es für seine Banken noch einmal in den europäischen Geldtopf greifen muss oder sie aber aus eigener Kraft stützen kann.

[Portugal](#) will bei Ablauf seines Hilfsprogramms im Juni nächsten Jahres an die Finanzmärkte zurückkehren, sich aber zur Sicherheit eventuell noch eine „vorbeugende Kreditlinie“ besorgen. Bei all diesen Unternehmungen hätten sie mit der alten und neuen Bundeskanzlerin zu rechnen, die ihnen im letzten Augenblick ihres Wahlkampfes noch einen Wermutstropfen kredenzt hat, als sie versprach, dass es mit ihr keine Eurobonds geben werde.

Leo Wieland, Madrid

Irland: „Enttäuschend, aber nicht überraschend“

In **Irland** wird nach Angela Merkels Triumph nicht mit einem grundlegenden Wandel der deutschen Euro-Rettungspolitik gerechnet. „Der große Knall ist nicht zu erwarten“, kommentiert die [„Irish Times“](#) am Montag. Merkel werde vielmehr weiterhin auf vorsichtige Politik der kleinen Schritte setzen. Ein Kompromiss im Ringen um die Schaffung einer weitreichenden europäischen Bankenunion unter Einbeziehung des Rettungsfonds ESM sei aber möglich. Mit Bitternis registrieren die [Iren](#), dass die Krise der Währungsunion im deutschen Wahlkampf kaum Beachtung gefunden habe: „Das Fehlen einer Debatte über die Europäische Union und die Zukunft ihrer Währungsunion ist enttäuschend – aber nicht überraschend“, schreibt die irische Zeitung. Schließlich gebe es seit Jahren einen breiten parteiübergreifenden Konsens mit der SPD in der Europapolitik.

Marcus Theurer, London

Brüssel

Jetzt kommen wieder die heiklen Themen auf den Tisch

23.09.2013 · Nach der Bundestagswahl wird die Debatte über neue Kredite für die Krisenstaaten, die Entwicklung des Euroraums und die Energiepolitik wieder Fahrt aufnehmen. Auch die umstrittenen Fragen der Bankenunion müssen bald geklärt werden.

Von [Hendrik Kafsack](#) und [Werner Mussler](#), Brüssel

84,17

Es ist eine in Brüssel gepflegte Legende, dass die Bundestagswahl etliche notwendige EU-Entscheidungen blockiert oder verzögert habe. Umgekehrt wurde in Berlin zuletzt der Eindruck erweckt, die Europäische Kommission und die anderen Mitgliedstaaten warteten nur auf den Tag der Wahl, um anschließend alle diejenigen Projekte vorantreiben zu können, die dem deutschen Wähler unangenehm sein könnten. Der Fokus lag dabei insbesondere auf der Ankündigung neuer Rettungspakete in Milliardenhöhe. Tatsächlich ist es in der EU üblich, vor Wahlen Rücksicht auf die Befindlichkeiten im jeweiligen Land zu nehmen.

Dann wird auf Wunsch der Bundeskanzlerin eine Abstimmung über neue Klimaauflagen für die Autobranche kurz vor der geplanten Abstimmung von der Tagesordnung eines EU-Ministerrats genommen und bis nach der Wahl zurückgehalten – wie im Juni geschehen. Auch dass das Ergebnis die Überprüfung des Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetzes durch Wettbewerbskommissar Joaquín Almunia auf sich warten lässt, dürfte kein Zufall sein. Ebenso hielt es die Kommission offenbar für klug, über die soziale Dimension des Währungsraums erst nach dem 22. September zu reden. Projekte, die den Eindruck einer Abkehr vom Sparkurs wecken, sind schließlich in Deutschland nicht gelitten.

Überraschungen nicht zu erwarten

Das wird sich zwar wohl auch nach der Wahl nicht ändern. Die Kommission darf jedoch – unabhängig von der Regierungskonstellation – auf etwas mehr Gelassenheit hoffen. Das bedeutet im Umkehrschluss nicht, dass nun Entscheidungen und Vorschläge aus Brüssel auf die Deutschen einhageln werden. Die durch die Bundestagswahl eine Weile unterdrückte Diskussion über den Fortgang der Kreditprogramme an diverse Euro-Krisenstaaten wird aber wieder auf den Tisch kommen, sobald die neue Bundesregierung gebildet ist. Die Eurogruppe hat sie für ihre letzten Sitzungen des Jahres im November und Dezember auf der Tagesordnung.

Wie schnell wieder über den Fall Griechenland entschieden werden kann, hängt vom [Ergebnis der aktuellen Prüfmision der Troika aus Internationalem Währungsfonds \(IWF\), EU-Kommission und Europäischer Zentralbank \(EZB\)](#) ab. Überraschungen sind dabei nicht zu erwarten. Die Troika wird die eine oder andere Verfehlung anmahnen, was die Auszahlung einer weiteren Kredittranche verzögern, am Ende aber nicht verhindern dürfte. Zugleich muss die Troika ermitteln, wie groß die Finanzierungslücke ausfällt, die sich für die zweite Hälfte 2014 abzeichnet. Die Lücke wird auf 4 Milliarden Euro geschätzt. Die Eurogruppe muss im Herbst entscheiden, wie sie diese Lücke schließt. Denn der IWF verlangt, dass ein Programm über die jeweils kommenden 12 Monate voll finanziert ist.

Schmerzhafte Debatten dürfte das nicht erfordern. Die Lücke ist im Vergleich zum Gesamtumfang der bisherigen Griechenland-Programme, in deren Verlauf 200 Milliarden Euro ausbezahlt wurden, relativ gering. Sie könnte mit Übergangsmaßnahmen – etwa mit der abermaligen Senkung der Zinsen auf laufende Kredite, mit einem geringeren griechischen Eigenbeitrag an EU-Förderprogrammen oder der Umwidmung von Mitteln aus dem laufenden Programm – gestopft werden. Über das von Bundesfinanzminister Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) im Wahlkampf vorsorglich angekündigte dritte Programm, mit dem weitere Lücken von 2015 an geschlossen werden sollen, wird die Eurogruppe wohl erst im Frühjahr 2014 entscheiden.

Europawahl wirft Schatten voraus

Entscheidungen stehen in diesem Herbst darüber an, was nach dem Auslaufen der Hilfsprogramme für Irland, Portugal und Spanien passiert. Das [irische Kreditprogramm](#) läuft zum Jahresende aus, das portugiesische Mitte 2014. Während Irland zugetraut wird, sich danach wieder voll am Kapitalmarkt finanzieren zu können, ist die Skepsis mit Blick auf Portugal weit größer. Doch auch über den richtigen Umgang mit Irland besteht noch keine Einigkeit – während etwa die EU-Kommission hinter den Kulissen für eine vorsorgliche Kreditlinie des Euro-Krisenfonds ESM an Dublin wirbt, lehnt die Bundesregierung diese ab.

Im Falle Spaniens dreht sich alles um die Frage, was mit den 60 Milliarden Euro geschieht, die das Land aus dem Ende des Jahres auslaufenden ESM-Programm zur Stabilisierung des Bankensektors nicht in Anspruch genommen hat. Die Kommission will die verbliebenen knapp 60 Milliarden Euro am liebsten über den Jahreswechsel hinaus als Kreditlinie für Spanien stehenlassen. Die deutsche Regierung hat das bisher abgelehnt. Sie hat argumentiert, dass Spanien nie ernsthafte Probleme mit der Finanzierung am Kapitalmarkt gehabt habe und das Geld nicht brauche. Hinzu kommt ein anderer Punkt: Ein „Stehenlassen“ des Kredits bedeutete formal ein neues Hilfsprogramm für Madrid, das vom Bundestag beschlossen werden müsste.

Auf diese Abstimmung wird jede neue Bundesregierung lieber verzichten wollen. Jenseits der akuten Krisenpolitik ergibt sich nach der Bundestagswahl eine besondere Konstellation. Es gilt ganz sprichwörtlich, dass nach der Wahl vor der Wahl ist. Denn zwischen der Bundestagswahl und der Wahl zum Europäischen Parlament am 25. Mai 2014 liegt nur ein gutes halbes Jahr. Für die europäische Gesetzgebung ist das ein knapp bemessener Zeitraum. Wenn die offenen Dossiers nicht spätestens bis zur letzten Sitzungswoche des Europaparlaments im April abgearbeitet sind, verzögert sich die Gesetzgebung erheblich. Auch deshalb sind zumindest aus dem Hause der EU-Kommission keine allzu großen unangenehmen Überraschungen mehr zu erwarten.

Etwas Ruhe nach den Wahlen

Zwar gibt es rein formal in der EU kein Diskontinuitätsprinzip, nach dem wie hierzulande alle zum Zeitpunkt der Wahl nicht beschlossenen Gesetzesinitiative verfallen. Das Europäische Parlament beansprucht aber für sich, nach der Wahl von der Europäischen Kommission eine Neuvorlage verlangen zu können. Unabhängig davon müssen sich das neue Parlament und die neue Kommission sprichwörtlich erst sortieren. Die für die einzelnen Dossiers zuständigen Berichterstatter im Parlament wechseln, die Kommissare ebenso. In der Regel kehrt deshalb nach den Europawahlen in der Gesetzgebung zunächst einmal einige Monate Ruhe in Brüssel und Straßburg ein.

Deshalb besteht die Taktik der Gegner großer Gesetzgebungsprojekte wie der Verschärfung der Tabakrichtlinie oder der Klimaschutzanforderungen an die umstrittenen Biokraftstoffe momentan auch vor allem darin, das Verfahren zu verzögern. Sie setzen auf den Zeitgewinn ebenso wie darauf, dass die neue EU-Kommission und das neue EU-Parlament offener für ihre Argumente sein könnten. Dass sie das können, hängt bei den Biokraftstoffen nach Einschätzung von Diplomaten anderer EU-Ländern mit der Bundestagswahl zusammen. Die Regierung habe es sich nicht mit den Biokraftstoffherstellern und Landwirten verscherzen wollen und sich deshalb bisher nicht eindeutig positioniert. Darunter habe auch die Meinungsfindung im Parlament gelitten.

Geradezu paralyisiert hat die Bundesregierung in den vergangenen Monaten die Gesetzgebung im Umwelt- und Klimasektor. In kaum einem anderen Feld hat sie sich derart lange Zeit genommen, um Position zu beziehen, ob es um die Reform des Emissionshandels geht oder die künftige Ausrichtung der Energiepolitik. Inwieweit das tatsächlich unmittelbar mit der Wahl zusammenhing, ist jedoch nicht eindeutig zu beantworten. Meistens lagen Bundeswirtschafts- und Umweltministerium miteinander im Clinch und verhinderten, dass die Bundesregierung sich auf eine Linie einigte.

Säulen kommen mit Verspätung

Das hatte sicherlich damit zu tun, dass sich die beiden Minister vor der Wahl profilieren wollten. Letztlich stritten beide Ministerien auch schon lange vor der Wahl erbittert um die Linie in der Klimapolitik. In der Gesetzgebung zum Umbau der Währungsunion haben zumindest einige Ressortchefs auf dem Treffen der Finanzminister im litauischen Vilnius (Wilna) den Eindruck erweckt, nach der Bundestagswahl ließen sich

viele offene Fragen lösen, wenn erst einmal der als „Chefbremser“ identifizierte Schäuble den Widerstand gegen bestimmte Brüsseler Vorschläge aufgeben werde. Streitpunkt gibt es viele. Nur die Gesetzgebung zum Aufbau einer Bankenaufsicht für die großen Euro-Banken unter dem Dach der EZB ist so gut wie abgeschlossen.

Dagegen wird in der Eurogruppe schon geunkt, dass die Beratungen über die geplanten zwei anderen Säulen der [Bankenunion](#), die Bankenabwicklung und die gemeinsame Einlagensicherung vor der Wahl nicht mehr fertig werden könnten – und danach erst mit erheblicher Verspätung. Besonders mit Blick auf die Abwicklung wäre das unerfreulich. Denn diese bildet das Pendant zur europäisierten Aufsicht: Wenn die EZB die Schieflage einer Bank feststellt, muss eine europäische Institution deren Restrukturierung oder Abwicklung übernehmen, um Konflikte mit nationalen Stellen oder langwierigen Streit zwischen einzelnen Ländern zu verhindern – wie dies bei der belgisch-französisch-luxemburgischen Dexia der Fall war.

Hinter der Abwicklungsgesetzgebung steht ferner ein Versprechen: Die Steuerzahler sollen künftig für Bankenpleiten gar nicht mehr oder jedenfalls nicht mehr so viel zur Kasse gebeten werden. Die Richtlinie mit den Grundsätzen zur Sanierung und Abwicklung von Banken haben die EU-Finanzminister im Juni auf den Weg gebracht. Ihre Kernelemente sind die Beteiligung von Aktionären, Gläubigern und ungesicherten Einlagen an Verlusten und Abwicklungskosten („Bail-In“) sowie aus Bankenabgaben finanzierte Abwicklungsfonds für den Fall, dass der „Bail-In“ nicht reicht. Diese Elemente sind zwischen Ministerrat und Parlament nicht grundsätzlich strittig, ihre Verhandlungen über die Details der Richtlinie werden aber noch einige Monate dauern. Eine endgültige Verabschiedung dieser allgemeinen Regeln zur Bankenabwicklung gilt dennoch als wahrscheinlich.

Ganz anders sieht es in der Frage aus, wie der „Abwicklungsmechanismus“ aussehen soll, der auf der Euro-Aufsicht aufbaut. Viele EU-Finanzminister haben den Vorschlag für diesen „Mechanismus“, den Binnenmarktkommissar Michel Barnier im Juli vorgelegt hat, scharf kritisiert. Nicht nur die von Schäuble in den Mittelpunkt gerückte Frage nach der Rechtsgrundlage für den „Mechanismus“ ist ungeklärt. Auch inhaltlich wirft Barniers Vorschlag Fragen auf – warum etwa die EU-Kommission das Letztentscheidungsrecht in konkreten Abwicklungsfällen bekommen soll, nach welchen Regeln und in welchem Zeitraum der von den Banken zu finanzierende Abwicklungsfonds gefüllt werden soll, und was passiert, wenn dieser Fonds noch nicht gefüllt ist.

"Gottesanbeterin Merkel sucht nach neuen Opfern"

Merkels großer Wahlsieg ist heute Thema in der ganzen Welt. Droht Deutschland zu einer "großen Schweiz" zu werden? Bleibt Merkel "Kanzlerin Europas"? Braucht sie als Koalitionspartner einen "Sklaven"? Von „Welt“-Korrespondenten



Foto: dpa Die Cover der spanischen Zeitungen zeigen am Tag nach der Wahl Angela Merkel. [Bild teilen](#)

Auf der ganzen Welt wurde die Bundestagswahl in Deutschland mit Spannung beobachtet. Am Tag danach ist der Erfolg der Union und Angela Merkels viel diskutiertes Thema in den internationalen [Medien](#).

Italien

"Historischer Sieg für Angela Merkel", titeln die italienischen Tageszeitungen. Richtig Freude brandet in Italien ob des Wahlergebnisses in Deutschland allerdings nicht auf. Es überwiegt die Furcht davor, dass Bundeskanzlerin Merkel wegen ihres guten Resultats an der Urne erst recht an ihrer bisherigen Politik in der Schuldenkrise festhält. Soll heißen: Finanzielle Hilfe aus Berlin wird nur unter der Bedingung gewährt, dass die Südstaaten ihren Haushalt in Ordnung bringen und strukturelle Reformen durchsetzen. Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe unter strengen Auflagen.

In der Tageszeitung "Repubblica" wäht Andrea Bonanni ein Zeitalter der deutschen Hegemonie auf dem Kontinent heraufziehen. "Merkel hat bewiesen, dass die Deutschen in großer Mehrheit ihre Philosophie und ihre Art, die Euro-Krise zu bewältigen, gutheißen. Es ist eine Philosophie und Methode, die den Partnern Deutschlands nicht unerhebliche Schwierigkeiten eingebracht hat."

Massimo Nava von der Tageszeitung "Corriere della Sera" hegt eine gegenteilige Angst. Deutschland sei womöglich geneigt, sich aus Europa zurückzuziehen und stattdessen sich auf die neuen Volkswirtschaften im

Osten und im Asien zu konzentrieren. Deutschland drohe so zu einer "großen Schweiz" zu werden, neutral, politisch stabil, nicht engagiert auf dem Kontinent. "Es ist der Geist einer neuen Generation, die Frieden mit der Geschichte gemacht hat", schreibt Nava. "Frieden in Europa, Wiedervereinigung, Währungsunion, Reformen. Die Deutschen scheinen uns zu sagen: **'Wir haben bereits geliefert.'**"

Gehofft wird in Italien auf eine [große Koalition](#) zwischen CDU und SPD. Dario Franceschini, als Minister zuständig für die Beziehungen zum Parlament, vertraut darauf, dass die Sozialdemokraten in einem etwaigen Regierungsbündnis den Merkelschen Sparkurs aufweichen könnten. "Ich bin überzeugt, dass eine große Koalition den Mut haben wird, ein neues Kapitel in Europa aufzuschlagen", sagt Franceschini. "Ich hoffe, dass davon ein starker Impuls für Europa ausgehen wird. In einem Moment der schweren Krise kann man nicht nur auf Haushaltsdisziplin setzen."

Italiens Ex-Premier Mario Monti drückt es ähnlich aus: "Kommt es zu einer großen Koalition, können wir Verbesserungen erwarten. Die europäische Integration könnte voranschreiten", sagt Monti. "Es wäre ein Deutschland, das entschlossen, aber entspannter voranschreitet." *Tobias Bayer*

Frankreich

"Le Monde" sieht einen "historischen Triumph für Angela Merkel". "Mit 59 Jahren hat die deutsche Bundeskanzlerin ihren Status als mächtigste Frau der Welt bestätigt, indem sie als erste europäische Regierungschefin seit Ausbruch der Finanz- und Währungskrise, die die Europäische Union erfasst hat, wieder gewählt wurde." "Le Monde" stellt fest, dass Angela Merkel ihrer Partei das beste Wahlergebnis seit der Wiedervereinigung 1990 beschert hat und es bislang nur den Bundeskanzlern Adenauer und Kohl gelungen war, dreimal gewählt zu werden.

Die links-liberale Tageszeitung weist jedoch auch darauf hin, dass Deutschland trotz derzeit positiver Wirtschaftsdaten vor großen Herausforderungen stehe: Das Land habe die höchste Zahl an Niedriglohneempfängern in Europa, was langfristig eine Gefahr für das Rentensystem darstelle. Außerdem sei eine der niedrigsten Geburtenraten der Welt eine "Zeitbombe für die Wirtschaft." Und eine mögliche erneute Verschärfung der Euro-Krise könnte auch den scheinbar robusten Bundeshaushalt noch an seine Belastungsgrenze bringen.

Mit dem Vertrauen der Wähler im Rücken, vermutet der konservative "Figaro" werde Angela Merkel nun eine "zentrale Rolle in einer neuen Epoche" spielen. Die Zeit des vorsichtigen Navigierens im Unwetter gehe zu Ende. Die europäischen Nachbarn erwarteten "ein neues Projekt und eine neue Dynamik". Es gehe um stärkere Integration, mehr Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und Wachstum sowie die Stärkung der Rolle der Europäischen Union auf internationaler Ebene.

"Dieses Ziel erreicht man nur, indem man den deutsch-französischen Motor wieder anwirft. Damit dieser Motor funktioniert, muss Frankreich versuchen sich auf das Niveau Deutschlands zu heben und sich nicht weiter davon entfernen", mahnt der "Figaro" die [französische Regierung](#). "François Hollande sollte den Sieg Angela Merkels zur Kenntnis nehmen und daraus seine Lehren ziehen: Es ist der Erfolg eines Modells, von dem die Franzosen sich inspirieren lassen sollten".

Im französischen Nachrichtensender BMTV nannte eine Kommentatorin den Sieg Angela Merkels "eine Ohrfeige für die französischen Sozialisten", die sie vor kurzem noch als "**unnachgiebige Egoistin**" beschimpft hätten. Während François Hollande gerade mit nur noch 23 Prozent Zustimmung in der jüngsten Umfrage einen Tiefpunkt erreicht habe, stehe die Bundeskanzlerin im Zenit ihrer Macht. Da sie nun für vier Jahre wieder gewählt sei, werde sie François Hollande dadurch bis ans Ende seiner eigenen Präsidentschaft erhalten bleiben. Der französische Präsident tue dieser besser daran, das Verhältnis mit Deutschland zu harmonisieren.

Die kommunistische Tageszeitung "Humanité" war indessen wenig angetan vom deutschen Wahlergebnis: Der Sieg Merkels sei "keine gute Nachricht." Die Wiederwahl der Kanzlerin werde "die Übel verstärken, unter denen der Kontinent leidet", fürchtet das Blatt. An der Spitze der größten Wirtschaftsmacht Europas habe sie "die Herrschaft der Finanzmärkte gefestigt, Solidarität zerschlagen, um sie durch den Egoismus und die Missachtung des Starken für den Schwachen zu ersetzen" sowie nationalistische Tendenzen gefördert.

Die Vorsitzende des rechtsextremen Front National, Marine Le Pen ist "beeindruckt" vom Wahlerfolg der "Alternative für Deutschland." In vielen Ländern wachse "das Bewusstsein, dass die Europäische Union eine Europäische Sowjetunion geworden ist und dass der Euro, die gemeinsame Währung, ein Hindernis für unseren Wohlstand ist." Während des Wahlkampfes habe Merkel bestimmte Themen bewusst ausgelassen, viele Deutsche seien aber gegen weitere Rettungspläne für den Euro, die in Frankreich zu einer Erhöhung der Schulden "in Höhe von 72 Milliarden Euro" geführt hätten. Wie sie zu dieser Zahl gelangt ist, rechnete Marine Le Pen jedoch nicht vor. Der Vorsitzende der konservativen UMP, Jean-François Copé, war über den Sieg Angela Merkels erwartungsgemäß erfreut und sieht den Grund für den Erfolg in der "Sprache der Wahrheit, die Angela Merkel während des ganzen Wahlkampfes gesprochen" habe. Der ehemalige konservative französische Premierminister François Fillon pries den "unbestreitbaren Erfolg" Angela Merkels.

Etwas verhaltener reagierten verständlicherweise die regierenden Sozialisten auf den Wahlsieg von Angela Merkel. Präsident François Hollande war gleichwohl einer der ersten, wenn nicht der erste Gratulant. Noch am Sonntagabend habe er mit der Bundeskanzlerin telefoniert, um sie zu Ihrem Erfolg zu beglückwünschen, erklärte der Élysée-Palast selten diensteifrig. Die beiden Regierungschefs hätten sich gegenseitig versichert, "ihre enge Kooperation fortzusetzen." *Sascha Lehnartz*

Spanien

Respekt und Anerkennung zollten Spaniens Medien Angela Merkel und ihrem überwältigenden Wahlsieg, mit dem man hierzulande allerdings weitgehend gerechnet hatte. "Die Kanzlerin ist die erste europäische Regierungschefin, die nicht der Krise zum Opfer fällt", so "El País" anerkennend und unterstreicht, dass die globale Wirtschaftskrise bereits zwanzig Staatschefs angefangen beim Tschechen Mirek Topolanek über Italiens Silvio Berlusconi bis hin zu Frankreichs Nicolas Sarkozy, den Job gekostet hat.

"Wahlen gewinnen ist Routine für Merkel, die ihren Gewohnheiten treu bleibt und am Freitag noch ganz seelenruhig in einem Supermarkt einkaufen ging", so "El País"-Korrespondent José Gómez, der die Kanzlerin dabei sogar mit seinem Handy ablichtete und die Fotos in die Samstagausgabe seiner Zeitung veröffentlichte. "In der Krise wollen die Deutschen keine Risiken und keine Experimente, der Pragmatismus trägt den Sieg davon", so das Fazit des Korrespondenten. Das Konkurrenzblatt "El Mundo" titelte "Merkel, Merkel über alles" und erntet in sozialen Netzwerken viel Kritik. Das Blatt verlieh Merkel zudem den Titel "**Angela I., eine Frau, die Geschichte schreibt**". "Ihr präsidentieller Stil überzeugt die Deutschen, die in ihr eine integrative Persönlichkeit sehen, die Vertrauen verdient", befindet Ana Alonso, verantwortlich für das Ressort Politik bei "El Mundo".

Man würde sich ja gerne mit den Deutschen freuen, bestünde da nicht die Furcht, dass die Zeiten für das krisengeplagte Spanien jetzt nicht eben einfacher werden. "Die Kanzlerin wird Spanien dazu auffordern, die Sparanstrengungen beizubehalten", sagt die Tageszeitung "ABC" vorher. "Hätten wir Spanier eigentlich nicht mitwählen sollen, wenn doch das Ergebnis so große Auswirkungen auf unser Land hat", schreibt José Manuel Oneto, altgedienter spanischer Journalist und Autor zahlreicher Bücher in seinem Blog "Republica.com". "Das alles hat Einfluss auf unsere Gehälter, unseren Wohlfahrtsstaat und unsere Zukunft". "Die Zukunft von Europa wird in Deutschland entschieden", befindet denn auch der staatliche Nachrichtensender Radio Nacional de España (RNE). *Ute Müller*

Großbritannien

"The Age of Merkel" überschreibt der "Guardian" seinen Leitartikel zum Ausgang der Bundestagswahl, während der Korrespondent der Zeitung in Berlin, Ian Traynor, diese Botschaft noch erhärtet, indem er die Bundeskanzlerin als "**Europas unangreifbaren Leader**" beschreibt. Das Urteil, auf den persönlichen Erfolg von Frau Merkel bezogen, wird zwar überall geteilt, doch fehlt nicht der Hinweis auf die schwierige Suche nach einer neuen Koalition, "ein Rätsel", wie die "Financial Times" schreibt, "das über Merkels Sieg hängt".

Der "Daily Telegraph" moniert, dass die Frage, wie die Euro-Krise weiter zu behandeln sei, im Wahlkampf so gut wie ausgeklammert war, was ein Grundproblem der Zukunft offener lasse denn je: Das werde jetzt an die Spitze der Agenda rücken, schreibt die "Times". Und die weitere Integration der EU? Der frühere Europa-

Minister Denis MacShane erkennt in einem Internet-Beitrag neue Chancen für ein Zusammenrücken Frankreichs und Deutschlands in dieser Frage, komme doch Merkels Ruf nach "mehr Europa", wie sie am letzten Tag des Wahlkampfes noch einmal betonte, dem Gedankengang von Frankreichs Präsident François Hollande weit entgegen; für David Cameron dürfte das zum Problem werden.

MacShane betont im Übrigen, dass der Wahlkampf fast Außenpolitik-frei verlief, ein weiteres Indiz für die zurückhaltende Rolle, die Berlin in diesem Bereich zu spielen gedenkt. Das Ausscheiden der FDP und ihres Außenministers verstärke die Reduktion des Außenministeriums zu einem Ressort, das mehr und mehr im Kanzleramt angesiedelt sei. *Thomas Kielinger*

Washington

Amerikas Blätter feierten Angela Merkel am Abend der Wahlen in Deutschland. Einen "historischen Sieg" bescheinigt die "Washington Post" der Bundeskanzlerin, die das stärkste Ergebnis für die Union nach 1990 eingefahren habe. Darum, so beobachtete der Korrespondent, trat die "normalerweise reservierte Merkel triumphierend vor die sie feiernden Anhänger".

Laut "New York Times" erreichte Angela Merkel einen "atemberaubenden persönlichen Triumph", als sie bei den Bundestagswahlen das beste Resultat für die Union seit 20 Jahren erzielte, "betörend nahe an einer absoluten Mehrheit". Doch weil wegen des [Scheiterns der FDP](#) nun wochenlange Verhandlungen zur Bildung einer neuen Koalition anstünden, könnte der Wahlausgang zunächst "die Lähmung Europas verstärken".

Das "Wall Street Journal" befand, Merkels nun bevorstehende dritte Legislaturperiode "zementiert ihren Platz in der Geschichte als einen der am längsten im Amt befindlichen und einflussreichsten europäischen Regierungschefs der Nachkriegsära". Das Blatt warnte aber auch, die Alternative für Deutschland habe trotz ihres knappen Scheiterns an der Fünf-Prozent-Hürde "durch ihre überraschende Stärke Deutschlands Polit-Establishment eine Warnung geschickt" und damit erinnert an den "Frustr mancher Wähler über Rettungspakete für Schuldenländer wie Griechenland".

Der Sender CNN feierte Angela Merkel angesichts der fast erreichten absoluten Mehrheit. "Das Wahlergebnis scheint ihre Politik und ihren Führungsstil zu bestätigen, mit dem sie Deutschland durch die Euro-Krise führte ungeachtet der Kritik, sie habe hart kämpfenden EU-Nationen nicht genügend unterstützt", so der Nachrichtensender.

"Das machiavellistische Genie der Angela Merkel" pries das linksliberale Wochenmagazin "The New Republic". Die typische Geste der Kanzlerin wird für den Autor nicht zur Raute, sondern zum Labor-getesteten "Merkel-Diamanten". Unauffällig und erfolgreich bemühe sie sich, das deutsche Exportmodell dem ganzen europäischen Kontinent überzustülpen und Deutschland damit letztlich zum Hegemon Europas zu machen.

Ein wenig Essig goss lediglich das "Time"-Magazin in den Wein der Merkel-Feierei. "Merkel erzielt einen großen Sieg, aber alle könnten verlieren", lautete die Überschrift zur Wahlanalyse. Die Kanzlerin habe "einen deutlichen, vielleicht sogar einen wirklich historischen Sieg errungen". Die Wähler "wollen, dass Merkel das Land führt, so wie sie es seit acht Jahren tut. Aber sie wollen nicht die bisherige Regierung zurück".

Vor wenigen Tagen hatte das "Time"-Magazin noch gefragt, ob wohl Barack Obama auf einen Sieg von Merkel hoffe. Immerhin habe sie den heutigen Präsidenten in seinem Wahlkampf 2008 nicht vor dem Brandenburger Tor reden lassen, möglicherweise mit Rücksicht auf die ihr inhaltlich nähere Bush-Administration. Allerdings, so bilanzierte das Blatt schließlich unter Berufung auf den Washingtoner Deutschland-Experten Jackson Janes, habe sich auch ihr "ideologisch Obama näher stehender" Rivale Peer Steinbrück nicht viele Freunde in Washington gemacht, als er zu Beginn der globalen Finanzkrise sagte, das sei ein von den USA verschuldetes Problem, das Europa nicht betreffe. *Ansgar Graw*

Österreich

Die österreichischen Zeitungen sahen sich am Montag sehr ähnlich: Auf so gut wie allen war die deutsche Bundeskanzlerin vor blauem Hintergrund zu sehen, mal versonnen, mal verschmitzt über ihren Wahlsieg lächelnd. **"Angela Merkel setzt sich die Krone auf"**, titelte die "Presse". Der "Standard" verwies in seiner Schlagzeile auch auf das "historische Fiasko" der FDP, der "Kurier" verkündete: "Merkel bleibt Europas Kanzlerin."

Die Kommentatoren beschäftigten sich aber auch mit der Kehrseite des Ergebnisses. "Mit Merkels Mittekurs triumphierte das Mittelmaß", kritisierte etwa der "Standard". Die "Presse" hingegen sprach "Triumph mit bitterem Beigeschmack": Merkels Spielraum könnte sich in einer neuen Koalition verengen. Uneins waren sich Politiker und ihre Beobachter darin, ob der Sieg der Union ihrer "Schwesterpartei" ÖVP oder dem sozialdemokratischen Amtsinhaber nützen würde.

Viel Aufmerksamkeit fand auch das Ergebnis der AfD. In Österreich würde der ihm zu grundlegende Euroskeptizismus vor allem FPÖ und die Milliardärspartei "Team Stronach" profitieren, schrieb die "Presse", der "Kurier" hielt hingegen fest, dass der Widerstand gegen den Euro in Deutschland viel geringer sei als in Österreich. Einzig die "Kronen-Zeitung" verweigerte sich den Merkel-Festspielen. Sie widmete dem "Triumph von 'Mutti'" auf ihrer Titelseite nur eine winzige Meldung, es gab schließlich Wichtigeres zu berichten: die Räumung einer von Flüchtlingen besetzten Kirche – und Sebastian Vettels Sieg in Singapur. *Elisalex Henkel*

Türkei

In der Türkei herrschte eine gewisse Betretenheit, hatte doch EU-Minister Egemen Bagis auf dem Höhepunkt der Gezipark-Protestbewegung der Kanzlerin gedroht: Wer die türkische Regierung kritisiere, der verliere bald die Macht. Ihr triumphaler Wahlsieg mutet nun wie eine Antwort darauf an. Zudem gilt Merkels persönliches Verhältnis zu Ministerpräsident Recep Tayyip Erdogan nach Meinung der Medien als getrübt – sie möge den Regierungschef einfach nicht.

Die türkische Berichterstattung zur Wahl blieb Montagmorgen vorwiegend nachrichtlich, mit Schlagzeilen wie **"Merkel: Deutschland gewann die Wahl"** ("t24") oder "Weitere vier Jahre für Merkel" ("Milliyet"). Allgemein bedeutet Merkels Sieg für die Türkei, dass Deutschland auch weiterhin einen türkischen EU-Beitritt nicht sonderlich wünscht, und stattdessen eine "privilegierte Partnerschaft" bevorzugt – die freilich schon jetzt besteht. *Boris Kálnoky*

Polen

Die ganze deutsche Wahnacht über haben Polens Politiker – wie üblich bei Wahlen im Ausland – Tee getrunken und mit Kommentaren abgewartet. Nur die Experten waren zu hören: Viele werteten den Erfolg der Bundeskanzlerin wegen ihres sehr guten Verhältnisses zu Polens Premier Donald Tusk als Stärkung auch des letzteren. **"Eine gute Nachricht für Polen"** sei das, befand die junge Politologin Agnieszka Lada. Sie lobte den angeblich langweiligen Wahlkampf als "typisch deutsch: keine Aggression, keine Schlammschlacht."

Ihr Kollege Piotr Buras erklärte das Wahlergebnis folgendermaßen: "Merkel ist, zum Teil unverdient, ein Symbol für Deutschlands Stabilität und Erfolg. Sie hat in der Krise unpopuläre Entscheidungen wie die Gründung des ESM so heimlich und so listig durchgebracht, dass die Eurozone in Deutschland immer noch größtenteils akzeptiert wird."

Janusz Reiter, Polens früherer Botschafter in Deutschland, sagte beruhigend: "Das polnisch-deutsche Verhältnis steht nicht auf der Kippe." Allerdings warnten Kommentatoren vor allen möglichen Koalitionen. "Es wird eine Große Koalition geben", prophezeit der Publizist Piotr Semka, "Merkel braucht immer einen Sklaven, den sie aussaugen kann." Viele Beobachter, etwa der Journalist Wawrzyniec Smoczynski, sehen für Polen Wolken am Horizont aufziehen. Grüne und SPD seien in Fragen der Energie- und Klimapolitik sowie der Nutzung von Schiefergas und Atomkraft für Warschau unangenehmere Partner als Merkel. Das Aufkommen der AfD wurde durch die Bank kritisch gesehen: als Tendenz zu Populismus oder nationalem Egoismus. *Gerhard Gnauck*

Ungarn

Schon vor der Wahl hatte Ungarns konservative Regierungspartei Fidesz klar signalisiert, dass ein möglichst überzeugender Sieg der CDU/CSU das Beste für Ungarns Regierung sei. Vor allem deswegen, weil SPD, Grüne und Linke in den letzten Jahren außerordentlich lautstark gegen Ministerpräsident Viktor Orbán getrommelt hatten, und teilweise den Ausschluss Ungarns aus der EU forderten. Aber auch wirtschaftlich hängt Ungarn stark von Deutschland ab – 70 Prozent der Exporte des Landes werden von multinationalen Unternehmen in Ungarn produziert, und die wichtigsten davon sind deutsch – vor allem die deutsche Autoindustrie produziert in Ungarn.

Zum Wahlsieg Merkels titelte das Wirtschaftsmagazin Magazin "HVG": "**Angela Merkel – die Gottesanbeterin sucht nach neuen Opfern.**" Gemeint war das gleichnamige Insekt, dessen Weibchen nach der Paarung das Männchen auffrisst – wie, dem Magazin zufolge, Merkel ihre jeweiligen Koalitionspartner. Die Verfasser merkten inhaltlich an, dass der Grund für Merkels Triumph auch daher stamme, dass die Kanzlerin ganz neue Wählerschichten zur CDU gelockt habe – etwa aus den Reihen der Nichtwähler und der bisher eher CDU-fernen Städter. In den sozialen Netzwerken herrschte Freude über das Debakel der Liberalen und den Aufstieg der eurokritischen AfD – beides entspricht den Neigungen der konservativen Regierungspartei. *Boris Kálnoky*

Russland

Die dritte Amtszeit der Bundeskanzlerin ist ein viel diskutiertes Thema in Russland. Und das sogar schon vor der Wahl: Bereits vergangene Woche scherzte der russische Präsident Wladimir Putin bei der internationalen Konferenz in Waldai darüber, dass Angela Merkel zum dritten Mal Kanzlerin werden solle. Damit spielte er auf seine eigene dritte Amtszeit im Kreml an, die von der Opposition und international kritisiert wurde. Diesen Vergleich griffen russische Medien auf.

"Die Parlamentswahlen in Deutschland rufen historische und geografische Parallelen hervor, unter anderem mit Russland", behauptete der Moderator des Kreml-nahen Fernsehsenders NTV in der Wahlnacht. Merkel bleibe die populärste Politikerin des Landes, unabhängig vom endgültigen Wahlausgang. "In Deutschland gibt es keine Einschränkungen von Amtszeiten des Kanzlers, und niemand empört sich. Wenn ein Politiker seine Arbeit besser als die anderen macht, gibt es keine Gründe, ihn zu wechseln", sagte der NTV-Korrespondent.

In den Beziehungen zu Russland erwartete man zunächst keine großen Veränderungen. "Merkel als Bundeskanzlerin ist eine ziemlich vorhersagbare Politikerin. Putin kennt sie schon lange, sie duzen sich und haben zusammen viele komplizierte Situationen erlebt, die sowie die Weltpolitik als auch bilaterale Beziehungen betreffen. Manchmal kritisiert Merkel die innenpolitischen Angelegenheiten Russlands, aber im Großen und Ganzen schätzt sie die gegenseitig vorteilhaften Beziehungen", hieß es bei NTV.

Spannend bleibt für Russland die Frage nach Merkels Koalitionspartner. Da die SPD traditionell als loyaler gegenüber Russland gilt, würde der Kreml wohl eine Große Koalition bevorzugen. Allerdings wird die Kanzlerfigur für die bilateralen Beziehungen als entscheidend wahrgenommen. Deshalb war die Aufmerksamkeit der Presse vor allem auf Angela Merkel gerichtet. Vom "**persönlichen Triumph**" Merkels schreibt der Sender "Echo Moskaus" auf seiner Internet-Seite. "Die Kanzlerin siegt alleine", titelte die Tageszeitung "Kommersant". Das sei ein "großer Erfolg" und ein "sicherer Sieg". Doch das Ergebnis von FDP könne die CDU/CSU zu einer Allianz mit der SPD zwingen.

Die Organisation von Wahlen in Deutschland ist für russische liberale Medien spannend, da die Frage nach fairen Wahlen und Wahlbeobachtung in Russland gerade aktuell ist. Wie sie in einer Demokratie wie Deutschland organisiert sind, interessiert russische Leser besonders. Die Zeitung "Kommersant" und der oppositionelle Sender "Doshd" beschreiben detailliert den Wahlprozess, das deutsche Parteiensystem, den Ablauf der Abstimmung und der Auszählung. *Julia Smirnova*

Griechenland

In keinem Land außer Deutschland wurde die Bundestagswahl in den Medien so intensiv beachtet wie in Griechenland. Kein Wunder, hängt doch nach Meinung der meisten Griechen das [Schicksal ihres Landes](#) vor

allem von Deutschland ab. Was also würde es werden – mehr Peitschenhiebe von Kanzlerin Merkel, oder ein großer Geldsegen von der SPD? Die TV-Sender berichteten in atemlosen Live-Sendungen vom Wahlabend.

