

IRE214

**CULTURE, SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN THE GERMAN-
SPEAKING COUNTRIES**

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Fall 2019

Session 2: Germany's Federal System

Introduction to Germany



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- Germany's Federal System
- German Politics
 - Political parties, coalition building, current Parliament's component, regional elections' results, etc.



Germany's Federal System



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- Federal government (Bund)
- 16 states (Länder)
- Bavaria > Bremen
- City States



Germany's Federal System



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- In Germany, political power is shared between the **central government** and the **governments of the 16 states**
- Federalism => Territorial division of power
 - 10 states in the West
 - 6 states in the East
- The Länder are unique (historical traditions, dialects, economy)
- State jurisdiction => education, law enforcement, etc.



Germany's Federal System



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■ Richest:

- Hamburg
- Bremen
- Bayern/Bavaria
- Hessen/Hesse
- Baden-Wuerttemberg

■ Poorest:

- Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
- Saxony-Anhalt
- Thuringia
- Brandenburg
- Saxony



Area/Population



6

- **Most Populated:**

- Nordrhein-Westfalen (north Rhine- Westphalia)
- Bayern (Bavaria)
- Baden Württemberg

- **Least Populated:**

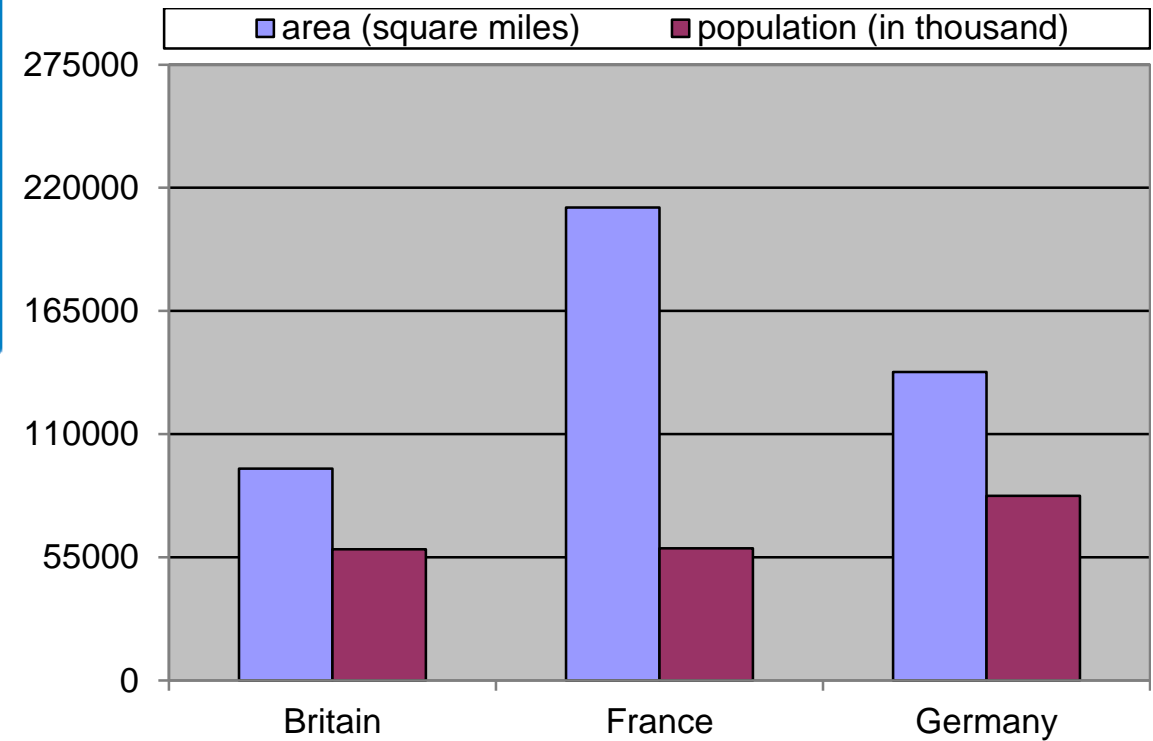
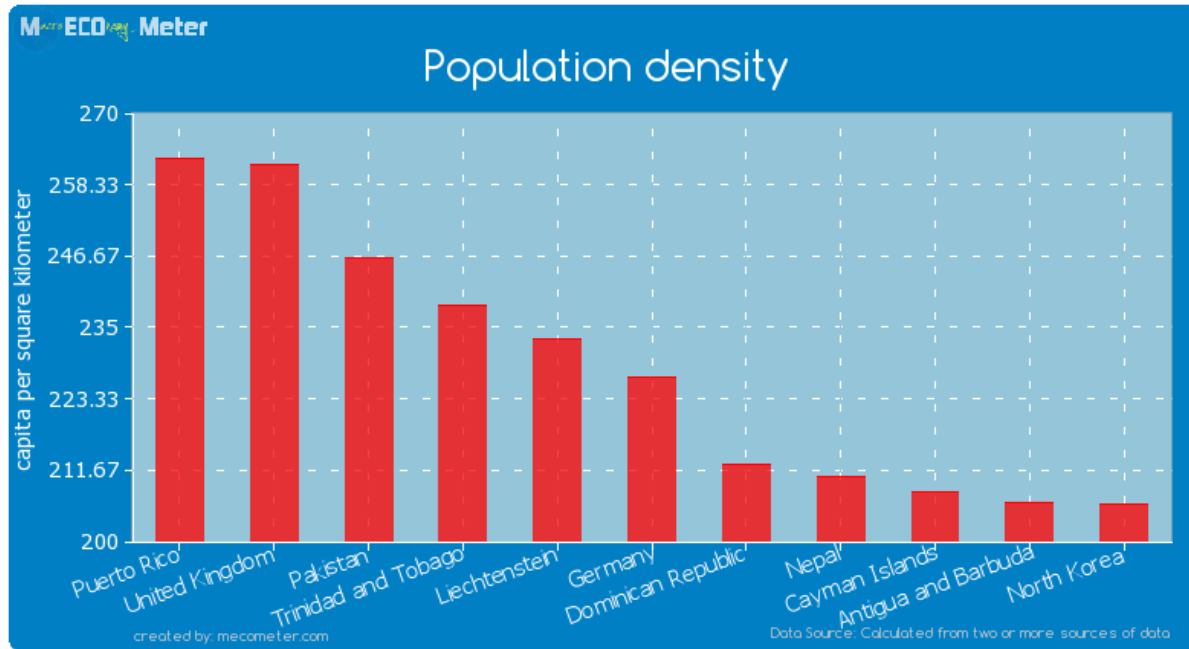
- Bremen
- Saarland
- Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (western Pomerania)





