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Electoral Support of the AfD in the Years 2013-2020
Bakalářská práce

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Zadání bakalářské práce

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The new political party Alternative for Germany (AfD) is currently the most successful far-right growing power in Germany. The bachelor thesis will be devoted to the analysis of the geographical change of the AfD electoral support. The work will primarily concern electoral geography, "areas of electoral support" and "areas of super electoral support" of the AfD will be indicated. The elections to the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) in the years 2013 and 2017, the last elections for State Parliaments (Landtage), as well as the elections to the European Parliament in the years 2014 and 2019, will be studied. The aim of the thesis is to describe the distribution of AfD electoral support between years 2013 and 2020 and to answer the research question: How has the AfD electoral support geographically changed in the years 2013-2020? In addition, two sub-questions will also be answered: What are "areas of electoral support" and "areas of super electoral support" for AfD in the years 2013-2020? Are there differences between the party's electoral support in different levels of electoral competitions? To answer the questions electoral geography methods will be used, election results will be analyzed and presented in detail on election maps. Comparison of data will occur at the district level (Kreise). The work will not aim at analyzing the reasons for such changes, however, non-deepened descriptions of the causes will be indicated with the help of secondary data.

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval (pod vedením vedoucí bakalářské práce) samostatně a uvedl jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne 13.12.2021.

Anotace

GLOZSHTEIN, EVGENII. Electoral Support of the AfD in the Years 2013-2020. Hradec Králové: Filozofická fakulta, Univerzita Hradec Králové, 2021. Bakalářská práce.

Nová politická strana Alternativa pro Německo (AfD) je v současnosti nejúspěšnější krajně pravicovou sílou v Německu. Bakalářská práce bude věnována analýze geografické změny volební podpory AfD. Práce se bude týkat především volební geografie, identifikovány budou „oblasti volební podpory" a „oblasti supervolební podpory" AfD. Budou studovány volby do Spolkového parlamentu (Bundestag) v letech 2013 a 2017, poslední volby do zemských parlamentů (Landtage) a také volby do Evropského parlamentu v letech 2014 a 2019. Cílem práce je popsat rozložení volební podpory AfD mezi roky 2013 a 2020 a odpovědět na výzkumnou otázku: Změnila se v letech 2013-2020 volební podpora AfD geograficky, a pokud ano, jak? Kromě toho budou zodpovězeny i dvě podotázky: Jaké jsou „oblasti volební podpory" a „oblasti supervolební podpory" pro AfD v letech 2013-2020? Jsou rozdíly mezi volební podporou strany v různých úrovních volebních soutěží? K zodpovězení otázek budou použity metody volební geografie, výsledky voleb budou analyzovány a podrobně prezentovány na volebních mapách. Porovnání údajů proběhne na úrovni okresu (Kreise). Práce si neklade za cíl analyzovat příčiny těchto změn, nicméně pomocí sekundárních dat budou naznačeny neprohloubené popisy příčin.

V rámci této práce byly zodpovězeny všechny výzkumné otázky, pro většinu voleb, kterých se AfD účastnila, byly vypracovány mapy s vyznačením oblastí volební podpory a supervolební podpory. Pro lepší orientaci v textu je součástí bakalářské práce popis volebního systému v Německu a samotné politické strany Alternativa pro Německo. Všechny volby za účasti AfD od roku 2013 do konce roku 2020 byly analyzovány pomocí metod politické geografie. Pro tyto účely byly použity statistické údaje o výsledcích voleb z otevřených

zdrojů na internetu. V přímé analýze získaných výsledků byly vyvozeny povrchní závěry o přítomnosti určitých vzorců ve volební podpoře AfD, což bylo v závěru jasně popsáno.

Klíčová slova: Alternativa pro Německo, volební geografie, volební podpora, volby v Německu

Annotation

GLOZSHTEIN, EVGENII. Electoral Support of the AfD in the Years 2013-2020. Hradec Králové: Philosophical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové, 2021. Bachelor thesis.

The new political party Alternative for Germany (AfD) is currently the most successful far-right growing power in Germany. The bachelor thesis will be devoted to the analysis of the geographical change of the AfD electoral support. The work will primarily concern electoral geography, "areas of electoral support" and "areas of super electoral support" of the AfD will be indicated. The elections to the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) in the years 2013 and 2017, the last elections for State Parliaments (Landtage), as well as the elections to the European Parliament in the years 2014 and 2019, will be studied. The aim of the thesis is to describe the distribution of AfD electoral support between years 2013 and 2020 and to answer the research question: Has the AfD's electoral support geographically changed in the years 2013-2020, and if so, how? In addition, two sub-questions will also be answered: What are "areas of electoral support" and "areas of super electoral support" for AfD in the years 2013-2020? Are there differences between the party's electoral support in different levels of electoral competitions? To answer the questions electoral geography methods will be used, election results will be analyzed and presented in detail on election maps. Comparison of data will occur at the district level (Kreise). The work will not

aim at analyzing the reasons for such changes, however, non-deepened descriptions of the causes will be indicated with the help of secondary data.

