



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

A ban on AfD – protection or risk for democracy in Germany?



Protests by more than a million people in dozens of **German cities** over the weekend were a powerful manifestation of Germans' desire to preserve democracy.

The political pressure they created will remain unavoidable in further shaping the nation's political position in a year when it needs to make long-term decisions.

There were scenes of great energy, not so often witnessed on the German political scene. The messages and demands were precise and focused, which gave the whole movement even more strength.

However, it is uncertain whether the strong revolt of supporters of civil democracy against the growing far-right will give the expected result with this action alone.

The outcome may be the opposite. It is possible that with their revolt, the leaders of the centrist political parties, their supporters and everyone concerned about the state of democracy in the country actually breathed oxygen into the extreme right.

Series of elections – the moment of truth

The protests organised across Germany last Saturday hint that they will develop into more or less regular action this year and the next.

They were massive, and attracted enormous attention from the German and international public, and as such, they have a great potential to influence voters. Voters in Germany will have a lot of work to do in the next year and a half, so, logically, political campaign planners will once again reach for the organisation of mass street rallies.

The European Parliament elections next June will be significant for all the leading German parties. They will reflect the influence of the largest national grouping in the EP and, from there on, the formation of other institutions in Brussels.

The Alternative for Germany sees elections as a chance for a final rise to the top

In the autumn, starting next September, elections will be held for the parliaments of 3 German states in the eastern part – Sachsen, Brandenburg and Thüringen. Seemingly still far away, the federal election will be held in October 2025 at the latest.

The ultra-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) sees each of these checks as a chance for a final rise to the top, perhaps a "to be or not to be" opportunity.

Their opponents are also fully aware of this, not because they are afraid of the far-right's self-confidence, but because this self-confidence of theirs has more support in political polls over time.

Is there enough evidence to ban the AfD?

The most radical demand at last Saturday's protests was a ban on AfD.

It was the result of outrage over the participation of the AfD officials in an **obscure meeting** held in Potsdam, where conspiracy theorists and neo-Nazis discussed the expulsion of millions of immigrants, refugees, and even those who have acquired German citizenship.

Even though the AfD dissociated itself from the views expressed at that meeting, the participation of some of its representatives in the meeting, which was reminiscent of the Nazi agreements on the extermination of the Jews, was the trigger for the massive numbers of Germans on the streets.

However, a ban on AfD is almost ruled out. Before the Constitutional Court decides on it, there must exist convincing evidence that the party you want to ban is actively working on overthrowing democracy.



The process of its banning, if initiated at all, could easily be used by the AfD to present itself as a victim of the big mainstream parties – Federal Constitutional Court

It was relatively easy for the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe to **ban the Socialist Reich Party** in 1952. It was one of only two parties banned in post-WW2 Germany.

It was an undisguised neo-Nazi organisation led by former Nazi military commanders. They believed that the concentration camps were fake, that the Holocaust did not happen, and that the united German Reich should lead Europe.

However, is the fact that some of its people attended a secret meeting, no doubt inspired by neo-Nazi ideas, enough to ban the AfD 70 years later?

Or is the fact that the AfD branch in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt was designated an extremist group by the German intelligence agency last November based on evidence of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia?

That will almost certainly not be enough because the threshold for banning any political organisation is high so that German democracy can defend itself, as it failed during the rise of Nazism.

Long way to marginalising extremists

However, demands to ban the AfD may well come to this party, which is already second in power at the federal level, behind the CDU, and leads with more than 30% of support in the eastern provinces where elections will be

held in autumn.

The process of its banning, if initiated at all, could easily be used by the AfD to present itself as a victim of the big mainstream parties and their establishment at a time when its popularity is growing, and it threatens their traditional political dominance.

AfD is the result of modern Germany's confrontation with the issue of migrants. It is the political expression of the most conservative part of German society and the growth of its extremism could not be stopped by one decision (of the Constitutional Court) or one series of mass protests.

The AfD is an unintended consequence of the policy of the CDU government and then Chancellor Angela Merkel towards immigrants

Founded in 2013 as a party of pronounced Euro-scepticism, after only 2 years, it accepted an anti-immigrant policy as the core of its activity, and as a response to the liberal policy of the CDU government and then Chancellor Angela Merkel towards immigrants.

The AfD is an unintended consequence of that policy, but it is more than a significant political fact today. It is practically impossible to use state repressive measures to remove from the political scene a force that has grown to the extent that the AfD has today.

Its political orientation and undoubtedly extremist ideology could be marginalised (not completely abolished) exclusively by the credible policies of the government and, in general, of other political competitors.

Circumstances do not favour AfD's opponents because its potential has been increasing with the radicalisation of attitudes towards migrants, particularly after the outbreak of the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

The ruling left-green bloc and the opposing CDU are going through a big test, just like the

similar mainstream traditional parties across Europe, to respond to the impact of simple and radical solutions offered by populists and anti-migrants.