Der Tenor der Reaktionen war dann, dass dies ein Traumergebnis für Griechenland ist: Weil Ministerpräsident Samaras ein sehr gutes persönliches Verhältnis mit Kanzlerin Merkel hat, und weil eine große Koalition mit der SPD wohl zu einer etwas großzügigeren Griechenland-Politik beitragen dürfte. Aber die größte Freude in den griechischen Medien herrschte darüber, dass die verhasste FDP brutal abgestraft wurde: Die Liberalen hatten je versucht, mit Forderungen nach einem Ausstieg Griechenlands aus dem Euro zu punkten. Sorge bereitet der Aufstieg der Alternative für Deutschland – denn die CDU könnte versuchen, sich manche Positionen dem neuen Rivalen zu eigen zu machen, um der AfD den Wind aus den Segeln zu nehmen. Und das ginge vielleicht zu Lasten Griechenlands.

Das beste aber ist, das die Wahl nun vorbei ist, sagte Babis Papadimitriou vom TV-Sender Skai. "Jetzt kann man endlich ernsthaft die griechischen Schulden restrukturieren. Dass es nun eine starke Regierung in Berlin gibt, sollte uns dabei freuen – es bedeutet Durchsetzungskraft auch in Europa." Auf Facebook witzelte Journalisten-Veteran Richardos Someritis (Jahrgang 1931) von der Zeitung "To Vima": **"Ganz Europa sollte jetzt Deutsch lernen."** Ähnlich sah es die Zeitung "Ta Nea": "Europa wird Merkel-Land nach dem Triumph der Königin des Sparens", titelte das Blatt. *Boris Kálnoky, Dimitra Moutzouri*

Israel

Die israelischen Medien interessieren sich für gewöhnlich nicht viel für Außenpolitik. Doch der Triumph von Angela Merkels CDU schaffte es bei der großen Tageszeitung "Jedioth Achronoth" dann immerhin auf Seite acht und damit noch vor das Geiseldrama von Nairobi. Unter der Überschrift "Angela die Große" berichtet der Korrespondent der Zeitung, Eldad Beck, über das Wahlergebnis aus Berlin. Kritischer fällt Beck's Kommentar unter dem Titel **"Der Sieg der Königin des Konsens"** aus. Die Zyniker in Berlin vermuteten, Merkel sei in Wahrheit die Vorsitzende von zwei Parteien, den Christdemokraten und den Christsozialisten, schreibt Beck. Bei vielen Themen wie Umweltschutz, der gleichgeschlechtlichen Ehe, der Forderung nach Frauenquoten und der sozialen Marktwirtschaft vertrete die Kanzlerin eigentliche traditionell linke Positionen. "Die Deutschen fühlen sich mit Merkel wohl, weil sie wissen, dass sie sie nicht überraschen wird." Die Kanzlerin sei immer "sowohl als auch".

Doch nun müsse Merkel ihre Chance nutzen, in die Geschichte einzugehen. Wenn sie Deutschland auch weiterhin nur von Krise zu Krise regiere, werde von ihr schließlich nur in Erinnerung bleiben, dass sie die erste Frau war, die die Geschicke der Bundesrepublik lenkte und mit dieser Ehre nicht besonders viel anzufangen wusste, schließt Beck in Jedioth Achronoth.

In der auflagenstärksten Zeitung des Landes, dem Gratisblatt "Israel HaJom", muss man schon bis auf Seite 13 blättern, um etwas über die Bundestagswahlen zu erfahren. Der bekannte Journalist Dan Margalit begegnet Merkel in seinem Kommentar sehr wohlwollend und erinnert an ihre klare Haltung nach der Machtergreifung der Hamas in Gaza. Ohne hin und her habe Deutschland die Zahlungen eingestellt. Außerdem habe Merkel seit ihrem Amtsantritt gleich viermal Israel besucht und eine beeindruckende Empfindsamkeit für die Erinnerung an den Holocaust und die in die Gegenwart nachwirkenden Folgen dieser Katastrophe an den Tag gelegt.

"Für Israel gibt es innerhalb Europas keinen Ersatz für Merkel", schreibt Margalit. Und das gelte auch für Europa selbst. Verantwortungsbewusstsein und Stabilität seien eben noch immer vermarktungsfähig. "Vielleicht wird tatsächlich ein 'anderes Deutschland' entstehen", lautet das Fazit von Margalit, dass in seinem rückwärtsgewandtem Pessimismus nicht so Recht in den Kontext des Kommentars passen will.

Die kleine aber einflussreiche liberale Tageszeitung "Haaretz" zeigt auf der Titelseite immerhin ein Foto der lächelnden Wahlsiegerin mit einem Blumenstrauß in der Hand. Der britische "Economist" habe gefordert, Merkel müsse die große Reformerin Europas werden, heißt es bei der Analyse des Wahlergebnisses. Doch die Kanzlerin vermeide das politische Risiko und eindeutige Standpunkte. Das sei zwar einer der Gründe für ihren Erfolg, könne nun aber auch ihr größtes Hindernis auf dem Weg zu einer der größten Staatspersonen in der Geschichte Europas werden – es sei denn, es gelinge ihr in der dritten Amtszeit nun, eine Koalition vor den Wagen großer geschichtlicher Reformen zu spannen.

Ein zweiter Text beschäftigt sich mit der Frage: "Ist Merkel also gut für die Juden?" und kommt zu dem Schluss, das Verhältnis zu Benjamin Netanjahu sei zwar nicht besonders herzlich, das Bemühen um eine Lösung im Beschneidungsstreit und andere Indizien deuteten aber darauf hin, dass die Kanzlerin es mit der historischen Verantwortung Israels und den Juden gegenüber ernst meine. Schon vor der Wahl war die englischsprachige Online-Publikation "Times of Israel" in einem langen, differenzierten Artikel auf das komplizierte Verhältnis der Länder eingegangen. Erheblich weniger differenziert unterstellt der Korrespondent der ebenfalls englischsprachigen "Jerusalem Post", Benjamin Weinthal, nun mit deutlicher politischer Schlagseite eigentlich allen deutschen politischen Parteien mit Ausnahme der CDU anti-israelische wenn nicht antisemitische Ressentiments. *Michael Borgstede*

China

Chinas Medien hatten schon vor der Wahl auf einen Sieg Angela Merkels gesetzt. Sie fühlten sich am Montag bestätigt. Die Kanzlerin hätte den Namen der "**deutschen eiserne Lady**" verdient, schreibt die "Guangzhou Ribao" (Kantoner Tageszeitung). Sie macht ihren Lesern folgende Rechnung auf: Wenn Merkel ihr Amt vier weitere Jahre ausübt, kommt sie auf zwölf Jahre. Die britische eiserne Lady Margaret Thatcher schaffte nur elf Jahre. Damit nicht genug: Merkel würde zur längsten amtierenden Regierungschefin Europas und weltweit werden. Auch würde sie Dritte im Klub der früheren Kanzler der Bundesrepublik, Konrad Adenauer und Helmut Kohl. Diese regierten drei Amtsperioden, so wie es nun auch Merkel vor hat.

Weil Chinas Zeit der deutschen Zeit um sechs Stunden voraus ist, konnten erst die CCTV-Mittagsnachrichten am Montag ausführlich alle Wahlergebnisse vorstellen. Zugleich gaben sie die erleichterte Prognose ab, dass sich an der Europapolitik und am Euro-Stabilitätspakt nichts ändern werde. Wie groß in Chinas Einparteiensstaat das Interesse an bundesdeutscher Politik im Einparteiensstaat China ist, zeigten erste Pekinger Analysen, ob Merkel mit ihrer nur strukturellen Mehrheit das Thema der großen Koalition wieder auf ihre Tagesordnung setzen muss.

Am Wochenende reichte ein Blick auf Zeitungskioske, um zu erkennen, dass Merkel für China die eindeutige Favoritin war. Boulevard-Zeitungen berichteten über den deutschen Wahlkampf, als stünde die Siegerin außer Frage. Das populäre Wochenmagazin "Xinwen Zhoukan" (China Newsweek) zeigte Merkel auf dem Umschlagsbild. Sie widmete ihr eine 18-seitige Titelgeschichte unter der Überschrift: "Merkel läuft Europa voran". Das Magazin deutete an, dass sich Chinas Führer an Merkel nicht nur orientieren können, sondern sollten. Es verweist dazu auf die unbeirrte Rolle Merkels beim Umgang mit der Eurokrise und in den jüngsten schwierigen Jahren.

Die Erfahrungen und Denkweisen im Umgang mit Strukturreformen könnten auch für Peking ein Spiegel sein. "China steht vor einer kritischen Zeit, wo es selbst strukturelle Reformen durchführen muss." Einem Xinhua-Kommentar, den am Sonntag viele Zeitungen abdruckten, fiel auf, dass im deutschen Wahlkampf das Thema China diesmal gar keine Rolle mehr spielte. Am selben Sonntag, an dem gewählt wurde, sei die Internationale Automesse in Frankfurt zuende gegangen. Während auf der IAA das Thema China wegen seiner Bedeutung als Automarkt in aller Munde war, sei es im Wahlkampf nicht ein Mal vorgekommen. Das zeige positiv, wie weit sich unter der Regierung Merkel die Beziehungen zwischen China und Deutschland vertieft und normalisiert haben. *Johnny Erling*

Le triomphe du centrisme en politique

LE MONDE | 23.09.2013 à 11h28 • Mis à jour le 23.09.2013 à 13h07

84,28

Editorial

Angela Merkel remporte un triomphe. Les Allemands l'ont plébiscitée, dimanche 22 septembre. A 59 ans, elle va être reconduite pour un troisième mandat à la tête de la quatrième économie du monde. C'est plus que de la continuité [politique](#). C'est un immense satisfecit personnel qui lui est accordé. L'[Allemagne](#) d'Angela Merkel dominera l'[Europe](#) des quatre années à [venir](#).

Mieux que quiconque dans la classe politique d'outre-Rhin, la chancelière incarne son pays en ce début de XXI^e siècle. Prudente, pragmatique, sans cesse en quête de consensus, elle est en phase avec ses concitoyens. Elle est la quintessence du centrisme dans une Allemagne que ne taraude aucun tropisme extrémiste – ni à gauche ni à droite. Heureux pays et singulière exception européenne !

Avec 41,5 % des suffrages, son parti, la CDU, frise la majorité absolue au Bundestag, la Chambre basse. Faute d'[atteindre](#) la barre des 5 %, son allié libéral du FDP est, pour la première fois, évincé de cette assemblée. Pour la même raison, les anti-européens du parti Alternative pour l'Allemagne n'y figureront pas non plus.

Probable allié de la CDU dans une future coalition, le Parti [social](#)-démocrate (SPD) est presque à son plus bas historique, avec 25,7 % des voix. Le reste de la gauche, qu'il s'agisse des Verts (8,4 %) ou de Die Linke (8,6 %), perd aussi du terrain.

Pour l'Europe, Merkel III, même avec le SPD en associé minoritaire, ressemblera à Merkel II. La chancelière n'a pas d'ambition pour l'[Union européenne](#) sur la scène internationale autre que celle-là : [regagner](#) une compétitivité sans laquelle le destin de l'Europe se conjuguera avec son déclin en ces temps de mondialisation économique.

Elle n'a pas tort. On ne pèse pas sur la scène internationale, on n'y défend ni ses intérêts ni ses valeurs si on ne compte pas économiquement. Mais la chancelière flirte avec le déclin stratégique quand elle se refuse à tout ce qui pourrait [donner](#) corps à une politique étrangère et de [défense](#) commune.

Ayant décidé que le maintien de l'euro était de l'intérêt de l'Allemagne, elle acceptera le minimum de fédéralisme nécessaire au fonctionnement de l'union monétaire : renforcement de la coordination budgétaire, maintien du Fonds de solidarité qu'est le Mécanisme européen de stabilité, mais pas d'euro-obligations ; progression lente vers l'union bancaire ; aménagement prudent des politiques d'austérité imposées à l'Europe du Sud, etc.

Cette évolution ne se fera pas par de nouvelles délégations de souveraineté à Bruxelles. L'Allemagne d'aujourd'hui n'en veut pas. Cela se fera, pour ce qui la concerne, au rythme lent d'un pays où les élus et les juges constitutionnels comptent. On peut le [regretter](#) pour l'Europe. On peut s'en féliciter aussi : c'est le rythme d'une démocratie en pleine maturité comme il y en a peu sur le Vieux Continent.

L'Histoire, c'est maintenant

- [Home MON FIGARO Mon Figaro](#)
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 - Par [Philippe Gelie](#)
 - Publié le 22/09/2013 à 20:42

84,29

Angela Merkel peut savourer son triomphe électoral, le troisième et le plus éclatant. Ils sont suffisamment rares aujourd'hui, les dirigeants qui fédèrent leurs concitoyens autour de leur politique et de leurs résultats, pour que chacun en Europe médite les leçons de ce succès. Pragmatisme, prudence, discipline, bon sens : pourquoi les Allemands seraient-ils partis à l'aventure avec Peer Steinbrück plutôt que de renouveler leur confiance à la gestion modeste et maîtrisée de la chancelière sortante ?

Cette confiance, atout maître d'Angela Merkel, va jouer un rôle crucial dans la nouvelle ère qui s'ouvre. Non seulement elle la met en position de force pour négocier la formation d'une grande coalition, mais elle devrait lui permettre de passer à la vitesse supérieure pour affronter les défis pressants qui l'attendent, en Allemagne et en Europe. La chancelière a l'ambition de marquer l'Histoire et cela commence maintenant.

Le temps de la navigation prudente dans la tourmente touche à sa fin. L'Allemagne doit profiter de sa bonne santé économique pour lancer les réformes sans lesquelles elle s'exposerait au déclin : rénover ses infrastructures et son système éducatif, réviser sa transition énergétique pour maintenir sa compétitivité, s'attaquer au déclin démographique qui menace sa puissance. S'il est vain d'espérer un changement de méthode à Berlin, on peut parier sur de nouvelles ambitions.

En Europe aussi, c'est un nouveau projet et une nouvelle dynamique qu'attendent les voisins de l'Allemagne: vers davantage de cohérence, de compétitivité, de croissance et d'affirmation politique de l'Union européenne sur la scène internationale.

Cet objectif passe par la relance du « moteur » franco-allemand. Pour que ce moteur fonctionne, la France doit tenter de se hisser à la hauteur de l'Allemagne et non s'en éloigner. François Hollande est invité à prendre acte de la victoire d'Angela Merkel et des leçons qu'elle porte – la réussite d'un modèle dont les Français lui recommandent de s'inspirer...

Merkel Re-elected in Show of Strong Support for Party

By [ALISON SMALE](#)

BERLIN — Chancellor Angela Merkel scored a stunning personal triumph Sunday in the national elections in Germany, becoming the only major leader to be re-elected twice since the financial crisis of 2008 and winning a strong popular endorsement for her mix of austerity and solidarity in managing troubled Europe.

The surprising show of strength for the chancellor and her center-right Christian Democrats — even their own polls had not suggested such a result — was just short of an absolute majority, according to preliminary official results published on Monday. No chancellor has achieved an absolute majority since Konrad Adenauer in 1957.

Ms. Merkel, a physicist raised in Communist East Germany, was unusually buoyant when she appeared before supporters, who chanted “Angie! Angie!” and gave her two minutes of applause at party headquarters. She exuberantly thanked voters, campaigners and her husband, Joachim Sauer, a quantum chemist. Mr. Sauer, who tends to shun the limelight, stood at the side of the stage, acknowledging the jubilation.

Later, during a celebration at her party headquarters, Ms. Merkel, 59, clapped and sang along with the crowds but reminded them, “Tomorrow, we work.”

For all her success, it is not clear how Ms. Merkel will govern in her third four-year term. Her allies for the past four years, the business-minded Free Democrats, were expected to lose their place in Parliament, missing the 5 percent cutoff.

Ms. Merkel’s Christian Democrats and their allies, the Christian Social Union in Bavaria, together won 311 of the 630 seats in Parliament, just short of a majority. In any event, a narrow majority would have been unstable — risking defeat in crucial parliamentary votes needed to pass more aid or credits for troubled countries.

The most likely course is that Ms. Merkel will enter a grand coalition with the No. 2 party nationally, the center-left Social Democrats.

In the past three years, the Social Democrats have given crucial support to Ms. Merkel in Parliament in passing credit lines and aid packages, tied to painful reforms, for euro-zone countries in need. But the center-leftists are likely to extract a high price in domestic reforms — a minimum wage, or social change — in exchange for joining a Merkel government in which they would be clearly the junior partner. Preliminary official results showed them with around 26 percent, far below their center-right rivals who won about 42 percent of the vote.

Ms. Merkel entered politics after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. She is now widely viewed as the world’s most powerful woman, and set to overtake Margaret Thatcher as Europe’s longest-serving elected female leader.

Her critics have accused her of lacking strategic vision, relying on tactical skills to survive, and ask why she has not used her power to write more history, both at home and in the unified Europe that is the source of Germany’s political and economic strength.

“She has a technocratic understanding of Europe,” said Joschka Fischer, the former Greens leader and foreign minister from 1998 to 2005. But, he added, “Europe is not a scientific project.”

The euro crisis, in this view, is about politics and sovereignty, and how much of the latter the 17 countries that use the euro, and the 11 others in the European Union, are prepared to abandon to make a success of their project.

Mr. Fischer sees Germany, and Europe, as stuck midway while crossing a river, unable to return to the riverbank they have left, but unable to get to the other side with Ms. Merkel as navigator.

Other analysts suggested that neither the chancellor nor most Germans, who are conservative by nature and relish their position as the economic powerhouse of Europe, are prepared to shoulder such leadership.

The election outcome Sunday “is the safest course for a country like Germany,” Annette Heuser, executive director of the Bertelsmann Foundation, said in a telephone interview from Washington. The mentality, she said, is “Why rock the boat?”

Yet the elections also hinted at more volatility in German politics, with the Greens, for example, tumbling from 20 percent-plus showings two years ago to around 8 percent on Sunday. Most surprisingly, the Alternative for Germany, a protest party founded on an anti-euro platform, came from nowhere and nearly landed in Parliament, just missing the 5 percent hurdle.

Alternative party supporters who gathered in a Berlin hotel were euphoric, believing that they had administered a shock to the chancellor.

“It will be noticed,” said Stefan Lindemann, a hotel director from Potsdam. “This will make Frau Merkel think about whether her Europe policy is the right one.”

Franz Niggemann, who ran for the party in the Tempelhof-Schöneberg section of Berlin, said: “When you think that we were founded in February, it’s a fabulous result.”

Germany’s European allies have been in suspense, waiting for the Continent’s most important election this year. President François Hollande of France indicated how eager, even impatient, they are when he congratulated Ms. Merkel from Paris and invited her to visit as soon as possible. Prime Minister David Cameron of Britain, who hopes Ms. Merkel will support his quest to claw back rights from Europe’s regulators in Brussels, posted his congratulations on Twitter, adding, “I’m looking forward to continuing to work closely with her.”

The next most pressing change on the European agenda is probably banking union, on which Germany has not pushed hard. Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, who with Ms. Merkel has guided his country through the euro crisis, went on television Sunday night to assure European partners that Germany would continue to play its reliable part in the Continent’s affairs, but mentioned no specifics.

Jan Techau, director of Carnegie Europe in Brussels, was in Germany for the election and said the vote Sunday meant that it would be winter before Europe resumed any overhauls.

While the chancellor has talked often of “more Europe,” lately she has shown little appetite for political restructuring that would require complex changes to the treaties that govern the European Union, Mr. Techau noted.

Her major goal is “to get out of this crisis in one piece,” he said. “This muddling through can continue for a while.”

Melissa Eddy and Jack Ewing contributed reporting.

German election diary

Angela Merkel's bittersweet triumph

Sep 22nd 2013, 19:10 by A.K. | BERLIN

84,32

ANGELA MERKEL, chancellor of Germany for eight years, seems likely to stay in office for a few more. She has won for her party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a sparkling election result, with about 42% of the vote when including its Bavarian sister party, the CSU, according to exit polls and estimates. Depending on how the smaller parties fare, that may even suffice for an absolute majority of seats in parliament, allowing Mrs Merkel to govern without a coalition partner as only Konrad Adenauer, also of the CDU, did in the 1950s.

But as of the evening of this election day, September 22nd, other outcomes were still possible. For one, voters delivered a stinging rebuke to Mrs Merkel's current coalition partner, the liberal Free Democrats (FDP). Having been [thrown out of the Bavarian state parliament a week ago](#), and the state parliament of Hesse today, the FDP seemed likely to be ejected from the federal parliament as well. [Its leadership will have to go](#), its message will have to be renewed, if it is to have any future in German politics.

The greatest unknown on this Sunday evening is the fate of the newest party in German politics, the euro-sceptic [\(as in: sceptic about the euro, not necessarily the European Union\)](#) Alternative for Germany. At 4.9% in the exit polls, it teeters on the edge of the 5% threshold necessary to get into parliament.

As for the other parties:

- The Social Democrats (SPD) improved slightly to about 25.6%, which was still a bad result.
- The Greens, also of the centre-left, suffered a bitter defeat relative to their expectations, at an estimated 8% or so. Like the Free Democrats, the Greens will be doing a lot of thinking in the coming days [about their leadership](#) and their messages.
- The Pirates, fashionable a couple of years ago but without content beyond geeky internet issues, are gone for all intents and purposes.
- Only The Left, [the party that descends from the communists of the former East Germany](#), has reason to celebrate like the CDU. It may come in slightly ahead of the Greens and thus become the third strongest group in parliament—also a historic first.

The upshot: the current government of the CDU and FDP is out. The current chancellor, Angela Merkel, is likely to stay in. She will try to form a coalition with the SPD in the coming week to get a majority of seats if she needs one (as she certainly will, for mathematical reasons, if the Alternative for Germany does get in). In fact, she will try even if the CDU-CSU eke out a technical majority of seats by themselves, because she knows she needs a large majority to steer Germany through the rest of the euro crisis and to keep the government stable for a full term.

The greatest suspense in the coming days—once you look past all the other theatrics of the parties—is about what the SPD will do. Will its moderates, including people like Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the parliamentary leader, prevail and push the Social Democrats into a responsible and patriotic partnership with Mrs Merkel as they had in 2005-09? Or will the left wingers win, with a nod to the Greens and that newly confident former pariah, The Left, for an alternative government? By the end of the week, we should know more.

Triumphant Merkel starts tough task of seeking coalition



By [Stephen Brown](#)

84,33

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany's Angela Merkel began trying to persuade her center-left rivals to keep her in power on Monday after her conservatives notched up their best election result in more than two decades but fell short of an absolute majority.

Even the chancellor's political foes acknowledged she was the big winner of the first German vote since the euro crisis began in 2010, which thrust the pastor's daughter from East Germany into the role of Europe's dominant leader.

But despite leading her conservatives to their best result since 1990, with 41.5 percent of votes putting them five seats short of the first absolute majority in parliament in over half a century, 59-year-old Merkel had little time to celebrate.

"We are, of course, open for talks and I have already had initial contact with the SPD (Social Democratic Party) chairman, who said the SPD must first hold a meeting of its leaders on Friday," Merkel told a news conference, adding that she did not rule out talks with other potential coalition partners.

Her SPD arch-rivals were plainly preparing to play hardball in any talks on repeating the 'grand coalition' led by Merkel from 2005-2009, which worked well for Merkel in her first term but cost the SPD millions of leftist votes.

"It will be an extremely long road," said Ralf Stegner, head of the left wing of the SPD which has major reservations about becoming junior partners again to Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU) and her Bavarian the Christian Social Union (CSU) allies.

The 150-year-old SPD may have finished a poor second with their second-worst post-war result, but they know Merkel has to come knocking after her current center-right coalition partners, the Free Democrats (FDP), failed to get back into parliament.

One SPD leader, speaking on condition of anonymity, half-joked that it would have been better if Merkel had got her own slim majority: "That would have been the worst punishment for her - to bear responsibility for everything on her own."

TOUGH BARGAINING AHEAD

But in German politics, where only one post-war chancellor has won an absolute majority - conservative patriarch Konrad Adenauer, in 1957 - complex coalition-building is par for the course and few politicians build consensus better than Merkel.

Her calm leadership through the euro crisis has reinforced her status as "Mutti" (mother) of the nation, but she counted on the SPD and Greens' support on all the euro zone bailout votes.

Polls show a majority of German voters would like another 'grand coalition', as do many of Germany's partners in the euro currency area, who expect the SPD to soften Merkel's austerity-focused approach to struggling euro zone states like Greece.

The euro inched up and German government bond futures rose early on Monday as investors anticipated continuity in Berlin's cautious approach to the crisis. But continuity may come at a high price for Merkel, in terms of cabinet posts and policies.

In the campaign, the SPD argued for a legal minimum wage and higher taxes on the rich. It may demand the finance ministry, pushing out respected 71-year-old incumbent Wolfgang Schäuble, or insist on key posts like the foreign or labor ministries.

"There will be no quick formation of a government," said an SPD insider. "The party will try to drive up the price."

After an election that gave a slim numerical majority to the leftist opposition, the SPD and Greens may even feel pressure to review a historical taboo against allying with the Left Party, heirs to the communists who built the Berlin Wall and still inspire distrust beyond their steady 8.5 percent of votes.

If Merkel and SPD chairman Sigmar Gabriel fail to agree on a coalition - and there is no love lost between them since the SPD chairman leaked a confidential text message from Merkel to the media - she could switch her focus to the Greens.

Many progressive CDU supporters favor a so-called "Black-Green" (black is the CDU's official color) alliance and think Katrin Göring-Eckardt, a 47-year-old Greens leader from east Germany who is close to the Lutheran church, is a snug fit.

But the CDU's conservative wing, embodied by tough-talking parliamentary leader Volker Kauder, dislike the pacifist and ecologist party which campaigned for tax hikes on the wealthy.

"The tax orgy that the Greens have proposed makes it very difficult with them," said Kauder. "It's not the first time that we are heading for a 'grand coalition'," he said.

The Greens, disappointed with their 8.4 percent result, may be wary of forming an alliance with a chancellor who bestows the kiss of death on her coalition allies.

In 2009, the SPD's reward for collaboration was their worst post-war election result. The Free Democrats replaced them in government only to crash out of parliament four years later.

"Maybe we won't find anyone who wants to do anything with us," said Merkel with a smile on Sunday night.

That would force her to form a minority government - very unlikely - or President Joachim Gauck would have to call a new election. No post-war government ever had to do that straight after winning, especially one with such a strong mandate.

For now, Merkel is one of few European leaders to survive the debt crisis, which has seen 19 of her peers lose their jobs.

She also saw off a challenge from the Alternative for Germany, a new eurosceptic party that had threatened to break into parliament.

(Additional reporting by Holger Hansen and Gernot Heller; editing by Philippa Fletcher)

09/23/2013 11:27 AM

World From Berlin

Triumph Confirms 'Era of Merkelism'

Angela Merkel is at the zenith of her power. Her historic election win on Sunday reflects how deeply Germans appreciate her no-nonsense, frugal Hausfrau style of governing, say editorials. But she now needs to address domestic reforms to secure her legacy.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel [won a stunning victory in Sunday's election](#), leading her conservatives to their best result in two decades following a campaign that focused almost entirely on her rather than on policies.

The election result, which puts her on a similar footing with Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party heavyweights like Konrad Adenauer and Helmut Kohl, but she won't have much time to savor it. She faces difficult coalition talks with the opposition Social Democrats and possibly with the Greens.

Many German media commentators from the right and left expressed admiration for the unassuming leader who has evidently won the hearts of a majority of Germans with her cool handling of the euro debt crisis.

To secure her legacy in what could well be her final term, she will need to address domestic economic reforms that she has neglected -- and she will need to start grooming a successor.

Tabloid **Bild**, Germany's best-selling daily, writes:

"It's a phenomenal victory for the woman whom the majority of Germans trust -- and only that seems to have counted at the ballot box. Taxes, justice and the euro weren't the decisive factors. This question was: Who do people trust to rule calmly, sensibly and with strong nerves?"

"Nevertheless, this election day will continue to reverberate for a long time, and Merkel will feel it. Her coalition partner the [Free Democrats](#) lost two-thirds of their voters and has disappeared from parliament. That's a historic blow -- and massively weakens Germany's right-of-center ground. In addition, the anti-euro party Alternative for Germany has established itself and will change the political landscape. Euro bailouts à la Merkel will become more difficult."

Center-left **Süddeutsche Zeitung** writes:

"It's her triumph rather than a triumph of the conservatives. She as a person, she as chancellor achieved it, with popularity ratings that are unprecedented in the history of postwar Germany. With this election she almost stands alongside Konrad Adenauer, who in 1957 won an absolute majority for the first and so far only time in the history of the republic. It was the zenith of Adenauer's power; 2013 is the zenith of Merkel's power. With this election, Merkel's time in office has become an era, regardless of what happens now -- the era of Merkelism, of a power-oriented policy devoid of the visible trappings of power."

"People say she has banished conservatism from the conservatives and has made the party's positions nebulous. But to her many voters, Merkel doesn't lack conviction. They see Merkel as the representative of an enlightened liberal conservatism that doesn't shy away from recognizing same-sex marriage. Merkel has mastered many roles. In the euro crisis -- and this was her biggest role so far -- she gave a masterful performance of the thrifty Swabian housewife who keeps the money together. Many Germans like that. And she has turned the exercise of power into an unspectacular affair. That, too, appeals to many Germans. In that way, she has ensured that the modest achievements of her governing coalitions didn't damage her popularity."

Conservative **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** writes:

"The result is confirmation of her policies as well as of her political style. The conservatives can choose whether to govern in a coalition with the weakened Greens or the SPD. Despite an increase in votes, (SPD chancellor candidate Peer) Steinbrück, provided he keeps his oath not to join forces with the Left Party, can at best lead his party back into the purgatory (in the form of another grand coalition government with the SPD as the junior partner to the conservatives as Germany had from 2005-2009) that he himself doesn't want to suffer again."

Conservative **Die Welt** writes:

"Angela Merkel won without her party. The Germans like her so much because she's so unassuming, and apparently devoid of narcissism in the way she goes about her work, she doesn't annoy her people or lecture them. 'She'll get the job done,' people think. But will that be enough? Her victory was a victory without clarity or direction -- it was a victory of being as she is. Now Angela Merkel has nothing to lose. She could come out of her shell. She could use what's likely to be her last term to push through reforms not just in Europe but at home. She won't be able to spend another four years feeding off the legacy of (former SPD Chancellor) Gerhard Schröder."

Left-wing **Berliner Zeitung** writes:

"Whatever alliance Angela Merkel will end up leading, whether it's with the SPD or the Greens, her policies will have to change radically from those of the last four years. The German chancellor has focused on foreign policy since the start of the international financial crisis and the euro crisis. She has been the leading voice in Europe and played a not insignificant role in questions of global finance. But not much happened on the domestic policy front, because nothing goes without her. Important tasks need to be addressed: reform of old-age nursing insurance, the pension system, education. Things can't stay as they are for another four years. The next government will be judged on whether it manages to find a balance between domestic and international policy. That will be measured in terms of the chancellor's involvement in these issues.

"There's another thing Angela Merkel should be worried about. The conservative success was her success alone, not the party's. She has become irreplaceable for the party. The conservative party is Merkel and Merkel is the conservative party. But as even she isn't immortal, she's going to have to make herself replaceable. Only when she has managed to put her legacy in order will she be a great politician."

Germany's left-wing **Die Tageszeitung** writes:

"And so, the worst chancellor in the country's postwar history is set to stay in office. Though her conservatives will be forced to enter into a new coalition government -- probably with the Social Democrats -- not much is likely to change as a result. The key questions of our time have been left undiscussed. The fact that Merkel's euro-zone policies benefit only the banks and investors in rich member states, and the fact that people in the troubled economies and taxpayers in the relatively stable economies are the ones to foot the bill were barely touched upon by the Social Democrats and the Greens during this campaign."

"The fact that Merkel is set to stay in office is bad news for Europe. The possibility that she might govern alongside the Social Democrats in a grand coalition hardly softens the blow. The SPD does have remnants of a Keynesian approach -- they know that debts cannot be reduced through austerity. They are familiar with simple mathematics -- they understand that without a debt haircut, Greece will never get back on its feet. So there is a possibility the SPD will push through the occasional amendment to Merkel's euro-zone policies. But a fundamentally different political approach -- a totally new direction -- is not to be expected."

David Crossland and Friederike Heine

Merkel triumphs



With 41.5 percent, the CDU/CSU had its best result since 1990. (© picture-alliance/dpa)

84,37

Angela Merkel scored a clear victory in Germany's parliamentary elections on Sunday. The conservative CDU and its sister party the CSU came just short of an absolute majority. Commentators expect Germany's influence in Europe to grow and urge the chancellor to use her new leeway to push for reforms in Europe as well as at home.

[De Volkskrant - Netherlands](#)

Europe's empress

With her sensational electoral victory Angela Merkel has become the empress of Europe, columnist Sheila Sitalsing writes in the left-liberal daily De Volkskrant: "Empress of a Union of accountants, in which what counts is not the size of the army but the breadth of the budget deficit. And in which the member states 'walk like 27 poodles on Angela Merkel's leash', as one ambassador to the EU put it. ... The empress herself likes to stress that she stands for a European Germany, and that is entirely true. ... Just as it's true that Europe has already become [extremely German](#). Ever since the euro crisis destroyed the [German-French axis](#), in fact. With budget discipline, austerity demands, [bank supervision](#), direct intervention in Greek domestic politics and Brussels diplomats who only complain out of the empress's earshot that 'the Germans don't understand why the rest of Europe doesn't simply adopt their model'." (23/09/2013)

[El Periódico de Catalunya - Spain](#)

Merkel's new room for manoeuvre

The election victory will make it easier for the chancellor to make important decisions, the left-liberal daily El Periódico de Catalunya points out: "While the crisis has swept away all other European governments in elections, Angela Merkel has emerged strengthened by an impressive election victory that has put her on the brink of an absolute majority. The Germans poured into the poll stations, breaking with the the last decade's downwards trend in voter turnout to show their support for the chancellor's policies, specifically her [management of the euro crisis](#). ... Now that she's not facing any elections in the immediate future we will see a chancellor much more willing to take decisions. The question is what decisions and which way they will go, even though she's already said no to [euro bonds](#) and debt mutualisation. Does she want to lead Europe? Does she want a German Europe? Or does she want a European Germany?" (23/09/2013)

[Le Figaro - France](#)

Hopes of fresh impetus for the EU

The conservative daily Le Figaro urges Merkel to create a new European dynamic - and President François Hollande to follow the example of the German head of government: "The Chancellor wants to make her mark on history, and there's no time like the present. Germany must take advantage of its economic health to implement reforms without which it will be vulnerable to decline: it must renew its infrastructure and education system, revise the energy transition to maintain competitiveness, and counter the demographic changes that are threatening its position of power. In Europe too, Germany's neighbours expect a new project and a fresh dynamic: towards more coherence, more competitiveness, increased growth and affirmation of the European Union on the international stage. François Hollande would do well to take note of Merkel's victory and the lessons it imparts - the success of a model that the French hope he will take to heart." (23/09/2013)

[Contributors.ro - Romania](#)

Germany must look for partners

Germany's chancellor must now clarify what leadership role she wants to play in Europe, political scientist Alexandru Coita writes in the blog portal Contributors: "It seems increasingly unlikely that the [French-German tandem](#) will continue to be the motor behind European integration, particularly as France is losing clout on the European level. One alternative would no doubt be for Berlin to adopt the role of 'benevolent hegemon'. That would give Europe a clear direction, but it would also run the risk of strengthening anti-European parties in the weaker countries. ... One compromise would be to unite a small group of heavyweight European states such as France, Poland and the Netherlands, which along with Germany would form the [hard core](#) that would point the way forward for the EU. That would give the entire project increased legitimacy among supporters of a traditional European social model, countries with a conservative fiscal policy and the new eastern member states." (23/09/2013)

[Süddeutsche Zeitung - Germany](#)

A victory of the unspectacular

Angela Merkel won her election victory by promising voters stability, the left-liberal daily Süddeutsche Zeitung observes, feeling reminded of former German chancellor [Konrad Adenauer](#): "Adenauer won the 1957 German elections with a magnificent 50.2 percent majority on the strength of a simple, humble, almost innocuous sounding sentence: 'No experiments'. The Germans don't want any experiments. Adenauer had just engineered the return of the last prisoners of war in Moscow and scored another impressive victory when the Saarland became part of Germany. ... Merkel can't point to spectacular victories as Adenauer could back then. But the Germans are doing well and they feel that Merkel has done a good job of steering them through the euro crisis. ... Because she's clever she won't seek a fourth term of office. Who knows what will come after Merkel. Right now the CDU consists of Merkel plus almost nothing else. That's the downside of victory. The SPD must wait until the shadows grow." (23/09/2013)

[La Stampa - Italy](#)

Take euro critics seriously

The eurosceptic [Alternative für Deutschland](#) (AfD) party won 4.7 percent of the vote in the German elections, its first ever. This means that although it won't be sitting in parliament it will be able to influence Germany's EU policy, the liberal daily La Stampa comments: "This is a sensational success. ... The AfD is not some vague

anti-European protest movement, nor is it a populist party, as the media claim. It's a small group of qualified people who in a radical discourse break with the political correctness taboos of Europe and the common currency. It aims to get rid of the euro or exclude from the Eurozone all member states that aren't capable of following the rules. It campaigns for Germany's autonomy and sovereignty - a popular stance in circles close to the Bundesbank and Constitutional Court. The party will force a discussion over the euro and it won't be satisfied with empty phrases. Angela Merkel knows this and will take it into account." (23/09/2013)

Mats Persson

Mats Persson is Director of [Open Europe](#), an independent think-tank with offices in London and Brussels campaigning for EU reform.

German election results: a triumph for Angela Merkel, a headache for David Cameron

By [Mats Persson](#) [Politics and society](#) Last updated: September 23rd, 2013

84,40

The dust has settled from last night's German elections. The result: game, set and match Angela Merkel. Her CDU/CSU party mustered 41.5 per cent of the vote, squashing all opposition and winning a third term. She only fell five seats short of the absolute majority for a single party since 1957, the days of Adenauer. This, in my mind, firmly establishes her as the most powerful female politician ever. However, with her previous junior coalition partner, the liberal FDP, failing to get seats in Bundestag, she'll still have to reach across the aisle to find a partner on the Left, either the Social Democrats (SPD) or the Greens.

Funnily enough, there's still a mathematical possibility of the the three Left parties – the SPD, Greens and Die Linke – ganging up on Merkel in the Bundestag. Between the three of them, they have absolute majority. But anything apart from a Merkel-led government will be an absolute sensation.

For the eurozone, this basically means [more of the same](#). Don't expect any radical departure for the current austerity-for-cash approach. For David Cameron – and his ambition to negotiate a new settlement in Europe – it's a mixed blessing.

Cameron can do business with Merkel, that's clear. The CDU and its Bavarian sister party CSU – the former is definitely sympathetic to Cameron's reform agenda – will dominate the next German government and, in addition to the Chancellery, keep control over the Finance Ministry. These two bodies are where a lot of the de facto power over EU decisions now lie.

However, as Open Europe argued in its [pre-election briefing](#), it's also clear that both SPD and Greens are more Paris-oriented in temperament – and the Greens are strongly EU integrationists (though some fractions of the party aren't). If she goes into power with the SPD in particular, the party may end up getting the foreign minister post. It won't be a deal breaker, but it might effectively take some negotiating items off the table, such as devolving powers over EU employment law – an old Tory beef.

Whatever happens, Cameron had better bring his A-team.

Germany: the Age of Merkel

Angela Merkel has not so much clung on to power in Germany, as she did in 2009, as hugely increased her grip on it

- [Editorial](#)
- [The Guardian](#), Sunday 22 September 2013 23.04 BST

84,41

Keep tight hold of "Mutti". That was the message from German voters on Sunday as [Angela Merkel](#) – the nation's "Mummy" to her image makers – [secured a stunning personal triumph at the polls](#) that consolidates her unchallenged claim to be the dominant political leader in modern economic-crisis-riven [Europe](#). Since the financial crisis struck the global economy in 2008, European voters have thrown out incumbent government after incumbent government, whether of the left, the centre or the right. But Mrs Merkel and her CDU/CSU centre-right party have bucked the anti-incumbency trend not once but twice. Mrs Merkel was first elected in 2005, forming a coalition with the ousted centre-left SPD. In 2009, she hung on to power even though the CDU/CSU vote had dipped, forming a coalition with the resurgent liberal FDP. Now, four years later, she has not so much hung on to power, as she did in 2009, as hugely increased her grip on it.