Contents

List of abbreviations

AfD – Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland)

CDU/CSU – Christian Democratic Union of Germany/Christian Social Union (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich-Soziale Union)

ESM – European Stability Mechanism

EU – European Union

EuWG – European Elections Act (Europawahlgesetz)

FDP – Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei)

SPD – Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)

Introduction

In recent years, right-wing populist parties have received a huge amount of support and are gradually consolidating their positions. In Germany, such a political force is the Alternative for Germany (AfD), which was formed less than 10 years ago, but is already the most successfully growing right-wing radical power in the country. The advancement of the AfD fits into the European trend of a growing number of successes of right-wing populist parties such as the National Rally in France, Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, Freedom Party of Austria, and the League in Italy. These radical parties are becoming strong and will remain important players in the political arena for a long time (Art 2011, p. 2). The bachelor's work will primarily be devoted only to the Alternative for Germany, namely, to changes in its electoral support.

The AfD is a young party but has already gained great popularity. From 2013, when the party was founded, until 2021, the party participated in over 25 elections at various levels. These were primarily the elections to the Bundestag (Federal Parliament) in the years 2013 and 2017, the elections to the European Parliament in the years 2014 and 2019 and over 23 elections to Landtag (State Parliaments) in all 16 states of Germany. In almost all the above elections, the party only improved its results, gaining more and more support. In 2017, the AfD first entered the Bundestag, gaining 12.6% of the vote. From 2014 the AfD has passed the electoral threshold and was able to go to the parliaments of all 16 federal states. The AfD has become the second largest party in Saxony-Anhalt (in both 2016 and 2019 Landtag elections) and the third largest in both Baden-Württemberg (2016 Landtag election) and Rhineland-Palatinate (2016 Landtag election).

At that time the topic of electoral support for political parties in Germany is very relevant, since quite recently the 2021 elections to the Bundestag were held and the era of the reign of Angela Merkel is coming to an end.[1] Just about

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[1] Angela Merkel was the German chancellor for a long term of 16 years, in December 2021 she resigned. She was replaced by Olaf Scholz from SPD, who was her finance minister for 4 years (Bennhold, 2021).

this time, the party faces serious problems, as the AfD has been ranked among the „suspects of right-wing extremism" (Wiedmann-Schmidt, 2021). At the same time, the party has immense popularity in some federal states. So, for example, in Saxony, support for the AfD already stands at 30% and makes it the most popular party in the state (Stadtler, 2021). In the last Bundestag elections, the AfD proved that they are firmly holding on to their positions - only slightly losing their seats in the new parliament (-1%), in contrast to, for example, the CDU (-7%).

In addition to everything else, the study of electoral support allows us to further understand its reasons. Studies have repeatedly pointed out that, for example, there are definite correlations between unemployment and support for extreme right-wing parties. An equally important topics are migration and welfare state protection, which can also directly influence electoral support in certain countries (Arzheimer 2009, p. 262). Support for the right-wing radical parties may also depend on the degree of political decentralization and the degree of disproportionality of the electoral system (Arzheimer 2009, p. 264). However, one should not forget about the geographical factor, which will be especially considered in this work, because even with the same electoral rules, in different regions there can be a completely opposite result (Art 2011, p. 3).

Thus, support for right-wing parties can change for a number of reasons, both from the political agenda and from the political system, including different levels of electoral processes. The main goal of this work is to examine these changes in electoral support for AfD in Germany and try to understand if there are any patterns in them. The bachelor's work will primarily focus on the analysis of three types of elections in Germany in which the AfD participated - elections to the federal parliament Bundestag, elections to the European Parliament and elections to the state parliaments. For the purposes of this work, the subdiscipline of political science, political geography, will be used. The aim of the thesis is to describe the distribution of AfD electoral support between years 2013 and 2020 and to answer the research question: *Has the AfD's electoral support geographically changed in the years 2013-2020, and if so, how?* In addition, two

sub-questions will also be answered: *What are "areas of electoral support" and "areas of super electoral support" for the AfD in the years 2013-2020? Are there differences between the party's electoral support in different levels of electoral competition?* The bachelor's thesis is aimed only at the period from 2013 to 2020, that is from the founding of a political party until the last elections for which there are available statistics. The work does not include the elections in 2021, which are currently taking place or were held very recently.

In this work, the reasons for such success of the AfD will not be studied, but rather the analytics of electoral support and its change. First, an empirical-analytical approach will be used to describe political processes in Germany. Moreover, the study will primarily work with methods of political geography, namely the division into areas of electoral support and electoral super support. In the Czech Republic, this method was primarily described by Petr Jehlička and Luděk Sýkora, as well as by Pavel Šaradín. The method consists in identifying these areas of electoral support, which shows the intensity of support for a particular party. Regions in which the party received 50% of the total number of votes is called the area of stable electoral support (Jehlička & Sýkora, 1991, p. 84). The area of super electoral support is determined similarly, except that the border is reduced to 25% (Šaradín, 2006, p. 248). This method is actively used to study electoral support (for example Pink, 2012). Determining the regions of electoral support helps to present the image of electoral behavior in the future. Using this method, we can indicate both significant deviations or certain similarities.