Area/Population

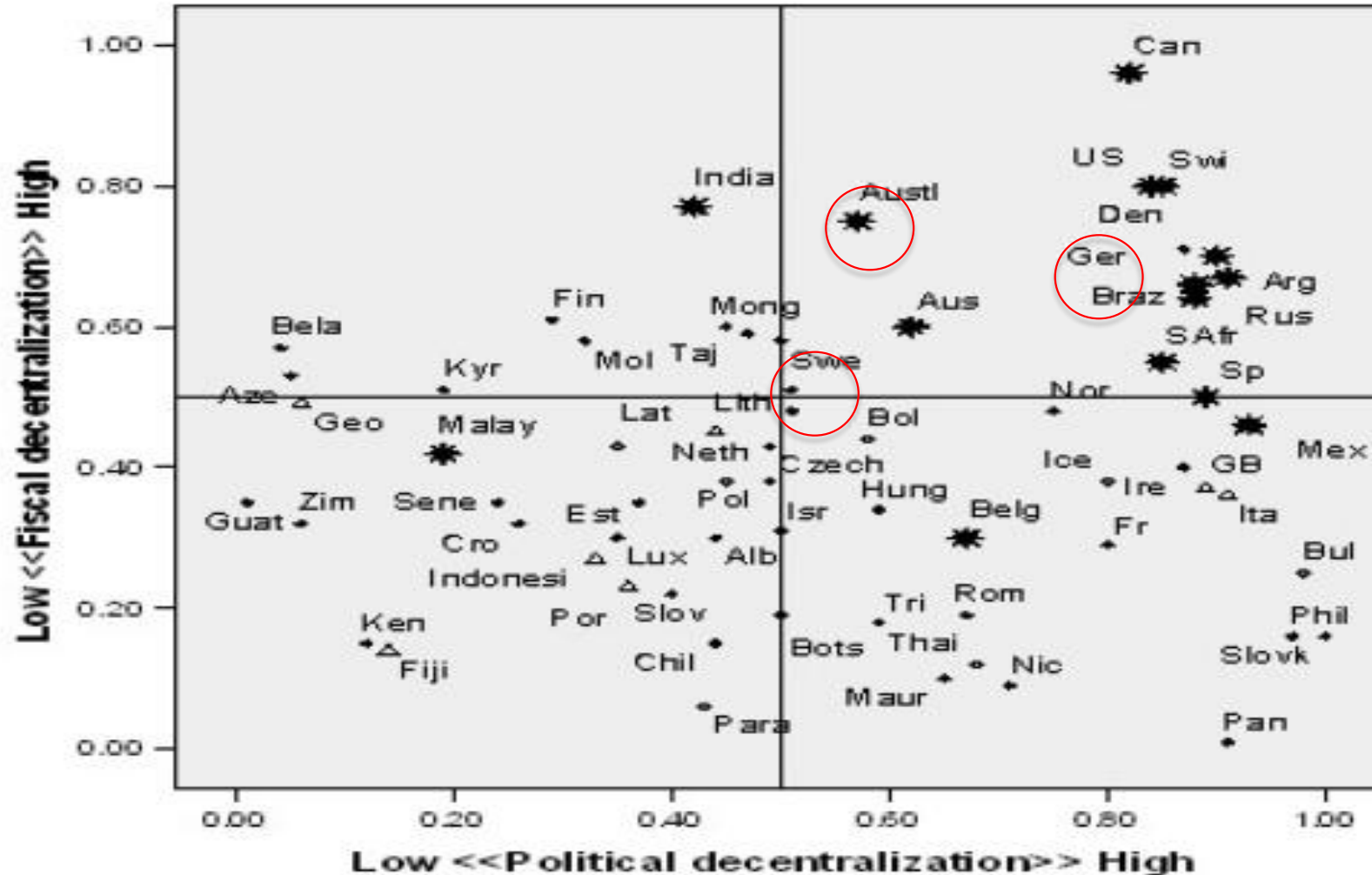
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Germany's Federal System



Fiscal and Political Decentralization



* Federal govts

Germany's Parliamentary System



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- Central institutes of the Federal government:
 - **Bundestag** (Parliament): Plural multi-party system
 - **Bundesrat** (Federal Council)
- Chancellor => Chief executive + head of state
- President => Ceremonial role (mostly)
- The German **Basic Law** (constitution) state that it is a welfare state (unemployment benefits, state benefits for the sick, poor & disabled)

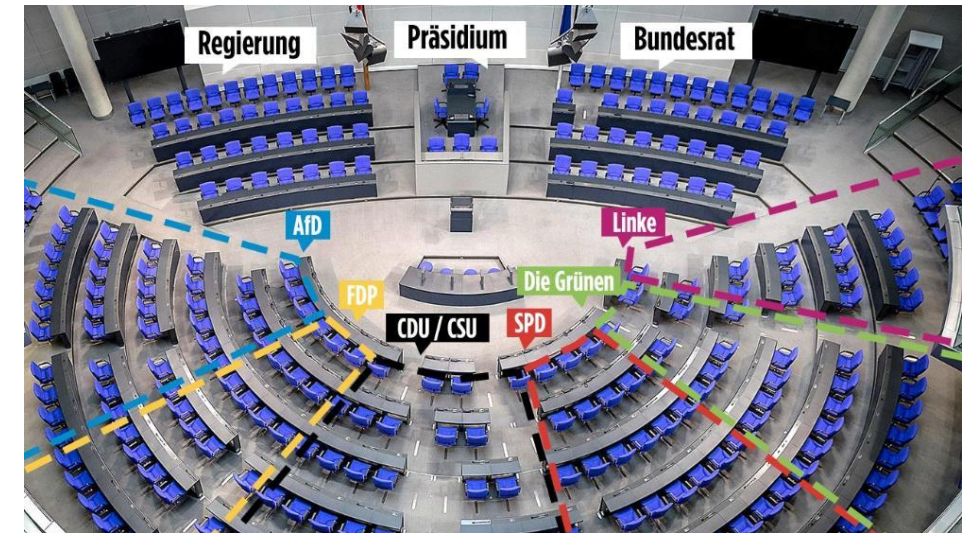


The Bundestag



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- **The German Parliament**
- Established by the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) of 1949 => one of the 2 legislative bodies and heir to the earlier Reichstag
 - **Proportional representation**
(traditionally done in continental Europe)
 - **Avoid fragmentation** in the party system (lessons from the Weimar Republic)
 - **Avoid the rise of extremists small parties**



The Bundestag



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- **Legislative** branch
- **598 base seats, now 709**
- **Directly elected by citizens** every 4 years
- Members of the Bundestag **elect the Chancellor**
 - Parliamentary Democracy: leader of the state (**Chancellor**) is **elected by the legislature**, not directly by the people



The Bundestag

Sie haben 2 Stimmen

hier 1 Stimme
für die Wahl
eines/einer Wahlkreis-
abgeordneten
Erststimme

hier 1 Stimme
für die Wahl
einer Landesliste (Partei)
= maßgebende Stimme für die Verteilung der
Sitze insgesamt auf die einzelnen Parteien
Zweitstimme

- Hybrid electoral rules =>
 - Constituencies (Left side): Choosing a candidate to represent the district in the Bundestag
 - Similar to the American congress
 - The **candidate** with the majority of the votes wins
 - 299 constituencies** in Germany (half the seats in the Bundestag)

1	Rönisch, Hannelore Angestellte 6200 Wiesbaden Teil von Clemens Str. 36	CDU Christlich Demokrische Union Deutschlands	<input type="radio"/>
2	Wiesmann-Zeul, Hildemarie Lehrerin 6210 Wiesbaden Waldstraße 10	SPD Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	<input type="radio"/>
3	Koch, Ulrich Friedrich Kaufmann 6200 Wiesbaden Friedstraße 27	GRÜNE Die Grünen	<input type="radio"/>
4	Dr. Funke-Schmitt-Rink, Margret Kaufmann 6200 Wiesbaden Königsberger Straße 1	F.D.P. Freie Demokratische Partei	<input type="radio"/>
6	Langer, Herbert Arbeiter 6200 Wiesbaden Rommelsberger Str. 27	REP Die Republikaner	<input type="radio"/>
7	Deubert, Ernst Wilhelm Rentner 6200 Wiesbaden Gartenstraße 21a	NPD Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands	<input type="radio"/>

<input type="radio"/>	CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident In: Klaus Eberhard, Ministerpräsident In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident	1
<input type="radio"/>	SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands In: Jürgen Scheerer, Ministerpräsident In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident	2
<input type="radio"/>	GRÜNE	DIE GRÜNEN In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident	3
<input type="radio"/>	F.D.P.	Freie Demokratische Partei In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident	4
<input type="radio"/>	DIE GRAUEN	DIE GRAUEN (Initiativ vom Sozialen-Schutz-Bund) („Graue Panther“) (S.P.B.-G.P.) In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident	5
<input type="radio"/>	REP	DIE REPUBLIKANER In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident	6
<input type="radio"/>	NPD	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident	7
<input type="radio"/>	ÖDP	Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident	8
<input type="radio"/>	PDS/ LINKE	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus/ Linke Linke In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident In: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Ministerpräsident	9