Whatever the final share of the vote and seats, this election has been a massive endorsement for Mrs Merkel. The [exit polls](#) will doubtless move around a little before the final tallies of vote share and Bundestag seats are settled, and coalition options, if any, can be definitively considered. But with that important proviso, this is about as dominant a result as Mrs Merkel could have dreamed of, far better than the [opinion polls were suggesting even at the end of last week](#). Her party seems likely to end up with 42%-43%, an increase of 10 points on four years ago, and [the centre-right's best result](#) since Helmut Kohl triumphed in the first post-reunification election in 1990.

If, as seemed possible on Sunday night, only four parties win representation in the new Bundestag by topping the 5% threshold, Mrs Merkel may even have secured an overall majority, enabling the CDU/CSU to govern alone, not in coalition, for the first time since Konrad Adenauer in 1957. Bear in mind, at the same time, that Mrs Merkel's personal popularity runs far ahead of that of her party, and it becomes clear that we are witnessing a rare moment of indubitable political ascendancy in a continent where weak governments are the norm, not least in Britain.

The centre-left Social Democrats may come out of this election as a junior coalition partner in a left-right "grand coalition" with Mrs Merkel. That would be a welcome move. They also slightly raised their share of the vote from the lamentable 23% of 2009 to 25%-26% this time. In every other respect, however, the SPD has little to celebrate. It is clear that the party's problems go deeper than just the gaffe-prone chancellor candidacy of [Peer Steinbrück](#). The SPD's programme of increased taxes on the wealthy and the middle classes failed to capture the mood of modern [Germany](#). There will, and should, undoubtedly be a profound period of reflection on the German centre-left about the party's failure to win much more than a quarter of the electorate. The resilience of the Green vote and that of the Left party, though both lost support while the SPD gained a little, will surely lead to speculation about realignment. All this should be watched very attentively by centre-left politicians in this country, who face many of the same problems.

The big loser in 2013 is the liberal FDP, which was on course on Sunday night to fail to cross the 5% threshold for the first time in 60 years, after winning nearly 15% four years ago. That failure is surely a verdict on the FDP's free-market programme, something that Mrs Merkel has scrupulously resisted in her own, nominally more rightwing party. It also seems clear that the growing fragmentation of party loyalties in German politics – in which the anti-eurozone-bailout AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) looked like falling just short of the threshold too – has damaged the FDP as well.

The net result, though, is unmistakable. Germans have given Mrs Merkel a strong mandate to govern Germany. But the way she uses her new power will affect not just Germany, important though that is, but the whole of Europe – and that includes us here in Britain. This is the Age of Merkel.

Next Stop, Brussels?

German Euroskeptics' Breakthrough Moment

By Friederike Heine

Despite falling short of the 5 percent hurdle required to enter parliament, the euroskeptic Alternative for Germany party performed surprisingly well in the German election. Experts say the party shouldn't be underestimated.

After a tumultuous night at party headquarters in Berlin, Bernd Lucke -- head of Germany's euroskeptic Alternative for Germany (AfD) party -- was up bright and early on Monday morning, doing an interview on the ARD's "Morgenmagazin" breakfast show.

Lucke exuded an air of calm confidence. Though his anti-euro party -- which was only formed in February and calls for an "orderly dismantling of the euro zone" -- did not achieve the 8 percent vote share Lucke had optimistically predicted on Sunday, AfD did come within a hair's breadth of the 5 percent threshold required to take seats in the German parliament, the Bundestag.

"Objectively, a 4.7 percent vote share for a party founded so recently is a highly respectable result," he told the public broadcaster. "We continue to believe that it's important to have a political force that is willing to discuss the common currency and European bailout policies, and this force is the AfD," before adding, "The ball is in our court now and we are ready for it."

Many political commentators breathed a sigh of relief at the party's failure to make it into parliament. Still, even its most forceful critics -- among them some of the country's pollsters, whom Lucke has accused of underrepresenting his party's support -- concede that the election defeat may not be the end of the line for the AfD.

"It's crucial not to underestimate them or to assume that they will simply pass into irrelevance now that the election is over," says Manfred Güllner, head of German polling institute Forsa, who has sparred with Lucke about poll results. "They are not just a single-issue protest party, or else they wouldn't have made it this far. They are a socially acceptable organization with clear right-wing affiliations -- that is an extremely dangerous combination."

Beyond the Euro

The AfD seems to have learned its lesson from the failed Pro DM party -- a right-wing populist organization that emerged in 1990s with the sole intention of preventing the introduction of the euro currency. Pro DM achieved less than 1 percent at the 1998 general election and passed into irrelevance shortly thereafter, largely because of its status as a single-issue party

Lucke's anti-euro party has made efforts to expand its election manifesto beyond the issue of the euro zone -- and the party has come to occupy a niche previously inhabited by the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP). Research conducted by polling institute Infratest Dimap shows that 330,000 of the anti-euro party's 1,160,000 votes on Sunday came from people previously affiliated with the FDP. "If the FDP had kept the promises it made four years ago, we wouldn't exist," Lucke said in an interview on Sunday.

But the party drew voters from across the political spectrum -- 230,000 AfD voters had previously supported Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right Christian Democrats and 150,000 their center-left Social Democrat challengers. The fact that the right-wing populists have found resonance with such a broad spectrum of voters is likely to cause a stir among the country's more established players. It's also worth noting that 150,000 AfD voters hadn't voted in the previous elections.

"The spectacular success of the AfD increases the pressure on the mainstream parties to face up to questions [about the future of the European Union]," argued an online commentary in Germany's left-wing *Tageszeitung* newspaper. "To dismiss them as a party that merely captures voters on the fringes of the political spectrum would not be smart."

'Here's Hoping'

Though the anti-euro party's popularity is likely to make waves in the Bundestag, and may even prompt some political parties to rethink their approach to the euro zone, Güllner argues that Merkel's economic policies are unlikely to be affected by it. "The chancellor has such broad support, nothing can deter her from her European path," he says. "The support for the AfD is worrying for German democracy, but that is unlikely to influence Mrs. Merkel."

The AfD may, however, be able to build on its current momentum by launching a campaign to enter the European Parliament in 2014. In Brussels, only 3 percent of votes are required to enter parliament, which may work in Lucke's favor.

Unlike some of Germany's other fringe parties, the AfD will not have to worry about its finances -- it has several private benefactors who are likely to support its anti-euro agenda beyond September 22. "Lucke and his colleagues do have a chance at the European level," says Güllner. "Their financial house is in order and they've got some semi-credible leaders."

But Hajo Funke, political scientist at Berlin's Free University, has his doubts about whether the AfD will be able to establish itself as a credible player in Brussels. "What people seem to forget is that the AfD's approach to the euro is actually rather unsophisticated," he says. "Its economic policies have to be developed and fleshed out if it wants to compete on a European level."

Draghi Says ECB Willing to Consider More Long-Term Bank Loans

Move Comes Amid Concerns that Short-Term Interest Rates Could Rise

By [BRIAN BLACKSTONE](#)

FRANKFURT—European Central Bank President [Mario Draghi](#) opened the door to providing additional long-term loans to banks, suggesting the central bank is willing to consider additional stimulus to keep short-term market interest rates in check and safeguard the bloc's fragile recovery.



European Central Bank President Mario Draghi in Brussels on Monday.

"We are ready to use any instrument, including another LTRO [long-term refinancing operation] if needed, to maintain the short-term money markets on the level that is warranted by our assessment of inflation in the medium term," Mr. Draghi said Monday in testimony to European Parliament.

Starting in late 2011, the ECB doled out over €1 trillion (\$1.35 trillion) in three-year loans to hundreds of banks. The program, known as LTRO, provided struggling banks that had trouble borrowing money through traditional interbank funding markets with access to cheap funds.

Banks have repaid over €330 billion of the loans and as a result the amount of excess cash in the banking system has dwindled. Mr. Draghi said Monday that the early repayments are partly a "good sign" that financial institutions are less reliant on the ECB for funding.

But many analysts fear that if this trend continues, short-term interest rates will rise, threatening a shaky economic recovery that began in the second quarter.

An ECB advisory panel of bankers and analysts, the Money Market Contact Group, warned recently that the maturity of these loans in early 2015 is a "cliff" that is weighing on confidence in financial markets, according to a summary of the Sept. 3 meeting released last week by the ECB.

Several of the panel members urged the ECB to launch another round of long-term loans early next year, when the remaining maturity of the existing ones falls below a year.

The ECB advisory group's warning came as some bankers, especially in southern Europe, are increasingly concerned about the lack of clarity regarding whether, and under what circumstances, the ECB might renew its loan program.

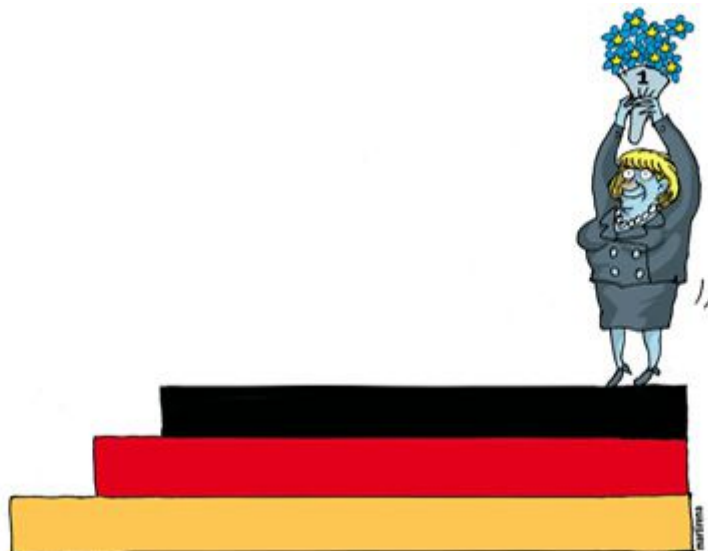
In his testimony, Mr. Draghi said that the ECB will keep interest rates at current record-low levels, or reduce them further, over an "extended period," [reiterating the forward guidance on interest rates](#) that was unveiled in July.

More indispensable than ever

23 September 2013

[Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung](#) Frankfurt

84,45



[Alfredo Martirena Hernández](#)

After her undisputed victory in the September 22 elections, Angela Merkel is now headlong into finding new political partners with whom to govern. But regardless of who makes up the coalition, she will wield a mighty power that comes from her country's position in Europe.

[Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger](#)



The Germans have voted. Their European partners, who allegedly awaited the elections to a new Bundestag with the nervousness of an Englishman awaiting the penalty shootout in a major international football match, can breathe out again: it is over and done with, even if the most exciting phase for both players and onlookers – the cobbling together of a new government in Berlin – is still to come.

The tension that lies in the question of who is likely to end up holding the reins of political power in the heart of Europe is not unjustified. It is bound up, after all, with the events and the experiences of the past four years, stamped by the European sovereign debt crisis, by the worry over the state of the monetary union and the row over how the euro could be permanently secured. Germany has played an important role in that, a role many would label as critical and dominant.

In the countries of the south hit hardest by the crisis, there is not a lot of enthusiasm about that role, to put it mildly. Germany has insisted on fiscal consolidation and made the acceptance of its own political preferences a condition for the granting of assistance loans – which was also a compelling prerequisite for keeping the

majority of Germans, who were already up in arms mentally, from straying from the flag of the country's policy towards the rest of Europe. The central political position of Berlin has never been more prominent since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

While Germany's economic dominance was already evident, the crisis has brought it out in even sharper relief. The tensions that arise from this gap in economic and technological achievement will be little diminished even if the problem countries do stay the course of the reforms.

The 'reluctant hegemon'

a hegemon – a position comparable to what America went through in the 20th Century – is something that the Germans neither want to be, nor are capable of becoming

In these years of crisis management and the shocks traversing Europe, two labels have been stuck on Germany because of its economic strength, its central geopolitical position and its policy. On the one side, there is Germany the "EU's indispensable nation", and on the other there is Germany the "[reluctant hegemon](#)". It was the Polish Foreign Minister who called Germany "essential" and, with the style of the federal government in mind, called on the country to lead from the front. The notion of Germany as a hegemon, trying almost selflessly to wean Europe out of the crisis – meant as a reproach by some and as a challenge by others – was encouraged mostly by the country's economic preponderance. However, a hegemon – a position comparable to what America went through in the 20th Century – is something that the Germans neither want to be, nor are capable of becoming.

The political class of Germany is indeed aware that the country must take on more responsibility for European policies and for international affairs. When it comes to security questions and military matters, all the same, a part of this class remains fixated on the German maxim of the "culture of restraint" – with which, by the way, as we saw in Libya, the great majority of the population are entirely in agreement: there is nothing wrong with the country's security policy following the model of a "Big Switzerland". In this view, the slogan "Germans to the front" is something best left to the costume dramas.

In this imbalance between its economic might and a corresponding self-confidence in the relevant areas, which faces a characteristic argument over its security policy that regularly brings up all the things that Germany will not go along with, not much will change. Germany's position in the centre of Europe is what gives rise to its political responsibility for Europe. That responsibility, however, is no longer easy to safeguard following the homespun mantra of "more Europe". In the cold light of day, many Germans no longer want to grant European institutions the benefit of the doubt, and they have as little burning desire for treaty changes as most of their partners do. There's one thing, though, that those partners can count on: Germany will continue to warn them that Europe's continued prosperity in the hyper-competitive world depends on their dynamism, their innovative strength, and therefore their competitiveness.

Merkel has ‘Europe at her feet’

23 September 2013 Presseurop

84,47

Rzeczpospolita, Les Echos, La Stampa & 4 others



On the throne: Federal Chancellor. On the chair: Vice-Chancellor.

[Heiko Sakurai](#)

Winning a third mandate with a performance that fell just short of an absolute majority: in the wake of September 22 general elections, the German Chancellor will be stronger than ever in her own country and also on the continent. The European press ponders what will she do with her newfound power?

“Angela Merkel knocks out her political rivals,” [writes Rzeczpospolita](#) stressing [in its editorial](#) that the “most important women in the world” will have the third term to show how will she use Germany’s exceptionally strength in the EU.



The third term is a chance to show what Germany’s hegemony is all about. Will it revert to pro-European traditions of former chancellors or will it come dangerously close to the vision most drastically seen on banners in Greek demonstrations, where Merkel is shown with a Führer moustache [...] It is up to Angela Merkel to revive a dream of the attractiveness of the EU for future generations.

Angela Merkel has “triumphed”, but her “victory entails responsibility”, writes *Les Echos* in Paris. In the wake of a campaign that was “short on details”, what will the Chancellor do? [wonders the daily](#) —



The answer will depend in part on the Chancellor's capacity to rule alone or with the social democrats. On this subject, the Elysée, which had long hoped for a win by Angela Merkel's adversaries followed by a grand coalition that would keep her on a tight rein, has suffered a setback. [...] With regard to external relations, Berlin can no longer content itself with speeches that are as vague and hollow as they are generous on the organisation of Europe. It is on these conditions that Angela Merkel will be included on the list of chancellors that have made their mark in history.

“Merkel wins hands down”, headlines *La Stampa*, which [hails](#) the “overwhelming support” for the Chancellor's party. The vote for the CDU in tandem with the SPD's good showing – and the exclusion of AfD and the Greens – stands out in contrast to the crisis suffered by traditional parties throughout the rest of Europe. In the future —



... there will be no deviation from the political, economic and financial strategy, which has been employed up till now by Germany. Regardless of what Steinbrück says, the social democrats do not have alternative ideas or the will to push them through. The key outcome of yesterday's election is that in Germany there is no alternative to the policies implemented by Merkel in recent years. Authoritative voices that are raised in response will have to come from Europe.

From now on, announces *El Periódico's* headline, Angela Merkel has “Europe at her feet”. [The Barcelona daily notes](#) that the Chancellor —



is the survivor of a crisis that brought down Sarkozy, Zapatero, Sócrates, Monti and Berlusconi [...] For Europe, one thing is clear. From now on, with no election dates on the horizon, we will see a chancellor that is much more prepared to take decisions. However, what these decisions will be and in what direction they will take remains to be seen, even if she has already said no to Eurobonds and collectivising debt. Will she want to lead Europe, and will she want a German Europe or a European Germany?

Leading with the headline “Merkel hails ‘super result,’” *The Financial Times* nonetheless warns against high expectations. For columnist Wolfgang Münchau, coming within a few votes of an absolute majority was [“the best conceivable result Angela Merkel could have had,”](#) but it is unlikely to pave the way for radical change —



She will stay in power – of that there was really never any doubt. But she also secured her other goal – to make it impossible for the three parties of the left to form a coalition against her during the next parliamentary term. The Germans will thus get what they wanted: a broad-based coalition with a non-visionary leader. Only a fool would think that the elections would free the German chancellor from making a big leap and agree to resolve the crisis once and for all. After the election is not going to feel much different from before the elections.

But after all, as [Volkskrant points out](#) Angela Merkel's main merit has been to channel tensions in Europe —



Merkel has been the cork in the bottle with regard to tensions and populist powers in Europe. While politics has become less stable in the Netherlands, in Germany, Merkel has continued to exude a sense of calm. And that is how she tackles problems: dealing with them step by step.

In Greece, one country where the German election results have been the subject of much trepidation, the website of [weekly To Vima](#) remarks —

TO BHMA

The Germans have voiced a resounding yes to the sovereignty of their country in Europe: a sovereignty that will be built on the ruins of what was once the southern part of a “united” continent. It was obvious and predictable: with her policy on the debt crisis, Angela Merkel not only dragged a large part of Europe to the brink of disaster, she also enabled Germany to swallow Europe whole. [...] Once again, false hopes have been brought back to earth in Athens. From the first opportunity, Merkel has clearly made it known that there will be no let-up in the pressure on Greece.

September 23, 2013

Merkel the Great

By [ROGER COHEN](#)

84,50

BERLIN — Henry Kissinger famously asked what Europe’s phone number is. Well, now he knows: Dial Angela Merkel.

After eight years in office spanning an economic crisis that has shaken nations from the United States to Greece, Merkel lifted her Christian Democratic party to a share of the vote not seen for two decades. In an election devoid of a theme, she was the subject matter. Her slogan was “The Chancellor.” It was a personal triumph, this near-absolute majority, and it was that alone.

“Larger-than-life great, Angela Merkel,” pronounced Thomas Schmid [in a front-page commentary in Die Welt](#).

Yet she is the face in the crowd rather than the face that stands out. Rumpled, awkward, with her de rigueur blazer and slacks (the former often just a touch too tight), Merkel can seem a study in orchestrated ordinariness, a brilliant creation of election strategists attuned to the post-traumatic German psyche. Perhaps it costs a lot of money to look this plain. But over time it becomes clear that she just is who she is, unchanged by power; a woman, like Margaret Thatcher, who is “not for turning.”

Merkel is a phenomenon. She has captured something in the zeitgeist. In this look-at-me age of image traffickers and spin merchants, she is the sobering antidote. She works hard and is humble. “Power to the Imagination,” went the slogan of the 1968 revolutionaries in Europe. The chancellor is the diametric opposite of that. She is a study in predictability. In the words of Rainer Stinner of the ousted Free Democratic Party, she is “the ultimate incrementalist.” For a post-ideological age, that works.

This Germany does not indulge in experiments. It is stable and rich, with its 5.3 percent unemployment rate, balanced budget and steady growth. Europe’s largest nation, with its taste for doing one thing at a time, is in a phase of consolidation. Here again Merkel fits the spirit of the moment. A leader issued from the former East Germany, she is knitting together the united country with prudence. She represents a pragmatic Germany generation whose dictum seems to be: After the big debates, after the agonizing, let’s just get on with being prosperous.

It is easy to forget that agonizing. Yet what is perhaps most striking, returning here a little over a decade after I finished a tour as a correspondent here, is the intellectual timeout Germany has taken. With each postwar German generation another debate was engaged: The silence of the Adenauer years gave way to angry demands for an accounting from the 1960s generation; and then there was Willy Brandt on his knees in the Warsaw ghetto; and the back-and-forth over détente; and the polemics over the stationing of Pershing-2 missiles; and the miracle of unification; and the immense cost of that long process; and finally the pained self-questioning as to whether, after Auschwitz, Germany could ever be “normal” and Germans “proud” — questions that found an answer in the flag-wrapped euphoria of the 2006 World Cup.

Merkel closed the book on all that. She is the great consolidator. That is why she is loved in a nation weary of self-questioning. Sell cars, balance the books, stay competitive, avoid surprises and live happily ever after.

Is this enough for Europe’s most powerful state? Schmid entitled his commentary: “Will the Chancellor Finally Emerge from Under Her Covers?” I suspect she has already emerged: This is who Merkel is. Legacies are not her thing if legacy involves some artificial straining for historical achievement.

She has walked the fine line between her nation’s demand for fiscal prudence and the salvation of the euro. She has also walked the very fine line for Germany between demands for leadership and perceptions of ominous

dominance. Perhaps, in a likely grand coalition with the Social Democrats (the people's party no more), and without the neo-liberal Free Democrats, she will show a little more growth-oriented indulgence toward the likes of Greece. She should, but any change will be marginal.

What else? Merkel, more drawn to the Anglo-Saxon than Gallic world, will do all she can to keep Britain in the European Union, probably trading some devolution of powers back to nation states in return for fiscal integration. She will push hard for a more competitive Europe. She will exercise quiet power in Germany's mold: Against militarism and interventionism, for a more balanced world order where American leads but accepts its limits. The legacy she wants is a strong Germany in a united Europe in a freer world.

She has already changed Germany more than people acknowledge. A generation ago anyone suggesting that a childless woman from the East could lead the Christian Democrats and Germany with a gay foreign minister and a vice chancellor of Vietnamese descent would have been dismissed as crazy. She has afforded Germany the space to evolve.

Giovanni di Lorenzo, the editor of the weekly Die Zeit, told me that the other day he was out with his five-year-old daughter who, seeing all the election posters of Merkel, turned to him and asked: "Is this woman the leader of the world?"

Good question.

September 23, 2013

Angela Merkel's Next Challenge

By [THE EDITORIAL BOARD](#)

84,52

Angela Merkel's resounding [re-election](#) in Germany on Sunday is a personal triumph, but it still leaves unanswered questions about the direction she will lead Germany and the European Union over the next four years.

Under her leadership, Germany has been an oasis of relative prosperity in the slumping euro zone, and voters rewarded her for it. Although her Christian Democrats, and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union, came close to winning a majority in Parliament, she will need to find a new coalition partner. Her previous partner, the pro-business Free Democrats, were a major casualty of the vote, falling below the minimum 5 percent threshold for entering Parliament.

Ms. Merkel's most likely partner is the Social Democratic Party, despite its relatively poor showing Sunday. The two parties shared power during Ms. Merkel's first term, from 2005 to 2009. The Social Democrats are more firmly committed to strengthening the European Union than the Free Democrats. They are more open to easing austerity conditions for struggling debtor nations and favor measures that could usefully raise consumer demand at home, like setting a national minimum wage.

Reviving the euro-zone economy will not be easy. Although the severe recessions in Greece and elsewhere seem to be bottoming out and deficit projections are starting to improve, unemployment rates of more than 25 percent in Greece and Spain (and twice that for young people) are disastrous. A generation is losing its future, social tensions are rising and neo-fascist movements like Greece's Golden Dawn are growing bolder in their extremist talk.

There is blame to go around for the euro zone's economic contraction. Greece fudged its fiscal accounts. Spain and Ireland failed to restrain speculative housing bubbles. No country kept close enough watch over the banks. The European Central Bank was never granted adequate lending powers.

But the current agonies of Greece, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus owe much to the rigid austerity measures Ms. Merkel insisted on in exchange for support programs that have kept payments flowing from debtor governments to their creditors. Those measures have stymied growth and forced those governments to shred social services for their poorest citizens.

Germany's competitive export-driven economy has stayed largely immune to the recession that has gripped the rest of Europe. (While the unemployment rate in the euro zone is now 12.1 percent, in Germany it is 5.3 percent.) For Europe to prosper, Germany must boost consumer demand at home, agree to easier bailout terms for debt-crisis countries and accept a more powerful European banking union.

Despite Ms. Merkel's disappointing remarks on Monday that German policies on Europe would not change, she has softened her tone recently on austerity-related issues, suggesting that she has begun to understand the need for a more enlightened German approach. Her challenge now is to put together a government wise enough to make the necessary changes and strong enough to sell them to the German people.

September 23, 2013

Vote for Merkel Seen as Victory for Austerity

By [ANDREW HIGGINS](#)

84,53

BRUSSELS — As Angela Merkel savored the results of Germany’s national elections, newspapers on the left and right in Greece on Monday gave the same mournful assessment of what the result means beyond German borders. “Victory for the Queen of Austerity,” declared the front page of [Ta Nea](#), a center-left daily. “Merkel victory atop the ruins of the South,” said the conservative [Dimokratia](#).

Bloggers, meanwhile, posted a cartoon that showed Ms. Merkel, a stethoscope around her neck, wagging her finger at a skeleton slumped in a blue chair and ordering, “Exercise, exercise, exercise to strengthen your muscles.”

For months now, Europe has been waiting for the end of a German election campaign that, while focused almost entirely on domestic issues, stirred furtive hope among those outside Germany that, if re-elected to a third term, Ms. Merkel, despite having given no indication, would try a more energetic, and perhaps more economically stimulative, approach to leading Europe out of its extended slump. The waiting has now ended — and so, too, has any hint of a new approach.

Instead of a respite from years of grinding budget cuts and tax increases in return for bailout funds, Ms. Merkel’s conservative Christian Democrats campaigned on holding the line against expensive commitments to reviving Germany’s neighbors. Her financial aides claimed that signs that Europe’s long recession had recently become less severe had proved that its austerity policies were working.

Ms. Merkel’s electoral success — the Christian Democrats and their allies, the Christian Social Union in Bavaria, together won 41.5 percent of the popular vote — will bring “more of the same,” predicted Mats Persson, director of [Open Europe](#), a London-based research group. For countries now on economic life support, this would mean yet more painful “exercise,” which in Greece has slimmed job prospects so significantly that over 60 percent of youth are now unemployed.

Whatever coalition government emerges in Berlin from what could be weeks of haggling, Mr. Persson said, “there may be a little change of rhetoric, but the substance will remain the same.”

“There will be a continued focus on austerity,” he said.

Ms. Merkel said as much herself during a final day of campaigning on Saturday. “We have to continue on this course,” she told a rally in Berlin, denouncing the European policies of her main rival, Peer Steinbrück, who had called for a presumably mostly German-financed Marshall Plan to relieve what he called “a deadly dose of austerity.”

Still, some outside Germany held out hope that a coalition with Mr. Steinbrück and his Social Democrats could moderate Ms. Merkel’s approach.

“We should not forget that Merkel needs a partner,” said Hannes Swoboda of Austria, president of the Socialists and Democrats, a grouping of left-leaning forces in the European Parliament in Brussels. “Now is the time to get a more flexible policy. She could not be flexible before the election for fear of losing votes to the Alternative for Germany,” he said. He was referring to an upstart protest party that, campaigning on promises to scrap the euro and stop using German money to bail out Europe’s economic laggards, nearly crossed the 5 percent hurdle to enter Parliament.

Ms. Merkel's center-left opponents tried during the campaign to rally support for the idea of so-called eurobonds, which would effectively pool the debts of the 17 countries that use the euro. But even Mr. Swoboda says the new flexibility he expects from Ms. Merkel will not go that far. "This is not on the agenda," he said. "Maybe in three or four years."

The idea of pooling obligations was raised at the start of Europe's rolling debt crisis in 2009 and gained support among some economists. But, in a measure of Germany's outsize role in decision-making in Brussels, it went nowhere once Ms. Merkel made clear that she opposed it.

Asked about the possibility of Greece's receiving more funds, Ms. Merkel said on German television immediately after Sunday's election that her finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, was already committed to examining a further request, and that would almost certainly lead to a third bailout deal for Athens. Mr. Schäuble also appeared on television Sunday night, assuring Germany's European partners that Berlin would play a "reliable" role in the Continent's affairs.

For much of Europe, particularly in countries that balk at what they see as efforts by Berlin to recreate European economies in its own image, Ms. Merkel inspires a mix of anxiety and grudging respect. Italy's [La Repubblica](#) newspaper on Monday called her the "tranquil and fierce czarina that bewitched Germany." The French newspaper [Le Monde](#) declared her "Chancellor of Germany, Chief of Europe."

With nearly a third of the euro zone's economic output and the lowest unemployment rate after Austria — 5.3 percent in July compared with 27.6 percent in Greece and 26.3 in Spain, according to Eurostat, Europe's statistical agency — Germany is Europe's undisputed economic powerhouse, and also its paymaster.

But having already contributed hundreds of billions of dollars to bailout funds for Greece, Ireland and others, Berlin is in no mood to relax its insistence that countries asking for help must undertake labor market and other reforms and accept the tough discipline of "fiscal consolidation," economist-speak for austerity. [Ifo Institute](#), an economic research institute in Munich, estimates that Germany has paid out nearly \$600 billion, and has total bailout liabilities of \$868 billion.

"On the day after the election, it is going to shove back those eagerly outstretched hands like slamming down a window on an autumn storm," predicted the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. "No miracles are on their way, and there will be no presents under any Christmas trees."

Even before the election, it was clear that, barring a major upset, Berlin would stick to policies that Mr. Schäuble, in a commentary in *The Financial Times*, recently declared a great success. "The world should rejoice at the positive economic signals the euro zone is sending almost continuously," Mr. Schäuble wrote.

Officials in Brussels, the headquarters of the European Union, say they mostly agree with Mr. Schäuble's upbeat analysis, though some questioned his "triumphalist" tone. The European Commission has in recent months slowed the pace of austerity, relaxing budget targets for a number of countries and stressing labor and other reforms as well as just cuts. But it insists it is sticking to its basic policy of forcing financial discipline. "For Europe, recovery is within sight," José Manuel Barroso, the president of the union's executive arm, the European Commission, said this month.

Indeed, Europe has shown some faint flickering of a recovery, with the nations of the European Union recording overall growth of 0.4 percent in the second quarter, an anemic rate but still better than the previous six quarters of contraction.

Greece is stuck in its sixth year of recession, but this has not stopped Prime Minister Antonis Samaras from declaring this month that "Greece is turning the page," when the national statistics agency reported that the Greek economy shrank by "only" 3.8 percent in the second quarter, less than the expected 4.6 percent. It was the smallest contraction since Greece secured the first of two bailout packages from the troika of creditors — the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

A big question now is whether Greece will need a third bailout after warnings from the monetary fund that Athens, despite belt-tightening, faces a funding shortfall of nearly \$15 billion.

Reporting was contributed by Niki Kitsantonis in Athens, Elisabetta Povoledo in Rome, James Kanter in Brussels and Jack Ewing in Frankfurt.

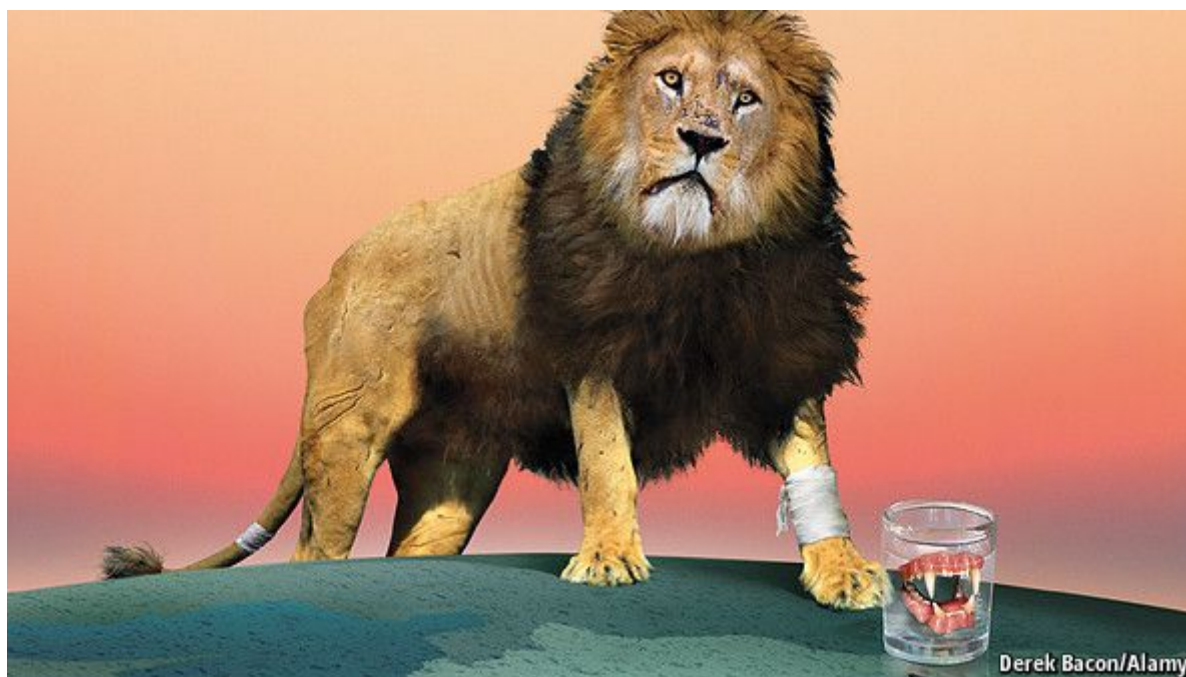
America, Russia and Syria

The weakened West

The deal over Syria's chemical weapons marks a low for those who cherish freedom

Sep 21st 2013 | [From the print edition](#)

84,56



IN JULY 1972 Anwar Sadat, president of Egypt, suddenly decided to turf out thousands of Soviet military advisers. Menaced by Egyptian leftists and undervalued by the Kremlin, he calculated that he had more to gain from siding with America. Henry Kissinger, Nixon's secretary of state, administered some deft diplomacy to broker a ceasefire between Egypt, Syria and Israel in the Yom Kippur war, and American aid duly flooded into Cairo. So did American influence: the Soviet hold over the Middle East never recovered.

The plan to wrest chemical weapons from Syria, shortly to be embodied in a UN resolution, has echoes of that era—except that the modern Metternich is a serial abuser of human rights and occasional op-ed writer on democracy for the *New York Times*, called Vladimir Putin. Russia, the country he leads, is too frail to regain its place in the Middle East. But this week, a decade after the invasion of Iraq, it suddenly became clear just how far the influence of the West has ebbed. The pity is how few Americans and Europeans seem to care about that.

The best of a very bad lot

In Western capitals the sigh of relief over Syria is audible. Barack Obama, while admitting that his diplomacy fell short on “style points”, claims that he got what he wanted. Syria's president, Bashar Assad, will sign the convention against chemical weapons and get rid of the agents that he used to kill around 1,500 of his own citizens last month (see [article](#)). Even better, Russia shares responsibility for enforcing the plan, which could lead to broader co-operation with America, while Syria's other ally, Iran, is making noises about negotiating with the Great Satan over its own nuclear programme.

The West's leaders are off the hook. Mr Obama has managed to avoid the sort of humiliating defeat in Congress that David Cameron suffered in Britain's Parliament. Now that military action is unlikely, Mr Cameron will not be embarrassed as a no-show. François Hollande no longer faces a domestic fight over his

willingness to take France to war on Congress's command. Some even see it as a victory for democracy: the people of the West did not want to fight, and got their way.

Yet the deal looks good only because the mess Mr Obama had got himself into was so bad. Step back, and the outcome looks rotten.

For a start, the deal itself is flimsy because it will be so hard to enforce. Mr Obama reserves the right to attack a delinquent Syria but the unpopularity of military action among America's voters makes it clear that only an egregious breach, such as another chemical attack, could stir the country to action. Although Mr Putin would lose face if Syria brazenly defied the agreement, he now knows that Mr Obama needs his support. Given that Russia cares more about diplomatic parity with America than about de-fanging Mr Assad, it is more likely to prolong the crisis than resolve it. Nor is it clear that Russia can force Syria to comply. Mr Assad may cooperate at first, when the will to enforce the deal is strongest. But it is hard to impose disarmament during a civil war. As time drags on, Mr Assad is likely to frustrate the process—both to keep some chemical weapons and to be seen to defy America.

America's credibility as an ally has been undermined. Whereas Mr Putin has stood firmly by Mr Assad, even while 100,000 people have perished, the West has proved an inconstant friend to the opposition. Two years ago, when only a few thousand Syrians had died, the liberal democracies called for Mr Assad's ousting, but Mr Obama refused to get mixed up in the fight, even though the regime was reeling. His lone attempt not to look weak was the promise to punish any use of chemical weapons. Since then the formerly largely moderate rebel force has become infested by Sunni extremists, including foreign fighters and al-Qaeda.

As for Syria so for the Middle East. The Arab spring has driven a wedge between the West and its allies. Mr Obama recently sent his envoy to Cairo to ask the generals not to fire on an encampment of protesting Muslim Brothers. But, in an echo of Sadat, the generals preferred to heed Saudi advice, shoot the Brothers and collect billions of dollars of Arab aid. When the cold war ended, the West's leadership showed imagination and resolve; no historian looking back at the Arab spring will say the same.

Last, America's credibility as an opponent has also suffered. That's not because all red lines that politicians draw must always be enforced. A leader who freely chooses to walk away from a fight need not suffer any loss of prestige. But a leader who the world sees is unable to fulfil his promises is inevitably weakened. And although nobody doubts that America's armed forces continue to enjoy overwhelming superiority, its unwillingness to use them undermines their ability to give force to its diplomacy.

Freedoms and constraints

The West's great problem is the paralysing legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan, exacerbated by a weak economy in Europe and, in America, vicious partisan politics. **Everyone knew that Western citizens were tired of fighting, but until Mr Obama and Mr Cameron asked them, nobody knew just how tired.**

Now every tyrant knows that a red line set by the leader of the free world is really just a threat to ask legislators how they feel about enforcing it. Dictators will be freer to maim and murder their own people, proliferators like North Korea less scared to proceed with spreading WMD, China and Russia ever more content to test their muscles in the vacuum left by the West.

The West is not on an inexorable slide towards irrelevance. Far from it. America's economy is recovering, and its gas boom has undermined energy-fuelled autocracies. Dictatorships are getting harder to manage: from Beijing to Riyadh, people have been talking about freedom and the rule of law. It should be a good time to uphold Western values. But when the emerging world's aspiring democrats seek to topple tyrants, they will remember what happened in Syria. And they won't put their faith in the West.

September 23, 2013, 8:06 p.m. ET

After Electoral Victory, Merkel Stands Apart in Europe

Win Gives Chancellor Strong Political Mandate Few European Leaders Have

By [MATTHEW KARNITSCHNIG](#)

84,58

BERLIN— [Angela Merkel](#)'s enduring popularity among Germans has confounded many in recession-worn Europe, where disaffected voters have ousted leaders across the Continent in recent years.

That the unassuming pastor's daughter from the former East Germany hasn't just survived, but thrived, through Europe's crisis can be explained in a word she has come to personify for Germans: *Vertrauen*, or trust.

Ms. Merkel's overwhelming victory in Sunday's election, in which her party nearly won an absolute majority, is the latest sign of the instinctive confidence Germans have in their leader.



Associated Press

Workers remove a campaign poster Monday, a day after Ms. Merkel's conservatives won a resounding electoral victory.

Europe's troubles have led Germany to turn inward in recent years in search of stability, and Ms. Merkel has delivered it to them. Her success in safeguarding Germany's prosperity in the face of the euro crisis, while fending off persistent calls from Europe for more money, has won the chancellor Germans' respect, if not their adoration.

"People like Angela Merkel, they like what she's doing, and they like that status quo," says John C. Kornblum, former U.S. ambassador to Germany. "There have been several blemishes on her record...but they seem to not have made one bit of difference."

