

ALTERNATIVE FÜR DEUTSCHLAND (AFD)

The AfD is a far-right, anti-Muslim political party that launched in 2013. While it started off a populist Eurosceptic party it has, since 2015, become increasingly extreme.

The party is predicted to do well at the 2019 European elections and it's important they are stopped.

Here is a short introductory guide to the AfD, their anti-Muslim politics and their links to extremism.

ANTI-MUSLIM COMMENTS

AfD politicians have a long history of making anti-Muslim statements. The party has long attracted racist and anti-Muslim figures.

- The AfD politician Björn Höcke said he wants to ban Islam, even in Turkey, a majority Muslim country. At a speech in Eisleben in Saxony-Anhalt in 2018 he said: "Once we come into power, we will enforce what is necessary for us to live our lives freely. We will issue the directive that after crossing the Bosphorus, the three great M's: Mohammed, Muezzin and minaret are over, dear friends!"¹
- Leading AfD figure Beatrix Von Storch was investigated by the police and had her Twitter account temporarily suspended after she accused Cologne police of appeasing "the barbaric, Muslim, rapist hordes of men."²
- Alexander Gauland, an AfD speaker in the Bundestag, said at rally in 2017 that a German minister with Turkish roots should be "disposed of" in Turkey.³





AfD posters have used the 'Eurabia' conspiracy theory popular in the far right

ANTI-MUSLIM POLICIES

The AfD have adopted an increasingly anti-Muslim platform. In 2016, for example, they approved a manifesto that “Islam is not part of Germany” and included a ban on the call to prayer and the wearing of a full-face veil in public. In 2017 they ran a controversial anti-Muslim poster campaign with slogans such as, “Burkas? We prefer Bikinis” and “New Germans? We’ll make them ourselves”.⁴ In 2018 they released a campaign poster with the slogan “Islam-free schools!”.

However, their 2019 manifesto has a whole section on Islam that confirms their position as one of the most explicit anti-Muslim parties in Europe. It includes the following:

- It argues that Islam is incompatible with Europe and states that the AfD will “defend” Europe from it.
- It calls Islam a “political ideology”.
- It says that multiculturalism is an “illusion” and advances the conspiracy theory that Islam and Sharia have taken over and created “Muslim ghettos”.
- It calls for the banning of minarets, the call to prayer and the headscarf.⁵

AFD’S EXTREMIST LINKS

Generation Identity

Generation Identity is part of the racist ‘identitarian’ movement that calls for ‘ethnopluralism’, which in practice means separating and segregating people along racial lines. The movement started in France with the launch of Génération Identitaire (Generation Identity, or GI), the youth wing of the far-right Bloc Identitaire. It has since spread across the continent with affiliated groups, the most prominent of which in addition to France are based in Germany, Italy and Austria. In 2019 a series of links have emerged between GI and the mass shooter who attacked two mosques and killed 50 Muslims in New Zealand. The AfD claim there are no official links with the identitarians but the truth is more complicated.

- In 2018 an Identitarian activist called Simon Kaupert in Halle told the *New York Times*, “We have street activists, we have a think tank, we have a publishing house and we have a political party in Parliament”; and claimed there are “dozens” of Generation Identity supporters working for the AfD.⁶

- Franziska Schreiber, a former leading member of the AfD's youth wing, Junge Alternative (JA), estimates that "at least half the members of the AfD's own youth wing are followers of Generation Identity."⁷
- Thorsten Weiss, an AfD representative in the Berlin state parliament confirmed that some of its members were working together with GI. He has also said that he felt it was "not at all reprehensible" that AfD and GI members "attended each other's events or took part in demonstrations together." He added that GI members "don't have a very different mentality to us, they just express it differently."⁸
- Petr Bystron, the Bavarian chairman of the AfD described GI as an "amazing" organisation and said that the AfD should be a "shield" for the movement.⁹
- The 2019 AfD manifesto called for "remigration", a core tenet of identitarian ideology and is a coded term for a policy of repatriating and lowering the standards of living for non-white migrants and Muslims.¹⁰