The work will be primarily aimed at analyzing the electoral results at the level of electoral districts (Wahlkreise), so that further comparison of the electoral results of different types of elections will take place at the same level. For better orientation, a computer program QGIS will be used in the work, which allows to create maps of the aforementioned areas of electoral and super electoral support. Corresponding maps will be drawn for the most important elections.

Mainly German Internet portals, which provide information in the public domain, will be used to collect election data. For federal elections, this is the

"Federal Returning Officer" (Der Bundeswahlleiter), which provides information on the Bundestag elections and the European Parliament elections. For elections at district-level, the official Internet portals of respective state election commissioners (Landeswahlleiter) will be used. These portals are primarily involved in collecting information regarding elections. This information includes statistics on participation in the elections, as well as the results of voting of all rounds, divided by state and / or specific electoral districts. Information on the elections is the most important in this study, since on its basis all the evidence base will be built.

Previously, there was not much research on extreme right-wing parties, especially regarding their electoral support, which was considered unstable and weak (Arzheimer 2009, p. 259). Now, when parties like the AfD are strengthening their positions, the research of such political parties is as relevant as never before. Today, the degree of study of the chosen topic can be assessed as quite high, given that individual monographs are devoted exclusively to the phenomenon of this party. The problem is that a political party, especially one as young as the AfD, is a very dynamic and changeable phenomenon, and therefore the authors of major research works devoted to this party do not always have time to take into account the latest changes.

Since many monographs are only partially or not at all relevant, in this case it is necessary to attract the most relevant news and analytical materials. The sources for this work are, in addition to research articles, numerous news and analysis materials from leading German publications.

The bachelor's thesis is divided into five chapters, which are also subdivided into further subchapters. The first chapter will examine the theory and application of electoral geography. Other two chapters are empirical and include the basic information needed to understand the entire work. The second chapter describes the electoral system of Germany, taking into account all its unique aspects. The third chapter includes a description of the AfD itself, its brief history and ideological position. Finally, the last two chapters are analytical. The fourth chapter analyzes the results of all elections for the years 2013-2020, in which the

AfD managed to participate. Among other things, this chapter will show the primary patterns that can be observed already from the election results. Further, in the fifth chapter, political geography will be applied, namely, the areas of electoral support and super electoral support will be determined. Most of the election results will be mapped and analyzed in detail.

1. Theory and application of electoral geography

Interest in electoral and geographical issues arose as a result of the development of the theory of political geography, as well as due to the availability of accumulated and easily accessible statistical information. At the moment, electoral geography is a dynamically developing area. Election surveys are now taking place in most countries. For the most part, both the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections are studied. Support or condemnation by potential voters forces the authorities to adjust their activities in order to achieve the intended election results. Consequently, the identification of the determinants of electoral behavior and analysis of the nature of electoral choice today is of great importance.

One of the earliest authors of works on political geography was Friedrich Ratzel. He identified states with the highest forms of the evolution of life, that is, with living organisms that have reached the highest development. He wrote that the development of the state, its foreign and domestic policy, are predetermined by the natural conditions of its location. Ideal states, in his opinion, are those that correspond to their geographical conditions as much as possible and are most adapted to them (Ratzel, 1897). Further, the French academician Andre Siegfried began to develop this discipline, trying to detect patterns in voting and somehow explain them (Forest, 2017, p. 2).

In the 40s, political geography is developing and concentrates on the geography of voting and the study of the geographical factors of voting. Researchers began to study regions from the standpoint of electoral preferences, adding poll results and statistics to their work (for example Key, 1949). Electoral geography has become a frontier science between geography, sociology, political science and psychology. Subsequently, this was reflected in the methods of electoral research, since, in addition to geographical methods, the results of opinion polls and methods of political science began to be used.

The geographical aspect plays an important role in Germany. This is a country that has gone through war, regime change, division into Western and Eastern and subsequent unification during the 20th century. All these events

influenced the formation of political culture and self-identification, which is expressed in the desire, on the one hand, to preserve their nation, national unity, and on the other, the culture and traditions of their land (Westle, 1993).

There are many methods of electoral geography and also a large variety of possible interpretations of the final data. This bachelor's work primarily uses the method of areas of electoral support. This method is very remarkable in the context of this thesis, since it can be used to determine the main areas of support regardless of the level of elections, given the similar structure of electoral districts. Thus, it is possible to determine in which parts of the country a political party dominates, as well as to determine winning tactics for further elections and various patterns for further actions within the political campaign. Potentially, based on this data, further research can be carried out, for example, delving deeper into the behavioral model of the party's electorate.

Understanding the areas of electoral support is very important, first of all, for the competing players themselves - candidates and political parties. During a political campaign, there is a huge territory and a limited budget, and therefore candidates, generally, spend most of their resources only on the most competitive regions (Forest, 2017, p. 7). Hence, candidates and political parties try to concentrate their support in a narrow pool of regions. After all, if support is evenly distributed across all regions, it will be very weak, unless it is strong enough to win in many constituencies (Forest, 2017, p. 8).