The Bundestag

Sie haben 2 Stimmen



- Hybrid electoral rules =>
 - Political Parties (right side)
 - Choose a party at the federal level
 - Parties put together lists of candidates
 - Votes are aggregated nationwide
 - Results determine which candidates occupy the remaining 299 seats (**party representatives**)
 - Threshold: Parties need at least 5% of the votes in a state to qualify for a seat

1	Rönisch, Heineleone Angestellte 6200 Wiesbaden CDU Eck von Clemmstr. 38/38	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	<input type="radio"/>
2	Wiesmann-Zeul, Heidemarie Lehrerin 6210 Wiesbaden SPD Waldenstraße 10	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands	<input type="radio"/>
3	Koch, Ulrich Friedrich Bauingenieur 6200 Wiesbaden GRÜNE Friedstraße 27	GRÜNE DEUTSCHLAND	<input type="radio"/>
4	Dr. Funke-Schmitt-Rink, Margret Medizinerin 6200 Wiesbaden P.D.P. Königsberger Straße 1	Freie Demokratische Partei	<input type="radio"/>
6	Langer, Herbert Arbeitslos 6200 Wiesbaden REP Rosenberger Straße 27	Die REPUBLICANER Partei	<input type="radio"/>
7	Deubert, Ernst Wilhelm Rentner 6200 Wiesbaden NPD Rangerstraße 21a	National demokratische Partei Deutschlands	<input type="radio"/>

<input type="radio"/>	CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel	1
<input type="radio"/>	SPD	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel	2
<input type="radio"/>	GRÜNE	GRÜNE DEUTSCHLAND In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel	3
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<input type="radio"/>	DIE GRAUEN	DIE GRAUEN In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel In: Heide-Engel, Heide-Engel	5
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The Bundestag



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- **What if Germans split their votes??** vote for a candidate from one party (to represent the district) and for a different party as ‘lead’ party?
- “Overhang” or “Balance Seats”- extra seats, which ensure that **every candidate who was directly elected gets a seat** while **political parties are still proportionally represented** based on the number of votes they received
 - **‘Proportionally represented’?** = size matters! The bigger the state, the more seats the party gets in the parliament (the state’s population is taken into consideration when votes are converted to seats)

The Bundesrat



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- **State's represents in the Federal Level**
- Each state (gov, not people) appoints representatives
- 69 seats (3 - 6 per state)
- Small states are overrepresented:
 - Bremen, 700k people = 3 seats
 - North Rhine Westphalia, 18 Million = 6 seats



The Bundesrat



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- **State's represented on the Federal Level**
- Mainly concerned with laws that affect the states (education & local government)
- The **German vice president** is also the **president of the Bundesrat**



The Chancellor



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- The **Chancellor** is the **chief executive**, head of Government (Prime Minister)
 - Sets governments' policy
 - Heads the **Cabinet** (recommends the formal appointment/dismissal of ministers)
- Elected by the Bundestag (legislature)
- May be subjected to constructive **Vote of No Confidence** (1982)
- Currently Angela Merkel (since 2005)



The German Federal President



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- The official head of state
- Usually a moderate
- **Elected by the Federal Convention** (federal assembly or '*Bundesversammlung*')
 - Its sole purpose is to elect the president
 - Consists of all Bundestag members and an equal number of states delegates elected by the Länder
- 5 years term, Re-electable only once
- Generally seen as “retirement office” or as a reward for service



Frank-Walter Steinmeier
(since March 2017), SPD
(center-left)

The German Federal President



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- Has important “**reserve powers**” (Article 81 of the Basic Law)
 - In case of a **legislative emergency**, he has the capacity to pass laws without the Bundestag’s approval
- Represents Germany in matters of international law
- Concludes treaties with foreign states
- Signs all new/revised laws and can technically **veto a law** on substantive constitutional grounds



Frank-Walter Steinmeier
(since March 2017), SPD
(center-left)

The German Federal President



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- Accredits diplomats
- Has the right to **pardon criminals** (federal crimes)
- Dissolves the Bundestag if a Chancellor loses a motion of confidence
- Appoint/dismiss federal judges, military officers & federal civil servants
- Mediator in cases of national emergencies



Frank-Walter Steinmeier
(since March 2017), SPD
(center-left)

The German Cabinet



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Bundeskabinett/Bundesregierung

- **Chief executive body**
- Consists of the **Chancellor & the federal ministers**
- Its composition is a major issue when building a coalition
- Cabinet ministers have the freedom to carry out their duties independently, but must follow the Chancellor's directive
- Ministers may dismiss the Chancellor with constructive vote of no confidence



The Federal Ministers



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- **Bundesminister**
- Appointed by the president, based on the recommendation of the chancellor
- 6/16 women
 - Education and research
 - Environment, nature conservation & nuclear safety
 - Family affairs, senior citizens, women and youth
 - Food and agriculture
 - Defense
 - Justice and consumer protection (non German parent)

