

Far-right Alternative for Germany makes gains in state elections

Ulrich Rippert
3 September 2019

The parties that make up the ruling German grand coalition suffered a major electoral setback in Sunday's state elections in Saxony and Brandenburg, amid popular hatred of their right-wing, antisocial policies. But the main beneficiary was the fascistic Alternative for Germany (AfD), which received wall-to-wall media coverage that sought to present it as the voice of opposition to the government.

In Saxony, ruled continuously by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) since the fall of the Berlin Wall 30 years ago, the CDU lost 6.6 percent and saw its worst result in this state (32.8 percent), according to exit polls. Its coalition partners, the Social Democrats (SPD), slumped to a historic low of 7.6 percent. The SPD's already miserable result five years ago fell yet again by another 5 percent and is only just above the five percent hurdle for parliamentary representation.

The Left Party, which has led the opposition in Saxony so far, was unable to benefit from the decline of the governing parties but was the main loser of the state election. It slumped from just under 19 percent to 10.2 percent—a drop of 8.7 percent. The main winner in Saxony was the AfD, gaining 18 percentage points, with a vote share of 27.8 percent.

The election results in Brandenburg are very similar, where the SPD has held the state premiership since the fall of the Berlin Wall for ten years in an alliance with the Left Party.

The SPD lost 5.9 percent in Brandenburg and slipped to 26 percent. The Left Party fell from 18.6 percent five years ago to 10.8 percent; with losses of 7.8 percent in Brandenburg it was the largest loser. The opposition CDU lost 7.3 percent and with 15.7 percent scored its worst result in this state. The AfD vote rose by 11.3 percent and reached 23.5 percent.

The Greens saw their best result in both states but

achieved far less than had been predicted. In Saxony they won 8.2 percent (+2.5), in Brandenburg 10.7 percent (+4.5).

In both states the AfD became the second strongest party and was the strongest party in some districts. Above all, the vote gains of the right-wing extremist party are a result of growing indignation and anger at the respective state governments—whether under social-democratic or conservative leadership—which have pushed through the same antisocial and reactionary policies. Both state governments approved the debt ceiling in the previous legislative period, which drastically reduced municipal borrowing, and agreed one budget cut after another.

The result is always the same. Large sections of the population live in poverty. Permanent social cuts have catastrophic effects. Rural areas are already completely deserted. School, sports, leisure and cultural facilities are closed one after another.

Because there was no party in the elections to counteract this social devastation, the AfD was able to channel part of the growing popular opposition to its benefit. It was striking that in addition to its racist agitation, the AfD also addressed certain social problems in both states. It also deliberately presented itself as an “Eastern” party and adopted slogans that recalled the events of 30 years ago, such as “We are the people!”

The first election analyses showed that a large part of the AfD vote was a political verdict against all the other parties.

In addition, the AfD is being systematically built up and promoted “from above”. Its leadership cadre comes from the right-wing of the Christian Democratic parties. Many of its members and officials sit in the state apparatus and have functions in the state

administration. The number of AfD members and supporters in the security apparatus is particularly high—including in the police, army and, of course, the secret service.

Former secret service chief Hans-Georg Maassen was highly active in both state election campaigns. Together with the right-wing conservative CDU, he organized election meetings in which often there were more AfD supporters than CDU voters. He gave countless interviews, in which he called for a right-wing conservative change in German politics. Many media outlets hyped the AfD and welcomed the rise of the right-wing party on the grounds that it was finally going to discuss politics again.

It is noteworthy that the Left Party was massively punished by the voters in both federal states. Its predecessor, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), had played a key role in the 1990s in the Eastern states in introducing capitalism. For years it had claimed that capitalism could be “socialised” and “humanised”, but wherever it had political influence it supported social cuts and austerity programs. Today it is met with contempt and rejection among most voters—and rightfully so.

The political prostitution and degeneration of this party knows no bounds. In the Saxony election campaign, it used the high poll numbers of the AfD to move closer to the CDU and demanded an “Alliance of all Democrats”. In several newspaper interviews, both the Left Party state leader Antje Feiks and its lead candidate Rico Gebhardt offered to “tolerate” a CDU minority government. Previously, Gebhardt had agreed to the debt ceiling in the Saxon parliament, knowing what impact it would have.

In Brandenburg, the Left Party was part of the state government for ten years. As the resistance to the social catastrophe its policies had caused grew, it supported the antidemocratic police law that have laid the groundwork of a police state.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)