In this thesis, the areas of electoral support for the AfD will be considered and, accordingly, it will be possible to interpret the patterns, if any. The interest is not only how the AfD shows its results in different types of elections, but rather how and where the geographic support of the party is concentrated.

2. Electoral system of Germany

Germany's political system is not only quite versatile and complex, but thus also an obstacle for small parties. Recently, very few new parties, especially the right-wing ones, have been able to achieve success in it. And even if small parties, including populist ones, can achieve some success in regional elections, it is very unlikely that they will be able to repeat this success at the federal level. This is especially true in some difficult regions, cities like Hamburg and Bremen (Berbuir, Lewandowsky & Siri, 2015, p. 6). That is why the breakthrough of the AfD is doubly surprising.

In practice, there are several types of elections in Germany where citizens can vote for a political party. All these elections, except for the municipal elections, will be analyzed in this bachelor's work. Most of these elections, with the exception of a few, use a mixed-member proportional system (Saalfeld, 2005, p. 209). All basic rules for the conduct of elections in Germany are listed in the Federal Elections Act (1993).

The federal parliament has approximately 600 seats. The number is approximate, since due to the specific election system it can change from election to election. About half of these seats are awarded in single-electoral districts based on a relative majority vote, and the remaining mandates are awarded via the state lists of the parties. The legislative period is 4 years (Capoccia, 2002, p. 175).

The right to vote in Germany proceeds from the fact that each voter has two votes to vote: 1) for a candidate according to the land party lists; 2) for a candidate from his single-mandate constituency according to federal party lists. In the first case, the voter votes for the party. Since 1952, a 5% parliamentary barrier has been introduced for parties in Germany. In the second case, the voter chooses a person. The 16 federal states are divided into electoral districts depending on their population. Since 2002, the number of electoral districts has been 299. Only parties that have received at least five percent of the valid second votes or have won a direct mandate in at least three constituencies are considered in the ratio adjustment (Capoccia, 2002, p. 172).

Table 1 – Constituencies

State	Constituency numbers	Number of constituencies
Schleswig-Holstein	1 - 11	11
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	12 - 17	6
Hamburg	18 - 23	6
Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen)	24 - 53	30
Bremen	54 - 55	2
Brandenburg	56 - 65	10
Saxony-Anhalt (Sachsen-Anhalt)	66 - 74	9
Berlin	75 - 86	12
North Rhine-Westphalia (Nordrhein-Westfalen)	87 - 150	64
Saxony (Sachsen)	151 - 166	16
Hesse (Hessen)	167 - 188	22
Thuringia (Thüringen)	189 - 196	8
Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz)	197 - 211	15
Bavaria (Bayern)	212 - 257	46
Baden-Württemberg	258 - 295	38
Saarland	296 - 299	4

Data: Der Bundeswahlleiter, custom table.

The number of electoral districts is important information as it affects the distribution of electoral support. So, for example, in Bremen, there is no way to calculate the geography of electoral support, since there are only 2 electoral districts on all types of parliamentary elections studied in this bachelor's work. The situation is similar in Berlin and Hamburg, but only in the elections to the

European Parliament. Both have 2 electoral districts, but there are more of them in other types of elections.

This bachelor's work will ignore the first vote, responsible for individual candidates, but will only consider the second - for the party. First, this work is not dedicated to specific individuals, but to the party itself. Secondly, the results of the first vote are very different from the second and are even worse in places, which, however, does not show real support for the party as something in whole. This work strictly examines the support of the party itself and the change in this support over the period of its existence.

Election system of the Bundestag and almost all state elections are the same. The only federal states that differ from the rest are Bremen, Hamburg, and Saarland. These three federal states use proportional representation with open lists (Bremen and Hamburg) and with closed lists (Saarland) while others use mixed-member proportional representation. In almost all federal states, citizens have two votes, except for Baden-Württemberg and Saarland, where there is only one vote. In Bremen, the citizens have 5 votes and in Hamburg 10 votes, because of their differing systems. The electoral period is 5 years everywhere, except for Bremen, where it is 4 years.

As for the elections to the European Parliament, they are approximately the same in all EU countries, since they are required to comply with the European Elections Act (EuWG). The election must be based on a proportional representation system, and on either lists or individual transferrable votes. A minimum threshold for the allocation of seats may be set, but this may not be more than 5 percent of the votes cast nationwide. Germany currently has 96 seats in the European Parliament. Proportional election system with closed lists is used without any threshold clause. Each voter has only one vote with which he chooses the federal or state list of a party. The election period is 5 years (Der Bundeswahlleiter, n.d.).

3. **Alternative for Germany**

The AfD is a very young and highly evolving party, which is why some scholars still argue about whether it is just a national-liberal party or a strictly right-wing radical populist (Berbuir, Lewandowsky & Siri, 2015, p. 2). According to researchers, the AfD is ideologically unambiguously located to the right than, for example, the CDU / CSU and the FDP. The further characteristics of the party are debatable, namely, whether the AfD is a moderately conservative, radical or even extremist party (Häusler, 2016, p. 1).