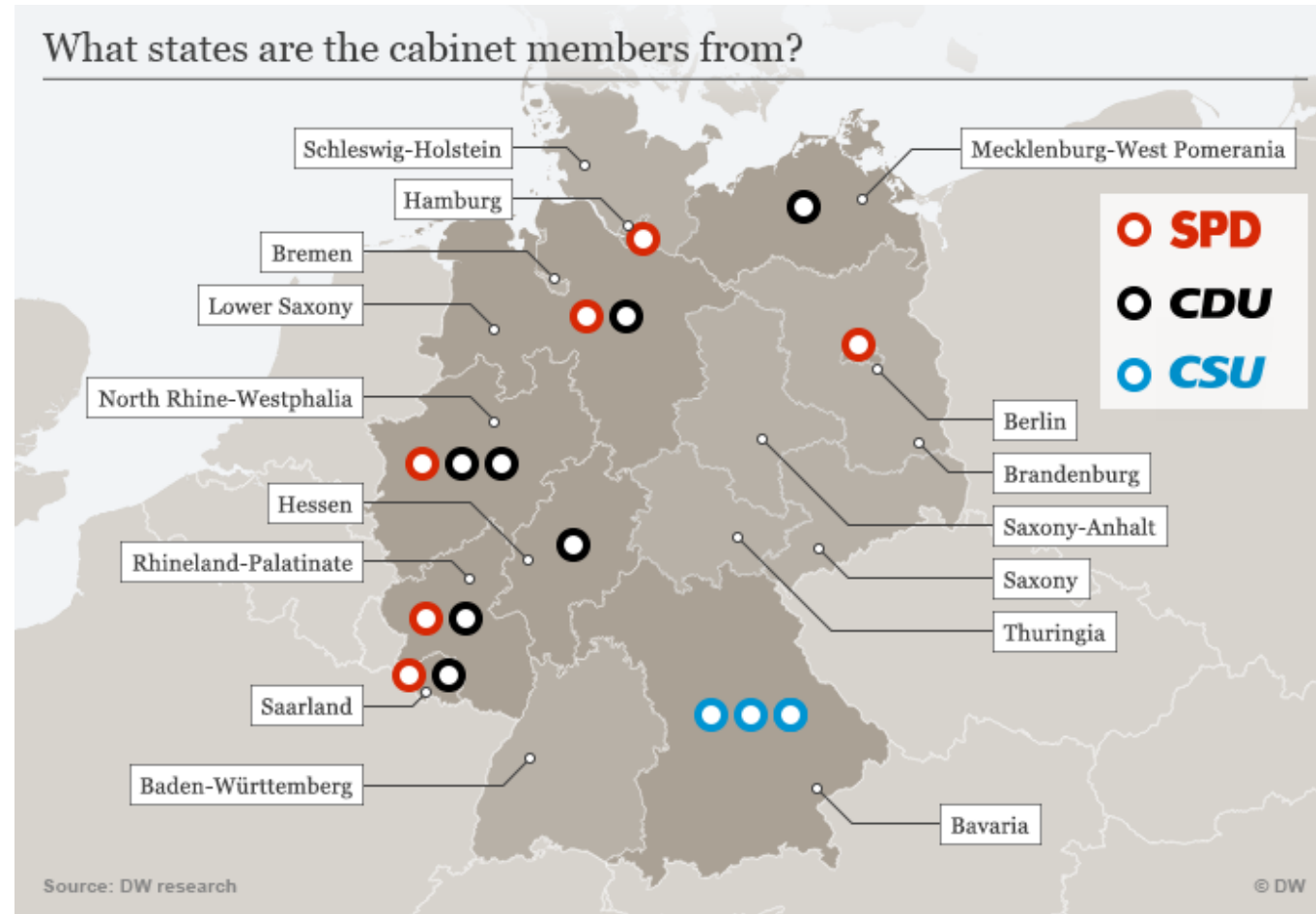




The Federal Ministers

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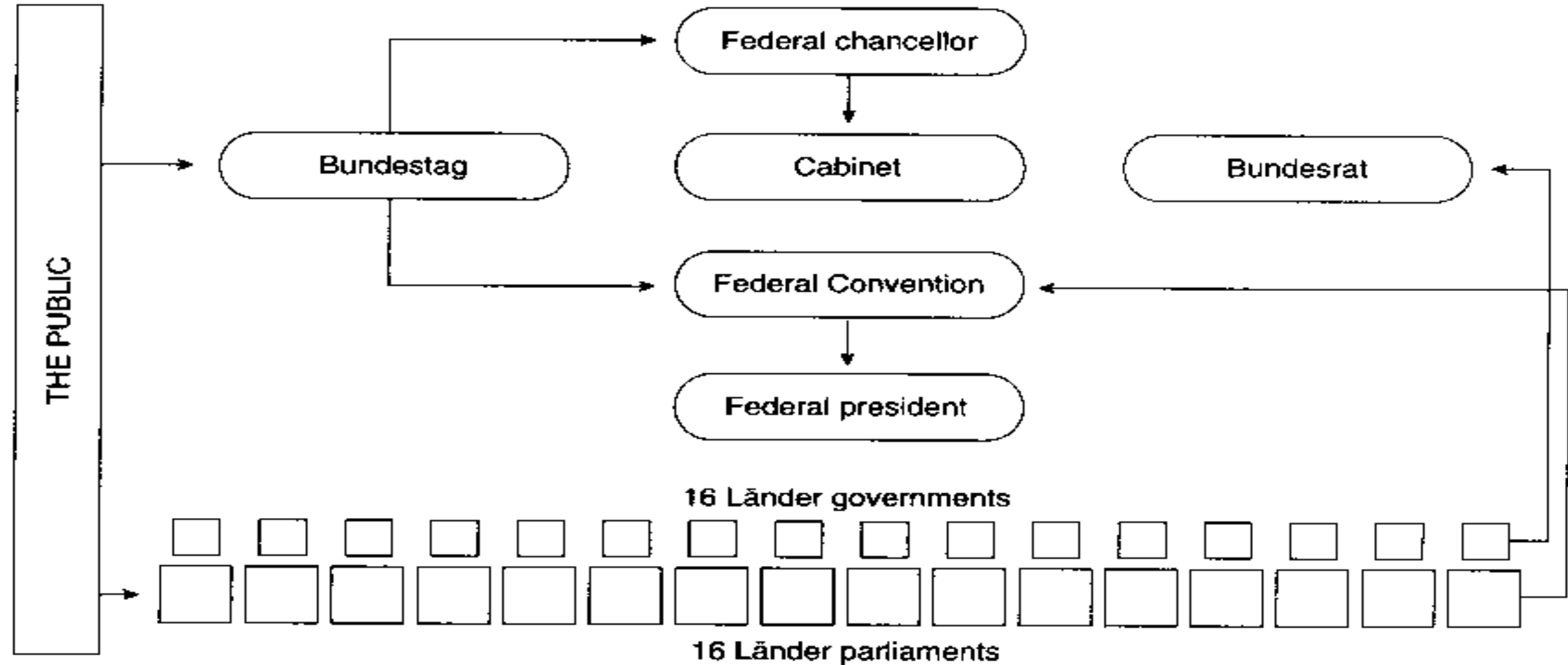
- East underrepresented
- Saarland overrepresented
- Hold advanced degrees
 - 5: PhD
 - 6: Political Science
 - 4: law
 - 3: economics/business
 - 2: M.D (1 Prof M.D)



Germany's Federal System



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The Federal Constitutional Court



25

- Reviews the constitutionality of legislation
- Can limit the decision-making power of the Bundestag
- **Hears:**
 - Constitutional issues brought before it (also by individuals)
 - Cases referred to it by a lower court
 - Federal/state governments or 1/3 of Bundestag member can request review of law



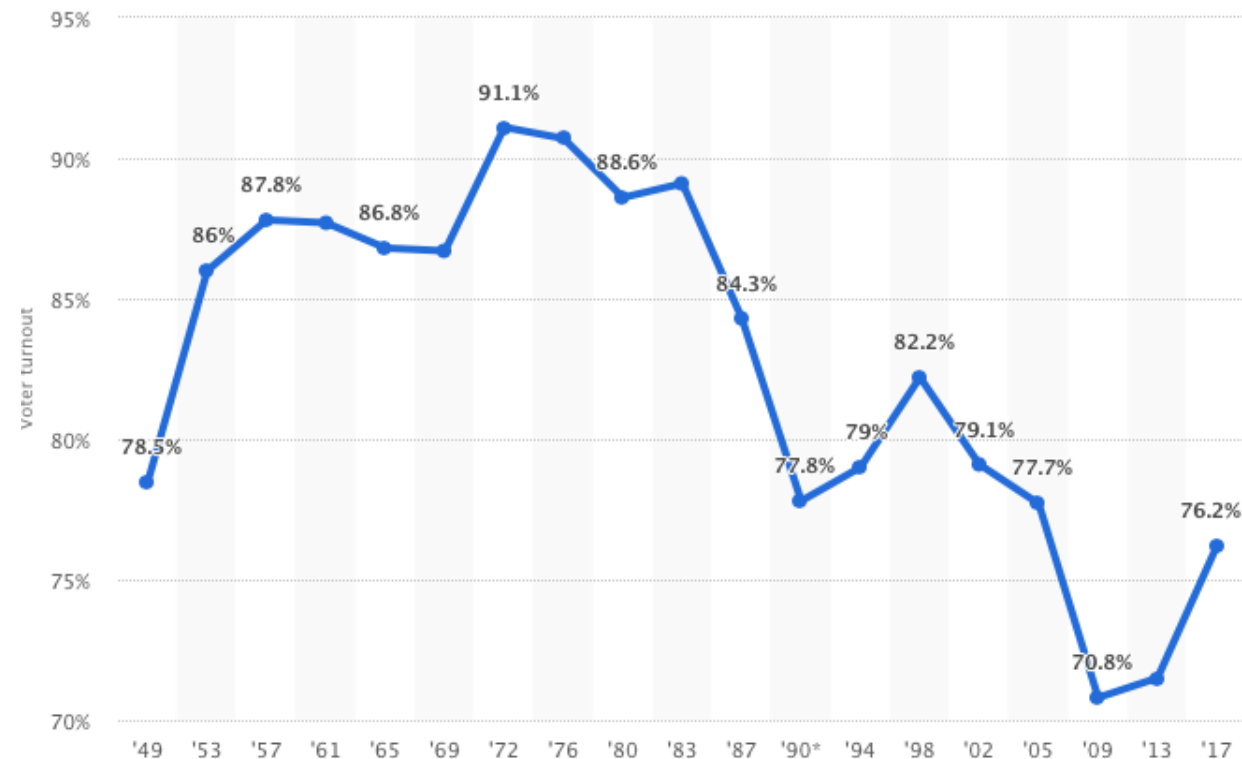
Citizen Participation & rights



26

- Citizens are treated **equally**
- Citizens enjoy the freedom of **worship, speech, right to a fair trial, education, to own property, and the right to security**
- Citizens do not directly elect the leaders (only the Bundestag)