Germans' resounding endorsement of Ms. Merkel on Sunday should give little comfort to those in Southern Europe still hoping for a relaxation of austerity programs. If anything, the election result offers confirmation that the chancellor is acting with the full backing of her countrymen. Even if Ms. Merkel's conservatives enter into a coalition with the center-left Social Democrats, who endorse more stimulus and less austerity for bailout recipients, the government's euro-crisis strategy won't likely change.

As the German chancellor heads into her third and likely final term, it is clear that Ms. Merkel's legacy will largely depend on whether she succeeds in preserving Germany's prized stability in the years ahead. Her support could evaporate should the euro crisis ensnare Germany and cause its own economy to falter.

For now, there are few signs Ms. Merkel's Germany will take a sudden turn for the worse, even as critics caution that energy, infrastructure and education policy are in urgent need of attention. Germany's export-driven economic growth is stable, if unspectacular. And unemployment is near historic lows.

Indeed, Ms. Merkel's handling of the euro crisis is so widely endorsed by Germans that the issue—though central to Germany's future—was largely absent from the election campaign. Instead, candidates focused on small-bore issues, such as highway tolls and child care subsidies.

The only party to vigorously challenge Ms. Merkel's strategy, the anti-euro Alternative for Germany, failed to win enough votes to get into parliament, despite a late surge.

Critics accused Germany's conservative Christian Democrats of breaking with the country's democratic traditions by using Ms. Merkel's personal popularity to dodge policy debates in the campaign. By presenting herself as a presidential figure above the political fray, Ms. Merkel succeeded in making the election more about her than the policies of her conservative party.

Voter surveys on Sunday highlighted the success of that strategy. Both among supporters of the environmentalist Greens and the radical Left party, roughly 40% said they preferred Ms. Merkel to left-leaning chancellor candidate Peer Steinbrück of the Social Democrats, according to a ZDF-Forschungsgruppe Wahlen exit poll.

Such polls suggest that while support for Ms. Merkel is broad, it may also be shallow. When asked why they support a politician both supporters and detractors increasingly refer to as "*Mutti*," German for Mom, even the chancellor's closest allies often resort to atmospherics.

"Angela Merkel makes you feel safe," said Eckhardt Rehberg, a member of parliament and fellow Christian Democrat from her home region of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in the former East.

With the heads of Europe's other major governments, from France to Italy, Spain and the U.K., facing intense domestic criticism over their economic fortunes and other issues, Ms. Merkel stands virtually alone as a national leader with a strong public mandate.

Ms. Merkel's strong election result could strengthen her hand across an array of issues in Europe, from the euro-zone's planned banking union to discussions with the U.S. over a free-trade pact.

Fearing accusations of German dominance, Berlin policy makers often describe their country these days as Europe's "reluctant hegemon." In fact, Ms. Merkel's government hasn't shied from exerting the full weight of its influence in areas it regards as central to its interests, such as the rules governing Europe's bailouts or the appointment of key European Union officials.

A Danish journalist asked Ms. Merkel at a news conference Monday how she planned to use her strengthened status as the "political giant" of Europe. Ms. Merkel, in typical aw-shucks fashion, shrugged off the suggestion of pan-Continental might.

"Europe only works if everyone's voice is heard," she said. "Those who know me know that I'm someone who seeks compromise, who approaches things creatively, and who tries to understand the interests of others."

Analyse des SZ.de-Wahlatlas

Schwarzes Land mit kleinen Farbtupfern

Der SZ.de-Wahlatlas fasst den überragenden Sieg der Union in ein beeindruckendes Bild. Er verrät auch, wo die meisten Eurokritiker leben, in welchen Regionen die Menschen am Wahlsonntag am ehesten zu Hause blieben und wo welche Koalition eine Mehrheit hätte.

Von Lilith Volkert

Am Tag nach der Wahl erinnert Deutschland an einen schwarzen Teppich, auf den aus Versehen ein paar Tropfen rote Farbe gekleckert sind. 236 schwarze Direktmandate für die Union zeigt der [Wahlatlas](#) von SZ.de - und nur 58 Erststimmensiege für die SPD. 2009 hätte man guten Gewissens noch von einem schwarz-rot-roten Flickenteppich sprechen können.

Sieht man genau hin, entdeckt man ein paar winzige bunte Tupfen in der Hauptstadt: Der Grüne Hans-Christian Ströbele hat in Berlin-Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg - Prenzlauer Berg Ost mit 39,9 Prozent das **einzigste Direktmandat** seiner Partei geholt - zum vierten Mal in Folge. Auch die Linkspartei verteidigt im Osten [Berlins](#) vier Sitze - die anderen zwölf in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (1), Brandenburg (4), Sachsen-Anhalt (5) und Thüringen (2) verliert sie.

Die **Kanzlerin** überflügelt ihren Herausforderer auch im direkten Vergleich: Angela Merkel gewinnt ihren Wahlkreis Vorpommern-Rügen - Vorpommern-Greifswald I mit 56,2 Prozent der Erststimmen, ihrem bisher besten Ergebnis. [Peer Steinbrück](#) scheitert in Mettmann I mit 34,6 Prozent an der CDU-Konkurrentin - wie schon 2009.

Die CSU hat in zahlreichen Wahlkreisen die absolute Mehrheit eingefahren - der Wahlkreis mit den **meisten Unionswählern** liegt jedoch in Niedersachsen. 63,2 Prozent der Wähler gaben in Cloppenburg-Vechta der [CDU](#) ihre Zweitstimme (SZ.de hat diesen [besonderen Wahlkreis](#) im August besucht).

Anzeige

Der "**rötteste**" Wahlkreis liegt in Gelsenkirchen, 44 Prozent stimmten hier für die [SPD](#). Die **FDP** bekam im Norden Düsseldorfs am meisten Unterstützung, 9,2 Prozent stimmten hier für die Liberalen - immer noch fünf Prozentpunkte weniger als ihr Durchschnittsergebnis bei der Bundestagswahl 2009.

Die **Alternative für Deutschland**, die es knapp nicht in den Bundestag geschafft hat, hat die meisten Wähler in Görlitz (8,2 Prozent). Ergebnisse über fünf Prozent erzielte die eurokritische Partei besonders im Osten Ostdeutschlands, im Westen [Baden-Württembergs](#) - und rund um die Bankenmetropole Frankfurt. Die **NPD**, die bundesweit auf 1,3 Prozent kam, erreicht mit 5,1 Prozent ihr stärkstes Ergebnis im Wahlkreis Sächsische Schweiz - Osterzgebirge.

In Berlin macht sich [Angela Merkel](#) gerade mit ihrer deutlichen Unionsmehrheit, die nur knapp nicht absolut geriet, auf die Suche nach einem **Koalitionspartner**. Nähme man die Ergebnisse der einzelnen Wahlkreise zum Maßstab, wäre die Frage einfacher. In 39 Wahlkreisen könnte die Union alleine regieren - 2009 waren es nur vier. Tief im Westen - in Baden-Württemberg, Hessen und rund um das Ruhrgebiet sowie bei München - gibt es noch vier Dutzend Wahlkreise mit **schwarz-gelber Mehrheit**.

Deutlich mehr sind es aber - ebenfalls in Westdeutschland - mit **schwarz-grüner** Mehrheit. Rot-Grün wäre nur in drei Wahlkreisen möglich (in Aurich-Emden, Hannover II und Herne Bochum II), eine Ampel-Koalition aus SPD, [FDP](#) und Grünen in vier (in Köln II, Oldenburg-Ammerland, Hamburg-Eimsbüttel und Kiel).

Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg war der Stimmenkönig bei der Bundestagswahl 2009. Seine Nachfolgerin in Kulmbach heißt Emmi Zeulner, im elterlichen Wirtshaus tat sie sich als Ersatzfrau beim Schafkopfen hervor. Die 26-Jährige ist aber nur eines von vielen neuen bayerischen Gesichtern in Berlin. Eine Übersicht.

Offensichtlich ist auch: Die **Wahlbeteiligung** ist im Osten tendenziell niedriger als im Westen. Besonders wenige Leute sind im Wahlkreis Harz (Sachsen-Anhalt, 58,9 Prozent) zur Urne gegangen. Am meisten waren es in Ludwigsburg in Baden-Württemberg (80,2 Prozent).

Am **durchschnittlichsten** haben die Wähler in Gießen, Hanau und Darmstadt entschieden - ihr Wahlkreisergebnis entspricht nahezu dem auf Bundesebene. 2009 konnte man den deutschen "Normalwähler" in der Südpfalz finden (SZ.de hat sich [vor der Wahl dort umgesehen](#)).

Das älteste und das jüngste Bundestagsmitglied werden in Zukunft übrigens **mehr als fünfzig Jahre Altersunterschied** haben. Der CDU-Politiker Heinz Riesenhuber aus dem Wahlkreis Main-Taunus ist 1935 geboren. Der jüngste Abgeordnete, der Duisburger SPD-Politiker Mahmut Özdemir, hat gerade erst seinen 26. Geburtstag gefeiert.

MAIN FOCUS

Merkel seeks coalition partner



Merkel in the headlines all over Europe - here in the Greek newspaper Ta Nea. (© picture-alliance/dpa)

After its victory in the [parliamentary election](#), German Chancellor Angela Merkel's CDU/CSU alliance has begun the search for a coalition partner. She had already made 'initial contact' with SPD chief Sigmar Gabriel, Merkel said on Monday. Commentators conclude that Merkel won the election thanks to her Europe policy and expect the new government to push on with [austerity](#).

[Financial Times - United Kingdom](#)

German interests are also European interests

Angela Merkel's strong performance in the elections to the Bundestag is also due to her having a different attitude to the European project than for example her CDU predecessor Helmut Kohl, the conservative daily The Financial Times writes: "Ms Merkel has developed a different vision for the EU - and of Germany's place within it. The chancellor has recognised that there is such a thing as a German national interest and made it clear that she intends to defend it. Her key insight is that protecting the interests of German taxpayers is not opposed to the struggle to keep the European single currency alive - it is a crucial part of the task. If German voters ever turned against the single currency, the entire project would sink. ... It is a measure of her success that the anti-euro [Alternative for Germany](#) party polled less than 5 per cent in this weekend's elections." (23/09/2013)

[» to the homepage \(external link, Financial Times\)](#)

[Večer - Slovenia](#)

The Eurozone's problems still unsolved

Merkel's election victory can't conceal the fact that her rigorous austerity measures aren't working in the EU, the conservative daily Večer observes: "The deteriorating situation is an increasingly clear indication that the course of treatment prescribed by Angela Merkel, the key figure in solving the euro crisis, doesn't work and that it won't work in future either because the error lies within the system. This is the system that enables the rich to get richer at the expense of the shrinking middle class and condemning growing numbers to poverty. Up to the elections Angela Merkel was able to sweep the problems in the Eurozone under the carpet. But rather than disappearing they have accumulated. And sweeping them under the carpet has given people in the EU and above all in Germany the false hope that the worst is over even though unemployment is rising, the economy is weakening and the banks are once again raking in money as if there were no crisis. And a lot of the banks in question are German ones." (24/09/2013)

[To Vima Online - Greece](#)

Athens' hopes were naive

Athens shouldn't expect too much of the new government in Berlin, writes the left-liberal online paper To Vima: "The Germans have given a resounding 'Yes' to their country's rule over Europe, a rule that is founded on the ruins of the southern European countries. It's clear that Merkel's approach to dealing with the debt crisis has been disastrous for a large part of Europe but has made Germany strong in Europe. What were those in Athens who pinned their hopes on these elections hoping for? ... Unfortunately these naive hopes will once again be disappointed. Merkel has already made it clear that the pressure on Greece won't diminish. She said this before the election. That's why she won. And now she will keep her promise." (23/09/2013)

[Adevărul - Romania](#)

Europe's Social Democrats pessimistic

The outcome of the last major national elections ahead of the European Parliament elections in May 2014 doesn't bode well for social democracy in Europe, notes journalist Ovidiu Nahoi on the blog portal Adevărul: "Angela Merkel's victory was foreseeable - the problem is the SPD's results. A showing of under 30 percent is incredibly worrying for the European Parliament elections. With a François Hollande who is rapidly losing steam and a weak British Labour leader [Ed Miliband] ... Europe's Social Democrats simply fear they won't even get enough MEPs together to retain a relative majority in the parliament and be able to control the Commission. ... It's not at all clear whether the Social Democrats are really benefiting from the consequences of the austerity measures introduced by the Conservatives of the EPP." (24/09/2013)

[Spiegel Online - Germany](#)

Merkel's strength works against her

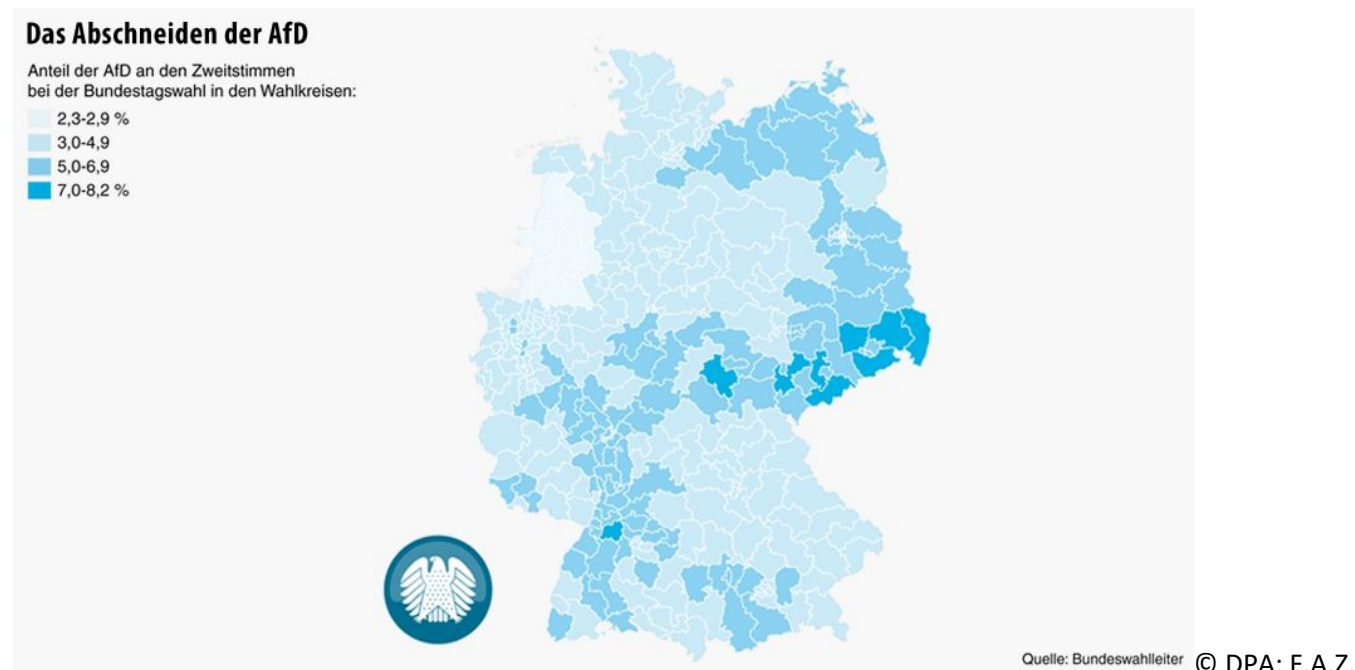
Merkel's outstanding success in the German parliamentary elections could work against her because she'll have a very difficult time finding coalition partners, columnist Jakob Augstein comments on the news website Spiegel Online: "The truth is that Merkel's course of relentless centrism has completely altered the German political system. The FDP - superfluous. The SPD - dwarfed. The Greens - weakened. And on the right margin a new reactionary force has reared its head. Time will tell whether the [Alternative for Germany](#) can withstand the propensity to fall apart that besets all new parties. But its chances are good because it offers 'traditional conservatives' a new home. ... This is a curious situation: the putative winner Merkel is now in fact 'Angela Noland'. ... One does not like to think about what the SPD would look like after another legislative period at Merkel's side. Would the party even still exist? The best thing would be new elections." (24/09/2013)

Die AfD und ihre Anhänger Professoren und Protestwähler

24.09.2013 · Die AfD hat es geschafft, auch Protestwähler an sich zu binden. Den größten Zuspruch hat die Partei von Arbeitern erfahren.

Von Grete Götze, Berlin

84,64



Die Partei Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) weiß seit dem 22. September, wen sie anspricht. Daraus kann sie jetzt Schlüsse für die anstehenden Europawahlen sowie die Landtagswahlen in Sachsen, Thüringen und Brandenburg ziehen. Außerdem kann die AfD nun die Daten zur sozialen Herkunft ihrer Wähler nutzen, um ein Parteiprogramm zu formulieren. Ausgehend von einer kleinen engagierten Kernwählerschaft hat sie es auch vermocht, Protestwähler an sich zu binden. Und entgegen der Annahme, die aus einer eurokritischen Professorenvereinigung hervorgegangene Partei werde vor allem Akademiker an die Wahlurne locken, kommen die mehr als zwei Millionen Wähler aus allen Bevölkerungsschichten.

Den größten Zuspruch hat die Partei von Arbeitern erfahren. Die Wähler waren, ähnlich wie jene der Piratenpartei, vor allem Männer. Eine weitere Gemeinsamkeit mit der Piratenpartei besteht darin, dass die AfD in allen politischen Lagern Zustimmung fand. 430.000 ehemaligen FDP-Wählern folgten an zweiter Stelle 340.000 enttäuschte Linkspartei-Wähler, auch 210.000 vormalige Nicht-Wähler konnte die Partei mobilisieren. Nicht umsonst betont Parteichef Bernd Lucke seit der Parteigründung immer wieder, dass die AfD nicht konservativ sei, sondern aus der Mitte der Gesellschaft komme und nach unideologischen Lösungen suche.

Lucke steht für jene Parteiströmung aus Professoren, die vor allem mit Zahlen argumentiert. Die zweite wichtige Strömung besteht aus Konservativen wie Konrad Adam oder Alexander Gauland, die sich für den Schutz von Ehe und Familie einsetzen und sich vor allem in der Familien- und Bildungspolitik engagieren. Entscheidend war bei der Bundestagswahl aber die dritte Strömung, die Protestwähler. Sechs von zehn Wählern haben angegeben, die AfD nicht aus Überzeugung, sondern aus Enttäuschung über die anderen Parteien gewählt zu haben. Besonders gut angekommen ist die Partei in Ostdeutschland, in Bundesländern, in denen vormals rechtsradikale Parteien sehr gute Ergebnisse erzielten.

Infolgedessen stellt sie sich nun zweigleisig auf: Einerseits gibt es von Berlin aus koordinierte Bundesfachausschüsse. Den bereits vorhandenen dreien zu den Themen Energie, Gesundheit und Verteidigung soll als nächstes ein Ausschuss für Außenpolitik folgen, was im Zusammenhang mit den Europawahlen steht. Andererseits wird die Arbeit in Landesgruppen fortgesetzt. Die daraus entstehenden Ergebnisse sollen aber laut

Adam, einem der drei Parteivorsitzenden, „knapp und thesenartig sein, die Programmarbeit darf nicht entgleisen“. Damit die Partei mit ihren derzeit etwa 17.000 Mitgliedern und Förderern steuerbar bleibt, wird es im Gegensatz zum Gründungsparteitag, wo jedes Mitglied stimmberechtigt war, beim nächsten Parteitag im Dezember oder Januar wohl ein Delegiertensystem geben.



Dass die AfD Überschneidungen mit der Linkspartei hat, betonen ihre Vertreter nicht nur gerne, um ihr Stimmen abspenstig zu machen, sondern auch, weil es als Argument gegen den Vorwurf dienen kann, rechtspopulistisch zu sein. Beatrix von Storch, auf Platz zwei der Berliner Landesliste und für manche Konservative mit ihrem Verein „Zivile Koalition“ eine wichtige Figur, sagt, die AfD habe mit der Linkspartei gemeinsam, dass sie in Bezug auf die Euro-Rettungspolitik gegen die von der Regierung betriebene Umverteilung von unten nach oben sei. Auch der Wunsch nach direkter Demokratie und die damit verbundene Kritik am Europaparlament sei eine Gemeinsamkeit mit der Linkspartei.

In der Bildungs- und Familienpolitik fordert die AfD den Ausbau des Ehegattensplittings zu einem Familiensplitting, solange Kinder zu versorgen sind. Das Leitbild einer Familie aus Vater, Mutter und Kind wird beschworen, von Gleichstellung von Partnerschaften außerhalb dieser traditionellen Ehe möchte man in der Partei nichts wissen. Ein letzter wichtiger Punkt, der für enttäuschte Liberale interessant ist, ist die Forderung nach einem schlankeren Staat, verbunden mit einer Vereinfachung des Steuerrechts im Sinne Paul Kirchhofs.

Für die Protestwähler aus den neuen, von hohen Arbeitslosenquoten geplagten Bundesländer dürfte bei den anstehenden Landtagswahlen von Interesse sein, dass die AfD sich mit der Forderung profiliert, es dürfe keine Zuwanderung in die Sozialsysteme geben. Mit ihrer Kritik am Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz verbindet sie die Forderung nach niedrigeren Strompreisen.

Nach der Wahlniederlage

Führende Grüne wollen weg von Links

24.09.2013 · Nach der Wahlniederlage wollen gemäßigte Grüne zurück in die Mitte: Weniger Gängelung und keinen Steuer-Irrweg. Und mehr Rücksicht auf Unternehmer.

Von [Henrike Roßbach](#), Berlin

84,66



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Tübingens Oberbürgermeister Boris Palmer

Nachdem die Grünen so schlecht bei der Bundestagswahl abgeschnitten haben, fordern die Realpolitiker der Partei eine Neuausrichtung. „Das ist die Stunde derjenigen, die sich real mit grünen Problemfeldern auseinandersetzen und Lösungen anbieten wollen“, sagte Thomas Gambke, Mittelstandsbeauftragter der Grünen-Fraktion, der Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung. Tübingens grüner Oberbürgermeister [Boris Palmer kritisierte das Steuerkonzept seiner Partei](#). „Viele haben nachgerechnet und gemerkt, das trifft mich“, sagte er im Deutschlandfunk. Vor allem hätten die Wahlprogramm-Pläne der Grünen die Wirtschaft vergrätzt. „Da habe ich niemanden gefunden, der gesagt hat, das finde ich jetzt aber mal ein gutes Angebot, dass die Steuern für mittelständische Unternehmen maximal 35 Prozent eines Jahresgewinns zusätzlich kosten sollen.“

Der Europaabgeordnete und ehemalige Grünen-Chef Reinhard Bütikofer warf [Spitzenkandidat Jürgen Trittin](#) vor, er sei „nur als Sprecher für den linken Flügel“ aufgetreten. Auch der frühere grüne Außenminister Joschka Fischer kritisierte, der Linksruck sei ein fataler Fehler gewesen. Baden-Württembergs grüner Ministerpräsident Winfried Kretschmann forderte, die Partei müsse stärker in die politische Mitte rücken.

Am Dienstag gab Trittin dem Druck nach und kündigte an, vom Fraktionsvorsitz zurücktreten zu wollen. [Renate Künast zieht sich ebenfalls von der Fraktionsspitze zurück](#), stattdessen will für die Realos Katrin Göring-Eckart kandidieren. Als mögliche Kandidatin aus diesem Lager hatte auch die Wirtschaftspolitikerin Kerstin Andreae gegolten. Schon vor der Wahl hatte sie der F.A.Z. gesagt, Umverteilung sei kein Wert an sich. Sie wolle nicht, dass ein Betrieb Maschinen verkaufen müsse, um die Vermögensabgabe zu bezahlen.

„Wähler waren gnädig mit uns“

Mittelstandspolitiker Gambke kritisierte den Versuch seiner Partei, in der Sozialpolitik Schwerpunkte zu setzen. Dort hätten sie keine eigenständige Position zwischen den Linken und der SPD gefunden. Die Grünen, betonte Gambke, hätten beispielsweise schon vor Jahren branchen- und regionalspezifische Mindestlöhne gefordert. Dann aber sei dieses Konzept verloren gegangen. Nun verkaufe die CDU es als ihr Programm, während die Grünen sich hinter den SPD-Mindestlohn von 8,50 Euro gestellt hätten.

In der Steuerpolitik wiederum seien zu viele Baustellen eröffnet worden. „Wir hätten uns konzentrieren müssen auf grüne Kernthemen“, steuerpolitisch etwa auf die Berufstätigkeit von Frauen und damit auf die Abschaffung des Ehegattensplittings. Letztlich könnten sie froh sein, „nur“ knapp 2 Prozentpunkte verloren zu haben. „Wir

haben viel mehr Wähler abgeschreckt. Sie sind gnädiger mit uns umgegangen, als wir uns präsentiert haben. Viele haben sich offenbar gesagt, die haben sich zwar verirrt, aber wir bleiben bei ihnen.“

Nun müsse das Programm neu ausgefochten werden. Die Grünen sollten sich auf ihre Kernthemen besinnen: Energiewende, Infrastruktur, Landwirtschaft, Klima, Staatsschuldenkrise, Frauen, Generationengerechtigkeit, Bürgerrechte. „Aber bitte schön nicht durch Gängelung und einen erhobenen Zeigefinger à la Veggie Day.“ Sie müssten stattdessen aufgreifen, was ohnehin Thema in der Gesellschaft sei. In Gesprächen mit Familienunternehmern habe er zum Beispiel erlebt, dass diese natürlich gegen die Vermögensabgabe Sturm liefen. Gleichzeitig aber seien einige angesichts der demographischen Herausforderungen durchaus bereit, zumindest über die Erbschaftssteuer nachzudenken. „Die Lehre ist, das mit den Leuten zusammen zu machen.“

Nach der Wahl

Vernichten Mindestlöhne Arbeitsplätze?

24.09.2013 · In den Koalitionsverhandlungen mit der Kanzlerin wird die SPD sicherlich einen flächendeckenden Mindestlohn einfordern. Ob der schadet, ist unter Forschern umstritten.

Von [Johannes Pennekamp](#)

84,68



© dpa

Auch Taxifahrer in Berlin fordern 8,50 Mindestlohn.

Noch wird darum gerungen, welche Parteien die künftige Bundesregierung bilden. Doch schon jetzt scheint klar: Egal wer zum [Juniorpartner in einer Regierung Merkel](#) wird, allgemeine Mindestlöhne werden wahrscheinlicher.

Einen flächendeckenden Mindestlohn von 8,50 Euro je Stunde forderte die SPD während des Wahlkampfes. Dass sie davon abrückt, scheint ausgeschlossen - zumal sich die CDU in der vergangenen Legislaturperiode mit [einer Reihe branchenspezifischer Mindestlöhne](#) dieser Position angenähert hat. Und auch die Grünen pochen auf einen Mindestlohn in derselben Höhe.

Unternehmerverbände warnen vor einem solchen staatlichen Lohndiktat und auch zahlreiche Ökonomen sehen in Mindestlöhnen ein Beschäftigungsvernichtungsprogramm. Doch das ist nur ein Teil des Gesamtbildes. Denn die wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten, die die tatsächliche Wirkung strikter Lohnuntergrenzen untersucht haben, ergeben ein sehr viel differenzierteres Bild. In mehreren empirische Studien aus dem Ausland konnten keine negativen Beschäftigungseffekte festgestellt werden.

Negativbeispiel Frankreich

Für neoklassische Ökonomen erscheint die Sachlage auf den ersten Blick eindeutig: Die Lohnhöhe bestimmt sich im freien Spiel der Märkte aus Angebot und Nachfrage. Gibt es in einer Branche viel Arbeit, aber wenige Fachkräfte, entsteht ein hoher Lohn. Gibt es dagegen viele Arbeitskräfte, aber vergleichsweise wenige Beschäftigungsmöglichkeiten – etwa unter Friseuren – können sich Angebot und Nachfrage bei 5 oder 6 Euro Stundenlohn treffen. Diktiert nun der Gesetzgeber einen Mindestlohn, der oberhalb dieses „Gleichgewichtslohnes“ liegt, dann müssen Arbeitgeber einen Teil der Angestellten entlassen, da diese weniger erwirtschaften, als sie verdienen. Erst dann passen Angebot und Nachfrage wieder zusammen.

Als Musterbeispiel dafür, dass Mindestlöhne Arbeitsplätze vernichten oder den Einstieg in den Arbeitsmarkt von vornherein verhindern, gilt Frankreich. Der Mindestlohn betrug dort zuletzt 9,43 Euro, die Arbeitslosigkeit der 15 bis 24 Jahre alten Franzosen betrug im vergangenen Jahr nach OECD-Angaben beinahe 24 Prozent. Eine Reihe wissenschaftlicher Studien sieht einen direkten Zusammenhang: „Der französische Mindestlohn stellt eine zusätzliches Hindernis für den Berufseintritt dar“, fasste eine deutsch-französische Forschergruppe um den Arbeitsmarktökonom Klaus Zimmermann in einer im Juli veröffentlichten Analyse zusammen.

Auch der Freiburger Ökonom Lars Feld betonte im Frühjahr, dass der Mindestlohn in Frankreich „gerade bei den Jugendlichen ziemlich schädlich“ ist. Feld ist Mitglied im Sachverständigenrat (fünf Weise) – auch dieses Gremium, das die Bundesregierung berät, wies zuletzt deutlich auf die Gefahren eines Mindestlohnes hin. Und die französischen Ökonomen Peirre Cahuc und Stéphane Carcillo kamen im vergangenen Jahr zu dem Schluss, dass ein einprozentiger Anstieg der Arbeitskosten die Beschäftigung unter den Geringqualifizierten um ein Prozent reduziere. Führt man sich vor Augen, dass ein Mindestlohn keine statische Marke ist, sondern nach ein nach oben offenes Gebilde, hat dieses Resultat besondere Bedeutung.

Positivbeispiele Amerika und Großbritannien

Die Erfahrungen aus Frankreich können jedoch nicht erklären, warum in mehreren Ländern die Beurteilung des Mindestlohns eher positiv ausfällt. Für Schlagzeilen sorgte vor zwei Jahren eine Studie aus den Vereinigten Staaten, in der Arbeitsmarktforscher der Eliteuniversität Berkeley zu dem Schluss kommen, dass Mindestlohnerhöhungen „starke Verdiensteffekte und keine Beschäftigungseffekte“ nach sich ziehen. Aus der Masse empirischer Mindestlohnstudien ragte die Arbeit heraus, da die Forscher nicht nur isoliert zwei Regionen - eine mit und eine ohne Mindestlohn - über einen kurzen Zeitraum miteinander verglichen. Sie betrachteten stattdessen Regionen im ganzen Land und griffen auf Daten aus einzelnen Counties (Landkreise) zurück.

Da der Untersuchungszeitraum auf 16 Jahre ausgedehnt wurde, konnten auch Langzeitfolgen eingeführter oder erhöhter Mindestlöhne betrachtet werden. Am positiven Fazit der Forscher änderte das nichts. Dieselbe Stoßrichtung hat eine Studie aus Großbritannien, einem Land, in dem seit vielen Jahren ein flächendeckender Mindestlohn existiert. Ökonomen des Royal Holloway College (University of London) hatten die Insel in hunderte Untereinheiten eingeteilt und über eine Zeit von zehn Jahre analysiert, wie sich die Einführung des Mindestlohns Ende der Neunziger Jahre ausgewirkt hat. „Der Mindestlohn hat über die gesamte Periode hinweg einen neutralen Beschäftigungseffekt“, bilanzierten die Forscher. In Strukturschwachen Regionen beobachten die Ökonomen zudem abnehmende Lohnungleichheit.

Und die Erfahrungen in Deutschland? Joachim Möller, der Direktor des Nürnberger Instituts für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung (IAB) untersuchte in einer im Jahr 2007 veröffentlichten Studie, welche Auswirkungen der Mindestlohnregelungen, die durch das Entsendegesetz in der Bauwirtschaft im Jahr 1997 wirksam wurden. Die Ergebnisse sind zwiespältig: Im Westen wirkten sich die fixen Löhne demnach nicht auf die Beschäftigung aus, im Osten seien dagegen Arbeitsplätze vernichtet worden. Möller plädiert für einen Mindestlohn mit Augenmaß. Eine mögliche Erklärung dafür, dass sie eindeutigen Prognosen des neoklassischen Modells von Angebot und Nachfrage so nicht immer eintreffen, haben Ökonomen längst gefunden: Der Markt funktioniert längst nicht so perfekt, wie in vielen Modellen angenommen.

No German, No Benefits

Turkish Family Fights Language Requirement

By Bruno Schrep

Imhan K., a Turkish woman living in Germany, had her welfare benefits slashed after her husband refused to let her take German courses. Now a court must decide whether immigrants can be forced to learn the language and adopt Western mores.

After three-and-a-half years of legal wrangling, there's still no end in sight. At least officially, the case centers on €290.70 (\$392). The K. family, thus identified to safeguard its privacy, is made up of ethnic Turks living in Germany. They claim that the state owes them the money. But, in reality, it's a matter of principle.

The questions at the heart of the dispute are: Can immigrants be forced to learn German? Can people who decline such an offer be denied welfare benefits? Or, viewed from the other perspective, can immigrants who live off state benefits refuse to integrate into society, or can they live as a group as if on an island and free of societal obligations?

The case of the K. family is typical of the problems German authorities face in dealing with immigrants from countries such as Turkey who don't want to integrate.

Ismail K. had just turned 19 when he came to Germany. It was 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell. He left behind the hardship, rigid moral values and ironclad hierarchical structures of a world whose rules have remained an internal part of him to this day. His extended family lived in a tiny village in eastern Turkey. As the head of the family, his father decided which of his sons went to school, for how long, when it was time to marry and what jobs they would have. His mother looked after the children, managed the household and generally saw to her husband's needs.

On his arrival in Germany, Ismail K. sought political asylum, claiming that Turkish authorities had falsely accused him of belonging to the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). His application was initially turned down, and for a while he faced deportation. But the case dragged on and on.

K. moved to a small town near Limburg an der Lahn in the western state of Hesse, where he married a woman from his village who had followed him to Germany. By the time he was finally granted political asylum, in 1996, the couple already had four children. Since asylum seekers aren't officially allowed to work, the family had been forced to live off welfare for many years. This hurt K.'s pride. After all, in his traditional mindset, the head of the household is responsible for providing for his family. He was therefore keen to live up to expectations.

In 1999, the naturalized immigrant started a pizza service. Business was good at first, and K. was in his element, just as he had always imagined. Now he was the one giving the orders, while relatives and acquaintances manned the pizza ovens and delivery vans.

Buoyed by his success, K. took out bigger and bigger loans, and eventually opened a large pizza restaurant, convinced that his customers would now come to him. But the plan failed, and people stayed away. Even his delivery service lost customers to competitors who undercut his prices.

In 2006, the dream of running a successful business was dead. The restaurant went bankrupt, and K. was left with a mountain of debt. The would-be entrepreneur was convinced he had failed in every way: As a businessman, as a family bread-winner and as a shining example for his children. Although still in his mid-30s, he was sometimes found staring into the distance. "Ever since he went bankrupt, he's been a broken man," a former employee says.

Blocked from Learning German

One Monday afternoon in August 2013, K. met with Florian Würz, a lawyer, in the dining room of his former pizza restaurant. The room has served as the K. family's living room ever since they were forced to leave their own home. The shiny wooden ceiling with built-in speakers and the tiled floors serve as a reminder of better days. Out on the terrace, a handful of chairs are slowly rotting away.

The head of the family, a powerful, stocky man with a five o'clock shadow, asked his lawyer in broken German about the next steps in the legal proceedings. He has never really learned German. But, unlike his wife, who sat silently at his side, he can at least make himself understood. Although she has spent the past 22 years in Germany, Imhan K. has only the most basic vocabulary, barely enough to buy bread or a soda. "But she understands a lot," her husband assures the lawyer. In Mr. K.'s eyes, that's all she needs.

But does she think so, too? Isn't it frustrating for her to live in a country in which she can't even speak with the locals? Sometimes it can be quite difficult, an acquaintance translates for her. But she manages to get by. After all, the family mainly speaks Turkish, and they have little contact with Germans. If anything needs explaining -- say, at the doctor's office or to the authorities -- the children jump in as interpreters.

Mrs. K.'s poor German language skills have been at the center of a bitter legal dispute for years.

Ever since the disastrous collapse of his pizza enterprise seven years ago, Ismail K. hasn't worked -- at least not officially -- and the family has been forced to live off welfare. Whenever his local employment office in Weilberg encourages him to find a job, he counters that he has several debilitating ailments that prevent him from working: backaches, a damaged shoulder caused by a car accident, knee problems, diabetes and the depression triggered by his bankruptcy. The now 43-year-old often gets doctors' note freeing him from having to look for work.

Since he has rejected so many job offers, the employment office has cut his unemployment benefits -- first by 30 percent and then by 60. They eventually cut it off completely for three months. And that's when the authorities started taking a closer look at K.'s wife, Imhan, then 41 years old. But she had her hands full already. Four of the couple's six children were still living at home, and her husband wanted to be taken care of as well. On weekday evenings, she also worked as a cleaner for a temp agency.

If her German were better, she would be able to find more qualified work and earn more money, a case worker at the labor office explained. So she offered Imhan K. a free German language course, with lessons three mornings a week from 8 a.m. until noon.

Mr. K., who had accompanied his wife to the employment office, objected immediately and vociferously. "Impossible!" he shouted. "No way. That's out of the question!" He said his wife was far too old to learn German, and in any case, she didn't have time to attend lessons. Who, he demanded, would take their youngest daughter to kindergarten in the morning?

Though she sat silently through her husband's outburst, and only understood a fraction of what was being said, Imhan K. at least got the gist of the conversation: Her husband didn't want her to learn German. Intimidated, she turned the offer down. Her husband grabbed her by the shoulder and hurried her out of the room.

Mutual Outrage

Mrs. K.'s involuntary refusal to learn German runs counter to the efforts by towns and cities across Germany, which offer free language courses to female Muslim immigrants in particular as a way to help them escape the

isolation often imposed by their own families. The city of Frankfurt alone runs hundreds of these courses as part of its "Mommy's Learning German" program. These lessons are primarily aimed at women from Turkey.

According to a study by Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, about 70 percent of Turkish women living in Germany have never learned a profession. Many work from morning till night in the home, and some rarely step outside their own four walls. Some, like Imhan K., can barely manage a handful of German words after decades spent living in Germany. As a result, they are completely dependent on the help of others in their daily lives.

Since Mrs. K. rejected their offer, the employment office in Weilburg decided to cut the mother-of-six's welfare by 30 percent for three months, that is, by €96.90 a month. They stressed that, rather than being meant as a punishment, it was meant -- as they put it in their bureaucratic jargon -- "as an economic sanction to enforce a change of behavior of a predominantly educational nature."

Mr. K. was outraged by the decision and refused to back down. "The employment office is spying on us," he insists to this day. So he asked his lawyer to sue the authorities on his wife's behalf -- thus adding yet another case to the statistics: Germany's social welfare courts are currently plowing through some 200,000 appeals against welfare cuts.

Almost half of them are eventually successful, but the K. family's case was turned down. In the words of the ruling by the court in Wiesbaden, an ability to speak and write German is an absolute prerequisite for permanent integration into the labor market. Mrs. K. should therefore have learned German. In other words: If you want welfare, you have to learn German.

The court rejected the argument that Mrs. K. had no time to attend lessons due to her dual role managing her household and cleaning in the evening. It said her husband would simply have to help out. After all, since he was unemployed, he would have "no problem" taking over responsibility for some of her chores.

Clashing Cultures

Ismail K. didn't understand the ruling's rationale. Clearly it was a cultural misunderstanding of shocking proportions. Although he had lived in Germany for 24 years, K. had always clung to the patriarchal privileges of the country in which he was born. Was he -- the head of the family -- expected to look after children? Was he now supposed to do the shopping, or maybe even cook? Owing to his diabetes, K. has to eat several small meals a day. Did they now want him to prepare this food by himself?

That's a woman's role, Mr. K. insisted. And, in any case, he was too ill to do so even if he wanted to. When K. submitted a terse doctor's certificate claiming that he couldn't look after his children due to "emotional problems," the court dismissed it, describing the letter as a "mere certificate of convenience."

