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# ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ПРОЦЕССЫ В COBPEMEHHOM MUPE POLITICAL PROCESSES IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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Research article

# Migration Policy in the Programs of FRG's Leading Political Parties

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**Abstract.** The presented study is devoted to the reflection of migration policy concepts in the program documents of the leading political parties in Germany. The purpose of this work is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of migration policy concepts of Germany's leading parties, incorporated in their programs. The research methodology is based on a combination of comparative descriptive analysis and elements of case study. The empirical basis of the research is constituted by program materials of 6 parties and party blocs, whose representatives became part of the Bundestag, according to the results of the 2017 federal elections. The author believes that despite certain differences, the majority of parties hold to the consensus stance on migration policy, which may entail maintaining the current course for the foreseeable future. Significant changes in migration policy are possible only if the leadership of the CDU/CSU is able to convince the leaders of the SPD to continue tightening migration policy in terms of restricting the flow of refugees. Attempting to sustain the existing model of migration policy with the current dynamics of the socioeconomic situation can lead to an increase in the popularity of AfD. However, this course of events does not threaten the stability of German political system, provided AfD does not ally itself with another influential party.

Key words: Germany, FRG, migration policy, political parties, party programs

#### Introduction

Migration policy regulation has been a major concern for politicians and researchers for decades; still, in the last five years, the migration issue impacted many countries. The political situations in Asian and African countries have sub-

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stantially changed life in Europe. The donor countries, as well as recipient countries, have found themselves in a cycle of migration flows. International migration keeps sending new waves of migrants to the EU countries, whose leaders, in the meantime, keep relentlessly generating new but highly controversial ideas. While some leaders speak in favour of multicultural society, tolerance and possible migrant assimilation, others demonstrate a highly negative attitude towards the increasing migration and actively criticize the policy that advocates tolerance in relation to incoming foreigners. These opposing views aggravate rather than smooth over various concerns related to the new members of society and draw public attention to challenges that inevitably emerge from assimilation problems, which foreigners have to face in a new social environment.

It is quite obvious that it would be challenging for European society to reverse the tendency: migrants have gained a firm foothold in European countries and become an intrinsic part of the current map of the world. There is no current debate on how to overcome the existing critical situation caused by the large-scale migration flow. It is vital now to decide on what principles the new migration policy should be based on, as all previous options have failed against the backdrop of the rapidly growing flow of migrants trying settle down, find a niche and secure their position within European society.

The latest data published in the International Migration Report by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) show that the number of migrants is on the rise and in 2017 accounted for about 258 million migrants, which reflects a 49% migration rate growth as compared to 2000. The largest number of migrants, according to official statistics, live in the USA (49.8 million migrants), Saudi Arabia and Germany (12.2 million migrants respectively) [1].

Since fall 2015, migration policy has been among the top priorities on modern Germany's internal affairs agenda. A sharp increase in the flow of refugees has aggravated the issues of ethnic crimes and terrorism. Integration mechanisms have been experiencing failures, while non-acceptance of European values and behaviour patterns by the majority of migrant communities has become more prominent. It naturally led to an eroding trust in the ruling party coalition, escalating anti-elite tensions, and growing popularity of certain party projects that have been named 'populist' within the framework of political discourse. There has also been a rise in right and far-right tendencies in German society, as well as an increase in the number of hate crimes and instances of civil unrest and clashes.

The aforementioned processes have come under close scrutiny of the expert community. Still, despite this fact, the majority of studies tend to neglect the major aspect of the FRG domestic political process, i.e. the leading parties' stance on migration policy. These parties are expected to build a new system of social, political and economic relations essential for ensuring a stable social situation and defining conditions that will satisfy all parties and allow them to coexist seamlessly.