Started in 2013 the AfD was a neoliberal party with a strong focus on euroscepticism and its original core issue was criticism of euro currency politics and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) (Olaf Henkel, 2012). In 2015, the internal party struggle led the party to the growth of right-wing ideas. The re-elected party co-chair, Frauke Petry[2], relied on nationalist and anti-Islamic rhetoric, which allowed the AfD to achieve some success during the immigration crisis. The AfD have now become one of the most successful newly founded parties in Germany since 1950s (Franzmann, 2014, p. 115).

Back in 2013, the main pillars of the party's program were monetary policy and European policy, as well as law, order and democracy. The topic of migration was not in the foreground. The party insisted on the Canadian example of solving the migration issue and tried in every possible way to abstract from European right-wing populism (Berbuir, Lewandowsky & Siri, 2015, p. 9). Unlike other European right-wing parties, the AfD did not view migration too negatively in 2013. The party was not against hard-working migrants and, on the whole, mildly expressed its dissatisfaction, and only towards certain groups (Berbuir, Lewandowsky & Siri, 2015, p. 14). According to studies in 2013, the average AfD electorate is a male, 25-35 years old, with an active political interest, more than half of whom have higher education. Geographically, these were mainly people from North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Wurttemberg, Berlin and

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[2] Frauke Petry led the party from April 2013 to July 2015. She left AfD on September 26, 2017.

Bavaria (Berbuir, Lewandowsky & Siri, 2015, p. 15). As for their euroscepticism, it certainly took place, but rather in a soft manner (Arzheimer 2015, p. 24).

The most recent elections to the Bundestag were in September 2021, to which the AfD presented its new program called "Germany, but normal". The program has certainly changed, but not very much: Europe, Family and Democracy are still among the main points of the program. However, the position on migration, in particular regarding Islam, has become much more radical.

The party still criticizes the European Union and the euro system ('AfD Programm', 2021, p. 50). In their opinion, the EU functions not as a confederation, but as one large federation, and all at the expense of Germany. The AfD believe that Germany should immediately stop using the euro.

Since 2013, Islam has become a more significant issue in the party's program. Anti-Muslim sentiments are shared by nearly two-thirds of Germans ('Almost two-thirds of Germans think Islam doesn't "belong" to their country', 2016). And the AfD is successfully building its political agenda around this. They recall their right to criticize religions and express the opinion that Islam is a threat to Germany and the Jews, and in this regard, control should be tightened ('AfD Programm', 2021, p. 84). The party calls for curtailing the teaching of Islam and removing any religious overtones ('AfD Programm', 2021, p. 86). It is important for them to fully control the Islamic question.

One of the new and important points of the program is also the so-called "Blue Deal" ('AfD Programm', 2021, p. 44). This is a program that aims to develop Germany's domestic industry and a greater contribution to education. The AfD considers it important to maintain healthy competition, reduce government influence and monitor the formation of monopolies.

In its program and the statements of the leaders, the party forms in the eyes of voters the images of gradual islamization, bureaucratization of the EU, destruction of cultural identity, presenting itself as a counterbalance to this as a democratic alternative to the established order, doomed to failure (Häusler, 2016, p. 17).

4. Election results

4.1. Federal elections results

The AfD has so far participated in only three elections to the federal parliament, but the results are already significant. Back in 2013, they could not reach 5% threshold to get seats in parliament, but they immediately showed a high result. However, already in the next elections, they actually become the third-strongest political party in the country and receive a significant number of seats in the federal parliament.

Table 2 – Bundestag elections results

Political Party	2013		2017	
	%	Seats	%	Seats
CDU/CSU	41,5	311	32,9	246
SPD	25,7	193	20,5	153
FDP	4,8	–	10,7	80
GRÜNE	8,4	63	8,9	67
DIE LINKE	8,6	64	9,2	69
NPD	1,3	–	0,4	–
PIRATEN	2,2	–	0,4	–
AfD	4,7	–	12,6	94

Data: Der Bundeswahlleiter, custom table.

In the 2013 elections, nothing supernatural happened. The party received a lot of support, but in the end did not get into parliament. Preliminary polls hovered around 4% and the overall result was approximately the same ('Letzte Prognose vor Bundestagswahl 2013', n.d.).

After the next elections, in 2017 Germany suffered a real political crisis. The AfD received 12.6% and entered the Bundestag for the first time. SPD refused to make the Grand coalition with CDU/CSU and as a result, protracted negotiations began to form a coalition. All this went on for several months, the Jamaica coalition seemed to be the only solution – CDU/CSU, FDP, and Greens, but in the end this option also reached a dead end ('Sondierung gescheitert',

2017). The AfD, like any other right-wing radical party, has very little coalition potential and, in fact, only aggravated the situation by the fact that it had many seats in parliament.[3] However, in the end, CDU/CSU and SPD found a compromise and were able to create the Grand coalition.