Voter turnout, German general elections





German Parties

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- The 2 major parties are the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and the SPD (Social Democratic Party), but neither can easily achieve a parliamentary majority

- Other parties include:

- CSU (sister party to the CDU)
- FDP (Free Democratic Party)
- Green Party
- Left Party (Die Linke)



- Since 1966, all federal governments consisted of at least two parties. Currently, the CDU is in power in a coalition with the SPD

German Parties- CDU



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- The center-right 'Christian Democratic Union of Germany' is the **main conservative party in Germany**
- Originates in the Catholic Center Party, founded after the WW2
- Traditionally supported by Catholics, nowadays also by non-Catholics/atheists
- Merkel, CDU leader and Chancellor (since 2005) is a protestant who was raised in former East Germany- last term in office

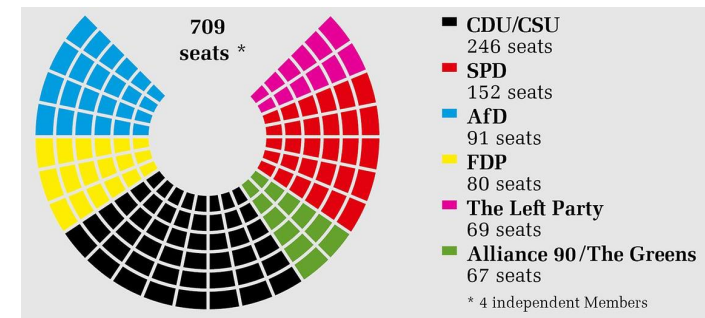


German Parties- CDU



29

- **Supports:**
 - **Conservative** social values
 - **Social market economy** (free market + ensuring social quality)
- Were part of 2 **Grand Coalitions** with the SPD
- CDU's preferred partner is the FDP/Free Democratic Party (1949–56, 1961–66, 1982–98, and 2009–13)





German Parties- SPD

30

- The center-left ‘Social Democratic Party of Germany’ originated in the 19-century **labor movement**
- **Traditionally** representing the **working class**, the SPD is widely supported in industrial cities and by protestants
- The SPD’s Party platform is **social democracy**, supporting:
 - Strengthened social market economy
 - Welfare state
 - Civil rights
 - European integration

The logo of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), consisting of the letters 'SPD' in a bold, white, sans-serif font centered on a solid red rectangular background.

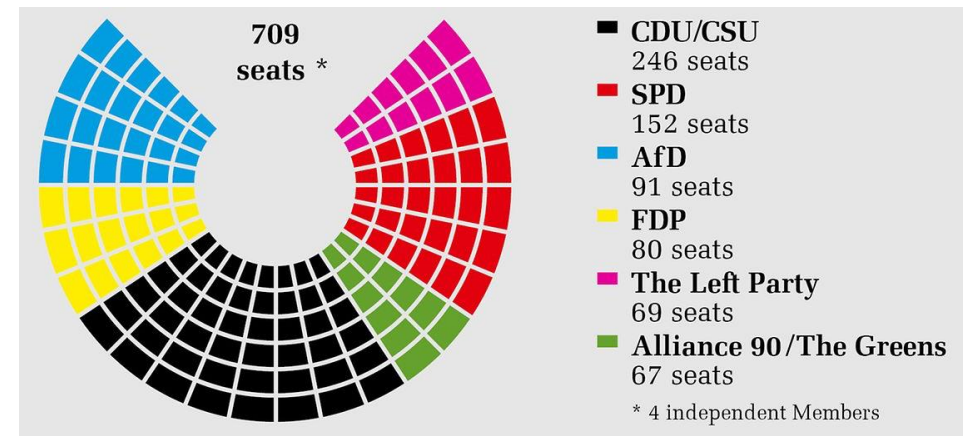
SPD



German Parties- SPD

31

- Used to be Germany's largest party until the last decade
- Lost voters when the last SPD Chancellor made extensive welfare cuts (early 2000s') and later when the left party was formed



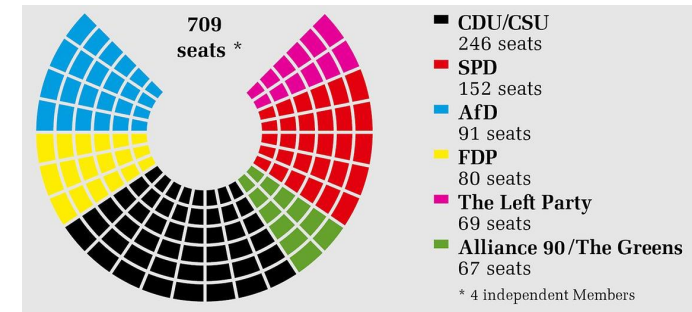
Smaller German Parties



32

- The **CSU**, 'Christian Social Union of Bavaria' is a sister party to **CDU**

- Generally more socially conservative than the CDU
- Founded in 1945, governed Bavaria since 1949



- CDU/CSU => had to unite according to German Federal Electoral Law (parties who share the same basic political goals mustn't compete)

- Center-right Christian democratic political alliance

- Referred to as the '**Union Parties**' (Unionsparteien) or 'the Union'

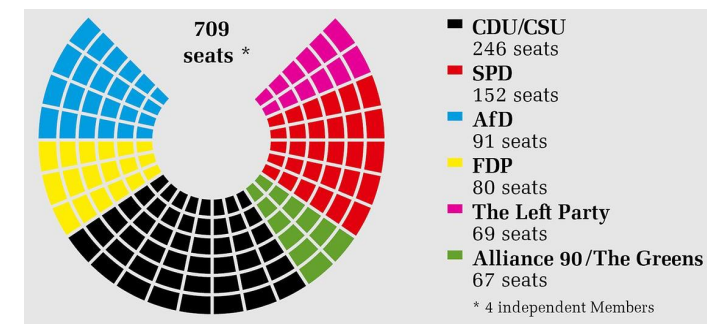




Smaller German Parties

33

- The **FDP** is a liberal party founded in 1948
- Supports:
 - Economic and social liberalism
 - Free market economy
 - Civil liberties and human rights
 - Internationalism
- Ideology shift to the right (center => center-right)
- Has been the **junior partner in coalitions with both major parties (in power for longer than any other party)**

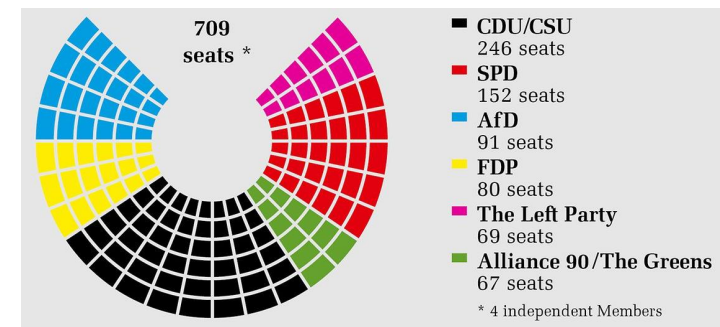


Smaller German Parties



34

- **The Alliance '90/Green Party, formed in 1993**
 - Corner issues => The environment & pacifisms
 - Pacifism was dropped when the party joined the Federal government in coalition with SPD (1998)
 - Smallest party in the parliament
- **Supports:**
 - Alternative energy
 - Sustainable development + green transport policy
- Mainly supported by **higher income city dwellers**