It is worth mentioning that academic literature extensively covers the migration policy adopted by the German government. Its implementation in the precrisis years was studied by N.N. Bolshova [2], I.A. Kositsyn [3], V.P. Ljubin [4],

E.A. Mikhailova [5] and M.V. Strelets [6]. The dynamic of the migration policy carried out by the FRG government after the crisis was investigated by D.Sh. Valiev [7], V.I. Vasilyev [8] and V.V. Radchenko [9]. The topic in question has also been indirectly addressed by authors who analyse how migration crisis affects electoral behaviour of German voters — A.A. Derevyanchenko [10], A.V. Kuznetsov [11], E.P. Timoshenkova [12], A.V. Fedina [13] and S.S. Morozova [14].

Still, the key aspects of the mainstream (leading) parties' views on migration issues have not been thoroughly covered yet. In this context, "Alternative for Germany" (Alternative für Deutschland, hereafter – AfD), a party viewed as rightwing populist and openly announcing its stance, is an exception. The relevant topic is studied either within the framework of related issues (for instance, the issue of public security) [15], or in the context of ideology baselines for specific parties [16]. The studies of separate parties' migration policies are still quite rare (except the AfD's pressing issue). Among such studies we can mention V.Yu. Shcherbakov's research, which focuses on the "Left Party" stance on the migration question [17]. However, to date, the Russian-speaking academic community has offered no articulate comprehensive analysis of German leading parties' stance on migration. In light of all of the above, the current research is of particular significance as it aims at specifying various German political parties' standpoints on the migration issue. Such analysis will help differentiate between inadequate solutions to the problem and solutions that offer both Germany and other European countries a satisfactory way out of the existing situation.

The article's objective is to fill the gap in the scientific knowledge system. Its goal is to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of migration policy concepts of the leading German parties outlined in their program documents.

The research methodology is based on a combination of comparative descriptive analysis and elements of case study. The empirical basis of the research is constituted by program materials of six parties and party blocs, whose representatives became part of the Bundestag, according to the results of the 2017 federal elections. The party leaders' commentary to the program documents served as an information source as well.

### Migration Issue on the Parties' Agenda

All German political parties are currently focusing on the controversial but pressing issue of further migration management. There are zealous opponents as well as ardent supporters of the policy of tolerance and multiculturalism pursued and actively promoted by the incumbent government. However, the opposition's stance is becoming a matter of growing concern from the security perspective.

The alliance of Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU, *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*) and Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU, *Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern*) traditionally asserts the idea of resolving the issue pragmatically. The leaders of this party bloc view migration as a source of

additional workforce that German economy needs to stay competitive in view of the current relatively low population reproduction rate.

The party bloc emphasizes that Germany is interested in a constant but controlled flow of migrants who are well-educated, proficient in the German language and sought after by the Republic's labour market (primarily it refers to the citizens of other EU countries). The flow channels for highly skilled migrants who could benefit the national economy need to be gradually expanded. The alliance leaders also consider the possibility of contracting highly qualified professionals from the non-EU countries in the medium term perspective. The bloc believes that to achieve this goal the German government will need to ramp up teaching German overseas.

The qualifications and experience of migrants have to be evaluated in accordance with German quality standards. Apart from this, policy makers insist that it is crucial to avoid a flux of migrants who could become "the professional welfare recipients". Thus, the CDU/CSU party bloc points out that it is essential to debar the right to resettle in Germany for those migrants who have a history of falsifying information regarding their nationality, citizenship, etc. The alliance stresses as well that the allowance amount needs to be reduced for migrants who sought asylum in other EU countries. Along with this, CDU/CSU considers it necessary to limit the court power to repeal deportation proceedings for illegal migrants [18]. Besides, the party bloc actively champions the idea of legislation amendments serving to prevent cases of child benefit abuse. This term refers to real or fictitious multi-child migrant families depending solely on child allowances [19].

Apart from this, it is stressed that migrants should be ready and willing to adopt the values and lifestyle that most FRG citizens abide by. The right to preserve cultural identity only exists to a certain extent, while democracy and human rights are recognised as fundamental values and strict commitment to them is required. First of all, these principles refer to safeguarding equal rights for males and females.