Even though the case centered on a relatively small sum -- a bit less than €300 -- Würz, the lawyer, filed an appeal citing a similar case from a few years earlier. In 2007, an appeals court had overturned a ruling by a lower court that had rejected a claim by a welfare recipient. "We therefore have a good chance of winning," Würz says.

Whatever the regional social welfare court for the state of Hesse decides, K.'s children are now old enough to ask themselves whether they want to stay in Germany. Three of them are now adults and have opted to take Turkish citizenship. They have married people from within their circle of Turkish friends, and they have little contact with German families.

That is less unusual than one might think. A survey conducted by a Berlin-based polling firm found that some 62 percent of Turkish migrants prefer to be among their fellow countrymen, a far higher proportion than earlier polls had found. Only 15 percent consider Germany to be their only home, while 45 percent yearn to return to Turkey at some point.

That's not an option for Merve, the second-youngest of K.'s daughters. The 13-year-old rejects such paternalistic ideas. Unlike her mother, she refuses to wear a headscarf, and she occasionally even talks back to her strict father. At school, she learned to speak perfect German, and she dreams of a future in her adopted home.

"I want to graduate from middle school and high school, and then I want to go to university," she says. And what does she want to be when she grows up? Without hesitation she replies: "A dentist."

Translated from the German by Jan Liebelt

Angie Abroad

What Merkel's Win Means for Berlin's Allies

Foreign policy has never been one of Angela Merkel's strong suits. But several German allies will be watching closely to see how the chancellor might use her new-found power on the international stage.

In a result that was closely watched around the world, Merkel crushed her opponents -- and an ally -- in the German election on Sunday, winning a better-than-expected 41.5 percent of the vote. Though it remains to be seen which party she will form a government with, the chancellor has cemented her role as the most powerful politician in Europe.

Considering her status in Europe and on the global stage, it is surprising that foreign policy played little or no part in her campaign for re-election. "Merkel has never had a passion for foreign policy," Olaf Böhnke of the European Council on Foreign Relations told SPIEGEL ONLINE on the eve of the vote. "She is happy to be in a leading role in Europe, but many foreign relationships are seen (by her) through the prism of economics."

[That is particularly true in Europe.](#) But beyond the euros and cents, her stance on global issues has been watched closely and heavily criticized in the past. While Germany has been a reliable partner in Afghanistan, Berlin has occasionally stumbled badly in the Middle East and North Africa. Her abstention from the United Nations Security Council vote on Libya in 2011 was widely lambasted as was her [apparent indecision on Syria](#) more recently. The [Merkel Doctrine](#), which prioritizes arms exports over active involvement, has also raised eyebrows abroad.

Her broad approach to foreign policy is unlikely to change. But her resounding election victory will affect Germany's relations with some of its closest allies and neighbors. SPIEGEL ONLINE takes a look at what Merkel's third term might mean for Berlin's relationships with France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and Russia.

FRANCE

Chancellor Angela Merkel's resounding win at the German election on Sunday was also a victory for France's center-right opposition: Jean-Francois Copé of the conservative UMP party jumped at the chance to deliver his heartfelt congratulations.

French President François Hollande, while also quick to congratulate the chancellor, did so with significantly less enthusiasm. "Mutti's Triumph," as it was referred to by France's left-wing *Libération* newspaper, is daunting for Hollande in more ways than one. Not only does he have to bury thinly-veiled hopes for a "left-wing Europe" for another four years, his popularity is waning at home -- while Merkel's is skyrocketing.

According to a poll published by France's daily *Figaro* newspaper, less than a quarter of French voters still support his course (23 percent), while more than half would have voted for Merkel at the German election (56 percent).

"The balance of power has tipped further in favor of Merkel," says Anne-Marie Le Gloanec, a political scientist at French university Sciences Po. "It's a paradox: the chancellor is at the zenith of her power. The president, meanwhile, has reached a low point in terms of popularity."

Privately, the prospect of a grand coalition with the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) will be welcomed in the Elysée Palace. The French president is hopeful that the SPD will enable progress on several issues he holds dear, including the banking union and a single fiscal oversight body.

But the imbalance in political fortunes between Berlin and Paris does not bode particularly well for an effective German-French partnership of the kind that Europe needs. Hollande will have to become used to playing second fiddle. But he too has four years remaining in his term -- plenty of time for the two to develop a stronger working relationship.

TURKEY

For Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), Merkel's victory on Sunday was a foregone conclusion. With Merkel remaining in the Chancellery for another four years, the prospect of Turkey joining the European Union is becoming increasingly remote. In contrast to her Social Democratic challengers, Merkel's conservatives have long been opposed to allowing Turkey into the EU.

Any hope that Merkel might change her mind as she has on so many other issues is likely to be in vain. The Christian Social Union, the Bavarian sister party to Merkel's Christian Democrats, has been even more adamant in its refusal to consider a Turkish membership. And the CSU on Sunday did extraordinarily well in Bavaria, which will likely increase its influence in the conservative camp.

Indeed, Turkey's minister for European Union affairs, Egemon Bagis, asserted even before Sunday's vote that a "prejudice" among member states was to blame for the fact that Turkey's cherished goal of joining the EU was likely to end in disappointment.

Turkey's accession talks have stalled in recent years. In off-the-record interviews, several Turkish politicians say Merkel is to blame for the impasse. It is doubtful whether Turkish accession talks, which began in 2005, will survive four more years of Merkel.

UNITED KINGDOM

Chancellor Angela Merkel's victory on Sunday made for interesting headlines in the British media. "Merkel Romps to Victory," declared Rupert Murdoch-owned broadcaster Sky. "Merkel's Landslide Win Is Good for David Cameron," asserted *The Sun*, the country's most powerful tabloid.

Indeed, her win bodes well for Prime Minister David Cameron's conservatives. It is hoped that the CDU's victory will set the tone for the UK general election in 2015 -- Cameron is hoping that his austerity measures will be rewarded at the ballot box. "The message from the German election is the following: People want economic stability," says Olaf Cramme of London-based think tank Policy Network. "This will give the conservatives a boost."

David Cameron is also relying on Merkel for help as a referendum on Britain's EU membership approaches on the horizon in 2017. Merkel has become increasingly vocal about her wariness of handing more powers over to Brussels and her vision for the EU is that of a collection of nation states rather than a United States of Europe. That jibes well with Cameron's fight to claw back powers from Brussels.

Still, it is far from plainsailing for London. Merkel will need a coalition partner and both the Social Democrats and the Greens are skeptical of Merkel's (and Cameron's) approach. The British prime minister is no doubt concerned that Merkel may be forced to steer a different course on Europe than the one she has followed for the last four years.

According to Peter Kellner, head of British polling firm YouGov, "a coalition between the CDU and either the SPD or the Greens would hamper Cameron's EU reforms."

RUSSIA

In the wake of Sunday's vote, the Russian media has heaped praise on Merkel's third consecutive election win. The government-funded *Rossiskaja Gazeta* newspaper drew parallels between Merkel's successful campaign against her challenger Peer Steinbrück, and Putin's victory against opposition leader and Kremlin dissident Alexei Navalny.

Despite the accolades, Merkel -- who is seen as the closest ally of President Putin in the European Union -- has never been as friendly with the Russian leader as was her predecessor, Gerhard Schröder. The SPD chancellor famously called Putin a "flawless democrat," whereas Merkel has often censured Moscow for oversteps and human rights shortcomings. "She has corrected the Schröder course when it comes to Russia by meeting with human rights groups and the like," says Olaf Böhnke at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Merkel's stance has resulted in a significant cooling in relations between Berlin and Moscow and there have been no signs of improvement recently as she has continued to be vocal about repressive laws introduced under Putin's leadership in recent years. Most recently, the leaders sparred over military intervention in Syria.

Her election program does call for a new partnership agreement between Russia and Germany, and more cooperation between the citizens of the two countries. But it clearly states that cooperation is dependent on the Kremlin's stance on "legal and democratic standards for its citizens".

A grand coalition between the CDU and the SPD would be welcomed in Moscow, as Schröder's Moscow-friendly legacy still colors the party's approach to the Kremlin. A coalition with the Greens, meanwhile, would be less popular: In such an scenario, human rights issues would feature even more heavily on the bilateral agenda.

'Merkel Must Take Action'

SPD Demands a New Europe Approach

Chancellor Merkel is likely heading towards a coalition with the Social Democrats. SPD leaders have begun making concrete demands for changes to her policies on Europe. European Parliament President Schulz wants quick action.

Chancellor Angela Merkel at the head of a coalition with the Social Democrats? It is a pairing Germany has seen before, most recently from 2005 to 2009. And now, it is looking increasingly likely that a redux is looming -- to the point that prominent SPD politicians are [starting to draw their red lines for European policy](#).

Martin Schulz, president of European Parliament and a leading member of the SPD, has taken the lead this week. In comments to SPIEGEL for a special election issue to be published on Wednesday, he appealed to Merkel to take the social hardships facing many across Europe more seriously. He said more needed to be done to address high youth unemployment in EU countries in Southern Europe that have been hard-hit by the debt crisis.

"After giving lip service to social issues, Merkel must now finally take action," Schulz told SPIEGEL.

It was one of the first concrete EU policy demands made by the SPD since Sunday's election. Addressing the chancellor's unpopular austerity measures in Europe, Schulz said, "Merkel will not simply be able to continue to pursue this policy with the SPD" at her side. A coalition pairing Merkel's conservatives with the SPD is widely seen as the most likely outcome of the Sunday vote.

EU Commissioner: 'A Grand Coalition Is Good for Europe'

Other top CDU politicians in Brussels have likewise commented this week. Günter Oettinger, Germany's representative on the European Commission, told SPIEGEL he supported a political alliance between the CDU and the SPD. "A grand coalition is good for Europe," Oettinger told SPIEGEL. The EU energy commissioner said he hoped that that political constellation would allow Germany to advance again on the issue of climate policy in Europe. Merkel's CDU had openly fought with its outgoing coalition partner, the business-friendly Free Democrats, over climate policy. Berlin has lagged on making progress towards its climate goals as a result.

Addressing problems with policies relating to Merkel's plan to shift from nuclear energy to renewables under the so-called *Energiewende*, Oettinger said the government needs to make changes to the Renewable Energy Act (EEG). "A number of provisions of Germany's Renewable Energy Act are barely compatible with EU law," he said. "The German government needs to take urgent action on this." In addition to steep electricity price hikes for consumers, the law also includes many problematic exceptions for industrial electricity consumers, he said.

Even conservative Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker is indirectly supportive of a CDU-SPD alliance. The influential European statesman and former Euro Group president said lessons must also be taken from the strong showing made by the euroskeptic Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. The party's main platform is the elimination of the euro and the restoration of a strong German national currency. "The success of the AfD means that we have a problem explaining the euro," he said. Juncker also told SPIEGEL he expects a grand coalition comprised of the CDU and SPD to adapt "more gentle approaches" to its European partners than in the past. At the same time, the prime minister praised the SPD's policy on Europe to date for its "excellent balance between solidarity and solidity."

CDU Official: ' Europe Isn't Going to Wait'

It is clear the SPD will demand concessions in exchange for governing together with the CDU, but already some conservatives are asking the party not to drag its feet on coalition talks. Volker Kauder, who heads the CDU's group in parliament, said that while it was necessary to take the time necessary to negotiate a government, unnecessary delays should be avoided. "Europe isn't going to wait for a government to be formed in Germany," he said. "We need to be prepared to act."

Kauder also said the current government is prepared to take into consideration the views of its potential future partner on current decision-making in parliament. "I know it won't be easy for the SPD if the government has to make decisions during the course of coalition negotiations," he said. He offered to repeat the procedures set up the last time the CDU and SPD negotiated to form a government in 2005, namely that working groups would be set up and decisions to be made prior to the establishment of the new government would be agreed together.

SPIEGEL ONLINE International will publish a selection of stories from DER SPIEGEL's new election special on Wednesday, including analysis from Berlin and Brussels.

En Allemagne, le parti anti-euro a réussi à fédérer les eurosceptiques

Le Monde.fr | 24.09.2013 à 18h38 • Mis à jour le 24.09.2013 à 21h15 | Par [Frédéric Lemaître](#) (Berlin, correspondant)

84,79



Le parti anti-euro, Alternative pour l'[Allemagne](#) (AfD), n'a pas tout à fait gagné son pari. Avec son score de 4,7% des voix, obtenu dimanche 22 septembre, il ne fait pas son entrée au Bundestag. Pourtant, dans les [analyses](#) et les tableaux du scrutin publiés par les journaux au lendemain des élections, l'AfD est systématiquement référencée alors que le parti Pirates n'y figure pas.

De fait, pour un mouvement créé il y a moins de six mois, le score de l'AfD est loin d'être négligeable. Surtout, chacun sent bien que ce parti est en phase avec un courant de la [population](#). Selon les instituts de sondage, ses 2,1 millions d'électeurs viennent de tous les horizons politiques. Certes l'AfD a d'abord attiré les déçus du parti libéral (430000) mais, de manière surprenante, également ceux de Die Linke (340 000), sans doute attirés par un discours plus radical sur l'euro. Le parti de la gauche radicale a, en effet, renoncé à se [prononcer](#) contre l'euro. Par ailleurs l'AfD a attiré 290 000 électeurs de la CDU et 180 000 électeurs du SPD.

"LIE SOCIALE"

Le premier point de son programme est dépourvu d'ambiguïté : *"Nous exigeons un démantèlement ordonné de la zone euro. L'Allemagne n'a pas besoin de l'euro. L'euro nuit aux autres pays"*. L'AfD préconise donc (point 2 du programme) : *"La réintroduction des monnaies nationales ou la création d'unions monétaires plus petites et plus stables. La réintroduction du deutsche mark ne doit pas être un tabou"*. Mais attention, officiellement, l'AfD n'est pas un parti anti-européen. Son président-fondateur, Bernd Lucke, n'a de cesse d'[expliquer](#) que *"l'euro divise l'[Europe](#)"*. L'AfD est pour une *"Europe des Etats souverains avec un marché intérieur commun"*.

Ces derniers temps, l'AfD a lancé d'autres thèmes. Bernd Lucke a notamment critiqué les étrangers qui vivent de la générosité supposée du système de protection sociale allemand et qui constituent *"une sorte de lie sociale"*. Un de ses adjoints a préconisé de [prendre](#) ses distances avec la France et de se [rapprocher](#) de la [Russie](#). Pour lui, en [politique](#) étrangère, Bismarck (chancelier du Reich de 1871 à 1890) constitue un modèle.



Agé de 50 ans, économiste enseignant à l'université de Hambourg, adhérent de la CDU durant 33 ans, Bernd Lucke incarne parfaitement ces conservateurs qui reprochent à Angela Merkel et à la Banque centrale européenne de [prendre](#) des risques inconsidérés en aidant les pays en difficulté. Même s'il se dit que des

militants néonazis ont tenté d'[infiltrer](#) l'AfD, le parti essaie d'[occuper](#) un créneau à la droite de la CDU-CSU tout en restant dans le jeu démocratique.

L'AfD est l'expression politique de tout un courant eurosceptique, que l'on retrouve dans tous les partis à l'exception des écologistes et qui est porté notamment par des économistes, soutenu par le quotidien conservateur *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Début septembre, dans ce journal, 136 économistes dénonçaient une nouvelle fois la politique européenne de la Banque centrale européenne (BCE), notamment ses achats d'obligations émises par des Etats européens en difficulté.

LA PERSPECTIVE DES EUROPÉENNES

Parmi eux, Hans-Werner Sinn, président de l'Institut Ifo de Munich, l'un des économistes allemands sinon les plus influents du moins les plus médiatiques. En bons Allemands, ces économistes se tournent régulièrement vers les juges de la Cour constitutionnelle de Karlsruhe pour empêcher les politiques de [commettre](#) l'irréparable. Ces plaignants préfiguraient la "*clientèle*" de l'AfD. En 2012, la plainte déposée contre le Mécanisme européen de stabilité émanait de conservateurs eurosceptiques mais aussi de Die Linke et d'une association (37 000 adhérents) présidée par Herta Daubler-Gmelin, membre du Parti [social](#)-démocrate et même ministre de la [justice](#) de 1998 à 2002.

Quelle peut être l'influence de l'AfD sur la vie politique ? Nul ne sait aujourd'hui s'il parviendra à s'[inscrire](#) dans le paysage politique allemand ou s'il va rapidement disparaître, à l'instar du parti Pirates. Prochains tests : les élections européennes de mai 2014 auxquelles l'AfD compte bien [participer](#) ainsi que les scrutins régionaux qui se dérouleront en 2014 dans trois Etats-régions de l'est de l'Allemagne : la Thuringe, la Saxe et le Brandebourg.

September 24, 2013

Greece, in Anti-Fascist Crackdown, Investigates Police

By [LIZ ALDERMAN](#)

84,81

ATHENS — The photo splashed on the cover of a Greek newspaper this weekend shocked a nation: Pavlos Fyssas, a Greek rapper whose music inveighed against far-right groups, lay dying in a pool of his own blood as his girlfriend cradled him in her arms, moments after he was stabbed in the heart.

The suspect has been linked to Greece's neo-fascist Golden Dawn party. Almost as chilling are accusations by some witnesses that a squad of police officers stood by as a group of burly, black-clad party members chased Mr. Fyssas down. A police spokesman denied that account, saying officers arrived right after the stabbing, in a gritty Athens suburb last Wednesday, and promptly arrested the suspect.

The killing of Mr. Fyssas has spurred the government to begin a risky crackdown on Golden Dawn, opening its first investigation into whether the police forces are infiltrated by sympathizers or members of the group, one of the most violent rightist organizations in Europe.

On Tuesday, officers raided three police stations on the outskirts of Athens. The sweep came a day after the government replaced seven senior police officials — including the chiefs of special forces, internal security, organized crime and the explosives unit — to ensure the investigation would take place with “absolute objectivity.” In addition, two top members of the Greek police force resigned abruptly Monday, citing “personal reasons.”

Such steps have the potential for volatile repercussions in a country where the security forces have had links to far-right organizations at various points since the end of World War II. They are likely to test the determination of the government and the public to turn back the influence of Golden Dawn, which has climbed steadily in opinion polls in the past year and has 18 of its members in Parliament.

“This is a pivotal moment,” said Harry Papatiriu, the director of the Institute of International Relations at Panteion University in Athens. “It is not clear whether Greece will become more or less stable as a result of any crackdown. There is always the risk that there is a more violent response, but this needs to be done.”

Until now, the government and most of the Greek public have stood by in a kind of outraged tolerance as Golden Dawn intensified a campaign of intimidation against immigrants, whom the group blames for a rising tide of crime and accuses of taking jobs away from Greeks amid a grinding economic crisis.

“But now they have killed a Greek, and they have crossed a red line,” Mr. Papatiriu said. “That has triggered a new movement against them.”

The public outcry after the killing of Mr. Fyssas, who used the stage name Killah P, placed greater pressure on Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, a member of the right-leaning New Democracy party, to investigate a police force he has repeatedly defended, despite a cascade of reports drawing links between the police and Golden Dawn.

Human rights groups say the police have for the most part looked the other way as Golden Dawn has systematically terrorized immigrants. These aggressive acts, sometimes captured on video by Golden Dawn members and posted on the Internet, involve roving groups crushing market stands run by immigrants, riding in gangs on motorbikes armed with clubs and shields bearing swastika-like symbols and beating immigrants with wooden poles draped in the Greek flag.

Nikos Demertzis, a professor of political sociology at the University of Athens, said allegations of police collusion with the far right were not surprising. “Generally there is a tradition in Greece that the far-right organizations have certain links with the police — this is a historic, recurring theme,” Mr. Demertzis said.

Armed with promises to restore jobs and order, members of Golden Dawn hew to nationalistic and xenophobic slogans, appealing to marginalized Greeks in rough areas populated by a rising tide of unemployed immigrants, mostly from Pakistan and North Africa.

But Golden Dawn has also increasingly clashed with leftist groups. This month, thousands of Greeks protested in Athens after about 50 Golden Dawn members, wielding bats and crowbars, attacked members of the Communist Party as they hung posters for a youth festival, leaving nine people hospitalized.

Mr. Fyssas appears to have been another symbolic target. The lyrics of his rap songs often criticized what he saw as a rising tide of fascism in Greece perpetrated by Golden Dawn.

There are conflicting reports about what happened in the moments before his death. The police are investigating witnesses’ accounts that Mr. Fyssas was watching a soccer game in a cafe when one of his friends made a disparaging remark about Golden Dawn that was overheard by another patron.

Not long afterward, according to some accounts by witnesses, about 30 Golden Dawn members, including the suspect in the killing, Giorgos Roupakias, 45, converged on the cafe. Mr. Fyssas’ mother, who was not present at the scene of the killing, has asserted that about 12 police officers were present when the stabbing took place.

“Golden Dawn is more violent than far-right groups in other countries,” Mr. Papatotiriou of Panteion University said. “They have morphed into an organization that is much nastier and violent and criminal than typical far right elsewhere. Whereas one might disagree with Marine Le Pen,” he said, referring to the leader of the far-right party in France, “these guys here emulate the Nazi model and resort a lot to violence.”

Mr. Demertzis of the University of Athens said Golden Dawn was suspected of being organized like a paramilitary organization, headed by a leader who is surrounded by 10 to 20 people close to him. Cells of 30 to 50 people in different areas of the country are organized “in full obedience as soldiers,” Mr. Demertzis said, adding that they take an oath of loyalty to the leader and the organization. “They operate like commandos, or special forces in the sense that they are supposed to leave no traces behind.”

Investigators are also looking into reports in the Greek news media that special forces officers in the military have secretly trained with Golden Dawn members.

The police strongly deny any ties between their ranks and Golden Dawn. “The aim of the Greek police is for there to be no shadow over the force,” a police spokesman, Christos Parthenis, said Tuesday. “The stance of the Greek police opposite every incident of violence or lawlessness is nonnegotiable: full investigation, zero tolerance and unwavering enforcement of the law.”

The leader of a police union admitted to some troubles within the force, but blamed government officials for a failure to address the problems. “During the last three years, there were many cases during which our colleagues displayed tolerance toward outbreaks of violence by members of Golden Dawn,” said Christos Fotopoulos, head of the Federation of Greek Police Officers, during an interview on Greek television. He said that the federation had flagged the episodes to alert police chiefs and the Public Order Ministry, but that there was little reaction from either.

Fünfprozentklausel in der Kritik

In der Politik und unter Wahlrechtsexperten wächst die Kritik an der Fünfprozentklausel. Wie der SPIEGEL berichtet, hält es der Grünen-Abgeordnete Hans-Christian Ströbele für "demokratierechtlich bedenklich", dass durch die Sperrklausel im deutschen Wahlrecht bei der Bundestagswahl am vergangenen Sonntag rund 6,8 Millionen Zweitstimmen von Wählern unberücksichtigt blieben, das sind 15,7 Prozent. Es handelt sich dabei um die Stimmen für jene Parteien, die im Ergebnis die Fünfprozentmarke nicht erreichten, darunter die FDP (4,8 Prozent) und die AfD (4,7 Prozent). Die Tatsache, dass nie zuvor bei einer Bundestagswahl eine so große Zahl von Wählerstimmen erfolglos blieb, stellt aus der Sicht von Verfassungsrechtlern einen unverhältnismäßig harten Eingriff in das Gebot der Wahlrechtsgleichheit dar. Der SPIEGEL zitiert den hannoverschen Verfassungsrechtsexperten Hans-Peter Schneider, der eine Absenkung der Höhe der Sperrklausel als "verfassungsrechtlich geboten" bezeichnet. Der Grüne Ströbele, dessen Partei mit 8,4 Prozent ein Ergebnis deutlich über der Grenze erzielte, hält sogar eine Verminderung der Sperrgrenze auf "zwei bis drei Prozent" für angemessen. Auch mit einer mildereren Regelung als der jetzt geltenden sind nach Expertenansicht hinreichend stabile Mehrheiten im Bundestag sicherzustellen.

18. September 2013, 06:30 Uhr

Britisches Lob für AfD

"Lucke säße in London im Kabinett"

Von [Carsten Volkery](#), London

84,84

In Deutschland ist die AfD eine Splitterpartei, in Großbritannien läge sie im Mainstream: Konservative Euro-Skeptiker sind voll des Lobes für die Newcomer. Sie hoffen, dass sich Kanzlerin Merkel von den Euro-Gegnern treiben lässt - und zusammen mit Premier Cameron Reformen in Brüssel durchsetzt.

Als Bernd Lucke vor der Sommerpause zu Besuch in [Großbritannien](#) war, wurde der Gast regelrecht hofiert. Abgeordnete der regierenden Konservativen trafen sich mit dem Parteichef der [Alternative für Deutschland](#) (AfD) zu Vieraugengesprächen. Die Hauptnachrichtensendung des Landes, die BBC-Show "Newsnight", lud ihn zur besten Sendezeit zum Gespräch ins Studio. Niemand beschimpfte ihn als Rechtspopulist, stattdessen lobten alle seine Intelligenz.

"Bernd Lucke ist ein sehr beeindruckender Mann", sagt Douglas Carswell, einer der führenden EU-Skeptiker der britischen [Konservativen](#): "Er ist bei den Tories hochangesehen."

Das Abschneiden der AfD bei der Bundestagswahl wird auf der Insel mit Spannung erwartet. Die Anti-Euro-Partei gilt als überfälliger Neuzugang in der deutschen Politik. Konservative wie Carswell hoffen, dass sie doch noch Gleichgesinnte in Deutschland finden werden. Während die AfD im [Bundestagswahlkampf](#) teilweise in eine Schmutzlecke gestellt wird, können die Briten so gar nichts Anstößiges an ihr erkennen. "In Großbritannien wäre Lucke ein moderater Mainstream-Konservativer", sagt Carswell. "Er säße wahrscheinlich im Kabinett."

"Wäre ich Deutscher, würde ich AfD wählen"

Als Lucke im Juni vor einer Wand mit schwarz-rot-goldenen Flaggen im "Newsnight"-Studio saß, kündigte ihn Moderator Jeremy Paxman als Mann des Tabubruchs an. Es gebe in Deutschland eine neue Partei, "die das bislang Unausprechliche zu sagen wagt", sagte Paxman. "Der [Euro](#) ist Wahnsinn." Lucke lächelte höflich und beantwortete die wohlwollenden Fragen in fließendem Englisch.

Die [konservative Politik-Website ConservativeHome](#) schreibt, das Programm der AfD sei aus britischer Sicht "nichts Besonderes". Die Partei sei nicht mit der britischen Unabhängigkeitspartei Ukip zu vergleichen, die den Austritt aus der EU fordert. Die AfD stehe vielmehr inhaltlich den Tories am nächsten, die ebenfalls den Euro ablehnen und die EU reformieren wollen. Die Partei von Premierminister [David Cameron](#) sei "in deutschen Augen offensichtlich eine rechtspopulistische Bewegung".

Der konservative Kommentator Andrew Gimson schreibt: "Wäre ich ein deutscher Wähler, würde ich mich so sehr über die Weigerung der beiden großen Parteien ärgern, über Europa zu debattieren, dass ich AfD wählen würde." Der Sieg der neuen Partei könne die große Geschichte des Wahlsonntags werden, schrieb Gimson am Dienstag in der "Times": "Eine Gruppe ehrlicher und eloquenter Euro-Skeptiker hat Deutschlands erdrückenden politischen Konsens aufgebrochen und den Bundestag erreicht."

Cameron setzt auf Merkel

Die Sympathisanten der AfD sitzen jedoch - wie Carswell - auf den hinteren Bänken im Unterhaus. Die Regierung hingegen setzt weiterhin auf die Schwesterpartei CDU. Premier Cameron hofft, dass [Angela Merkel](#) ihm in ihrer dritten Amtszeit hilft, nationale Zuständigkeiten aus Brüssel in die Hauptstädte zurückzuholen.

Aus Camerons Sicht ist der Aufstieg der AfD ein zweischneidiges Schwert. Auf der einen Seite kann er hoffen, dass Merkel unter dem Druck von rechts ihre EU-Kritik verschärft und die britischen Forderungen in Brüssel unterstützt. Die jüngsten positiven Signale der Bundesregierung werden in London auch auf den Einfluss der AfD zurückgeführt.

Auf der anderen Seite würde ein Einzug der Euro-Gegner in den Bundestag jedoch wohl Schwarz-Gelb verhindern und zu einer Großen Koalition führen. Eine Regierungsbeteiligung der SPD ließe eine deutsche Unterstützung für die Renationalisierung der EU aber in weite Ferne rücken.

Ein Sieg der AfD wäre "bad news" für David Cameron, schrieb Mats Persson, Chef der Euro-skeptischen Denkfabrik Open Europe, in einem "Telegraph"-Blog. "Dann müsste Merkel fast sicher mit der SPD regieren." Eine große Koalition würde sich jedoch eher an Paris als an London ausrichten.

Für Carswell spielen solche taktischen Erwägungen eine untergeordnete Rolle. Er drückt Luckes Truppe die Daumen. "Wir alle in Europa profitieren, wenn Merkel gezwungen wird, die Euro-Skepsis der Deutschen ernst zu nehmen".

Harte Bretter

Die Wahlrechtsopfer

25.09.2013 · Die FDP ist an sich selbst gescheitert, aber auch am Bundesverfassungsgericht. Das liegt daran, dass das neue Wahlrecht nicht nur Arithmetik ist. Es bestimmt auch die Wählerpsychologie.

Von [Jasper von Altenbockum](#)

84,86

Der neue Bundestag wird nicht so groß sein wie befürchtet. Am Sonntag wurden 630 Abgeordnete gewählt – direkt, über die Parteilisten, sowie durch Überhang- und Ausgleichsmandate. Das sind acht Abgeordnete mehr als im alten Bundestag. Eigentlich hat der Bundestag nur 598 Sitze. Die Hälfte der Abgeordneten ist direkt nach Mehrheitswahlrecht gewählt, die andere Hälfte entsprechend dem Verhältniswahlrecht über Listen. Aber durch die Überhangmandate entstehen regelmäßig zusätzliche Sitze. Sie fallen immer dann an, wenn eine Partei mehr Mandate durch ihre Direktkandidaten erzielt als ihr durch ihren Zweitstimmenanteil zustehen. Besonders viele Überhangmandate entstehen, wenn eine Partei viele Direktmandate gewinnt, aber relativ wenig Zweitstimmen erzielt – die Bezugsgröße für die Stärke ihrer Fraktion im Bundestag.

CDU und CSU erwiesen sich mehr denn je als die Könige der Direktmandate – in den meisten Bundesländern überließ die CDU nicht einen Wahlkreis einer anderen Partei, in Bayern gewann die CSU auf ganzer Strecke. Doch die Zahl der Direktmandate entsprach jeweils fast ihrem hohen Zweitstimmenanteil – die Zahl der Überhangmandate hielt sich deshalb in Grenzen, es sind nur vier. Nach dem neuen, nach langen Auseinandersetzungen am Ende der zurückliegenden Legislaturperiode beschlossenen Wahlrecht müssen sie „ausgeglichen“ werden, das heißt, sie kommen nicht nur CDU und CSU zugute, sondern allen im Bundestag vertretenen Parteien, hier also SPD, Linkspartei und Grünen.

Warum hat der Bundestag 32 Abgeordnete mehr?

Warum aber hat der neugewählte Bundestag dann weit mehr Abgeordnete, als es die Berechnung dieser Überhang- und Ausgleichsmandate ergibt? Das liegt daran, dass das deutsche Wahlrecht nicht nur eine Kombination aus Mehrheits- und Verhältniswahlrecht ist, sondern auch föderales Wahlrecht. Jedes Bundesland erhält demnach ein bestimmtes Sitzkontingent, das wiederum jeweils auf die Listen der Parteien verteilt wird. Früher wurde dieses Kontingent anhand der Zahl der Wähler berechnet, nach neuem Wahlrecht – um „negatives Stimmgewicht“ zu verhindern – anhand der Bevölkerungszahl.

In Bayern führte das bei dieser Wahl zu einer Besonderheit. Dem Land standen 92 Sitze zu. Die CSU hatte sämtliche Wahlkreise gewonnen, 45 Sitze. Nach altem Wahlrecht hätten ihr nach der Verteilung der Zweitstimmen auf die Parteien 53 Sitze zugestanden – sie hätte also keine Überhangmandate bekommen. Nach dem neuen Wahlrecht, in dem erst die Sitzkontingente verteilt werden, ergibt sich ein anderes Bild: „Angesichts der etwas niedrigeren Wahlbeteiligung und des höheren Anteils der nicht zu berücksichtigenden Parteien (18,6 Prozent) im Vergleich zum Bundesdurchschnitt, erhält die CSU hier 56 Sitze“, rechnet Matthias Cantow von „wahlrecht.de“ vor. Die drei überzähligen Mandate müssen ausgeglichen werden – so erhält selbst die CDU noch Ausgleichsmandate.

[Die Internetseite „wahlrecht.de“, die über das komplizierte deutsche Wahlrecht aufklärt, nennt diesen Überhangeffekt den „Listenüberhang“.](#) Er komme zustande, weil Union und FDP im neuen Wahlrecht die der Sitzverteilung vorgeschaltete „Pseudositzverteilung“ nach Ländersitzkontingenten durchgesetzt hätten. Insgesamt ergeben sich aus dem neuen mehrstufigen Berechnungsverfahren deshalb nicht vier Überhang- und – auch das ist das Ergebnis einer komplizierten Berechnung – fünf (statt vier) Ausgleichsmandate, sondern wesentlich mehr: entsprechend ihrer Größe erhält die CDU zusätzlich zu ihren Überhangmandaten noch 13 Ausgleichsmandate, die SPD neun, die Linkspartei vier und die Grünen zwei.

Hat das neue Wahlrecht den Wahlsieg gekostet?

Für CDU, CSU und FDP ergibt sich aus alledem die Frage: Haben die Windungen des neuen Wahlrechts die schwarz-gelbe Koalition den Wahlsieg gekostet? Und hätte die alte Regelung der Überhangmandate – mit anderem Berechnungsverfahren und ohne Ausgleich – der Union zur absoluten Mehrheit verholfen? Legt man nur die vier Überhangmandate zugrunde, die der CDU jetzt zustehen, hätte es 602 Abgeordnete gegeben, die Union hätte 299 Sitze gewonnen, es hätte also nicht gereicht. Nicht berücksichtigt wird bei dieser Rechnung aber, dass das Bundesverfassungsgericht in seinem Urteil vom Juli 2012 nicht einfach nur die Einführung von Ausgleichsmandaten verfügt hat. Das Urteil und die folgende Wahlrechtsreform hatten vor allem tiefgreifende Auswirkungen auf die Wahlpsychologie und das (intelligente) Wählerverhalten.

Nach neuem Wahlrecht hat sich vor allem der Effekt des Stimmensplittings verflüchtigt. CDU-Wähler konnten zwar weiter mit dem Gedanken spielen, dem gewünschten Koalitionspartner zu fünf Prozent zu verhelfen, indem sie ihre Zweitstimme der FDP gaben. Doch anders als früher verhalf das der CDU damit nicht gleichzeitig noch zu einem Vorteil, nämlich zu Überhangmandaten, die nicht ausgeglichen werden mussten. Im Gegenteil, der FDP-Zweitstimmenwähler schadete „seiner“ CDU, weil er hätte abwägen können, was dann tatsächlich eintrat: seine Stimme war doppelt „verloren“, weil sie der FDP nicht zu fünf Prozent verholfen hatte und der CDU nicht zugute kam.

Da es bei dieser Wahl offenbar tatsächlich nicht mehr zu nennenswertem Stimmensplitting kam und anzunehmen ist, dass dafür nicht nur der Widerstand von CDU und CSU gegen die Zweitstimmenkampagne der FDP verantwortlich war, gilt für die Liberalen durchaus, dass sie ein Opfer der Wahlrechtsreform sind. Das gilt deshalb auch für die schwarz-gelbe Koalition, wenn man annimmt, dass ein paar mehr Zweitstimmen für die FDP die Fünf-Prozent-Hürde bewältigt und damit die Stimmen gerettet hätten, die jetzt „unter den Tisch fallen“ und zur Koalitionsmehrheit gefehlt haben.

Doch die Union hat davon – wenn auch am Ende vergebens – durchaus profitiert, nicht nur arithmetisch, weil massenweise FDP-Zweitstimmenwähler CDU oder CSU wählten. Sie konnte weit mehr Nichtwähler mobilisieren als die SPD. Dazu beigetragen hat die umgekehrte Ausgangsposition wie in Niedersachsen: Dort wirkte die unwidersprochene „Leihstimmen“-Kampagne der FDP auf viele CDU-Wähler einschläfernd – warum sollten sie zur Wahl gehen, wenn die CDU offenbar so stark war, dass sie Stimmen „verleihen“ konnte? Diese Frage stellt sich mit dem neuen Wahlrecht nicht mehr.

Wie das Maastricht-Kriteriumt im Louvre entstand

26.09.2013 · Ein unbekannter Staatsdiener erfand in Frankreich vor dreißig Jahren die Defizitgrenze, die bis heute den Euroraum prägt.

Von [Christian Schubert](#), Paris

84,88



© Christian Schubert Guy Abeille

Es ist eine magische Zahl, die kaum ein Land unberührt lässt – in Europa, aber auch darüber hinaus. Die Haushaltsdefizit-Grenze von 3 Prozent des Bruttoinlandsproduktes, die im Vertrag von Maastricht 1992 festgelegt wurde, soll allen Mitgliedsländern der Währungsunion einen Riegel gegen übermäßige Neuverschuldung vorschieben. Oft wurde die Grenze überschritten, doch weiterhin entfaltet sie ihre Wirkung, und sei es nur als Anhaltspunkt. Kein Politiker kann den Schwellenwert ignorieren.

Warum aber sind es genau 3 Prozent, warum nicht 2,5 Prozent oder 3,5 oder 4 Prozent? „Ökonomisch ist das nicht leicht zu begründen“, sagt der ehemalige Bundesbankpräsident Hans Tietmeyer, der die Entstehung der Defizitgrenze aus nächster Nähe beobachtete und beeinflusste. Also bleibt nur eine politische Erklärung. An deren Anfang steht ein rangniedriger Mitarbeiter im französischen Finanzministerium, der noch nicht einmal verbeamtet war: der Franzose Guy Abeille. In einem Hinterzimmer des Ministeriums, das sich damals noch im Louvre gleich neben dem berühmten Museum befand, entstand 1981 die Idee der 3-Prozent-Grenze. Erst nutzte sie die damalige französische Regierung für ihre innenpolitische Zwecke, danach wurde sie auf Vorschlag der Franzosen auf einen europäischen Rang befördert. Monsieur Abeille, ein schmächtiger Mann mit randloser Brille und offenem Hemd, erzählt in einem Pariser Café die frühe Entstehungsgeschichte des 3-Prozent-Kriteriums. Wichtige Entscheidungsträger, wie Tietmeyer und der spätere EZB-Präsident Jean-Claude Trichet, bestätigen seine Version in den wesentlichen Punkten.

Die Zahl war schnell gefunden

Die Sozialisten hatten im Mai 1981 gerade die Präsidentenwahl gewonnen, und François Mitterrand musste seine teuren Wahlkampfversprechen einlösen. Die Erwartungen der Öffentlichkeit und der Minister seiner Regierung waren hoch. Das staatliche Haushaltsdefizit (des Zentralstaats ohne Départements, Kommunen und staatlicher Sozialkassen) schnellte innerhalb eines Jahres von 50 auf 95 Milliarden Francs nach oben. Mitterrand ahnte, dass dies nicht so weitergehen konnte, und versuchte die Kontrolle zu behalten. Also beauftragte er einen Mann, der als verlässlich galt: Pierre Bilger, der damalige stellvertretende Leiter der Budgetabteilung im Finanzministerium. Er brauche „eine Art Regel, etwas Einfaches, das nach volkswirtschaftlicher Kompetenz klinge“, ließ der Präsident Bilger ausrichten – und das bitte schnell. Bilger fielen zwei Experten aus den Hinterzimmern des Louvre ein: Abeille, damals noch keine 30 Jahre alt, und Roland de Villepin, ein Cousin des späteren Premierministers Dominique de Villepin. Bilger gab den Auftrag bewusst an die beiden weiter, weil sie an der französischen Hochschule ENSAE eine volkswirtschaftliche Ausbildung mit viel mathematischem Hintergrund erhalten hatten. Die zahlreichen Kollegen der allgemeinen Verwaltungskaderschmiede ENA dagegen hielt er absichtlich auf Distanz.