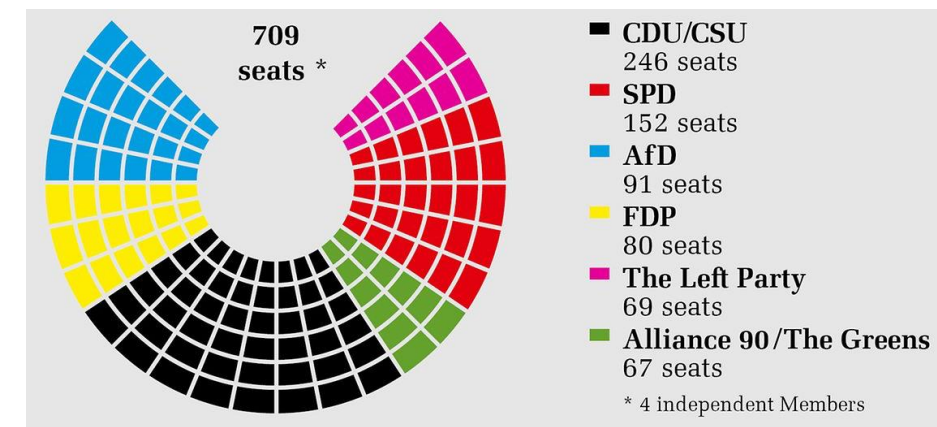


Smaller German Parties



35

- **Die Linke** (the Left Party) was formed in 2007
 - The **most left-wing party** in the Bundestag
 - **Second smallest** party in the parliament
- Supports:
 - Increased government public spending
 - Higher taxes for corporations and high earners
- Mainly supported by the **older population**



Smaller German Parties



36

- German far right parties include:

- The neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD)
- The nationalist German People's Union (DVU)



- The '**Alternative for Germany**' is a right-wing populist & Eurosceptic political party

- Founded in April 2013
- 2013: 4.7%, 2017: 12.6%

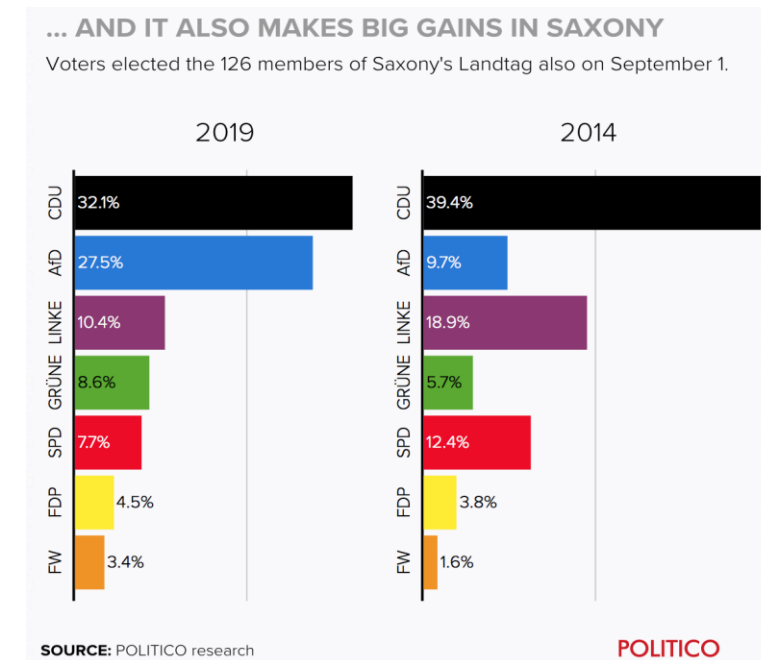


Smaller German Parties

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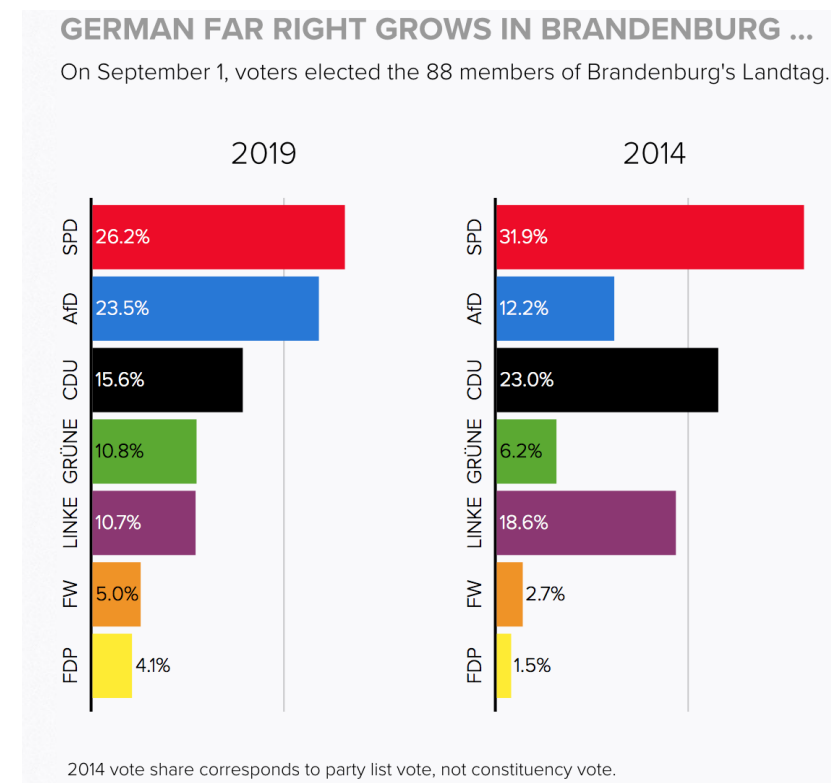
- October 2019 => German far right surges in eastern elections (Saxony + Brandenburg)
 - The AfD didn't win either state but achieved its best-ever results in both => **A strong message to Merkel's centrist coalition**

- **Saxony** =>
 - The AfD nearly tripled its 2014 result
 - The CDU (ruled the state since German reunification) finished first (32.1%), but lost nearly one-fifth of its support compared with 2014 result



Smaller German Parties

- **Brandenburg =>**
 - The AfD finished second behind the ruling SPD with 23.5% (up from the 12.2% in 2014)
 - The SPD, which has dominated Brandenburg's politics for 30 years, reached 26.2%, compared with 31.95 in 2014
 - Merkel's party (CDU) won only 15.6% down from 23%
- Results appear to confirm **the fracturing of the electorate in eastern Germany**





Smaller German Parties

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- **The German Pirate Party** (*Piratenpartei Deutschland*) was founded in 2006 after similar parties were founded in France and Sweden
- Broke through into national politics in 2011, winning several seats at the state level
- Supports:
 - Internet freedom (part of an international movement aimed at shaping the “digital revolution”)
 - Political transparency, direct democracy, anti-corruption
- Diminishing popularity, so far failed to win a seat at the federal level



German Political Parties



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Party financing/political finance in Germany =>

- The 'Act on Political Parties' regulates how parties are financed and the level of public funding they receive
- The criterion for the distribution of these funds is the **extent to which the parties are rooted in society**
 - How many votes a party gained in the most recent European, Bundestag and Land parliament elections
 - The amount of money raised through members' subscriptions, contributions made by office holders and legally obtained donations



German Political Parties

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Party financing/political finance in Germany =>