PEGIDA

PEGIDA, which in its full title translates as 'Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident', was formed in October 2014 in Dresden, Saxony. Their primary targets are Muslims, refugees, the media and mainstream politicians, not least Germany's federal chancellor Angela Merkel. The relationship between the AfD and PEGIDA has always been a difficult one with

many AfD politicians fearing links with the far-right protest group would tarnish their reputation. However, as the AfD has increasingly shifted to the right there seems to be more open collaboration.

- In March 2018 the AfD national executive said that any member was free to appear at PEGIDA protests in Dresden.¹¹
- In May 2018 Björn Höcke, AfD leader in Thuringia, gave a speech at a PEGIDA rally.¹²
- In September 2018 the AfD marched alongside PEGIDA at a demonstration in Chemnitz, following a series of far-right gatherings in the wake of a man's stabbing in the town, allegedly at the hands of immigrants.¹³
- A poll carried out by *The Economist* found that nine out of ten PEGIDA supporters back the AfD.

NAZI RELATIONSHIP

While the AfD is not a Nazi party, it has at times attracted people who are pro-Nazi and some experts have argued that some of their propaganda echoes that of the Nazis. In addition to this:

- In late 2018, it emerged that one of its members posed for photographs on a "pilgrimage" of sites associated with Adolf Hitler. He posed holding a candle outside Hitler's birthplace, posed with a picture of Hitler near Berchtesgaden and with a banner bearing SS runes and a swastika.¹⁴



- The head of their youth wing in Lower Saxony, Lars Steinke, was removed from his post in 2018 after describing Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, the man who unsuccessfully plotted to murder Adolf Hitler, as a traitor.¹⁵
- Senior AfD figure Björn Höcke has denounced Berlin's Holocaust memorial as "monument of shame" and has called for a "180-degree turn" in attitudes to WWII.¹⁶
- In late 2018 German historians condemned an article written by Alexander Gauland, the then AfD leader, for having "striking parallels" to the words of Adolf Hitler.¹⁷

NOTES

- 1 <https://www.welt.de/regionales/thueringen/article172946155/Fuer-Hoecke-fuer-Islam-am-Bosporus-Schluss-sein.html>
- 2 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/02/world/europe/germany-twitter-muslims-hordes.html>
- 3 <https://www.dw.com/en/afds-alexander-gauland-slammed-over-racist-remark-aimed-at-minister/a-40277497>
- 4 <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/8/31/16234008/germany-afd-ad-campaign-far-right>
- 5 <https://www.afd.de/europawahlprogramm/>
- 6 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/27/world/europe/germany-far-right-generation-identity.html>
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2017-06/afd-identitaere-bewegung-unvereinbarkeitsbeschluss-funktionaere/seite-2>
- 9 https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/die-afd-und-die-identitaere-bewegung-unterschiedliche-wege.976.de.html?dram:article_id=409459
- 10 <https://www.afd.de/europawahlprogramm/>
- 11 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/pegida-turns-4-will-afd-be-among-well-wishers/>
- 12 <https://www.mdr.de/sachsen/dresden/bjoern-hoecke-bei-pegida-gegenproteste-dresden-100.html>
- 13 <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/chemnitz-afd-pegida-und-pro-chemnitz-schliessen-sich-bei-demo-zusammen-a-1226122.html>
- 14 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/10/18/senior-figure-germanys-afd-went-pilgrimage-hitler-sites/>
- 15 <https://www.thelocal.de/20180803/stauffenberg-was-a-traitor-the-comment-that-went-too-far-for-the-afd>
- 16 <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2017-01/afd-bjoern-hoecke-rede-holocaust-mahnmal-berlin/seite-2>
- 17 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/10/germanys-afd-leader-alexander-gauland-accused-of-echoing-hitler-in-newspaper-article>



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