Auf Formelberechnungen im VWL-Stil verzichteten die beiden Franzosen allerdings. Rasch kamen sie innerhalb eines Abends („es war schon spät“, erinnert sich Abeille) überein, dass man als Referenzgröße das

BIP heranziehen sollte, weil dies jedermann begreifen könne. Auch die Zahl war schnell gefunden: „Wir steuerten damals auf die 100 Milliarden Francs Defizit zu. Das entsprach rund 2,6 Prozent des BIP. Also sagten wir uns: 1 Prozent Defizit wäre zu hart und unerreichbar gewesen. 2 Prozent hätte die Regierung zu stark unter Druck gesetzt. Also kamen wir auf 3 Prozent.“ Ohne jede fundierte Analyse wurde somit ein Defizitkriterium geboren, das später die Reise um die Welt antreten sollte. „Das entstand damals allein aus den Umständen, ohne jede Theorie“, erinnert sich Abeille. Nachdem die beiden ihren Vorschlag nach oben weitergeleitet hatten, griff ihn zuerst der damalige Budgetminister (und heutige Außenminister) Laurent Fabius auf und nach einiger Zeit auch Mitterrand selbst. „Die Obergrenze liegt bei 3 Prozent des Bruttoinlandsproduktes – nicht mehr“, lautete seine Richtlinie, die der Präsident am 9. Juni 1982 verkündete.

Referenz: Schulden Anfang der neunziger Jahre

Der Damm hielt, mit der Ausnahme einer leichten Überschreitung 1986, einige Jahre lang; erst in der ersten Hälfte der neunziger Jahre überschritt die Neuverschuldung Frankreichs mehrere Jahre lang die 3-Prozent-Grenze.

Dies ermutigte die Franzosen dazu, der heimischen Regel eine europäische Karriere zu bereiten. Wenige Wochen vor Beginn der Maastricht-Konferenz im Dezember 1991 waren die europäischen Verhandlungen festgefahren. Da brachte Jean-Claude Trichet, der damalige Leiter des Schatzamtes und spätere Präsident der Europäischen Zentralbank, die 3-Prozent-Regel ins Gespräch (die allerdings zusätzlich alle Gebietskörperschaften und die Sozialkassen einbeziehen sollte). „Frankreich hatte damit ganz gute Erfahrungen gemacht, die Regel war einfach und für alle verständlich“, sagte Trichet der Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung. Die von der deutschen Seite vorgebrachte Idee, entsprechend dem Grundgesetz (Artikel 115) eine Neuverschuldung nur in Höhe der Staatsinvestitionen zu erlauben, galt dagegen als undurchführbar. „Dann hätten vielleicht einige Staaten Militär- oder Erziehungsausgaben als Investitionen deklariert“, sagt Trichet. Die Deutschen ließen sich daher recht schnell von der französischen 3-Prozent-Idee überzeugen.

Trichet fand sogar eine ökonomische Begründung, auf die der damalige Finanzminister Theo Waigel im Rückblick hinweist: „Der europäische Schuldenstand betrug Anfang der neunziger Jahre 60 Prozent des BIP. Das Nominalwachstum setzte man bei 5 Prozent an, und die Inflation bei maximal 2 Prozent. Damit dürften die Schulden höchstens um 3 Prozent jährlich steigen, um die 60 Prozent nicht zu übersteigen“, erinnert sich Waigel.

Unaufhaltsamer Aufstieg

Diese Rechnung stand jedoch nicht am Ursprung der 3-Prozent-Regel, sie wurde nachgereicht. Die Annahme der 5 Prozent Wachstum war „leider auch viel zu optimistisch, wie wir heute wissen“, räumt Trichet ein. „Man hätte die Defizitgrenze niedriger ansetzen müssen, denn das Wachstum fiel niedriger aus“, sagt der ehemalige EZB-Präsident heute.

Am Aufstieg der Prozentregel änderte dies jedoch nichts. Weit über den Euroraum hinaus wird und wurde sie in unterschiedlicher Verbindlichkeit verfolgt, bis hin zu Ländern wie Kanada und Indonesien. Der „Vater der Regel“, heute 62 Jahre alt, blickt mit einer gewissen Belustigung auf diese Entwicklung. „Wir hätten uns das nie erträumt.“ Er ist ein Verfechter der Haushaltsdisziplin geblieben. Als ehemaliger Rechengehilfe hinter den Kulissen hat Abeille oft genug erlebt, wie französische Regierungen die Zahlen gerade in Wahlkampfzeiten von den Beamten manipulieren ließen. Daher sollen Regeln breit gefasst sein und wenige Schlupflöcher bieten. Für besonders utopisch hält Abeille die in Mode gekommene Berechnung von strukturellen Defiziten, die angeblich den konjunkturellen Einfluss außer Acht lassen. Doch die dafür nötige Schätzung eines Potentialwachstums sei „nichts als eine Hypothese“. Jede Angabe von strukturellen Defiziten mit einer Scheingenauigkeit von Kommastellen sei daher nicht glaubwürdig, findet Abeille.

September 25, 2013

How Do You Say ‘Blog’ in German?

By ANNA SAUERBREY

84,91

WE Germans owe the English language a debt of gratitude. If English didn’t lend us one or two little words every once in a while, we would probably call blogs “digitale Netztagebücher” and apps “Anwendungen für mobile Endgeräte.” Even for German speakers, those don’t exactly roll off the tongue.

Such linguistic borrowing has been increasing, as technology both creates its own new words and facilitates the global spread of newfangled cultural terminology. Recently the editors of the Duden dictionary, the German equivalent of the Oxford English Dictionary, [added](#) 5,000 new words to its 26th edition, many of them English or of English origin, including “digital native” and “flashmob.”

The Duden has been around since 1880, and this isn’t the first time English words have been added. But the new edition has caused an uproar among linguistic conservatives. After the additions were announced, the German Language Society, an unofficial organization that has tasked itself with protecting the German language, voted the editors of the Duden the “language adulterers of the year,” [accusing them](#) of legitimizing the demise of German.

Most Germans are more liberal in their linguistic views and generally agree that the idea of protecting a country’s language is as megalomaniacal as it is futile.

It certainly doesn’t represent the view of the majority of my generation, the 20- and 30-somethings, who generally have a relaxed relationship with both languages. Our parents associated German music with Nazi propaganda and opted for Springsteen-only musical diets, but we embrace the renaissance of German pop and rap lyrics. At the same time, we see no harm in integrating English words into our language.

But the society’s stance has nevertheless touched a chord across German society, particularly among people you might call anti-cosmopolitans: those who feel unable to keep up with an internationalization they feel is being imposed on them.

That the reaction should come now, in a rapidly homogenizing Europe, is unsurprising. The feeling of speaking increasingly marginalized languages is vivid in many parts of Europe, even in countries with large populations of native speakers like France and [Germany](#).

Of course, the motives for defending one’s language differ from country to country. In France, it is part of a quest to bolster the country’s self-perception as a still-functioning colonial power. It is government policy that radio stations [must play a certain minimum](#) amount of French music.

In Germany, the driving force comes from the opposite direction. Refusing to accept the internationalization of the German language is a way of rejecting internationalization as a phenomenon. It is a nativist attempt to stand up to globalization.

Walter Krämer, the president of the society, articulated this point of view when he lambasted the Duden for including Anglicisms commonly used by “braggers” — what in previous generations might have been called yuppies. There is some truth in that. The frequent use of English words has become a status symbol, not unlike a pair of pearl earrings or shopping at Whole Foods, a way of showing off your education. A way of saying that your world is bigger than that medium-size country in the middle of Europe that doesn’t even have the guts to support military action in Libya or Syria.

In Germany as in America, it is easy to make fun of such people. But as the German sociologist Ulrich Beck noted recently, cosmopolitanism is a reality, not a willfully chosen identity. There are those who will continue

to embrace it and those who will see it as a threat, but it can't be turned back, even if one insists, as the German Language Society does, on calling a laptop a "Klapprechner."

As any English speaker fond of the term "schadenfreude" knows, German has its own share of wonderful, untranslatable words. One of those, "Zeitgenossen," is particularly apt for the moment. If you look it up in a German-English dictionary, you will find that it means "contemporaries," those who happen to live in the same day and age. But it means more than that. The German word "Genosse," meaning "comrade" or "associate," also implies a mutual responsibility.

Thus "Zeitgenossen" share a responsibility toward one another as well as toward the age they live in. It is an attitude that sees languages as complementary, not competitive, and sees the world as a continuum of cultures, rather than a set of distinct borders. It is an attitude I wish more of my fellow Germans would adopt.

Again, English, thanks for "digital natives." In return, you can have "Zeitgenossen." It's yours. Take it. It is a wonderful linguistic paradox that one of the nations that currently struggle with the idea of cosmopolitanism should be able to express it best.

Anna Sauerbrey is an editor for the opinion page of the daily German newspaper Der Tagesspiegel.

September 25, 2013

France Takes Modest Steps on Changes in '14 Budget

By [ALISSA J. RUBIN](#) and SCOTT SAYARE

84,93

PARIS — Hoping to nurture the fragile beginnings of economic growth without running afoul of either the European Union or the financial markets, the French government presented a 2014 budget plan on Wednesday that included modest spending cuts and tax increases, but not the radical changes that many economists say the country needs.

In line with the “fiscal pause” that President François Hollande promised, the budget would continue to narrow the country’s deficit gradually and mainly through reductions in public spending, which makes up 57 percent of the country’s economy, well above the European Union average. Tax increases in 2014 would be smaller than in recent years, raising only about 3 billion euros (\$4 billion) in new revenue, and would be felt mainly by businesses and wealthy individuals.

The finance minister, Pierre Moscovici, promised that by 2015, all budget savings would come from reduced spending rather than tax increases. But by then the government also intends to have reached the 3 percent deficit level it has promised its European partners it will attain.

The budget would leave 13,000 government jobs unfilled as workers quit or retire, especially in the Ministries of Defense and Finance, and would trim about 6 billion euros (\$8.1 billion) from spending on social programs and pensions, and 9 billion euros (\$12.1 billion) in operational costs and investments.

The government expects the French economy to grow by 0.1 percent this year and 0.9 percent in 2014. On that basis, it forecasts a deficit of 4.1 percent this year and 3.6 percent in 2014, in line with the country’s pledge to its European partners to reduce its deficit to 3 percent in 2015.

France originally promised to reach that target by the end of this year, but it negotiated an extension because of the lengthy recession across Europe. The country’s public debt was expected to rise slightly in 2014, to 95 percent of gross domestic product.

Mr. Hollande declared in July that “the recovery, it’s here,” and promised that unemployment, now about 11 percent generally and nearly 25 percent for young people, would soon fall.

A Socialist [who won election in 2012](#) after campaigning against the austerity policies that had been imposed on Europe’s ailing economies, Mr. Hollande has seen his popularity fall sharply since he took office.

Mr. Hollande has pledged to stem the rise of unemployment by the end of the year, and statistics released on Thursday by the Labor Ministry suggested that goal might be near.

The number of unemployed workers registered with the national employment agency, Pôle Emploi, fell by 50,000 in August, the first such decrease since April 2011. But much of that fall may be attributable to people who have removed themselves from the agency’s rolls after failing to find work, analysts noted, and not to job creation.

The government, too — however much it has been at pains to find and trumpet good news wherever it can — was circumspect.

In a statement sent to reporters, Labor Minister Michel Sapin called for “prudence” in interpreting the numbers, however “encouraging” they might seem.

“A drop in August does not allow us to exclude an increase the next month,” Mr. Sapin said. “The results of one month do not constitute a reversal.”

Mr. Hollande’s economic policies have been in keeping with his reputation as a deft if uninspiring builder of consensus, including a plan to overhaul the country’s troubled pension system that went too far for the country’s unions but not far enough to satisfy economists.

Auf Wiedersehen Austerity?

European Hopes for Gentler Merkel

By Christoph Pauly and [Christoph Schult](#)

84,94

A sigh of relief can be heard around the Continent, where many European countries are hopeful that a left-leaning German coalition partner could steer Angela Merkel toward a gentler course and less austerity in managing the euro crisis.

On Sunday evening, Günther Oettinger had himself chauffeured to the conservatives' Berlin headquarters to attend their election party. The results for his party were sensational, but the European Union's energy commissioner was not in a celebratory mood. "Damn it," Oettinger said as he leaned into the backseat of his black sedan. The projections were showing that German Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU) would win the election, giving them a slim absolute majority in the German parliament, the Bundestag.

He made a face. From the point of view of the Eurocrats in Brussels, it would be a disaster if the conservatives tried to govern the country entirely on their own. The German chancellor might then have to push through her policies on Europe with nothing more than a one-vote majority -- making it extremely difficult for her to overcome resistance within her own party, not to mention surmount the overwhelming majority of the opposition in the Bundesrat, the upper legislative chamber that represents the states. Oettinger would rather not even think about that possibility.

Somewhat later, when the projections showed that it was much less likely for the conservatives to win an absolute majority, Oettinger relaxed again. He is firmly convinced that there will be a grand coalition with the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), even though he sees the appeal of an alliance between the conservatives and the environmentalist Green Party. "A grand coalition is good for Europe," he says.

The German EU commissioner's reaction to the German election result was echoed by most of Germany's European partners. A collective sigh of relief was felt throughout Europe. A slim absolute majority for Germany's conservatives could have posed a huge obstacle to the next efforts to save the euro. With so many euroskeptic dissenters among the ranks of the CDU and the CSU, another round of bailout packages would have triggered renewed nervousness on the financial markets.

Renewed Hope for Softer Euro Policy

The end of the coalition between the conservatives and the business-friendly Free Democrats (FDP) has sparked renewed hopes from Athens to Paris and Warsaw that Germany will now pursue a less rigid policy as the main guarantor for programs to save the euro. An alliance between the conservatives and the SPD, or even a coalition with the Greens, would ease tensions with Germany's neighbors, primarily in southern Europe.

Merkel is aware of the burden of her responsibility, said Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker after he congratulated the CDU leader by phone. Juncker told SPIEGEL he expects the new German government to adopt "gentler approaches" to its European partners than in the past. At the same time, the prime minister praised the SPD's policy on Europe to date for its "excellent balance between solidarity and solidity."

Brussels and many European member states have primarily had one objection to Merkel's outgoing coalition: its ruthlessness. They criticized Germany's austerity dictate and accused the chancellor of a lack of sensitivity when it comes to European history.

"Merkel will not simply be able to continue to pursue this policy with the SPD," says EU Parliament President Martin Schulz. The Social Democrat says that people's social concerns must finally be taken seriously, and he cites high youth unemployment in the crisis-ridden countries of Southern Europe as a top priority. The chancellor attempted to neutralize this issue in July with a high-profile summit in Berlin. "After paying lip service to social issues, Merkel now has to finally take action," Schulz argues.

Policy Across Party Lines

Although the election platforms of Germany's two main parties may seem similar in some respects, they differ considerably when it comes to European policy. They diverge on the issue of how much solidarity there should be among the EU member countries. The SPD favors partially collectivizing debt across the euro zone, whereas the CDU rejects this. "We cannot allow the issue of collective liability to remain off-limits," the SPD party platform proclaims. By contrast, the conservatives' election manifesto warns that collective liability "would be the road to a European debt union."

The gap will now have to be bridged in coalition negotiations. Merkel would not have it any easier with the Greens. During their election campaign, they also criticized her "one-sided austerity policy, with its lack of solidarity."

It is ironic that the conservative winner of this election will now likely have to rely on the Social Democrats. During the recent election campaign, the CDU leader accused the SPD of being "[totally unreliable](#)" on European policy. She will have to pay a price for this during the coalition negotiations.

Merkel won't agree to a system of broad liability based on euro bonds, i.e. collective bonds for all euro-zone countries. At most, she will consent to a temporary debt repayment fund, which would merely contain a portion of the current outstanding debts of the euro-zone members. This idea stems from the German Council of Economic Experts, a respected panel that advises the government.

The fact that Merkel ruled out such a debt repayment fund as recently as Saturday during the CDU's closing rally in Berlin doesn't necessarily mean much. It wouldn't be the first time she made an about-face. Furthermore, she could make her approval contingent on how effective recently introduced EU regulations for monitoring national budgets turn out to be in practice.

The Clock Is Ticking

The negotiators don't have much time. Due to the German election campaign, there is enormous mounting pressure to make decisions in Europe. Berlin has put the brakes on diverse EU programs over the past few months -- and the other European countries have done their best to make only a minimal number of new demands.

Greece's troubles are expected to intensify as soon as this fall. In the midst of the election campaign, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble made supposedly [spontaneous comments](#) aimed at carefully preparing the public for the unavoidable: "Greece will need yet another new package."

The Banque de France and a number of other European central banks no longer intend to extend the maturities of Greek sovereign bonds worth some €4 billion (\$5.4 billion), in contrast to what was agreed in late 2012. Now that Greece has a national debt amounting to 160 percent of GDP, they no longer believe that the ailing country will be able to avoid another debt haircut.

It's very possible that the central banks will be pressured to extend the maturities of their bonds once again. Perhaps the new German government will seek to ease the repayment conditions in a bid to postpone the

moment of truth. That notwithstanding, many Eurocrats in Brussels and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are anticipating a major debt haircut during the upcoming legislative period.

A debt haircut would be more likely if Germany had a grand coalition. Working together, the CDU and the SPD could easily muster a sufficient majority if it came to a vote in Germany's parliament, the Bundestag, on this unpopular and costly support for the Greeks.

Other Countries Need Fresh Capital

Europe's other debt-ridden countries are also breathing a sigh of relief, because they hope the Social Democrats will show more understanding for their problems. Indeed, Greece is not the only country that needs fresh capital. The aid programs for Ireland and Spain will expire at the end of this year. It's now already clear that the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), the euro zone's permanent bailout fund, will have to intervene with guarantees worth billions.

The first candidate is Ireland. Although Dublin has now managed to borrow money on the capital markets under better conditions, the Irish finance minister is asking for an additional credit line of €10 billion as a precautionary measure.

What's more, the Spanish will most likely need additional support for their banks. Madrid has already borrowed €41 billion to aid its financial sector. The program expires at the end of the year. The stress tests carried out on behalf of the European Central Bank (ECB) will show whether the recapitalization of their financial institutions has been sufficient.

The problems in Slovenia are even more pressing. It's very possible that one of the first things that the new Bundestag will vote on could be this new candidate for financial aid. Central bankers say they now assume that Slovenia can no longer solve its banks' problems on its own.

Rating agencies recently downgraded Slovenian sovereign bonds to junk status. During their September session, the ECB Governing Council and the European finance ministers intensively discussed what needs to be done to help this small country. Slovenia has already liquidated two small lending institutions. But the country's larger banks have also had to write off huge amounts in bad loans.

Regulating Europe's Banks

To prevent the financial industry from plunging entire nations into chaos in the future, Brussels is pressing for the planned euro-zone banking union to be completed as quickly as possible. In the fall of next year, the ECB will start regulating Europe's banks. But there still is no effective restructuring process that could allow an ailing bank to go bankrupt without significantly damaging the economy.

This is another area where Germany's European neighbors have been eagerly awaiting the Bundestag election. For months now, Finance Minister Schäuble has put them off with threadbare legal arguments, because he refused to make any additional concessions before the election. Liquidating banks requires a European fund that, if necessary, can intervene when shareholders, bank creditors and individual countries don't have sufficient resources. "Without a credible financing mechanism, the collective banking regulatory agency cannot work," writes Deutsche Bank.

"I haven't spoken with my former boss about it," said Jörg Asmussen, a former senior official in the German Finance Ministry and the country's current ECB director, following a recent meeting of European finance ministers in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. But the legal experts at the ECB, the European Commission and the European Council have reportedly come to the conclusion that a European restructuring process is possible without amending the European treaties.

The new German government will now have to vote on a new restructuring fund.

Likewise, the new German finance minister-- who may also turn out to be the old one -- will lobby for a solution that holds not just shareholders but also bank creditors responsible in the event of a bankruptcy. Furthermore, the chancellor aims to prevent the European Commission from having the last word on bank closures. Instead, she wants an agency to assume responsibility for coordination. "The new German government has to make headway with the banking union," says SPD politician Schulz.

Relief in Europe

There is a palpable sense of satisfaction with the German election results in many parts of Europe. The debtor countries are relieved that the chancellor is reliant upon a left-wing party, and will probably have to alter her rigid course on Europe. At the same time, most heads of state and government welcome the fact that Merkel will remain in office and ensure continuity in the EU's key country.

The new coalition arithmetic could also have consequences that go beyond rescuing the euro. For instance, the current ruling center-right coalition has steadfastly rejected an initiative by European Commissioner for Justice Viviane Reding for a women's quota on the supervisory boards of publicly traded companies across the Continent. The SPD will attempt to write this quota into the coalition agreement.

EU Energy Commissioner Oettinger hopes that Germany will be able to make headway on climate policy again. In the outgoing German government, the two ministers responsible for this policy area -- Environment Minister Peter Altmaier of the CDU and Economics Minister Philipp Rösler of the FDP -- stonewalled each other's proposals. Consequently, over the past few months Germany has not even been able to take a position on EU climate protection goals for 2030, according to Oettinger.

The so-called *Energiewende*, Germany's push to abandon nuclear energy and promote renewable sources, is not only problematic from the viewpoint of German consumers of electricity. "A number of provisions of Germany's Renewable Energy Act are hard to reconcile with EU law," says Oettinger, adding that many exceptions for large consumers of electricity are problematic. "The new German government urgently needs to take action on this," the German EU commissioner argues.

Time for Reform

All in all, last Sunday's mandate by Germany's voters should improve the prospects for fundamental reform of the EU. Until now, Merkel has opposed extending the European Commission's power. She has a vision of a Europe in which the governments of the member states play the leading role.

By contrast, the Social Democrats are urging the executive branch in Brussels to play a greater role. The Commission needs to be expanded to become a government "that is elected and monitored by the European Parliament," as it says in the SPD's election manifesto. The Greens take a similar view. Indeed, the notion of a public convention that would prepare amendments to European treaties is regaining momentum.

Merkel will now no longer be able to hide behind pure crisis management. The elections to the European Parliament in May 2014 will force the chancellor to make sweeping affirmations on European policy. The strong voter support for the conservative, anti-euro Alternative for Germany (AFD) party is a clear indication that she has failed to adequately explain her political course. Although the AFD fell just short of meeting the 5 percent hurdle to enter the Bundestag, this result should not be played down, according to Luxembourg Prime Minister Juncker, who warns: "The success of the AFD means that we have a problem explaining the euro."

It's very likely that the German anti-euro party will win seats in the European Parliament next year. EU Commissioner Oettinger anticipates that roughly one-third of the seats will go to anti-EU populists -- more than ever before.

The established political parties have to counter this development with a credible alternative -- and this includes having the right candidates. The Social Democrats have a prominent pro-European politician with Martin Schultz. Merkel is still looking for a top candidate for the conservative European People's Party. She doesn't have much time left, though.

Lucky Lucke und der "illiberale Geist" der AfD

Die Welt 25. September

84,98

Wie rechts ist die AfD? Bei Anne Will wurde Parteichef Bernd Lucke so heftig angegriffen wie selten zuvor. Besonders seine Formulierung "Entartungen von Demokratie" löste eine aggressive Debatte aus. Von Daniele Raffaele Gambone



Foto: NDR/Wolfgang Borrs

Bei Anne Wills Talk-Sendung ging es am 25. September 2013 um das heikle Thema "Euro Kritiker auf dem Vormarsch – kann Merkel sie kleinhalten?" Zu Gast waren der stellvertretende Chefredakteur der "Welt"-Gruppe Ulf Poschardt, Kabarettist Serdar Somuncu, AfD-Chef Bernd Lucke, der ehemalige bayerische Ministerpräsident Edmund Stoiber (CSU) und die zweimalige Bundespräsidentenskandidatin Gesine Schwan (SPD) (v.l. n. r.).

Talk-Duelle mit Bernd Lucke haben sich schon im Jahr der Parteigründung der Alternative für Deutschland zu einer Art Genreklassiker entwickelt. Meistens folgen sie ein und demselben Muster: auf der einen Seite der Parteisprecher, den man aufgrund seines glücklichen Händchens und der augenscheinlichen Namensähnlichkeit in Anlehnung an den Comic-Cowboy Lucky Luke gerne Lucky Lucke nennt.

Auf der anderen Seite eine knappe Handvoll Euro-Befürworter, die sich, wenn sie nicht aufpassen, flugs in der Rolle der vier Daltons wiederfinden, jener tollpatschigen Gegenspieler des Westernhelden also, deren Auftritte eigentlich nur dazu dienen, seine Qualitäten, in diesem Falle Sachkompetenz und Wortgewandtheit, in einem umso strahlenderen Licht erscheinen zu lassen.

Auch Anne Wills Sendung zum Thema "Euro-Kritiker auf dem Vormarsch – Kann Merkel sie kleinhalten?" setzt auf dieses mittlerweile bewährte und quotenträchtige Konzept, das der Gruppe der Europhilen die Meinungshoheit garantiert und der jungen Partei eine willkommene Bühne zur Präsentation des eigenen Programms bietet. So heftig wie an diesem Abend gerät Bernd Lucke dabei allerdings selten unter Beschuss.

Ein "Westentaschen-Demagoge"?

Das sagten die Gäste bei Anne Will 1/5

Bernd Lucke,

Parteichef der

Alternative für Deutschland:

"Es war nicht

im Mindesten von
mir beabsichtigt,
damit auf
nationalsozialistische Politik
anzuspielen."

(zu seiner Formulierung

"Entartungen von Demokratie"

am Wahlabend)

Die zweimalige Bundespräsidentenskandidatin Gesine Schwan (SPD), der ehemalige bayerische Ministerpräsident Edmund Stoiber (CSU), der stellvertretende Chefredakteur der "Welt"-Gruppe, Ulf Poschardt, und der Kabarettist Serdar Somuncu – den Lucke als "Meister der Polemik" titulierte – ließen jedenfalls zu keinem Zeitpunkt Zweifel daran aufkommen, dass sie nicht angetreten waren, um sich vom Politneuling – oder "Westentaschendemagogen", so Somuncus Retourkutsche – vorführen zu lassen.

Schon zuvor hatten sie – ganz ohne Lucke, der zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch abseits saß – ausgehend von Wolfgang Schäubles mehr oder weniger offener [Ankündigung höherer Steuern](#) über die Glaubwürdigkeit der Politik und die Koalitions(un)fähigkeit der Kanzlerin gestritten. Edmund Stoiber hielt die Ansage des Finanzministers zwar "taktisch und strategisch für falsch".

Er erkannte aber für die nahe Zukunft die Notwendigkeit von Kompromissen und damit – angesichts der Auswahl an potenziellen Koalitionspartnern – von Steuererhöhungen an. Somuncu verleiteten diese Ausführungen zu der Mutmaßung, man dürfe den Wähler also anlügen, es ihn aber erst später merken lassen.

Das "tiefe Gefühl der Unfairness" bei der SPD

Obwohl man sich insgesamt eher einig war, dass in Berlin gerade der Weg für eine große Koalition geebnet werde, diskutierte man engagiert über den Wert und den Preis einer solchen Zusammenarbeit. Gesine Schwan erinnerte mit Bezug auf die schwarz-rote Regierungszeit von Angela Merkel zwischen 2005 und 2009 an das "tiefe Gefühl der Unfairness", das bei der SPD zurückgeblieben sei.

Ein rot-rot-grünes Bündnis konnte sie sich für den Augenblick aber auch nicht recht vorstellen. Dennoch müsse sich die SPD mit Blick auf die Zukunft nach 2017 wenigstens die strategische Perspektive auf eine Regierungsübernahme bewahren. Auch deshalb prophezeite sie für die nächsten Bundestagswahlen ein Ende der kategorischen Ablehnung von Bündnissen mit der Linken.

Aktuell, so ließ sich insgesamt aus den Äußerungen der Gäste schlussfolgern, droht der Kanzlerin von dieser Seite – die erfolgreiche Koalitionsbildung vorausgesetzt – eher wenig Ungemach.

Anders von rechts oder dem, was in der Logik der Sendung als solches definiert wurde, auch wenn diese Einordnung beim Betroffenen auf vehementen Widerstand stieß. Bernd Lucke erhielt ausgiebig Gelegenheit, seine Partei politisch zu verorten, und er arbeitete bewusst Gemeinsamkeiten mit der Linken im Umfeld der Banken- und Europapolitik sowie grundlegende Unterschiede zu allen Parteien heraus. Die AfD scheut bekanntermaßen eine Positionierung im rechten Spektrum und bezeichnet sich stattdessen lieber als "Partei des gesunden Menschenverstandes".

Lucke und seine "spontane Rede"

Rechtfertigen musste sich Lucke an diesem Abend vor allem für ein Wahlplakat gegen "Zuwanderung in die Sozialsysteme" und seine Formulierung von den "Entartungen von Demokratie und Parlamentarismus", die er am Wahlabend "in einer spontanen Rede" verwendet hatte. Während sich der erste Vorwurf mit einem Zitat aus dem Unionsregierungsprogramm – das eine ähnliche Forderung enthält – noch leicht beiseiteschieben ließ, kam es über den zweiten zu einer aggressiven und nicht immer sauber geführten Diskussion.

Lucke hatte sich mit dem Hinweis verteidigt, der Ausdruck Entartung sei nicht auf die nationalsozialistische Terminologie beschränkt. Er finde beispielsweise Gebrauch, wenn ein Arzt von einer Krebszelle als einer entarteten Zelle spreche.

Zu Recht merkte Gesine Schwan an, dass die Sache dadurch keineswegs besser werde, und bot auch eine sprachliche Alternative an: Sie selbst empfinde Angela Merkels Umgang mit dem Parlament in Sachen Europapolitik, auf den sich die umstrittenen Äußerungen des AfD-Sprechers bezogen, selbst als "Missachtung". Damit war eine unproblematischere und nicht minder vorwurfsvolle Formulierung gefunden.

Dass Luckes Äußerungen teilweise aus der Runde als Diffamierung von Demokratie und Parlamentarismus allgemein gedeutet wurden, war allerdings nicht fair. Immerhin bezog sich in seiner vorbelasteten metaphorischen Anspielung der Ausdruck "Entartungen" nicht auf diese an sich, sondern auf den als respektlos empfundenen Umgang damit.

Poschardt und Stoiber streiten über Verortung der AfD

Freunde machte sich der AfD-Mitbegründer an diesem Abend keine mehr. Die teilweise lautstark vorgebrachten Anklagen reichten von vorsätzlicher Panikmache bis hin zu unverantwortlichen Forderungen in der Europapolitik.

Über die Verortung der AfD im Parteienspektrum stritten vor allem Poschardt und Stoiber. Der "Welt"-Journalist war sich sicher, dass die Partei angesichts ihres "tief illiberalen" Charakters keineswegs in die Fußstapfen der FDP trete. Sondern eben jene Lücke besetze, die Angela Merkels CDU mit ihrer zunehmenden Orientierung nach links habe entstehen lassen. Den ehemaligen Ministerpräsidenten brachte er damit regelrecht in Rage: Stoiber sah in der Partei mit Hinweis auf den beachtlichen Zulauf ehemaliger Linke- und FDP-Wähler kein ausschließliches Problem der Union.

Seine Aufgebrachtheit lässt sich vielleicht verstehen, wenn man bedenkt, wie sehr der Vorwurf ins Mark der CSU trifft: Im übertragenen Sinne fungierte Stoiber an diesem Abend schließlich als Franz Josef Strauß' Stellvertreter auf Erden. Der legendäre CSU-Vorsitzende hatte es zur Maxime erhoben, dass es rechts von seiner Partei keine demokratisch legitimierte Kraft geben dürfe. Er wird gewusst haben, warum. Ob die Kanzlerin diese Devise auch beherzigt – und wie –, bleibt abzuwarten.

WSJ Updated September 25, 2013, 8:54 p.m. ET

Brussels's Real Deficit Problem

Growth, not some mythical budget figure, should be the aim.

It's a debate that could quicken the pulse of only the most hard-core Brussels mandarin. But underneath the controversy over how the EU calculates a country's "structural deficit" is a crucial question about the purpose of the austerity drive led by Brussels and Berlin. And both sides are missing the growth point.

EU officials on Tuesday declined to approve a change in how the Union calculates budget deficits, fearing that it would loosen the spending restraints on countries like Spain, which is currently running a deficit equal to 6% of GDP. The details are technical, but the issue boils down to how much Spain's deficit would naturally shrink if its unemployment rate, currently 26%, fell to more normal levels, as well as the question of what should be considered "normal."



Getty Images

The deficit hawks in the EU, especially Germany, are loath to introduce any change that might be perceived as giving in on balanced budgets. The relevant question here, however, is the goal of austerity. For some, it is itself a virtue, a sign of moral rectitude. Be that as it may, the reason Berlin cares about Madrid's spending habits is simply this: After Greece, Germany has become the de facto lender of last resort to insolvent or illiquid euro-zone governments. And so Germany has an interest in making sure its neighbors adopt policies that minimize the chances of another bailout.

Brussels and Berlin can quibble about whether Spain's "natural" rate of unemployment is 23%, as in the current model, or 20% or 15%. But whatever the case, the euro-zone creditor countries' overwhelming interest is in having partners with growing, dynamic economies.

That does not mean signing off on an ineffective binge of Keynesian deficit spending. But if Madrid wants to reduce labor costs by cutting payroll taxes, or improve incentives to work, save and invest by cutting top marginal rates, these goals should take priority over a short-term obsession with a mythical calculation of the cyclically adjusted budget deficit in any given year.

The EU's deficit-reduction drive has always been a blunt instrument for controlling spending. If Berlin really wants to get off the hook for potentially bailing out Spain, it would push for pro-growth reforms. Growth, in the long run, is the only thing that can save the euro zone.

Record public debt in France

Despite plans for cuts running into the billions, France is heading for record debt levels. The Socialist government of President François Hollande on Wednesday discussed the 2014 budget, with which total debt is set to reach 95 percent of the GDP. Commentators criticise the planned [tax hikes](#) and call for increased cuts in the [bloated government sector](#).

Neue Zürcher Zeitung - Switzerland

The French time bomb is ticking

Hollande's draft budget foresees a drop in France's budget deficit in the coming year to 3.6 percent of GDP, compared to an estimated 4.1 percent in 2013. Not low enough, the liberal-conservative daily Neue Zürcher Zeitung criticises: "A comprehensive strategy for restructuring the chronically deficitary budget is not in sight, and certainly not on the [expenditure side](#). ... Until now France has continued to profit from very low interest rates on the capital markets. But if it fails to do more to tackle its problems, the yields on French government bonds will rise in the short or long term. Many players on the financial markets are reckoning with a 'French crisis' as one of the next developments in the European financial and debt crisis. President Hollande and his government team would do well to allay these fears before it's too late. The time bomb is already ticking." (26/09/2013)

[» to the homepage](#) (Neue Zürcher Zeitung)

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All available articles from [» Michael Ferber](#)

Who's saying what [» Is France falling behind?](#)

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung - Germany

Spending cuts instead of tax hikes

Instead of raising taxes France should put the brakes on spending, writes the conservative daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, pointing out that the "[tax orgies](#) of the Socialist government and its conservative predecessor haven't even reduced the record 7.5 percent new debt level of 2009 by a half. Spending cuts are now supposed to account for four-fifths of the latest effort to reduce the budget deficit. If this turns out to be the case it would be commendable because no government since the post-war period has managed such a feat. But even that won't be enough. The remaining 20 percent in new tax increases will be poison for the tentative economic recovery. Further cutbacks to the bloated state apparatus would be less detrimental. Otherwise there won't be any real debt reduction. France's public debt will rise to more than 95 percent of its economic output next year. This is the payback for the fact that in the last 20 years only seven times have the French managed to fulfil the [3-percent deficit criterion](#)." (26/09/2013)

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Libération - France

The ball is in the employers' court

France's new budget plan foresees tax hikes for private households, while taxes on companies will decrease slightly. The latter should therefore now be willing to carry part of the burden, the left-liberal daily Libération contends: "Additional efforts are being demanded of families, and it would be good if President François Hollande and Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault also called on employers to shoulder their responsibilities. Because the ball is in their court. It's time for employers to present a plan for investment and boosting employment that's worthy of the name. Tax cuts aren't just a blank check given to companies, but a moral commitment to the government, and above all to the people of France. Governing means making choices, and François Hollande must stick by the ones he has made. This tax cut puts economic and political pressure on employers, all the more so since so far they have done little in return." (26/09/2013)

» [full article \(external link, French\)](#)

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Who's saying what » [Is France falling behind?](#)

Die Presse - Austria

Fiscal discipline better than fiscal union

The International Monetary Fund on Wednesday called on the EU to take greater control of national budgets, create a stronger [safety net for banks](#) and [introduce Euro Bonds](#). Such theoretical recommendations fail to take account of the reality of the situation, the liberal-conservative daily Die Presse writes: "EU policy is a constantly experienced compromise. So the IMF may be right, but it may also be wrong. This monetary union certainly won't reach its ideal state by taking a large step towards a [fiscal union](#). The crisis has already produced some ugly edifices like the [fiscal pact](#) and the ESM bailout fund. ... Ultimately the future of the single currency is less a technical issue than a power-political one. The member states will no doubt realise at some point that they will only be able to retain their sovereignty if they contribute to a stable euro by exercising stringent budget discipline and responsible economic policies. Any transgression will only deprive them of power." (26/09/2013)

» [full article \(external link, German\)](#)

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Architect of Austerity

Schäuble's Search for a Way Forward

By [Ulrich Fichtner](#) and Alexander Smoltczyk

84,104

As Germany's Finance Minister, Wolfgang Schäuble is one of Europe's most influential politicians -- and one of its most hated. Many hold his austerity policies responsible for mass poverty and unemployment in the south. How does he know his decisions are right?

At the Federal Ministry of Finance on Berlin's Wilhelmstrasse, working home to one of the most powerful men of our time, the corridors are up to 700 meters (2,296 feet) long. They lead to 2,100 offices, whose stone doorframes form seemingly endless rows reminiscent of the set of a grim, futuristic film.

The layout of the building, designed by Nazi architects, looks like the drawing of a complex machine part. Those who enter the building inadvertently find themselves whispering, as if to avoid disturbing the power concentrated inside. History is constantly being made, day after day, in this building. Senior Nazi leader Hermann Göring once strode through its corridors. It was occupied by the Soviet military administrators after World War II, and it was the setting for both the establishment of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and, decades later, its liquidation by the *Treuhandanstalt*, the agency that privatized former East German state-run enterprises.

Wolfgang Schäuble's office is in room 4358, an unadorned corner office on the fifth floor. Many people in cities like Athens and Madrid hold this man responsible for their misery. For them, he is hardly less contemptible than the other men whose offices were once in the same building. They blame him for the plight of retirees reduced to scavenging for food in garbage cans. They claim that the Teutonic furor behind his austerity measures has impoverished Europe and turned it into a place of decay. They believe that no one bears more responsibility for such policies than the man in room 4358 at the German Finance Ministry. Does this man in a gray suit actually know what he is doing?

'Into a Dark Forest'

Schäuble isn't one for small talk. He seems to have no objection to getting right to the point -- to the question of what constitutes the basis of his political decisions, and how academic insights enter into the political process. "As Bismarck said, from one second to the next, you suddenly find yourself walking into a dark forest," he says.

The minister is referring not only to his particular branch of government, but also to the system of finance, global transfers and hypersensitive expectations in an era of chronic crises. Many voters act on little more than the hope that their elected representatives in the parliament and the administration have a pretty good idea of what they are doing. But what exactly serves as the basis for their decisions?

Schäuble points to a man sitting with him at the table: an unobtrusive, alert man whom the minister, with a hint of sarcasm, calls his "chief economist." His name is Ludger Schuknecht, and his head resembles that of a nervous bird. As the Finance Ministry's director general for economic policy, a position referred to as "AL I," Schuknecht serves as the link between the world of economic theory and the world of the feasible, between knowledge and power.