Table 3 – AfD second vote proportions according to federal states in Bundestag elections

State	2013	2017	Diff.
Schleswig-Holstein	4,6	8,2	+3,6
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	5,6	18,6	+13,0
Hamburg	4,2	7,8	+3,7
Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen)	3,7	9,1	+5,4
Bremen	3,7	10,0	+6,3
Brandenburg	6,0	20,2	+14,2
Saxony-Anhalt (Sachsen-Anhalt)	4,2	19,6	+15,4
Berlin	4,9	12,0	+7,1
North Rhine-Westphalia (Nordrhein-Westfalen)	3,9	9,4	+5,5
Saxony (Sachsen)	6,8	27,0	+20,2
Hesse (Hessen)	5,6	11,9	+6,3
Thuringia (Thüringen)	6,2	22,7	+16,5
Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz)	4,8	11,2	+6,4
Bavaria (Bayern)	4,3	12,4	+8,1
Baden-Württemberg	5,2	12,2	+6,9
Saarland	5,2	10,1	+4,9
Germany	4,7	12,6	+7,9

Data: Der Bundeswahlleiter, custom table.

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[3] Despite winning the elections, the result was very poor, and Angela Merkel faced the difficult task of forming a government. The desired coalition with the FDP did not receive the required number of votes, the SPD announced their transition to the opposition, an alliance with the Green Party was arithmetically impossible, and any cooperation with the Left or AfD was ruled out. In fact, the chancellor was faced with a choice: the formation of a new and complex Jamaica coalition ('AfD-Erfolg für Merkel ein Auftrag', n.d.).

Table 3 shows AfD second vote proportions in two elections to the Bundestag. Already according to these results, a certain pattern can be traced, if we look at the federal states, where the support has grown the most (by more than 10 points). Support for the AfD has grown very strongly in the states of eastern Germany, except for Berlin. Most of all in Thuringia, Saxon-Anhalt, Saxony, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Voprommen. Moreover, these states stand out from the very beginning. According to the results of the 2013 elections to the Bundestag, only in Thuringia, Saxon-Anhalt and Brandenburg the AfD were able to gain more than 6 percent. According to preliminary data, these states already show strong support for the AfD.

4.2. State elections results

During its existence, the AfD managed to participate in elections to the parliaments of all federal states. Moreover, in six of the sixteen federal states, the party has already managed to participate twice, and therefore we can compare how the party's support has changed. In the context of this thesis, all elections will be considered, regardless of whether the party took part in the elections in a particular federal state once or twice.

Table 4 – AfD election results in state parliaments 2013 - 2020

State	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Schleswig-Holstein					5,9			
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern				20,8				
Hamburg			6,1					5,3
Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen)					6,2			
Bremen			5,5				6,1	
Brandenburg		12,2					23,5	
Saxony-Anhalt (Sachsen-Anhalt)				24,3				
Berlin				14,2				

North Rhine-Westphalia (Nordrhein-Westfalen)					7,4			
Saxony (Sachsen)		9,7					27,5	
Hesse (Hessen)	4,1					13,1		
Thuringia (Thüringen)		10,6					23,4	
Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz)				12,6				
Bavaria (Bayern)	—					10,2		
Baden-Württemberg				15,1				
Saarland					6,2			

Data: Federal states Landeswahlleiter, custom table.

In almost all elections, the party was able to gain enough support to get into parliament. Moreover, in the elections to the state parliament, the same pattern is observed as in the elections to the Bundestag. If we consider only the first elections, then from the results in table 4 it follows that again Thuringia, Brandendenburg and Saxony-Anhalt are the most successful federal states for the party. The results of the first elections in these federal states are very different from the rest. They clearly stand out from the rest of the federal states and are the core of support even at a lower level.

In general, for the new party, the AfD performed well enough in all federal states, and a really low result was only in Hesen. In about half of the rest of the federal states, support was at the level of 5 to 10 percent, and in the other half it already exceeded 14-15 percent, which is very good for the first elections.

At the same time, the three above-mentioned federal states had not only good first results, but also further results in the subsequent elections. When in the next elections in Bremen it increased by only 1 point, and in Hamburg it even

decreased, in Brandenburg, Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt and Saxony, party support increased by almost 10 points. Thus, these federal states are not only the main regions of support for the elections to the Bundestag, but also to the state parliaments.

4.3. European Parliament elections results

The last type of elections that are studied in this bachelor's work is elections to the European Parliament. This type of election is quite problematic for many reasons. The AfD positions itself against the EU and, moreover, the elections to the European Parliament themselves are not very popular. Each time fewer and fewer people participate in this type of elections, and eurosceptic sentiments are only growing (Desilver, 2019).

Table 5 – AfD results in the elections to the European Parliament

State	2014	2019	Diff.
Schleswig-Holstein	6,8	7,5	+0,6
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	7,0	17,7	+10,7
Hamburg	6,0	6,5	+0,5
Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen)	5,4	7,9	+2,6
Bremen	5,8	7,7	+1,9
Brandenburg	8,5	19,9	+11,4
Saxony-Anhalt (Sachsen-Anhalt)	6,3	20,4	+14,0
Berlin	7,9	9.9	+2,0
North Rhine-Westphalia (Nordrhein-Westfalen)	5,4	8,5	+3,1
Saxony (Sachsen)	10,1	25,3	+15,1
Hesse (Hessen)	9,1	9,9	+0,8
Thuringia (Thüringen)	7,4	22,5	+15,1
Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz)	6,7	9,8	+3,2
Bavaria (Bayern)	8,1	8,5	+0,5
Baden-Württemberg	7,9	10,0	+2,1
Saarland	6,8	9,6	+2,8

|			
Germany	7,1	11,0	+3,9

Data: Der Bundeswahlleiter, custom table.

