

Alternative für Deutschland: A Conservative Challenge

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Abstract

The meteoric rise of *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) on German political scene is regarded by many as a puzzle. It accuses the CDU (Christian Democratic Union), Germany's long-standing conservative party of abandoning its core conservative stand especially on Eurozone's monetary policies and then on immigration debate. The party itself lays powerful claims on representing German conservatism. My paper provides an ethnographic account of AfD's tapping into broad conservative milieu and its struggle to gain respectability in German public debates. I draw upon my (ongoing) fieldwork to interpret AfD's political messages in east Germany based on my sustained interaction with the ranks and files of the party in the state of Saxony. I conclude that the party members strive to gain respectability in public debates by consciously or unconsciously exploiting the grey zone between the conservative and rightist thought. The appeal of the party hinges on the tacit support for conservative social politics in Saxony but also on the respectability of the party individuals.

Keywords: right populism; alt-right; AfD; Germany; ordoliberalism