"He is an outstanding academic," says Schäuble, although he is unable to resist adding a "but..." He doesn't complete the sentence, and yet it is clear what Schäuble means to say: Politics is a whole different game. Schuknecht laughs nervously.

Staying One Step Ahead

Schuknecht's job is to provide answers to all technical and specialized questions on the spur of the moment. Schäuble sometimes even calls him at night to resolve questions that are on his mind. Could you explain to me, once again, the "balance sheet crisis" in Spain, he might ask? Or: Which laws govern the shadow banks in the US state of Delaware? Schäuble expects to receive immediate input, material to contemplate.

Schuknecht's economic policy division employs about 140 people, most of them economists, whose job is to provide the state secretaries and the finance minister with the latest figures. They are expected to be consistently well informed about the latest academic debates, or preferably even a step ahead of them. Schuknecht is convinced that there isn't a single important thought that escapes his team. They represent the concentrated expert knowledge of the powerful.

Each employee in the economic policy division has access to specialized knowledge and contacts at universities, banks and associations, as well as think tanks in Brussels and Washington. Schuknecht's staff members invite professors to write concept papers or, at times, to pay a visit to the minister in room 4358.

One of those academics was Kenneth Rogoff, a Harvard economist and one of the world's foremost economic thinkers. He stopped by Schäuble's office on March 2, 2011, just after having given a talk in the ministry on his latest book, "This Time is Different," a 500-page tome on the financial crises of the last 800 years. The book, a massive collection of figures derived from archives, forgotten books and documents presumed lost, became a global bestseller and required reading for finance ministers and central bankers alike. It helped to explain the anatomy of financial crises.

Schäuble, who had read the book, met with Rogoff for an hour. "It wasn't a narrow advice-giving session," says the minister. "I asked him to explain to me what he said in his talk." As it turned out, Rogoff's views conformed to what Schäuble had always known: Ever since money has existed, there has been debt and there have been crises. And when they expand into sovereign debt crises, and when the entire structure of global finance begins to totter, there are no longer any easy answers. After the meeting, the name Rogoff began popping up in Schäuble's speeches.

The Real World

"Academics are important," says Schäuble, "because one has to constantly make an effort to understand things." And yet there is still a wide gap between all the models and theories, and actual political decisions. The world doesn't submit to theories, and history does not offer quick lessons for the future. Suddenly what the experts believe is the right thing to do diverges from the reality of what is feasible -- a reality characterized by political compromises in Brussels, unrest in Lisbon and the power struggles within the steering committee of a coalition party in Athens.

Greece is only one example, but a good one nonetheless. Schäuble often mentions Greece, and when he does he breathes heavily and pauses frequently, rubs his eyes and clasps his hands together in front of his face as if he were praying. Should the country have withdrawn from the euro zone in 2010? The possibility was discussed in the Finance Ministry, even though these discussions were never mentioned publicly. The numbers were clear, and they made a mockery of the Maastricht criteria.

"But then I get a call from (former US Treasury Secretary) Timothy Geithner," says Schäuble, "and he says, 'You do know that we wouldn't have made the decision to allow Lehman Brothers to go bankrupt if we had been asked 24 hours later, don't you?'" Schäuble shrugs his shoulders and falls silent. He cradles his head in his hands and narrows his eyes, using body language to ask: Well, what do you do in that situation? What's the right thing to do? What isn't? What's going to blow up in your face tomorrow?

"Or take the debate in 2011 over the debt haircut for Greece," Schäuble continues. He shrugs his shoulders once again. What would be the consequences of debt forgiveness? What would it mean for Portugal? And for Ireland? And how much of a haircut should private creditors be forced to accept? 20 percent? 22? 30? Or at least 50, as Schäuble had proposed from the very beginning?

'That Terrible Feeling'

It wasn't because he was sure about the number, but almost on the basis of a gut feeling derived from year after year of dealing with the feasible. In those situations, someone like Schuknecht is no longer helpful. In those situations, politicians get together late at night, drink wine and talk -- not about the specific details and not about methodology, but about all the things they have already experienced, and about what works and what doesn't.

Schäuble talks about how Jean-Claude Trichet, the then-head of the European Central Bank (ECB), warned him that by rigidly calling for a 50-percent debt haircut he was risking the worst crisis since the Great Depression. "Thank God he wasn't right," says Schäuble. "It ended up at 53 percent. In the end, you can't reach a decision like that based on scientific methods. Nevertheless, you have to make the decision as difficult as possible, weighing all the options with the help of experts. Then you reach your decision and assume it's the right one and hope, just a little, that you're not wrong."

Schäuble exhales loudly and shrugs his shoulders. He is honest enough to admit that he wasn't envious of his predecessor, Peer Steinbrück, when Lehman failed in 2008 and the global financial crisis erupted, nor did he envy Steinbrück for "that terrible feeling you get when you realize that this could turn into a panic."

The 'German Ideology'

A generation of economists has studied the trauma of the 1929 panic that led to the Great Depression. It dominates their theories and pervades their models. The lessons of that great crisis led to the emergence of two schools of thought that remain hostile to each other to this day, and that can quickly transform discussions of fiscal and economic policy into an ideological minefield.

During the crisis and as a result of its dissection by academics, London currency speculator John Maynard Keynes and Friedrich August von Hayek, the son of a Viennese doctor, became the champions of the two camps. Keynes assigned responsibility to the government, while Hayek, despite everything, continued to argue that markets should be as unregulated as possible.

To this day, controversies in economic theory can still be interpreted as variants of the contradictions between Keynes and Hayek, even if today's debates are conducted with the sophisticated mathematical models of econometrics. For Keynesians, the market is an animal that requires taming. Students of Hayek, on the other hand, prefer to see the state as a night watchman, establishing a loose framework and allowing the markets to run their course. Instead of battling a crisis, the best approach is to weather it like a storm. "These categories are too simplistic for my taste," says Schäuble. "I have a disdain for them shaped by experience. I'm beyond that."

The Flexible Approach

Perhaps that is why he and his advisors end up periodically changing their positions. In the endless corridors of the Finance Ministry, the dispute between the two schools of economic thought has broken down into a question of the right timing, with "Keynes" sufficing for the short term and "Hayek" for the longer and long term. Their goal is to maintain a balance between the rapid stimulation of a tired economy and the long-term achievement of a reasonable level of debt. They call it the "flexible approach to regulatory policy," which the rest of the world tends to describe, and deride, as the "German ideology."

Even when Schäuble sounds like former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who once casually decreed that there is no left-wing or right-wing economic policy, but merely a modern and an outmoded economic policy, he still imposes a policy on Germany's European neighbors that their governments see as conservative, at the very least, and substantially inspired by Hayek.

Someone who seeks to enshrine debt limits in the constitution, thereby strapping a chastity belt of fiscal policy onto the government, who advocates stability pacts and for whom a low debt level is more important than high unemployment figure, is staking out an ideological position.

This is the view critics, from France's Socialists to US President Barack Obama to Left Party politician Sahra Wagenknecht, hold of the new "German ideology." Schäuble finds such criticism "ridiculous" and believes that the dispute over "austerity" boils down to a "misstatement of the issues." Anyone who seriously considers the problems of countries, he says, can only conclude: "In many cases the economic foundations have become fragile, and this doesn't work in the long run. That's why simply injecting more money doesn't do any good, and why improving the underlying economic conditions is so important."

Establishing a Threshold

It is a very German and very Protestant view, which, until 2010, could easily have been dismissed as moral nonsense because it lacked strong scientific evidence. But during the course of 2010, that evidence was supplied just in time for the Greek crisis, when economists the world over were able to prove that high levels of government debt stifle growth.

In a short, elegant paper, Harvard Professors Rogoff and Carmen Reinhart even established a number, a "threshold," or magical limit: They wrote that growth suffers when government debt exceeds more than 90 percent of a country's gross domestic product. It was the kind of knowledge that could be used to shape policy.

It also helps to explain the interplay between policy and science. Since their 2010 bestseller "This Time is Different," the names of the two authors, Rogoff and Reinhart, have become a quality seal of sorts. The 90-percent mark quickly became a welcome tool for all those politicians who had always believed austerity was better than borrowing.

Throughout 2011, European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs Olli Rehn used the expressions "90-percent rule" and "90-percent threshold." They were now being quoted whenever the time came to cut budgets, admonish habitual debtors and intervene in the policies of other countries. Olivier Blanchard, chief economist of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), called the 90-percent threshold "a good reference point." And as soon as the Rogoff-Reinhart paper was published, officials at the German Finance Ministry recognized its potential value in furthering their agenda.

All Hail the Cash Injection

From all corners of Europe, there were growing calls to finally inject more money into the heart of the economy and to put an end to austerity -- with its side effects of the elderly begging for money, young people being deprived of opportunity and burning barricades in Athens and Madrid -- and to finally stop taking debt more seriously than the destruction of the European project.

At the time, the economic policy division supplied Schäuble with ammunition to fend off this attack. It argued that confidence in a sound government has historically carried more weight in Europe than in the United States. It also argued that high debt levels impose a far greater burden on Europe than on the United States, home to the world's currency, and where the government also has the option of simply printing more money. During the various conferences of the period, Schäuble argued that taking on even more debt was not the way to fight existing debt, as Rogoff and Reinhart had stated in their paper.

The Harvard professor was summoned as a crown witness of sorts against the kingdom of the dollar, on the one hand, and against the tendencies on Europe's periphery to ease off austerity, on the other. In a speech to the German parliament on Jan. 17, 2013, Schäuble mentioned Rogoff directly, saying: "We now know -- as even the former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, Mr. Rogoff, has demonstrated -- that at a certain level of government debt, a further increase in debt no longer stimulates growth, but in fact hinders it in the medium term. This is precisely why we don't do that."

The Keynesians Strike Back

Last April, three years after the publication of the Reinhart-Rogoff paper, a student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst made headlines when he claimed to have refuted the Harvard professors' numbers. Thomas Herndon, a 28-year-old graduate student in economics, concluded that the 90-percent study was filled with embarrassing typos, was based on incorrect data and compared apples with oranges. According to Herndon, key figures in the study were wrong and essentially worthless. Before long, Herndon's conclusions had been reported in every newspaper, blog and tweet from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, and from London to Tokyo.

Rogoff suddenly found himself confronted with a digital mob instead of the civil academic community. Rogoff, a scholar who has been a chess grandmaster since the age of 25, talks about the incident in his office at Harvard University. He has withdrawn from the public eye and has stopped giving interviews, fearing that anything he says will only be used against him. He agreed to an interview with SPIEGEL in an effort to defend his credibility.

Rogoff says that at times he was receiving up to 10 emails every five minutes, that he was called a filthy pig and a murderer, and that some people even suggested he should die. He says that he will never forget some of the attempts to assassinate his character on television. Some of his colleagues, he says, have called him the victim of an outrageous and even fascist campaign. He insists that he isn't telling us these things so that we will publish them, but instead to help us understand him.

"Our 90-percent thesis doesn't mean that everything is fine up to 89 percent and that everything becomes catastrophic starting at 91 percent," says Rogoff. "But something happens at this threshold. Perhaps we haven't understood it fully yet, but no one can seriously believe that it isn't a problem that some countries are reporting their highest ever national debt levels in times of peace." So is Rogoff truly the premier advocate of rigid austerity, as his critics and enemies claim? Rogoff laughs out loud -- bitterly and almost despairingly -- at the question.

Dragged Through the Mud

He can present entire binders of newspaper clippings that demonstrate how perfectly balanced the arguments he and Reinhart presented publicly have been; how they warned against radical austerity; how they advocated adjusting government budgets in a sustainable and reasonable manner, and with a sense of proportion; how they even advocated Keynesian ideas so as not to stifle growth; and how he, Rogoff, campaigned for a little less stability in Europe and a little more inflation in order to find a gentle path of transition. But none of it did very much good.

"How much unemployment did Reinhart and Rogoff's arithmetic mistake cause?" asked the British newspaper *The Guardian*. Rogoff is appalled by such reductive arguments. He, who prides himself on being nonpartisan and describes himself as a "centrist," whose works were cheerfully appropriated by all sides in the US presidential election campaign and quoted as proof of the validity of their opposing programs, feels like a victim of collateral damage in the old war of ideologies. "What can an academic do when politicians pepper their speeches with his name? Should I have issued a denial each time? To whom?"

In the Keynesian camp, the no less renowned *New York Times* columnist and Nobel laureate Paul Krugman wrote about the "Rogoff-Reinhart saga," depicting the economists in a highly unflattering light. Soon the two economists were appearing in cartoons as a pair of bunglers who, out of sheer stupidity, had the prosperity of entire nations on their conscience. As recently as this June, a major article in the German newspaper *Die Zeit* erroneously claimed that the 90-percent mark had been disproven and that austerity policy was wrong.

'My God, Are We on the Right Path?'

Even before they were attacked in April of this year, Reinhart and Rogoff had followed up on their 2010 working paper, which was indeed erroneous, with more exhaustive studies that further substantiated an empirical relationship between high debt levels and weak growth. Their conclusions were underpinned by independent, no less profound studies by the ECB, the IMF and the Bank for International Settlements, based in Basel, Switzerland.

Finance Minister Schäuble, a political pragmatist who used Rogoff as much anyone else, defends the economist when he says: "It really doesn't matter whether the threshold lies exactly at 90, 100 or 110 percent. That isn't really the issue at all. But one thing is clear: At some point borrowing goes too far, which no one can seriously dispute."

Nevertheless, have there been situations in his last three years as finance minister when Schäuble feared that he was barking up the wrong tree? "It would certainly be strange," he says, "if you hadn't wondered at some point during the euro crisis: My God, are we on the right path?" Of course, says Schäuble, there were times when he and others wondered whether the European Union would survive or the grand project would indeed fail. "What would have happened if a revolution had erupted in one of the countries?" Schäuble says. "That's when the economist has no answers, which brings us back to the art of the possible."

It is an erratic art form, resulting in a constant political back and forth, almost like a pendulum swinging between Keynes and Hayek. A radical shift occurred in the summer of 2010, a departure from debt-financed economic programs and a commitment by most industrialized nations to austerity in their budgets. But why? Because a professor said the right thing in a conversation in room 4358 at the German Finance Ministry? Because a study had been published at Harvard? Or because more and more new studies appeared that substantiated the correlations Rogoff had made?

The likely answer to these questions is no. It may come as a blow to the vanity of some experts, but their expertise, though employed as a tool to support political arguments, is never implemented, and certainly not directly. Their conclusions are chopped up and combined into a stew, and policymakers are not interested in the individual components.

Experience Breeds Humility

Economic insight is primarily a means to an end, a piece of background information, but not a navigation system. It's a process, says Schäuble. "You can't turn over political decisions to academics," he says. "But it's just as wrong for politicians to believe that they are always right. As a politician, you need a certain amount of humility."

Many of the players involved lack such humility, especially the experts who appear on talk shows, and are always completely convinced of their opinions and are quick to accuse lawmakers of being incapable of comprehending simple truths. But the reality is that politics, compared with the pure theories of academia, is a dirty business, and in this case it's a good thing.

Wolfgang Schäuble knows the business better than almost anyone else. The 2013 German parliamentary election was his twelfth. He has been a member of the Bundestag for 41 years. Over that course of time the Berlin Wall was toppled, he survived an assassination attempt, a world once divided into east and west had to reconstitute itself, planes were flown into skyscrapers, Wall Street crashed, and the euro shook. So many unpredictable things have happened that the minister has had plenty of time to learn how to be humble.

Translated from the German by Christopher Sultan

Zeitarbeit

Mit 8,50 Euro an der Schmerzgrenze

25.09.2013 · Die Zeitarbeit hat mit dem Tarifabschluss den möglichen Mindestlohn vorweggenommen. Die Kostenschübe könnten jedoch das Geschäftsmodell gefährden und Arbeitslosen schaden.

Von [Sven Astheimer](#)

84,110

Der bisherige Buhmann am deutschen Arbeitsmarkt ist vorangeprescht. Noch kurz vor der Bundestagswahl schloss die Zeitarbeitsbranche mit dem Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) einen neuen Tarifvertrag ab, der Symbolkraft hat. Denn im Januar 2014 werden dank einer Lohnerhöhung von 3,8 Prozent selbst ungelernete Zeitarbeiter in Westdeutschland je Stunde 8,50 Euro verdienen. Im Osten, wo die Zuwachsraten über 4 Prozent liegen, soll diese Marke am Ende der dreijährigen Laufzeit erreicht sein.

Die absolute Höhe kommt nicht von ungefähr: Denn auf 8,50 Euro lautet die Forderung nach einem allgemeinen Mindestlohn für Deutschland, mit dem SPD und Grüne in den Wahlkampf gezogen waren und wie ihn der DGB unterstützt. Auch die Arbeitsministerin Ursula von der Leyen von der CDU freute sich anschließend über die Signalwirkung, die von der Querschnittsbranche Zeitarbeit damit ausgehe. „Für eine positive Nachricht aus unserer Branche war die Aufmerksamkeit noch nie so groß“, sagt Dieter Traub, Geschäftsführer des Personaldienstleisters Orizon. Und Andreas Dinges, Deutschland-Geschäftsführer des in der Schweiz beheimateten Adecco-Konzerns, hofft, „dass die öffentliche Negativdiskussion um die Zeitarbeit beendet ist“.

Teuer erkaufte

Doch der politische Erfolg, wenn er sich denn als solcher entpuppt, wäre teuer erkaufte. Denn neben der reinen Entgelterhöhung setzten die Gewerkschaften weitere Forderungen wie eine verbesserte Fortzahlung im Krankheitsfall durch, die den Einsatz der Zeitarbeit für den Kunden deutlich verteuern.

Zudem schlugen in diesem Jahr erstmals die im vergangenen Jahr in Kraft getretenen Branchenzuschläge voll in den Bilanzen durch. Diese besagen, dass die Lohnkluft zwischen einem Leiharbeiter und der Stammkraft im Kundenunternehmen mit zunehmender Einsatzdauer ausgeglichen wird. Diese Unterschiede bestehen vor allem bei geringqualifizierten Tätigkeiten in den Industriebranchen. Weil die Zeitarbeit schon in der Vergangenheit, allerdings von niedrigem Lohnniveau kommend, Zuwächse von insgesamt rund 20 Prozent vereinbart hat, trifft Adecco-Chef Dinges mit einer typischen Floskel aus dem Arbeitgeberlager die derzeitige Stimmung in der Branche womöglich auf den Kopf: „Wir sind an unsere Belastungsgrenze gegangen.“

Der Kunde muss mehr als den nackten Lohn zahlen

Zwar zeigen sich die meisten Zeitarbeitsanbieter überzeugt, dass die Kunden auch diesen Preisanstieg mitgehen werden. „Wie bereits bei Tarifierhöhungen in der Vergangenheit nehmen wir an, dass die Kunden diese auch akzeptieren werden“, sagt etwa Klaus Eierhoff, der Vorsitzende der Geschäftsführung von Tempton. Sein Kollege Traub von Orizon setzt darauf, dass die relativ niedrige Arbeitslosigkeit sowie die demographische Entwicklung die Kunden überzeugen werden, „für gute Leistung auch gute Löhne und Verrechnungssätze zu zahlen“. Denn was oft vergessen wird: Der Kunde kommt nicht nur für den Lohn auf, sondern muss auch noch eine Vermittlungs- und Ausleihgebühr an das Zeitarbeitsunternehmen entrichten, bei dem die Leihkraft fest angestellt ist. Dieser nach außen demonstrierten Zuversicht zum Trotz war schon zur Einführung der Zuschläge aus der Branche zu hören, dass längst nicht alle Kunden diese akzeptierten oder Nachlässe an anderen Stellen forderten, was die Margen unter Druck setze.

Von Seiten der Kunden hält man sich offiziell noch bedeckt. Es sei zu begrüßen, dass der Tarifabschluss noch mitten im Wahlkampf zustande gekommen sei. „Dadurch haben die Kundenunternehmen drei Jahre Planungssicherheit gewonnen“, heißt es aus dem Arbeitgeberverband Gesamtmetall. Die Unternehmen der Metall- und Elektroindustrie stellen die größte Kundengruppe der Personaldienstleister dar. Etwa jeder vierte der rund 800.000 Zeitarbeiter kommt hier zum Einsatz. Die Zahl schwankt jedoch je nach Konjunkturverlauf. Waren es im Aufschwung 2011 rund 241.000 im Durchschnitt, schätzt Gesamtmetall das Volumen derzeit noch auf 190.000, was auch der schwächeren wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung geschuldet ist. Als weiterer Grund wird die vor allem nach Einführung der Zuschlagsregeln zunehmende Praxis genannt, neues Stammpersonal aus Zeitarbeitern zu rekrutieren. Gerade die Automobilhersteller sind diesen Weg verstärkt gegangen, zuletzt etwa Daimler. Doch die jüngsten Kostensteigerungen spielen ebenso für die Reduzierung eine Rolle. Auch aus der Metallbranche ist hinter vorgehaltener Hand zu hören, dass die „Schmerzgrenze erreicht“ sei.

Rund zwei Drittel der Zeitarbeiter kommen aus der Arbeitslosigkeit

In einer Einschätzung sind sich allerdings Kunden wie Anbieter einig: Die Leidtragenden der höheren Kosten werden Geringqualifizierte und Arbeitslose sein. Immerhin rekrutiert die Zeitarbeit rund zwei Drittel ihres Personals aus der Arbeitslosigkeit, und 35 Prozent der Zeitarbeiter sind Hilfskräfte. „Je geringer qualifiziert die Mitarbeiter sind, umso schwieriger ist es, sie zu den neuen Tarifen zu überlassen“, sagt Dieter Traub von Orizon. Tempton-Chef Eierhoff fügt an: „Wir gehen davon aus, dass zum einen der Druck auf die unteren Entgeltgruppen steigen wird und zum anderen die Tendenz zur Rationalisierung in den Unternehmen zunehmen wird.“

Wissenschaftlich belegen lassen sich die Thesen nicht, wie Elke Jahn vom Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung in Nürnberg bemerkt. Der hohe Anteil der Hilfskräfte in der Zeitarbeit zeige jedoch, „dass die Betroffenheit schon groß ist“. In der Theorie ist die „Schmerzgrenze“ für einen Arbeitgeber erreicht, wenn der Lohn für einen Mitarbeiter dessen Produktivität überschreitet. Dann wird er ihn nicht mehr weiterbeschäftigen wollen. Ob dies in der Zeitarbeit mit 8,50 Euro in der Stunde der Fall ist, lässt sich nicht berechnen. Das hänge jeweils auch davon ab, welche Alternativen zur Zeitarbeit das Kundenunternehmen habe. Eines sei jedoch klar, sagt Jahn: Die Anpassungslast für einen zu hohen Lohnabschluss müssten immer die Arbeitnehmer am untersten Ende der Skala zahlen.

September 26, 2013

As Merkel Is Showered in Glory, Hollande Trudges Through Drizzle

By [ALISSA J. RUBIN](#)

84,112

PARIS — It has been a hard week to be François Hollande.

While he faced a new poll giving him the lowest approval rating of any French president in 20 years, newspapers were hailing Chancellor Angela Merkel as the undisputed leader not just of Germany but of all Europe after she nearly secured the first outright parliamentary majority there since 1957.

Meanwhile, glimmerings of a French economic recovery went unremarked, while Mr. Hollande's government — ostensibly the antidote to Ms. Merkel's brand of austerity — produced a budget that sought to spread the impact of government belt-tightening with incremental spending cuts and limited tax increases.

The coincidence of events was exceptional, but the week was typical in the sense that from almost the day Mr. Hollande took office, he has been in the unenviable position of disappointing supporters and opponents alike.

Far from having Ms. Merkel's ability to point to an economy that is Europe's strongest, Mr. Hollande inherited an economy that, while still Europe's second largest, is burdened by a large and expensive public sector and an electorate that has little interest in the kind of changes that free-market economists say are necessary.

His approach has been to tack between doing the bare minimum to move toward European Union requirements on budget deficits and preserving the public benefits that are in the tradition of his Socialist Party. Mr. Hollande believes he was elected to uphold that legacy and is fearful of a backlash if he tries to revamp it, analysts say.

Mr. Hollande was elected in 2012 as the antidote to Nicolas Sarkozy, whom many French loathed, finding him abrasive and frighteningly eager to reduce some of their cherished social programs and state institutions. Ultimately, Mr. Sarkozy backed away from a number of planned changes, said Françoise Fressoz, an editorial writer for *Le Monde*, the leading center-left French newspaper.

“As soon as they are elected, they have a tremendous fear of scaring people and of provoking big protests,” she said of both men. “It's an obsession they all have.”

The result, experts say, is that both French presidents presided over decline. “Growth and competitiveness have been declining over a pretty long period,” said Guntram B. Wolff, director of Bruegel, a public policy research organization in Brussels. “There's a lot of skepticism that not a lot has been done.”

Mr. Hollande had done somewhat better on foreign policy, winning praise for his intervention in Mali to stop the advance of Islamist rebels. But then in August, when he called for military strikes on Syria in the wake of allegations that its government had used chemical weapons, the public backed away. He was left isolated when Britain and Germany opposed a military response and the United States, after seeming to be on the same page, decided to pursue diplomacy instead.

“He deluded himself on Syria,” Ms. Fressoz said. “He must have thought that it would give him a popularity rating like Mali did. It was a much more complicated conflict than Mali, because the goals of the war weren't clear at all. They weren't spelled out.”

Mr. Hollande's political travails appeared in even sharper relief after the success of Ms. Merkel.

“Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, Chief of Europe” gushed *Le Monde*, despite its center-left reputation.

Pascal Perrineau, director of the Center for Political Research at the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, or Sciences Po, said, "Her triumph shows that she has the massive backing of the German people, whereas all opinion polls say that is far from the case for François Hollande." Analysts and economists said much of Mr. Hollande's problem might be rooted in an overall approach to the economy that does just enough to hold the budget scolds in Brussels at bay while being unable to satisfy the public appetite for a sense of forward thrust toward a more sustainable system of social protections.

Instead, meeting year-to-year targets is predicated on modest cuts and the uncertain hope that an eventual economic recovery will arrive with no need for deeper structural change. The French government projects little growth in 2013 — just one-tenth of 1 percent, with a step up to nearly 1 percent in 2014.

There are a few encouraging signs for the government: unemployment figures released Wednesday showed the first drop in two years, in line with Mr. Hollande's promise during the summer.

Olli Rehn, the European Union's economic affairs commissioner, said the French budget showed "responsibility and prudence," but he still worried at the lack of plans for deeper changes.

The government released a pension proposal this month that offered incremental changes that would affect only the private sector, leaving untouched the large number of public employees.

"The pension reform just didn't get as far as it could have and should have," Mr. Wolff of Bruegel said. "A pension reform, if done credibly, gives a lot of fiscal space in the short run, and it's also something that you can logically explain to citizens: people are living 10 years longer than they were 20 or 30 years ago."

In the United States, the retirement age is now 67, while in France it is 62, and that is only because of an increase pushed through under Mr. Sarkozy.

However, from Mr. Hollande's viewpoint, the pension proposal worked: it kept his promise to his base to protect benefits, underlining the differences with his predecessor. Furthermore, the government is making cuts — even if they seem small to Brussels — and that seems to be as much risk as he wants to take.

Speaking to lawmakers this week, Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault acknowledged what for even Mr. Hollande's supporters has become obvious. "Putting the public accounts back in order doesn't inspire anybody," he said.

September 26, 2013

A Challenge to European Political Elite

By [ALAN COWELL](#)

84,114

LONDON — When Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) won a stunning third term in Germany's election this week, she emerged from the fray at the pinnacle of European political power. But great battles — political or military — sometimes cloak small skirmishes that end with more ambiguous results, and so it was in Berlin.

In the shadow of Ms. Merkel's victory, another less obvious contest was fought by players who, like their equivalents elsewhere in Europe, tapped a vein of discontent that seems too insidious for mainstream leaders to ignore.

In Germany, it was the Alternative für Deutschland party — the Alternative for Germany — that reshaped a corner of the political landscape, much as small insurgent parties from Athens to Amsterdam have brought new calculations and pressures to bear on the political elite.

And the emergence of these gadfly groupings served to highlight a European phenomenon that small protest parties — some of them no more than single-issue alliances of convenience — have come to embody: Even without formal political power, or perhaps because they flourish outside the traditional salons of influence, they exert a disproportionate pull on national political life, to the detriment of larger and more established parties.

In the formal arithmetic of German parliamentary democracy, the most obvious point about the Alternatives' showing was that they lost, failing by a hair's breadth to secure the five percent of the ballot required under German law to enter Parliament.

In the process, though, the Alternatives took some 430,000 votes from the liberal Free Democrat Party, Ms. Merkel's most recent coalition partner, contributing to its exit from Parliament for the first time in over six decades. Voters, it seemed, were drawn in large numbers to the Alternatives' antipathy toward the euro zone and its embrace of conservative social values on issues like gay rights. And by contributing to the Free Democrats' woes, the insurgents also created prickly problems for the triumphant Ms. Merkel in her efforts to build a new coalition.

Maybe it was no more than a knock-on effect, driven by a law of unintended consequences, almost guaranteeing that politicians' best-laid plans will somehow unravel.

But there were parallels with developments in elsewhere in Europe earlier this year, when the euro-skeptic United Kingdom Independence Party, or **UKIP**, alarmed the dominant Conservatives with a surprisingly high showing at local British elections, winning 23 per cent of the vote, and spurring Prime Minister David Cameron to commit himself irrevocably to an in-out referendum on membership of the [European Union](#) if he wins the next national vote.

That came only months after **Beppe Grillo's** Five Star Movement in Italy won 25 percent of the vote in national elections in February to become the most powerful challenger to Italy's established order for decades.

The very status of such parties as insurgents and rebels reflects their dilemma: By positioning themselves as outsiders, they exclude themselves from the mainstream, which they anyhow revile or mock as emblems of a corrupt and elite establishment that has failed the people.

That, in turn, deepens their vulnerability to the inherent frailty and short shelf life of narrow, issue-driven politics. Indeed, the failure of many to build the kind of political machines that determine Western elections

leaves their leaders dependent on sometimes troublesome lieutenants and exposed to squabbles within their ranks.

In Britain, Nigel Farage, the beer-drinking, one-of-the-lads leader of UKIP, has tangled frequently with rambunctious figures in his own party, most recently last week, when one of them, Godfrey Bloom, was suspended after referring to women as “sluts” and using a copy of the party’s political program to beat a television reporter over the head, on camera.

Even Mr. Farage admitted that the episode on the fringes of the party’s autumn conference had been a huge setback. “We can’t have any one individual, however fun or flamboyant or entertaining or amusing they are, destroying UKIP’s national conference and that is what he has done,” Mr. Farage said of his erstwhile ally.

It is no coincidence that such populist tub-thumping parties — often anti-immigrant and conservative, but by no means limited to the far right — have seized headlines as Europe’s economic crisis has bitten deeply not only into pocketbooks but also into the reputation of the political elite.

The range of contenders embraces **Geert Wilders’s** Freedom Party in the Netherlands as much as parties on the left and right in Greece, including the neo-fascist Golden Dawn.

The insurgents’ record for durability is mixed. Some, like **the Greens** in Germany, or the more established **National Front** of Marine Le Pen in France, which long predates the latest wave of start-up rebels, **have settled into the political spectrum**. Others, like Germany’s **Pirates**, whose main issue is Internet freedom, have fizzled.

Britain’s maverick **Respect party** has one lawmaker in Parliament. UKIP has none, relying for representation on council seats at home and, paradoxically, on 13 of the 72 seats allocated to Britain in the [European Parliament](#) — a tally Mr. Farage wants to expand in next year’s European elections as a platform to broadcast his euro-skeptic views.

“Populist parties pit the good, the honest, ordinary voter against the out-of-touch, liberal mainstream political elite,” the writer Jamie Bartlett said in the left-wing New Statesman weekly in Britain. “They claim to represent the former against the latter, an authentic and common sense voice in a world of spin and self-interest.”

“It is not the extreme right that is on the march across Europe,” he said, “but a much wider rejection of mainstream, established politics.”

Energiewende

Frösche im EEG-Sumpf

27.09.2013 · Die Energiewende ist falsch konzipiert. Künftig sollte sich das Wirtschaftsministerium darum kümmern: Denn schon heute verlassen immer mehr Unternehmen wegen steigender Stromkosten das Land.

Von [Holger Steltzner](#)

84,116

Wäre die Energiewende nur schlecht gemanagt, wie so oft behauptet wird, könnte ein erfahrener Energieminister (den man nicht hat) die unzähligen Ökostrom-Profiteure vielleicht in die Schranken weisen. Doch leider ist die Energiewende mehr als schlecht gemacht: Sie ist vor allem falsch konzipiert.

Ihr Kern, [das Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz \(EEG\)](#), ist ein gigantischer Subvention-Selbstbedienungsautomat, von dem jeder zwanzig Jahre lang abheben kann, der sein Geld in eine Wind-, Sonnen- oder Biogasanlage investiert. Weil das nicht jeder will oder kann, aber alle normalen Stromkunden für die Öko-Subventionsjäger zahlen müssen, ist das EEG auch eine riesige Umverteilungs-Maschine.

Will man diesen Subventionssumpf, der größer ist als es die Steinkohle je war, wirklich trockenlegen, sollte man nicht die Frösche aus dem Umweltministerium darum bitten. [Um die Öko-Planwirtschaft an den Energiemarkt heranzuführen, ist das Wirtschaftsministerium der bessere Ort.](#) Schließlich sind in der Wirtschaft schon die Folgen der maßlosen Subventionierung sichtbar: Heimlich, still und leise verlassen immer mehr heimische Unternehmen wegen steigender Stromkosten das Land.

Euro-Krise

Rettungsfonds-Chef will Athens Schulden tragbar rechnen

27.09.2013 · Griechenland hat hohe Schulden. Der Internationale Währungsfonds drängt darauf, einen Teil zu erlassen. Die Euroländer wollen das nicht. Es droht Krach zwischen den Rettern.

Von [Werner Mussler](#), Brüssel

84,117



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Klaus Regling ist Chef des Euro-Rettungsfonds ESM.

Der Chef des Euro-Rettungsfonds ESM, Klaus Regling, hat einen Weg angedeutet, auf dem die Euroländer und andere öffentliche Kreditgeber um einen [Schuldenschnitt für Griechenland](#) herumkommen könnten. Er läuft auf eine Neudefinition der griechischen Schuldentragfähigkeit hinaus. Regling sagte dem „[Wall Street Journal](#)“, die im aktuellen Hilfsprogramm für das Land fixierten quantitativen Zieldaten für den Abbau der Staatsschuld reichten nicht aus, um deren Tragfähigkeit zu beurteilen. Eine solche Zielgröße sei für sich genommen „bedeutungslos“. Deshalb sei er von der Notwendigkeit eines Schuldenschnitts, der diesmal auch die öffentlichen Gläubiger betreffe, „nicht überzeugt“.

[Damit stellt Regling](#) den Inhalt des im November 2012 vereinbarten Hilfsprogramms für Athen in Frage, an dem auch der Internationale Währungsfonds (IWF) beteiligt ist. Darin ist festgehalten, dass die Staatsschuld bis zum Jahr 2020 auf 124 Prozent des Bruttoinlandsprodukts (BIP) und bis 2022 auf „deutlich weniger“ als 110 Prozent sinken muss. Nur unter diesen Bedingungen gilt die Staatsschuld bisher als tragfähig, was eine wichtige Voraussetzung für eine IWF-Beteiligung an der Kredithilfe für das Land ist. Derzeit beträgt Griechenlands Staatsschuld rund 170 Prozent des BIP.

Der IWF trägt den kleineren Teil des Hilfsprogramms

Regling sagte, die in dem Programm festgelegten Zielgrößen müssten in Bezug gesetzt werden zu den Konditionen, zu denen das Land seine Kredite zurückzahlen muss. Die Eurogruppe hat die Bedingungen, zu denen der ESM-Vorgänger EFSF die Darlehen an Athen gewährt, mehrfach abgemildert. Deren Laufzeit beträgt nunmehr durchschnittlich 30 Jahre, der Zins liegt weit unter dem von Regling auf etwa 9 Prozent bezifferten Marktniveau bei etwa 1,5 Prozent. Die durchschnittliche Laufzeit der IWF-Kredite betrage dagegen 10 Jahre, das Zinsniveau liege bei drei Prozent. „Für den IWF ist es deshalb sehr wichtig, was in zehn Jahren ist. Unsere Finanzierung dauert aber sehr viel länger“, sagte Regling. Deshalb sei die Situation in zehn Jahren „nicht so wichtig“.

Da die europäische Seite einen weit größeren Anteil des Programms – die Rede ist von etwa 80 Prozent – trage als der IWF, sei es unangemessen, nur die IWF-Interpretation der Schuldentragfähigkeit zu Rate zu ziehen. Die niedrigen Zinsen und die lange Laufzeit enthielten bereits ein „erhebliches Zuschuss-Element“, sagte Regling weiter. Vor diesem Hintergrund erwarte er nicht, dass die öffentlichen Gläubiger auf Forderungen gegenüber

Athen verzichteten. „Das würde eine Finanzierung aus den nationalen Haushalten bedeuten, und das wäre in der Tat sehr umstritten.“

Debatte auf der anstehenden IWF-Herbsttagung

[Bundesfinanzminister Wolfgang Schäuble \(CDU\) hatte einen Schuldenschnitt aus diesem Grund immer ausgeschlossen.](#) Dagegen hatte der IWF mehrfach darauf hingewiesen, dass auf die Euro-Staaten nach 2015 weitere Schuldenerleichterungen für Griechenland über 4 und 3,5 Prozent des BIP zukämen, um den Schuldenstand bis 2020 auf 124 Prozent und bis 2022 auf deutlich weniger als 110 Prozent des BIP zu senken. Reglings Versuch einer Neudefinition dürfte deshalb Streit mit dem IWF provozieren, weil er darauf hinausläuft, die Grundlagen der bisherigen Vereinbarung auszuhebeln.

Nach Reglings Angaben haben die Euro-Finanzminister bisher nicht über seine Überlegungen diskutiert. In Brüssel hieß es aber, einzelne Vertreter der Eurogruppe hätten darüber durchaus schon informelle Gespräche geführt. Es sei unvorstellbar, dass der ESM-Chef seine Ideen ohne Abstimmung mit wichtigen Mitgliedstaaten in die Öffentlichkeit trage, sagte ein EU-Diplomat. Deshalb sei es wahrscheinlich, dass die Eurogruppe einen Schuldenschnitt über den von Regling skizzierten Weg zu vermeiden suche. Alle Mitglieder der Troika aus IWF, Europäischer Zentralbank und EU-Kommission hätten während der IWF-Herbsttagung in zwei Wochen in Washington ausreichend Gelegenheit, über das Thema zu sprechen.

Has Germany reached a turning point? Whither the SPD and the arrival of political euroskepticism

By Joshua Tucker

813 mots

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Anglais

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Continuing our series of election reports, the following German post-election analysis is provided by Benjamin Preisler, who most recently obtained his second M.A. from the College of Europe. His pre-election report on this election can be found [here](#); additional post-election analysis from The Monkey Cage is available [here](#).

As I argued in my background information post, the 2013 federal German elections may be seen as yet another indication of the volatility of the Berlin Republic's (post-reunification) party system -- what Oskar Niedermayer had called a fluid five-party system. Notwithstanding "the curious sleepiness of the [] campaign," participation rose just a bit from 70,8 percent to 71.5 percent. Merkel's party Union (as the combination of CDU and CSU is called in German; obviously no link to the American Civil War) almost won an absolute majority of seats in the parliament with 42 percent. (Check [here](#) for a nice interactive graph of voter movements between parties). This was the case because the Union:

1. Absolutely feasted on its desolate liberal coalition partner FDP (taking more than 2.4 million votes from them);
2. Benefited from Merkel's popularity and her parties' perceived problem-solving skills in the economic realm (unemployment and the **economy**; but also the eurocrisis) in drawing additional votes from the whole political spectrum (920,000 from the SPD, 560,000 from the Greens, and an astonishing 1.5 million from 2009's non-voters).

Apart from Merkel's impressive all-around victory, there are two other important developments to take away from this election.