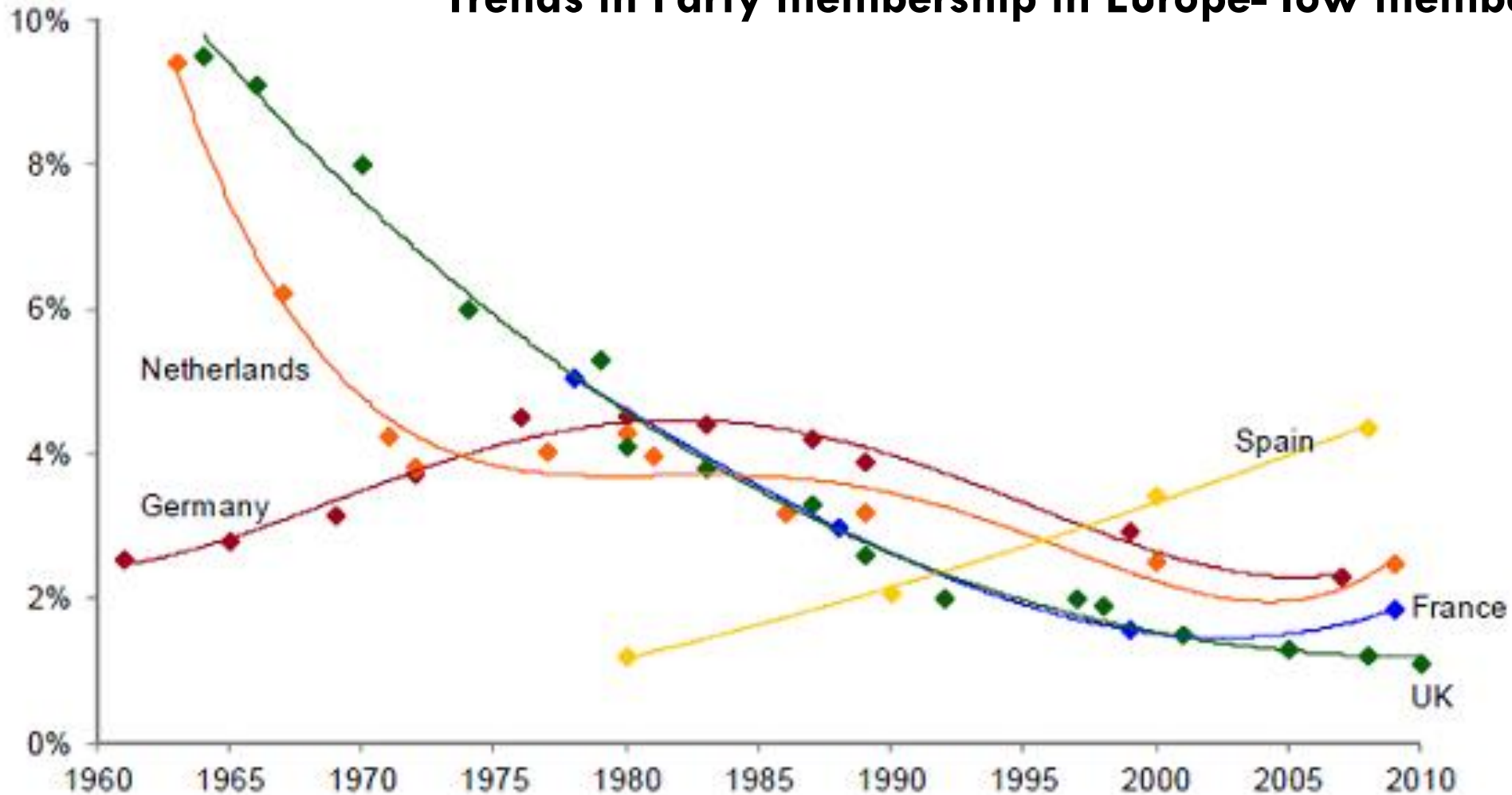
- Funding mostly comes from **membership dues** and **donations**
- The German parties receive **free campaign advertising** on public television and radio stations for European, national & local elections
- All major parties experienced a decrease in party membership in the early 1990s, possibly as a result of the increased **general distrust** of political parties



German Political Parties



Trends in Party membership in Europe- low membership countries

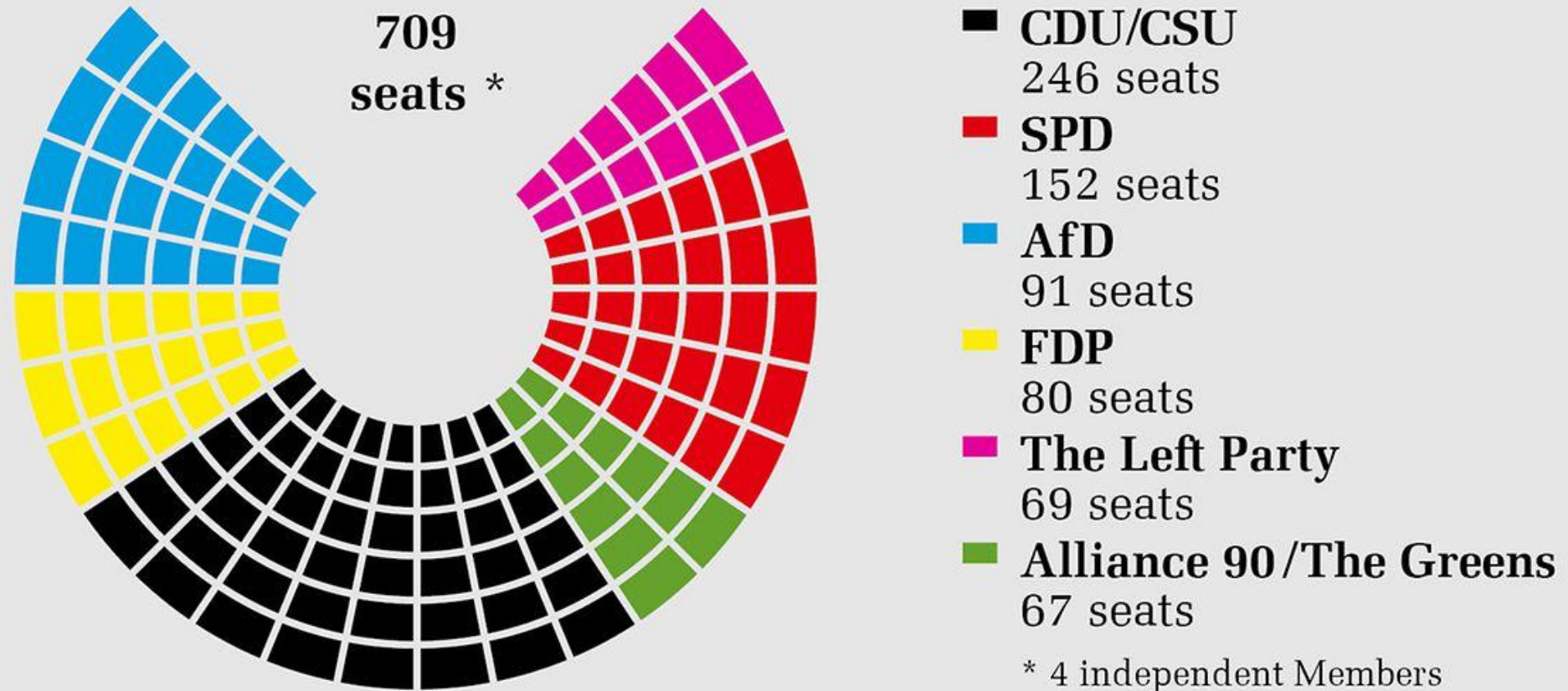




The Bundestag (2017-)