At the moment, the AfD has 11 seats in the European Parliament, that is, it is in fourth place in terms of the number of seats. According to the results of the elections to the European Parliament, shown in Table 5, we can draw several conclusions. Firstly, as in the elections to the Bundestag, the party in each federal state has only improved its result. This confirms that the party has growing support at the federal level, which cannot be said about all the elections to the parliaments of the federal states. Secondly, Thuringia and Saxony are again in the top federal states in terms of support growth; between the two elections, support increased by 15 points. Saxony-Anhalt is not far behind, where support has grown by 14 points. In other words, all the same three federal states are in the top of support at all levels of the elections.

5. Electoral support of the AfD in terms of electoral geography

5.1. Federal elections

Unlike a simple analysis of election results, electoral geography allows for a complete picture and interpretation of these results, which helps accurately determine which regions are the key source of support for a particular party, as well as to suggest the reasons for this support. In the case of the AfD, below are two maps that show support for the Bundestag elections across the entire country in the two elections in which the party participated.

Figure 1 – AfD electoral support in the 2013 Bundestag election
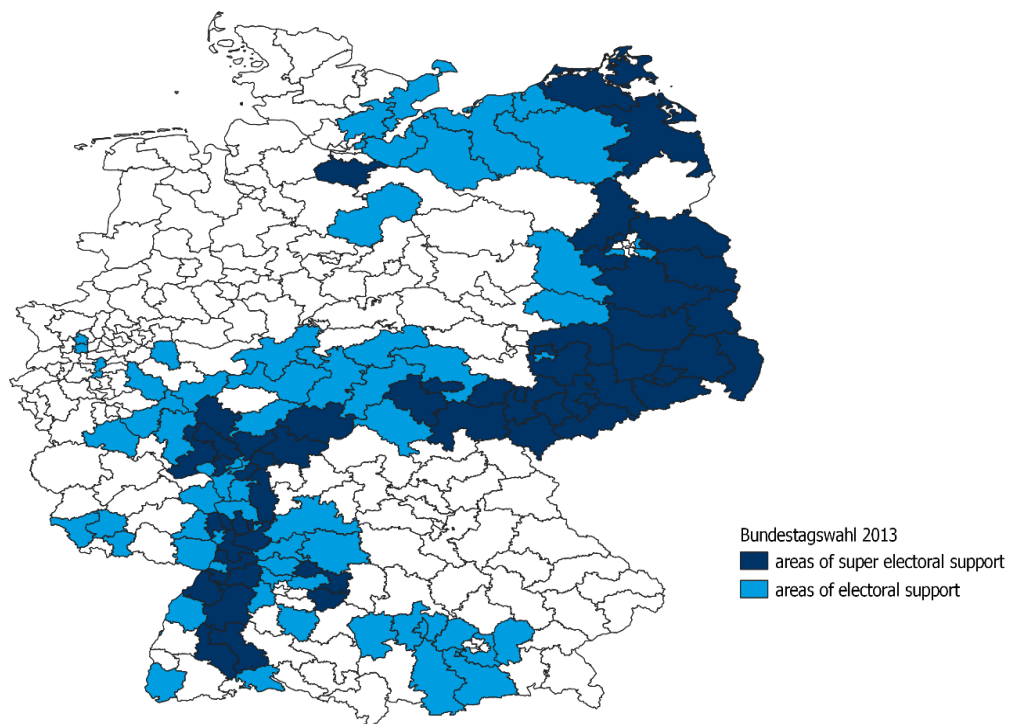
Data: Der Bundeswahlleiter, custom map.

In the 2013 elections, it is particularly noticeable that the party's support is scattered across the country. The federal states of the former GDR stand out on the map, that is, northeastern Germany, where most of the areas of super

electoral support are concentrated. Areas of simple electoral support usually adjoin them, in other words, the distribution is even.

Moreover, the conclusion can be drawn from the results of the first elections that there is a village-city opposition, since in large cities the AfD has much worse results. So, for example, the so-called lack of support holes in large cities such as Berlin and Munich are especially noticeable on the map, but at the same time there are areas of support around these cities.