In October 2018, at the CDU/CSU faction session Minister of the Interior of FRG Horst Seehofer stated that since the beginning of the year about 100 thousand refugees have come to Germany, which is significantly less than during the same period last year. He named the number of 200 thousand people as a target mark and expressed his confidence in the country's ability to "manage that". He summed up that in this situation "integration would take place, but any exceeding number would cause an overload" [20].

The CDU/CSU program documents mention that relying on Christian moral attitudes and acknowledging human rights as a core value, Germany is obliged to grant asylum to the victims of humanitarian disasters. However, this idea did not gather much popular support.

While highlighting interest in migrants and their value for the country, the party alliance claimed that one of the major goals of German political system is to integrate newcomers into FRG society, which primarily concerns the second and third generation of migrants.

Moreover, the CDU/CSU bloc sees elimination of the language barrier as one of the key directions of migrant integration into Germany society. The party establishment believes that in order to overcome this barrier the pre-school and school systems have to be reformed. The party insists that it is necessary to provide targeted language support for children of migrants in kindergartens, introduce language proficiency tests for children joining schools and set up a language assistance program for migrant students in colleges [21].

Among the major challenges CDU/CSU representatives have noted in pursuing the adopted migration policy course include cultural attitudes toward employment among certain categories of migrants (women in particular), Eurosceptic efforts aimed at settling the migration crisis, which can be solved by EU countries collectively, and increased xenophobia within German society.

According to the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the migration issue has to be resolved by turning to principles of humanity, rationality and sharing EU common resources. The latter is considered especially significant. Social-democrats believe that it is possible to settle the migration crisis at the pan-European level alone. What is more, this entails providing necessary assistance (financial and administrative) to South European countries – the main transit areas for the majority of refugees from Maghreb and the Middle East.

Further, they suggest drawing a clear line between labour migration (or migration of professionals) and providing assistance to asylum-seeking citizens from other countries.

Social-democrats, as well as CDU/CSU representatives, are open to migration of highly qualified professionals. Such migration is believed to guarantee a higher quality of economic development and decent pension benefits for FRG citizens (how these factors are interrelated is yet to be clarified) [22].

Social-democrats believe that individuals who have a reason to seek asylum, should be granted refuge by all means. However, this issue cannot be resolved unless other EU partners offer their assistance. Today this idea seems utopian as many of these countries have closed their borders.

Migrants are guaranteed equal freedoms with other German citizens and an opportunity to maintain their cultural identity. An exception applies solely to traditions that contradict German society's understanding of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Moreover, special emphasis is placed on protecting gender equality. The question of migrants' security is also among the main priorities. Social-democrats insist that the key to resolving this issue lies in suppressing farright movements.

#### **Migration Issue in Terms of Democratic Values**

The Free Democratic Party of Germany (FDP, Freie Demokratische Partei), which formally adheres to neoliberal ideology, extensively focuses on migration issues in its program documents as well. They declare that the problem of refugees and illegal migrants should be solved in close cooperation with other EU

countries. "Free democrats" believe that Germany has to champion the full exercise of power for pan-European institutes. Only in this case other EU countries would take on an "adequate" load to help deal with the European migration crisis. Along with this, they suggest carrying out joint economic projects in certain Middle Eastern countries (Lebanon and Jordan). These projects are expected to create a source of well-being which would attract part of the refugee flow. Moreover, FDP insists that it is essential to expand activities related to engaging highly qualified migrants in the German economy, among other things, by increasing the number of employment vacancies and student visas [21].

The "Alternative for Germany" (AfD) adheres to the strictest policy on the migration management issue. At the same time, the party program is very specific and lists well-articulated requirements. The party representatives insist on taking the following measures:

- reduce the number of grounds on which asylum in Germany is granted to foreigners;
- refuse to grant the right to reside in Germany in the framework of family reunion program;
  - establish tight control on border crossing points;
- revoke citizenship in case a serious crime is committed within 10 years after naturalization;
  - extend the list of crimes that exclude the possibility of naturalization;
- ease the procedure of deportation of foreign criminals (including those who committed minor offences);
  - deport foreigners on suspicion of involvement with criminal groups;
  - allow criminal courts to pass verdicts in deportation cases;
- prohibit holding Islamic worship services in any language other than German:
  - ban wearing religious symbols in public places [23].