Distribution of seats in the 19th electoral term

Last updated: January 2019

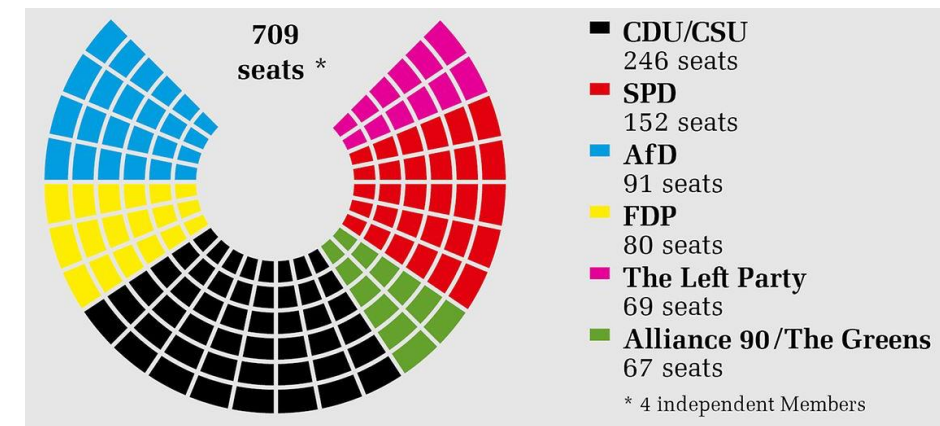




Current Bundestag (2017-)

44

- 61,5 Million eligible voters could vote for the 19th German Parliament
 - 3 Million first time voters
 - 299 constituencies (*Wahlkreise*)
 - 4828 candidates representing 42 political parties
- The two big parties (CDU/CSU + SPD) suffered severe losses- second worst and worst result ever (respectively)
- Many votes ‘went’ to **smaller parties**

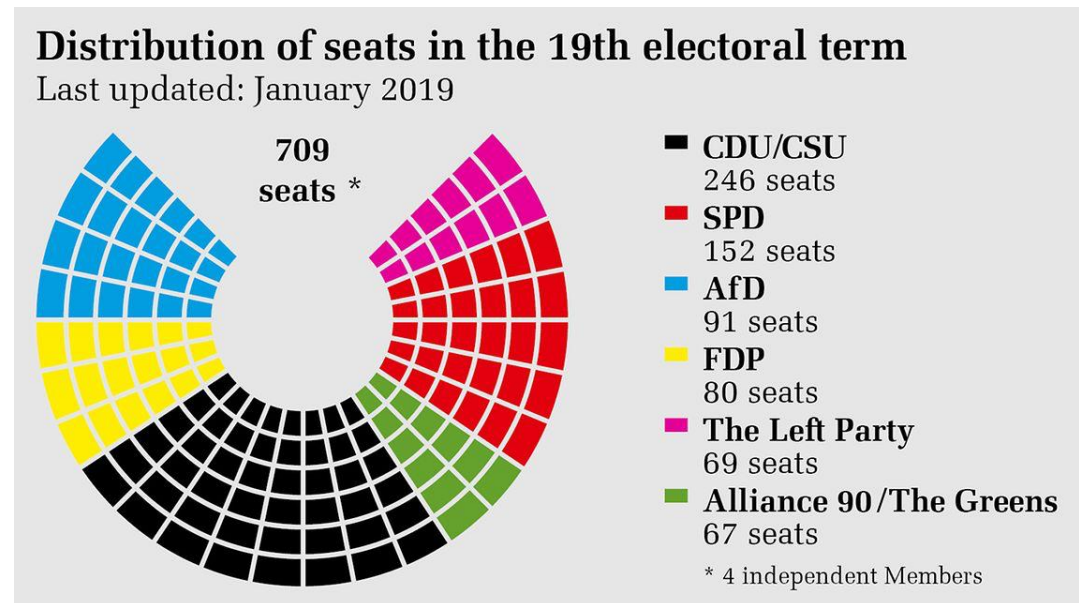




Current Bundestag (2017-)

45

- **A Political Shift/change of trend=>**
 - ‘Alternative for Germany’, a right-wing populist party won seats in the parliament (first far-right party to do so since the 1950s’)
- Merkel's (4th candidacy) CDU/CSU got the most seats (no realistic coalition without them)
- However, they only received 33% support (no ‘majority’)- **why?** Discontent with policies (immigration etc.)



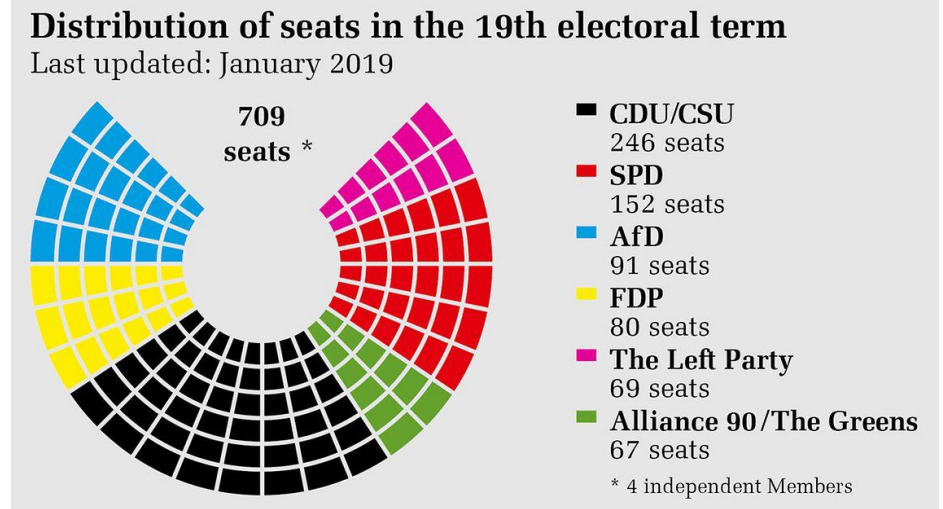


Current Bundestag (2017-)

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Forming a coalition =>

- All parties ruled out a coalition with the AfD
- The only options for a **majority coalition** were:
 - “**Jamaican**” coalition (CDU/CSU, FDP, Green)
 - A **grand Coalition** (CDU/CSU + SPD)



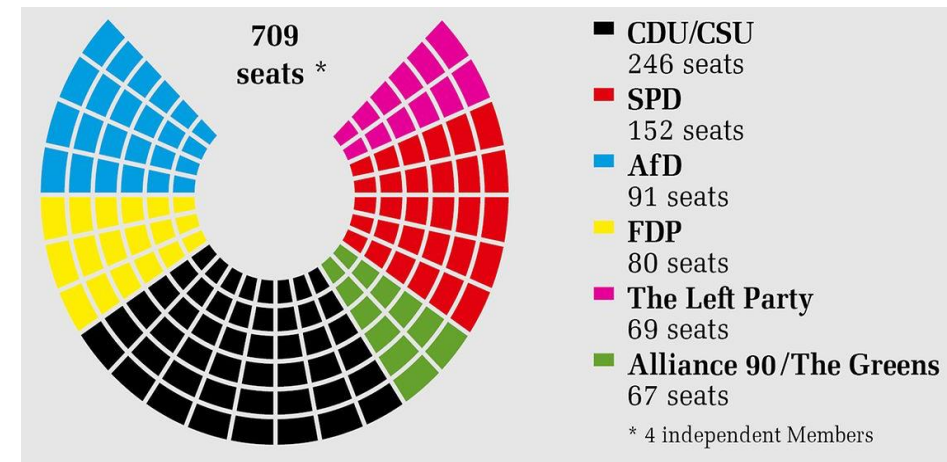
- Coalition talks between the "Jamaican" parties broke, and for the first time **minority coalitions** were seriously discussed

Current Bundestag (2017-)



47

- President Steinmeier publicly called for the leaders of all parties to go back to the negotiation table (first German President to do so)
- Finally, the **CDU/CSU** and **SPD** agreed to **renew the grand coalition** and to re-elected Angela **Merkel** as **chancellor**
- Important to note => Remarkable Post-war democratic consolidation



Next Session...

48

Reading Week => no session

- ◆ Marks, Hegel
- ◆ Luther's Protestant reformation





Thank You For Your Attention!