First, the SPD has paid a heavy price for the ideological convergence and the decreasing polarization of the German political system. It essentially undercut its very existence as one of the two more or less equal major poles in German politics due to the liberalizing Schröder reforms. After 34.25 percent in 2005 and 23 percent in 2009 in the wake of its participation in a Grand Coalition, the party has now obtained 25.7 percent. With a tripartite split of the left vote, the AfD taking in additional protest votes, and the SPD having difficulties to paint itself as a true alternative, it is unclear how the party can overcome this **decline**.

Second, the AfD of course almost entered parliament, thus joining a well-documented wave of euroskeptic parties in Europe (although the AfD claims to be only Euro-skeptic but in favor of European integration otherwise). Following the True Finns in Finland, Geert Wilder's Freedom Party in the Netherlands, Marine Le Pen's Front national in **France**, and Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement in Italy, euroskepticism has also now arrived in Germany.

What is interesting to note here is that for the most part these are the debtor, and not the creditor, countries and that none of these has undergone such harsh austerity as Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain, or Latvia did. All of those countries with the exception of the truly extreme case of Greece and its Golden Dawn party have been much more stable electorally, which is odd in light of Barry Eichengreen et.al.'s seemingly common sense analysis of right-wing political extremism in the Great Depression, which finds it "is greatest where depressed economic conditions are allowed to persist."

The AfD managed to garner more than 2 million votes by attracting a highly diverse 430,000 voters from the FDP, 290,000 from the CDU/CSU, 340,000 from Die Linke (!), 180,000 from the SPD, and only 150,000 who previously had not voted. To underline this heterogeneity, a closer look at results in Berlin shows that the party won about as many votes in an upper middle class neighbourhood such as Steglitz-Zehlendorf (5.3 percent) as in a relatively poor, high-unemployment one such as Berlin-Lichtenberg (5.5 percent). This clearly was a protest vote with 44 percent in one survey believing that the party "won't change anything but at least names problems."

With elections for the [European Parliament](#) in May 2014 only having a 3 percent hurdle for parties to overcome and historically lower participation rates, as well as better scores for smaller parties in these secondary-type elections, a continued presence for the AfD at least in the mid-term seems almost assured. This is also because all regional elections in 2014 will take place in the East German L nder where the AfD polled strongly. From a European perspective it will be interesting if the party joins forces with Geert Wilders and Marine Le Pen to form a on the surface paradoxical pan-european euroskeptic alliance "rooted in a broader authoritarian worldview that also includes higher levels of nationalism and hostility to 'outsiders.'"

En Autriche, la "grande coalition" sous la pression de l'extrême droite

LE MONDE | 27.09.2013 à 14h55 | Par [Joëlle Stolz](#) (Vienne, correspondante)

84,121



La remontée de l'extrême droite xénophobe, le FPÖ de Heinz-Christian Strache, tout comme le surgissement d'un nouveau parti créé par le milliardaire austro-canadien Frank Stronach, très critique envers les instances bruxelloises, sont deux éléments marquants des élections législatives autrichiennes, dimanche 29 septembre. Si les forces eurosceptiques pourraient représenter plus d'un quart des suffrages, elles ne devraient pas suffire à bouleverser le paysage politique et le Parlement restera majoritairement proeuropéen.

Faute de mieux, les électeurs vont sans doute reconduire la "grande coalition" entre le Parti social-démocrate autrichien (SPÖ) et les chrétiens-démocrates du Parti populaire ÖVP. En Autriche, cet attelage a souvent fait ses preuves après la seconde guerre mondiale, quand il s'agissait d'effacer le traumatisme de la "guerre civile" de 1934, puis de l'austrofascisme et du nazisme.

Au pouvoir depuis cinq ans, la grande coalition a permis aux Autrichiens de traverser sans trop de mal les turbulences de la crise financière et de conserver **un taux de chômage – 4,8 %** – parmi les plus bas de l'Union européenne. Mais ses bons résultats économiques n'empêchent pas un sentiment d'usure : un récent sondage créditait les partis de la coalition gouvernementale d'à peine 49 % des voix à eux deux, contre 55 % en 2008.

Si le SPÖ du chancelier Werner Faymann reste nettement en tête, avec 27 % des intentions de vote, les chrétiens-démocrates, conduits par le vice-chancelier et ministre des affaires...

September 28, 2013

Greece Cracks Down on Far-Right Party With Arrests of Lawmakers

By [LIZ ALDERMAN](#)

84,122

ATHENS — The counterterrorism police conducted an unprecedented crackdown on Greece's neo-fascist Golden Dawn party early Saturday morning, arresting four members of Parliament, including the head of the organization, and ten party officials. A search was under way for the arrest of two more lawmakers and more than twenty party members.

It is the first time that members of political parties and Parliament members have been arrested in Greece since the fall of a military junta in 1974.

Less than two weeks after a man who said he had ties to the party murdered an anti-fascist Greek musician, igniting an uproar throughout Greece, Nikos Mihaloliakos, Golden Dawn's leader and a member of Parliament, was taken into custody Saturday morning on charges of forming a criminal organization. The other arrests followed. The immunity usually enjoyed by Greek members of Parliament is automatically lifted in the case of felonies. For lesser charges, a vote has to be held in Parliament. But the immunity of Greek members of Parliament can only be lifted by a vote by the Parliament.

Ilias Kasidiaris, another Parliament member who is the party's chief spokesman, was among those arrested early Saturday, along with two other lawmakers, Ilias Panagiotaros and Yiannis Lagos. Also included in the sweep was Giorgios Patelis, head of the party's local chapter in Nikaia, a gritty Athens suburb that is one of Golden Dawn's biggest strongholds.

The arrests are part of a rapidly widening campaign by the government to clamp down on what it says is a rising tide of extremism in Greece, fueled by a devastating economic crisis. In addition, the government last week opened an investigation into whether sympathizers or members of the group — one of the most violent rightist organizations in Europe — have infiltrated Greek police forces and the armed forces.

Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, who heads the right-leaning New Democracy party, has said he is determined to curb the influence of Golden Dawn, a group whose standing had climbed in opinion polls in the last year and which now has 18 of its members in Parliament. Since the murder a week and a half ago of Pavlos Fyssas, a 34-year-old rapper whose lyrics protested the rise of neo-fascism in the country, Golden Dawn's standing in polls has slid. But it is still the third most popular party in Greece, behind New Democracy and Syriza, the leftist party headed by a political maverick, Alexis Tsipras.

The crackdown is not without risks.

"If they are prosecuted, it might have a boomerang effect among Golden Dawn's followers and voters," Nikos Demertzis, a professor of political sociology at the University of Athens, said in an interview earlier this week. "If you alienate them totally from the political system, alleging that everyone who has voted for Golden Dawn or who likes them should be stigmatized, it may marginalize politically thousands of people," he said.

Earlier this week, Mr. Mihaloliakos suggested that all 18 Golden Dawn members might resign from Parliament en masse, a move that could force a series of elections in areas where the party now holds seats. A government spokesman said such a move would not force a new round of general elections, although the prospect of new elections for those seats could undermine political stability in Greece at a time when Mr. Samaras is negotiating with the country's creditors for continued financial aid as part of two multibillion euro bailouts it has already received — even as speculation of the possible need for a third bailout hangs over the talks.

Golden Dawn is by no means a new force in Greece, but its influence has grown in tandem with Greece's devastating economic hardship. Armed with promises to restore jobs and order, its members espouse nationalistic and xenophobic slogans, appealing to marginalized Greeks in rough areas populated by a rising tide of unemployed immigrants, mostly from Pakistan and North Africa.

Human rights groups say Golden Dawn, whose members perform Nazi salutes at rallies and meetings, has systematically terrorized immigrants, while the police looked the other way. The aggressive acts include the beating of immigrants with clubs and shields bearing swastikalike symbols, or with wooden poles draped in the Greek flag.

in a message sent by cellphone to an unspecified number of Greeks, including reporters, Golden Dawn called for its backers to "support our moral and just struggle against the corrupt system," appealing to them to rally outside the party's offices in northeastern Athens and outside the Athens police headquarters near the city center where the members of Parliament and officials were being detained.

Tensions have also risen recently between Golden Dawn and leftist groups. This month, thousands of Greeks protested in Athens after about 50 Golden Dawn members, armed with bats and crowbars, attacked members of the Communist Party, leaving nine people hospitalized with serious injuries.

The police said arrests would continue throughout the day.

Greece

On the edge

The mood in the Greek capital is at the boiling point

Sep 21st 2013 | ATHENS | [From the print edition](#)

84,124



A ghastly new dawn

A WHIFF of tear gas, the first in the city centre for almost a year, signalled the start of a new round of protests led by Greek teachers, school and university administrators, and members of the capital's recently disbanded municipal police. All face being laid off in a long-awaited cull of public-sector workers. Riot police resorted to firing the tear gas on September 16th to dissuade a group of school guards from occupying the ministry of public administration.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the minister in charge, has been scrambling to find another 1,500 candidates to complete a quota of 12,500 workers, who will be transferred to a "mobility reserve" at the end of September. University rectors objected to his last-minute proposal to include secretaries, laboratory technicians and computer support staff. Mr Mitsotakis had to cast around half a dozen ministries to try to make up the numbers days before the "troika" of officials from the European Commission, European Central Bank and IMF arrive to check up on Greece's progress.

Another 12,500 jobs must be cut by the end of 2013. Workers dumped in the reserve on 75% of their pay will be given eight months to find a new public-sector job. The striking teachers are backed by Alexis Tsipras, leader of the radical Syriza party, the main opposition, who wants to bring down the government.

The mood is edgy. Middle-class Greeks are struggling to pay three years' worth of property taxes. Rumours are rife of another cut in pensions to help plug a widening deficit at IKA, the biggest social-security fund. Mr Samaras's New Democracy party has fallen a point behind Syriza in some recent polls.

Greece is on track to achieve a primary budget surplus this year before debt repayments, but will still need an extra €4.4 billion (\$5.9 billion) from its creditors next year and €6.5 billion in 2015. Some indicators suggest that this year's recession will be shallower than forecast and that the economy will grow by 0.8% next year. Athens officials hope to begin discussing debt relief, perhaps involving another reduction of interest rates, and an extension of loan maturities, once Eurostat, the EU's statistical arm, confirms the primary surplus in April.

Despite this encouraging news, Mr Samaras worries about a political "blind spot" that extremists can exploit when the economy has begun to improve but ordinary Greeks feel nothing has changed. Opinion poll support for Golden Dawn, the thuggish neo-Nazi party, has jumped from 10% to 15% since June. On September 18th a hip-hop artist was murdered by a man claiming allegiance to Golden Dawn. Violence erupted once again on the streets as demonstrators expressed their outrage. A return of the old strife between left and right now seems all too possible.

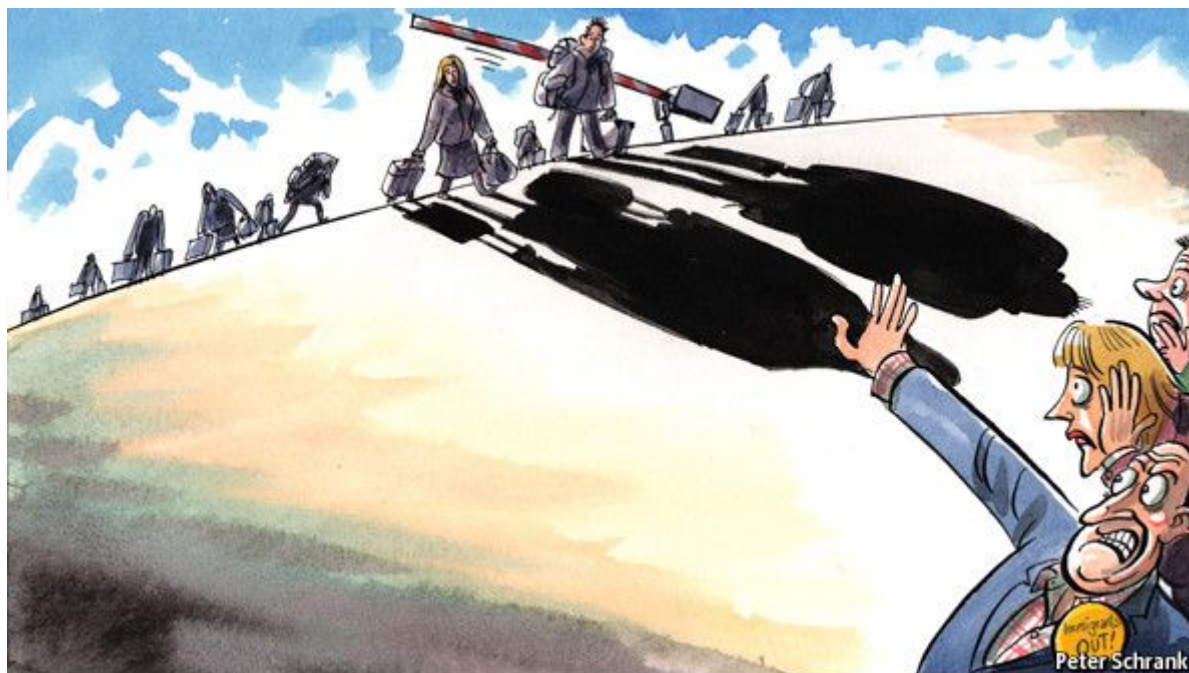
Charlemagne

They are coming

Hope for a better life is pushing young Europeans abroad

Sep 21st 2013 | [From the print edition](#)

84,125



A NEW generation is on the move in Europe, migrating from the fringes of the continent in search of work. The Polish plumber ventured out when his country joined the European Union in 2004, followed a few years later by the Romanian fruit-picker. Now it is the Irish graduate, the Spanish engineer and the Italian architect who are packing their bags. For the people of eastern Europe, migration is a way of catching up with western incomes; for those from the crisis-hit southern and Celtic periphery, it is a means of escaping mass unemployment.

This is the way the EU was meant to operate. Goods can move to the consumers; workers can move to the jobs. Migration can relieve the public finances of countries in a slump and fill labour shortages in booming economies. Even so, Europeans remain less mobile than Americans. At their summits, European leaders call for greater mobility to ease youth unemployment and boost growth.

But do they really mean it? Migration inevitably causes resentment among some, especially the low-paid. But it has become a more acute political issue with the rise of anti-immigrant and anti-EU parties of all stripes. Increasingly, suspicion that was once directed at asylum-seekers and other dark-skinned migrants from poor countries is now also aimed at legal migrants from within the EU. In hard times it is easy to blame go-getting eastern newcomers for stealing jobs, benefits, or both. One of the EU's most cherished freedoms is thus under growing strain.

Lodewijk Asscher, the Dutch deputy prime minister, last month issued a dramatic warning. The flow of European migrants, he said, had reached the equivalent of an "orange alert" in the country's flood-warning system. Though Mr Asscher did not spell it out, the Netherlands and many other countries are worried about a flood of migrants from Romania and Bulgaria, the poorest countries in the EU, when the sluice-gates to their emigrants are fully opened at the end of the year.

Yet the Netherlands is hardly the country most affected by the free movement of Europeans: less than 1% of its population is made up of citizens from central and eastern Europe, compared with 5% in Ireland, 2.5% in Spain, 2% in Britain and 1.5% in Germany. Since 2010 the biggest flows have been to Britain and Germany. Perhaps the real reason for the Dutch panic is the country's poisonous politics. The far-right Freedom Party of Geert Wilders is leading in opinion polls.

A fragile coalition government, and the rise of the UK Independence party (UKIP), help to explain the uproar in Britain. The question of EU workers touches on three explosive issues: Europe, migration and welfare. That is why David Cameron, the prime minister, is focusing on migration as part of his campaign for reform of the EU. Some think that reforming benefits for EU workers would allow Mr Cameron to show that he is addressing public concerns, winning allies in Europe and, together with other reforms, successfully redefining Britain's relationship with Europe. He could then campaign for Britain to remain in the EU in a referendum that he wants to call by 2017.

The trouble with this strategy is that Britain must demonstrate there is a need to fix the EU's rules and find allies ready to push for change. Under EU procedures it is for the European Commission to propose legislative changes to rules governing the free movement of workers. In April the interior ministers of Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria urged the commission to take action. But the commission says they have offered no proof so far of widespread "benefit tourism", providing only anecdotes and alarmist tabloid headlines. Viviane Reding, the justice commissioner, says they should stop "populist scaremongering". Even if the commission were minded to tighten the rules, the European Parliament is certain to try to block change.

Such resistance can be overcome only with a concerted push from governments. But migration has hardly figured in the German general-election campaign. Instead of criticising multi-culturalism, Angela Merkel, the chancellor, is more liable to talk of the need for migrants to shore up Germany's demographic decline and alleviate its skills shortages. Moreover, any German chancellor will be sensitive to the views of neighbouring Poland, which supports the commission. In France, despite the strength of the far-right Front National, François Hollande, the president, has avoided his predecessor's get-tough rhetoric on migration. Southern European countries worry most about illegal migrants from northern Africa, and have little interest in restricting their citizens' ability to work in the rest of Europe.

Brits out

There will be little or no action from Brussels, at least before a new parliament and commission are in place at the end of next year. If a tide of Eurosceptic MEPs were to flow in, the political balance might change. For now, British demands are treated with disdain. Was it not the British who pushed the EU to go far and fast with its eastward enlargement? What about all those British pensioners putting a strain on Spain's health services? And was it not the British this summer who urged the commission to act against Spain's restriction on traffic from Gibraltar in a row over fishing rights?

The four ministers rightly say that freedom of movement within the union is not unconditional, and the perception of unfairness undermines support for the EU. Yet often the problems are about enforcement, rather than the rules. European leaders would make a stronger case for action against abuse if they were more welcoming to hard-working European migrants. Creating a freer, more dynamic economy requires Europe to cherish its dynamic workers.

Latvian lessons

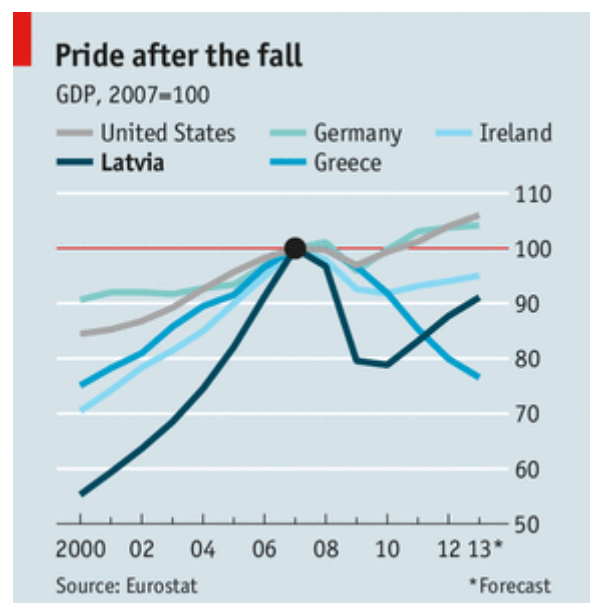
Extreme economics

A new study asks whether Latvia is an exception or an exemplar

Sep 21st 2013 | [From the print edition](#)

84,127

FOR a place long marched over by warring armies, there are worse fates than being fought over by economists. Latvia has a population of 2m and its annual GDP is a mere €23 billion (\$30 billion). But the tribulations experienced by this small Baltic country since 2008, as it kept the lat, its currency, fixed to the euro while fiercely tightening fiscal policy, have sparked a big dispute among dismal scientists.



Latvia is now the European Union's fastest-growing economy. But the recovery has come after an epic recession, that was at its most savage in 2009 (see chart). Does its experience show that countries can cope with harsh austerity and adjust costs without devaluation? Or could a different policy, featuring a lower exchange rate and a gentler fiscal tightening, have spared much unnecessary pain?

A study* published this week for the Brookings Institution by a trio of IMF economists—led by Olivier Blanchard, the fund's chief economist—tries to answer these questions. It is especially pertinent because the IMF's usual remedy for a country with its own currency that needs help (it contributed to an international rescue of Latvia in late 2008) is to combine a budgetary squeeze, which lowers domestic demand, with a devaluation, which provides an offsetting stimulus from net trade. Mr Blanchard admitted last year that he thought the Latvian government's disavowal of depreciation would be disastrous. He also believes that austerity has inflicted more damage on European economies than expected.

The study's conclusions are nuanced. Latvia did achieve a hefty internal devaluation remarkably swiftly, but the improvement in unit labour costs came mostly through unexpectedly big productivity gains rather than a more unpalatable fall in private-sector wages. Whether the same can be done in other crisis-stricken economies is far from clear.

As for the bitter controversy about austerity, the IMF economists point out that much of the Latvian programme was implemented after the main fall in output. They reject as "unwise" the notion that the country's fiscal consolidation helped growth. But they do accept that austerity did not prevent the recovery, although this was from a very low starting-point.

The Latvian case study matters not just for economists but for policymakers trying to deal with troubled countries within the euro area. European and especially German officials believe that Latvia vindicates the tough approach they have taken when bailing out economies like Greece and Portugal. The Baltic state is returning the compliment by joining the euro next year.

But there is a danger of reading too much into the experience of any one economy. Precisely because it is so small, Latvia had more scope than larger countries to adjust through emigration: its population has shrunk by almost a tenth since 2007. The fall in output, which took away only a portion of the catch-up growth after it had won independence in 1991, may have been easier to endure for a citizenry hardened by a harsher existence under Soviet rule. One reason why the government is prepared to disregard public opposition to joining the euro is a strategic objective of reducing Russian influence by embedding Latvia in the currency zone. Latvia's relevance may be limited because politically and economically it is an outlier.

* "Boom, Bust, Recovery: Forensics of the Latvia Crisis", by Olivier Blanchard, Mark Griffiths and Bertrand Gruss

German economic history

Where the angst comes from

Why Germans are so frightened of inflation

Sep 14th 2013 | [From the print edition](#)

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The Downfall of Money: Germany's Hyperinflation and the Destruction of the Middle Class. By Frederick Taylor. *Bloomsbury*; 416 pages; \$30 and £25. Buy from [Amazon.com](#), [Amazon.co.uk](#)

GERMANS are terrified of inflation. German politicians (and their colleagues in the euro zone) understand this, though mostly they ignore it as they try and steer their way out of the euro crisis. By the end of “The Downfall of Money” it is clear why these fears are so deeply embedded. At the root of the trauma lie the events of 1923, when the German currency plummeted from 7,500 Reichsmarks to the dollar to a rate of 2.5 trillion.

This is not just a story of financial mismanagement. The dice were loaded against Germany as soon as it became clear, late in 1918, that it would lose the first world war. As often happens, the winners wrote the history and set the terms for peace. The Treaty of Versailles, signed in 1919 but not finalised until 1921, was designed by the allies to suck dry what was left of Germany. Worse still, France entered and occupied Germany's industrial heartland, the Ruhr and the Rhine, in January 1923, making it even harder for Germany to keep up its reparation payments.

Add to that a weak central government, threatened daily by extremists on the left and right, and it is remarkable that the world's second-biggest economy didn't disintegrate. Frederick Taylor, who has written several books on this era, is careful to blame no one—except perhaps the French. He is quick to offer parallels with the recent financial crisis, when many governments turned to quantitative easing (buying assets with newly created money) to avoid recession or even depression. And his book has suggestions about where the world may be heading if it is not careful.

Living in hyperinflationary Germany was very hard, unless you had a good supply of dollars. For civil servants, whose salaries never kept up, and savers, whose holdings shrank to nothing, it was a slide into poverty and worse. Manual labourers were better rewarded than white-collar workers. Landlords earned a pittance in rent. Pensioners starved. House-buyers had a better time of it; at least their mortgages shrank to nothing. For the quick-witted it was a game of barter and raiding the countryside where most people at least were not starving. Two million migrated back to the land from German towns. Fat cats thrived by trading property and black-market goods and so did a handful of industrialists.

Karl Helfferich, a nationalist politician, Hans Luther, the finance minister, and Hjalmar Schacht, who later became Hitler's economics minister became intent on currency reform. Helfferich first proposed the idea of a currency indexed to the price of rye and other agricultural products. That evolved into the introduction of a “gold” mark whose issuance was severely restricted by a new bank, called the Rentenbank. Just in time, as it happened.

Things came to a head in November 1923. The central government was nearly toppled by the communists and socialists in Hamburg, Saxony and Thuringia, and by Hitler and his Nazi party in Bavaria. The putsches failed, although Hitler lived to fight another day.

The gold mark came in on November 15th, and the paper mark settled down to a rate of 4.2 trillion to the dollar by the end of the year. Germany became stable enough to attract foreign investment and a huge American loan. But the residual fear of hyperinflation helped Hitler's rise to power a decade later. Mr Taylor notes similarities between the Treaty of Versailles and European economic and monetary union. Both, broadly, were attempts to tie down Europe's giant and help prevent another war. Versailles failed. As for the EU, this book, if written five

years ago, would have had a happy ending, he says. Now “Germany finds itself widely hated...and the root of the problem is, once more, a currency in difficulties.”

France's economy

Budgetary blues

Tax rises have reached their limit

Sep 28th 2013 | PARIS | [From the print edition](#)

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THE French government unveiled what it called a “historic” 2014 budget on September 25th, intended both to reassure doubters abroad that it is still serious about controlling its public finances and voters at home that it has heard their howls over tax increases. Yet with public debt expected to top 95% of GDP next year, economic growth fragile and the overall tax take inching up to 46.1% of GDP, the fifth consecutive yearly increase, France is not out of the danger zone yet.

As agreed with the European Commission, and in a bid not to cramp growth, France will ease the pace of deficit reduction next year. The government forecasts a budget deficit of 3.6% of GDP, down from 4.1% in 2013. To get there, the finance minister, Pierre Moscovici, promises that in 2014, unlike this year, 80% of the €18 billion (\$24 billion) deficit-reduction effort will come from budget savings rather than tax increases. As a mark of seriousness, the finance ministry, for instance, is planning to cut some 2,600 of its own staff. Central government will shave a total of €1.5 billion off its spending.

Mr Moscovici and Bernard Cazeneuve, his budget minister, call this effort a “turning point”, unprecedented under the Fifth Republic. There have been tough negotiations with spending ministries—one finance-ministry official jokes about wishing he wore a sturdy helmet in such meetings—and some, such as agriculture, have had their budgets trimmed. In a country that has not balanced a government budget since 1974, it is certainly a novelty to find central government shrinking its own share of public spending, even if only by a fraction. The trend is now at least in the right direction.

Yet the picture is not quite as encouraging as it might seem. Overall public spending will continue to rise, albeit by only 0.5%. This is slower than in recent years, but it will still leave public spending at 57% of GDP in 2014, higher than in any other country in the euro zone. The public-debt level will rank France no better than average for the euro zone. Even with this effort to control spending, the 2014 budget still adds an extra €3 billion of new taxes on top of those already agreed, such as an increase in VAT rates, compounding a sense of uncertainty that is braking investment and hiring.

The French were fully prepared for François Hollande, the president, to squeeze the rich with taxes. When he campaigned for office last year, he denounced the “arrogant and grasping” super-rich. And he made waves with a promise of a 75% top tax rate for millionaires, which will be applied in 2014, though paid by firms not employees. Today, however, the middle too is feeling the pinch, and it will do so again in 2014 thanks to new measures such as lower family tax credits and higher social contributions. So is business, which faces an extra 1% levy on gross profit. “A painful budget for everybody” read the front page of *Le Monde*, a left-leaning newspaper, on budget day.

Mindful of the voters’ worries about taxes, the government argues with gymnastic skill that, since the rate of tax increases has decreased, this constitutes a “stabilisation” or even a “tax pause”, as Mr Hollande recently promised. Perhaps. But the government’s revenue projections may turn out to be optimistic, notably as unemployment, currently at 11%, is likely to remain higher than it hopes. Indeed, France’s new office of budgetary oversight warned the government in a note published on budget day that in order to keep deficit reduction on track by 2016 further measures would be needed next year.

Charlemagne **Waiting for Angela**

The German chancellor has big decisions to make in Europe, but will take her time

Sep 28th 2013 | [From the print edition](#)

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AROUND Europe, they sit and wait for Angela. They waited for her to fight her election campaign. Now they must wait for her to form a coalition. Eurocrats draft papers, crunch numbers and muse about the future of Europe. They look in their hats. But there is nothing to be done until Angela Merkel comes. Triumphant returned as Germany's chancellor, Mrs Merkel has already said her European policy will not change. So what are they asking for? A bit like Vladimir and Estragon in "Waiting for Godot", theirs is "a kind of prayer... a vague supplication" that Mrs Merkel do more to end Europe's misery.

The newly re-elected chancellor will be in Brussels for a summit next month, but little will be decided. Perhaps things will move at a meeting of finance ministers in November, or maybe at the next summit in December. Yet time for legislative work is short. The European Parliament will break up in April for its own election campaign. **Europe is not like Samuel Beckett's play, in which nothing happens; bad things may happen when its leaders do nothing.**

To begin with, Europe's banks need to be fixed, not least because firms in southern Europe still face crippling borrowing costs. But Europe must wait for Mrs Merkel to decide on the form of the promised **banking union**. EU leaders have established a **new euro-zone bank supervisor, with the European Central Bank (ECB) at its core**. The next stage is harder: creating a **bank-resolution authority with the power and money to wind up or restructure bust banks and allocate losses**. Germany said a proposal by the European Commission in July was illegal because it centralised too much power. Instead, Germany wants a looser arrangement among national bank-resolution authorities.

German officials have privately hinted that they are ready to strike a deal, but want Germany's many small banks carved out of the system. But what is the value of a banking union without the bulk of German banks? And unless there is genuine risk-sharing, it will be hard to clean up losses without overburdening national budgets and damaging the credibility of the new bank supervisor from the outset.

Another pressing question is **Greece and Portugal. Both will need more bail-out money (or a debt write-off)** in the coming months. But they too must wait for Mrs Merkel. Some hope that she will find it easier to secure approval in the Bundestag for a bail-out, and ease demands for austerity, if she forges a coalition with the Social Democrats. But don't expect her to put up a lot of money.

AUSTERITY???

Until now Germany has argued that its medicine has been working. Unit-labour costs and the current-account balance in troubled countries are moving in the right direction. But growth is sluggish at best, and unemployment remains worryingly high. Several countries are close to deflation, which would increase their real debt burden. Tellingly, Germany's current-account surplus has risen above 7% of GDP. **Some want Germany do more to boost demand at home to help southerners adjust more quickly.** In a joint paper this week, two German Europhiles, Daniela Schwarzer of the SWP think-tank in Berlin, and Guntram Wolff of Bruegel in Brussels, advocate three measures: **increasing public investment in Germany, facilitating migration by Europeans to Germany and liberalising the services sector.** The alternative to supporting the adjustment may be less palatable, such as **more bail-outs, more debt defaults or bigger transfers.**

Then there is the question of the **longer-term future for Europe.** Italy's prime minister, Enrico Letta, is among those warning that Europe must have an appealing vision of greater integration if it is to resist a surge of Euroscepticism at **the European election next May.** "Sacrifices, yes. Cuts, yes. **Then the Promised Land,**" is how he puts it. But Mr Letta, too, must wait. In the land of milk and honey, as he sees it, the euro zone would have a central budget and could borrow money to invest in growth-enhancing projects. The IMF made a similar call this week in a report outlining several options. But such ideas were shot down by Mrs Merkel last year. Even a limited model, in which the euro zone would offer modest financial support for countries that accept **reform "contracts"**, shows little sign of becoming reality soon.

This suggests that the idea of **changing the EU's treaties has been pushed back,** frustrating Britain's most obvious means of repatriating some powers after 2015. So the British prime minister, David Cameron, must also wait for Mrs Merkel to help him obtain a more diffuse reform of the EU as a whole. She has sounded only vaguely supportive about rebalancing EU powers.

Mario came yesterday

One reason for the lack of urgency is that the **markets have been sedated** by the ECB's promise in late 2012 to do "whatever it takes" to prevent the break-up of the euro. **The central bank's pledge to buy bonds of troubled countries (on condition that they submit to a reform programme)** has proven an **effective bluff,** bringing down yields without spending a cent. But **Germany's constitutional court is due to rule later this autumn on the legality of the ECB's planned Outright Monetary Transactions.** For critics the policy is tantamount to outright **monetary financing of governments.** Should Karlsruhe's judges limit the ECB's freedom of action, **the markets may test the bank's resolve.**

In short, the euro crisis is far from over. It could be revived at any time by any one of several events: **a banking crisis, another slump, a political backlash or even unwise judicial meddling.** Then Mrs Merkel will be called upon to act once more as the **euro's saviour.** For now, she is more like Godot, who cannot promise anything, has to think it over—and must check the bank account before taking any decision.

"L'islamophobie va au-delà d'un simple racisme"

LE MONDE | 27.09.2013 à 10h07 • Mis à jour le 27.09.2013 à 17h28 |

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Propos recueillis par [Stéphanie Le Bars](#)

Les sociologues Abdellali Hajjat et Marwan Mohammed ne s'en cachent pas : leur ouvrage *Islamophobie, comment les élites françaises fabriquent le "problème musulman"*, (La Découverte), est un livre à thèse. La notion d'islamophobie et les actes qui l'accompagnent, sont, selon eux, la conséquence d'un "*consensus national*" autour de l'idée que l'islam et la présence des musulmans en France "*posent problème*". Mais, au-delà de cette démonstration, les auteurs livrent un travail fouillé sur l'état des recherches en France et dans le monde anglo-saxon sur ce phénomène. Ils reviennent sur "*l'imperfection*" du terme, sa possible "*instrumentalisation*" et la progressive reconnaissance du phénomène par les élites.

Quelle est votre définition de l'islamophobie et quels en sont les ressorts ?

Pour nous, l'islamophobie, ce ne sont pas seulement des actes de discrimination, mais un phénomène social global, qui consiste à réduire "l'autre" à son appartenance religieuse présumée ou réelle. Elle repose donc à la fois sur une idéologie, des préjugés et des actes. En cela, elle va au-delà d'un simple racisme, mais découle d'un "problème musulman", construit, de manière non concertée, par différents acteurs.

A l'heure actuelle, il faut distinguer plusieurs logiques, opérant de manière séparée ou cumulative : anti-religion, lutte contre l'islamisme (religion dangereuse), anti-sexisme (religion opprimant les femmes), racisme de classe (religion du pauvre) ou un racisme tout...

September 28, 2013

Greece Arrests Senior Members of Far-Right Party

By [LIZ ALDERMAN](#)

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Nikos Michaloliakos, the Golden Dawn party's leader, was escorted on Saturday by police officers outside the Athens police headquarters.

ATHENS — Moving to drain power from one of the most violent rightist organizations in Europe, the Greek government conducted an extraordinary crackdown on the neo-fascist Golden Dawn party on Saturday, arresting 5 members of Parliament, including the leader of the group, and at least 15 other people.

A search was under way for another lawmaker and at least 10 more party members.

It is the first time that the leader of a political party and members of Parliament have been arrested in Greece since the fall of a military junta in 1974.

Less than two weeks ago, the murder of an anti-fascist Greek singer, the rapper Pavlos Fyssas, 34, ignited an uproar throughout Greece after the suspect claimed to be a Golden Dawn supporter.

The public outcry over the killing put substantial pressure on the government to move ahead with an investigation of the party.

On Saturday, Nikos Michaloliakos, Golden Dawn's leader and a member of Parliament, was charged with forming a criminal organization. With a defiant expression on his face, Mr. Michaloliakos raised his cuffed hands as he was escorted by police officers. Another arrested lawmaker, Ilias P. Kasidiaris, shouted as he was led away: "Nothing will bend us! Long live Greece!" Other arrests followed.

The police had not yet released details of the criminal charges, but they include murder, attempted murder and blackmail, according to a court official. The party has denied any role in the killing, and the police had not said what evidence they have linking the arrested party members to specific crimes.

Since 2012, when it gained seats in Parliament, Golden Dawn has engaged in a campaign of intimidation against immigrants. In April, the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner described it as "a neo-Nazi and violent political party" and urged that it be banned under international human rights treaties, but the arrest of elected lawmakers is a rare step for any European democracy.

The move may curb Golden Dawn's influence, at least for now, especially in Parliament, where the party holds 18 seats after elections last year during a volatile moment when Greece was on the precipice of exiting the euro zone.

Nonetheless, the disenchantment stoked by the economic crisis that helped propel Golden Dawn's rise is unlikely to fade anytime soon.

“As the country is mired in its worst economic crisis in modern history, support for extremist and antiestablishment parties is likely to remain high in the coming years, regardless of the future of Golden Dawn as a political party,” the geopolitical intelligence, economic and political firm Stratfor said in an analysis.

Human rights groups say Golden Dawn, whose members perform Nazi salutes at rallies and meetings, has systematically terrorized immigrants, while the police have looked the other way. The aggressive acts include the beating of immigrants with clubs and shields bearing swastikalike symbols or with wooden poles draped in the Greek flag.

Golden Dawn was established in 1987, and its influence has grown in recent years in tandem with the country's economic hardship. Offering promises to restore jobs and order, the party's members also espouse nationalistic and xenophobic stances, appealing to marginalized Greeks in areas populated by a rising number of unemployed immigrants, mostly from Pakistan and North Africa.

Those arrested early Saturday also included the lawmakers Nikos Michos, Ilias Panagiotaros and Yiannis Lagos, and also Giorgos Patelis, the leader of the party's local chapter in Nikaia, a gritty Athens suburb that is one of Golden Dawn's biggest strongholds, and 12 other party officials.

The immunity usually enjoyed by Greek members of Parliament is automatically lifted in the case of felonies. For lesser charges, a vote has to be held in Parliament.

In addition, two police officers connected with the organization were caught up in the sweep, a sign that a parallel crackdown is intensifying against parts of the police, long thought to have been infiltrated by members or sympathizers of the group.

The police are still seeking Christos Pappas, the sixth Golden Dawn lawmaker for whom an arrest warrant has been issued and the party's second-in-command. A court official who spoke on the condition of anonymity said that a report by the Greek prosecutor charged that the party had recruited young Greeks for its hit squads, in a manner similar to the Nazis.

The report claims that the party also had links to organized crime groups, particularly in Korydallos, southwest of Athens, close to the spot where the rapper, Mr. Fyssas, was killed on Sept. 18.

The police seized two handguns and a hunting rifle from the home of Mr. Michaloliakos, the party leader, on Saturday, saying he did not have licenses for them.

“It's a big deal that the chief of the political party got arrested; most people are glad that something was finally done,” said Aris Papaspyrou, 32, an Athens-based lawyer.

“But I'm not sure this will be the end, because we've seen in history something like this happen with Hitler and Nazi Germany,” Mr. Papaspyrou added. “They took him to jail, but when he came out he created the party that won the election and went on to become prime minister. I hope this will not come back as a boomerang for us.”

As Mr. Michaloliakos, the party leader, and four of the other lawmakers were escorted from the Athens police headquarters in handcuffs, flanked by masked counterterrorism officers, and ushered into police vehicles for their transfer to the Athens court complex, about 300 Golden Dawn supporters gathered in front of the station before being dispersed by the police.

The arrests are part of a rapidly widening campaign by the government to clamp down on what it says is a rising tide of extremism in Greece, fueled by the economic crisis. In addition, the government opened an investigation last week into whether sympathizers or members of the group had infiltrated Greece's police forces and the armed forces.

The government replaced seven senior police officials to ensure that the investigation would take place with “absolute objectivity.” Two other police officials stepped down.

Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, who leads the right-leaning New Democracy Party, has said he is determined to curb the influence of Golden Dawn, a group whose standing climbed in opinion polls in the past year.

Since the murder a week and a half ago of Mr. Fyssas, whose lyrics protested the rise of neo-fascism in the country, Golden Dawn’s standing in polls has declined. But it is still the third most popular party in Greece, behind New Democracy and Syriza, the leftist party led by a political maverick, Alexis Tsipras.

Last week, as protests against the party intensified, Mr. Michaloliakos suggested that all 18 Golden Dawn lawmakers might resign from Parliament en masse, a move that could force a series of elections in areas where the party now holds seats.

A government spokesman said such a move would not force a general election. But the prospect of new elections for those seats could undermine political stability in Greece at a time when Mr. Samaras is negotiating with creditors for continued financial aid as part of two multibillion-dollar bailouts Greece has already received — even as speculation about the possible need for a third bailout hangs over the talks.

Niki Kitsantonis contributed reporting.