The migration question, as it is covered in AfD's program, is closely related to countering criminal activity and terrorism. Paragraph 4.1 of the program directly alleges that the majority of individuals involved in organized crime are foreigners. Thus, AfD proposes the following measures to enhance public security:

- lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 years old;
- increase expenses for the police force, which "is not properly supported as of now";
- reform federal and local law enforcement agencies by establishing cooperation and equalizing their level of training;
  - mitigate the right to acquire firearms for citizens [23].

It is noteworthy that AfD stance on migration issue corresponds to their electorate views. The public opinion polls conducted in February 2016 show that 54% of FRG citizens doubt that migrants of the newer flow can assimilate into German society. Besides, 97% of the sceptics are constituted by the AfD supporters [24. P. 27]. Thus, by representing its voters the party openly expresses the position of a

large segment of society. Along with this, it should be noted that the party's standing does not correlate with the official policy of multiculturalism, and therefore it cannot be adopted by "mainstream" parties (which have considered the AfD's line to be marginal for a long time) [13. P. 79].

The "Left Party" (or "The Left", *Die Linke*, *Linkspartei*) insists on significant mitigation of migration barriers. In accordance with this policy, the party representatives suggest vesting a privilege of "prospective benefit" to those individuals who may claim a right to resettle in Germany. "The Left" demand that German borders should be open for anyone who seeks asylum. First of all, it concerns the citizens of countries with ongoing armed conflicts or systematic blatant violation of human rights. To clear the obstacles on migrants' way to Germany, the party proposes elimination of FRONTEX, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency [25].

Furthermore, "The Left" is seeking to maximally broaden the interpretation of the term "family reunion". They believe that within the relevant procedure the right to resettle should be granted to children, partners (including same-sex couples) and non-immediate family members. Besides, the German citizenship should be granted to every child born on the territory Germany (upon condition that its parents live in FRG). The official line of the "Left Party" states that it imperative to alleviate the naturalization procedure as well. Migrant integration into German society should be supported by large-scale language programs and elimination of "structural discrimination". The latter implies that migrants would be granted equal access to health care services and education, and also would have equal starting opportunities in labour market. "The Left" is also pushing for validating all education and professional retraining certificates that were obtained by migrants before coming to Germany.

The party "Alliance 90/The Greens" (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*) also call for significant ease of migration legislation. The party representatives reinforce their stance by referencing qualified workforce shortage and demographic challenges. Besides, they stress that Germany is obliged to help refugees and there cannot exist any "upper limit" in this matter.

The "Greens" believe that the ideal model of migration policy would ensure a constant but controlled resettlement of new citizens to Germany. Along this line, the party representatives claim that the system needs to target safeguarding the rights and interests of migrants as well. Besides, the system has to be closely correlated with migrant integration mechanisms, which include individuals who have been living in FRG for some time.

In like manner, the party is committed to the refugee protection policy which is based on human rights, including the basic right to asylum. It is a fundamental requirement (as well as a human rights obligation) to render assistance to people who are under threat or being persecuted. The "Greens" are strongly opposed to any "upper limit" for refugees saying that immigration and asylum seeking should not be confused.

The "Greens" intend to ensure FRG citizenship for every child born in Germany, provided their parents have a residence permit. The party suggests estab-

lishing a migration committee that, if approved by the Bundestag, would determine migration quotas for a fixed number of foreign professionals. They want to introduce a point-based immigration law, which involves assigning the so-called "talent cards". These cards are awarded to foreign citizens who meet the criteria of professional qualification, expertise, experience, German language proficiency, etc. A certain number of points given for each of the mentioned criteria constitute a score for a "talent card" eligibility.

The "Greens" believe that engaging highly qualified professionals from abroad can also be arranged by granting benefits to foreign students who study in Germany and plan to stay and work in FRG afterwards. On top of that, the party proposes to increase access to low-skilled vacancies in the labour market for migrants.

Thus, the majority of German leading political parties, except AfD, maintain that the growing flow of migrants is beneficial for the country's economic development. The majority of parties also support the idea that the migration crisis should be resolved on the pan-European level with mandatory involvement of EU joint management institutes. Most parties believe that consensus begins with agreement on controlled and planned migration. The majority focuses on the threat far-right parties pose to migrants and the necessity to counter this threat. CDU/CSU and SPD, the members of the coalition government, insist that migrants need to be granted a restricted right to preserve their cultural identity, meaning that traditions that contradict German take on human rights cannot be applied to FRG realities.

CDU/CSU tandem abide by rather strict stance on illegal migration and asylum granting conditions. The latter brings the alliance of the two centre-right parties and AfD together, which seems natural, as AfD was formed by former CDU/CSU activists, who belong to ideological fundamentalists.

SPD has taken up a moderate stance and insists on a modest expansion of benefits for migrant workers, as well as refugees. "The Left" and the "Greens" promote the idea that Germany, being an economically developed democratic country, has certain obligations, which implies that migration legislation needs to be extensively mitigated, primarily with regard to individuals seeking asylum.

#### Conclusion

With parties forming a clear consensus on the key issues, it is unlikely that German migration policy will be tightened in the nearest future, as long as CDU/CSU representatives get SPD to support their initiatives to curb refugee migration. Maintaining current migration policy in the context of the currently complex socio-economic situation and failing integration mechanisms can lead to increased discontent among voters and growing popularity of AfD. Despite the fact that AfD lacks significant support from other leading parties, its expanding influence puts political stability at risk. Along with this, the migration regulation issue has become so popular on its own that the majority of political parties or candidates claiming political influence in the contemporary society have made it an integral part of their programs. Migration has become one of today's topical issues

and we believe that it will remain relevant for a long time. It should be noted that the number of children born in European countries in migrant families grows each year. Therefore, large-scale problems resolved on the governmental level will be amplified by more specific ones, namely healthcare, various welfare benefits, preschool facilities, etc. It is impossible to ignore migration processes, as their impact on current political realities has grown out of proportion. The migration issue is becoming more complex as new challenges keep adding up: nationalism, unemployment, refugees, international legal norms, political culture and many others.

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Научная статья

## Миграционная политика в программах ведущих политических партий ФРГ

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Аннотация. Представленное исследование посвящено отображению концепций миграционной политики в программных документах ведущих политических партий Германии. Целью данной работы является проведение комплексной оценки концепций миграционной политики ведущих партий Германии, закрепленных в их программах. Методология исследования выстраивается за счет комбинации сравнительного дескриптивного анализа и эле-

ментов кейс-стади. В роли эмпирической базы работы выступил комплекс материалов программ 6 партий и партийных блоков, представители которых вошли в состав Бундестага по результатам федеральных выборов 2017 г. Автор приходит к выводу, что представители большинства партий, несмотря на отдельные разногласия, придерживаются консенсусной позиции в отношении миграционной политики. Это может означать сохранение текущего курса в обозримом будущем. Существенные изменения в миграционной политике возможны лишь в случае, если руководство ХДС/ХСС сумеет убедить лидеров СДПГ пойти на ужесточение миграционной политики в плане ограничения потока беженцев. Сохранение нынешней модели миграционной политики при аналогичной динамике социально-экономической коньюнктуры способно обернуться ростом популярности АдГ. Однако это не приведет к дестабилизации политической системы Германии, если АдГ не сможет заключить альянс с другой влиятельной партией.

**Ключевые слова**: Германия, ФРГ, миграционная политика, политические партии, партийные программы

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