Figure 2 – AfD electoral support in the 2017 Bundestag election
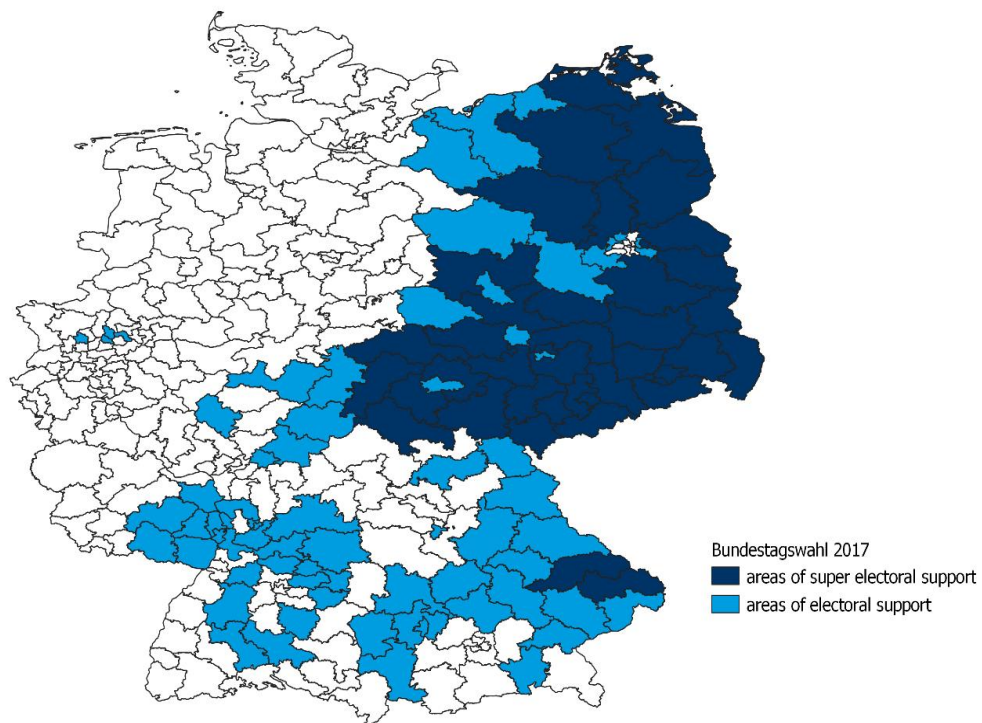
Data: Der Bundeswahlleiter, custom map.

The second map for the 2017 elections shows a strong change in the geography of electoral support. Of course, the federal states of the former GDR are still the main electoral areas of support for the party. What followed from the results and the same follows from the electoral geography - Saxony,

Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia are the main federal states that support the AfD. At the same time, Berlin is a big exception among them.

However, there are two major changes between the first and second elections to the Bundestag. First, support has become more centralized. The AfD has strengthened itself in the aforementioned federal states of eastern Germany but has completely weakened in the rest. So, in the rest of Germany, in its western part, there are absolutely no areas of super electoral support left. Secondly, the results have changed noticeably in Bavaria, where back in 2013 there was almost no support, but already in 2017 areas of super electoral support appeared.

For Bavaria, the role of Catholicism in the formation of political life is enormous. In the political sphere, the parties of Bavaria united in the Christian Social Union (CSU), which became the basis for the formation of a single Bavarian identity. The CSU party succeeded in tying party identity to Bavarian identity, maintaining traditions and becoming a political hegemon (Mintzel, 1993). Therefore, the successes of the AfD in Baraiya are very unexpected.

At the same time, the fact that people do not vote for the AfD in large cities has also not changed, mainly these are smaller electoral districts. Equally important is the fact that the AfD did not receive sufficient support in the federal state of Lower Saxony, where back in 2013 there was a certain potential.

This electoral geography supports speculation that migration is a win-win topic for the AfD. And most likely it is because of this that the party turns out to be so actively gaining a large amount of support precisely in the federal states of eastern Germany. There are two demographics-based evidence for this. First, as already indicated, major cities do not support the AfD. At the same time, it is in large cities that most foreigners live (Benrath, 2018). Unsurprisingly, then, Germany's multicultural capital Berlin stands out so strongly among the strong support regions around it in eastern Europe.

The second reason follows from the first. It is in the federal states of western Germany that most foreigners live, while in eastern Germany there are significantly fewer of them (Benrath, 2018). So, for example, where the share of foreigners reaches almost 30%, the AfD completely sags in support. This is

clearly seen in Hesse, where support for the AfD is very low at all levels of the elections.

In the course of the electoral analysis of the elections to the Bundestag, two main patterns of the geography of voting can be distinguished. First, there is a bipolar pattern that fits into the center-periphery model. Its sign is the presence of two opposite electoral poles, located on the territory of the center and the periphery. Secondly, there is very weak fragmentation, that is, rather a clustering of areas of electoral support.

5.2. State elections

In the elections to the state parliaments, the situation is significantly different from the elections at the federal level. The AfD from 2013 to 2020 managed to participate in elections in all federal states. However, unlike the elections to the Bundestag, the party did not manage to improve its results in all states, only in most of them. Moreover, the AfD is not included in any of the ruling coalitions in any of the federal states of Germany. Since the party managed to take part in a fairly decent number of elections, in the context of this thesis, they will be studied in chronological order, and only for the most interesting, maps will be drawn up for better orientation.

The first major elections for the AfD were the 2013 elections to the state parliament in Hesse. This year, elections were also held in Lower Saxony and Bavaria, but the party did not participate in them. Even though the AfD did not have enough votes to get into parliament, these elections are considered the best start for the new party since 1953 (Nestler & Rohgalf, 2014, p. 395). In this federal state, the AfD took part in elections twice and significantly improved its result in the second elections in 2018.

Hesse is divided into 55 electoral districts. The capital of the federal state is Wiesbaden. Hesse is internally heterogeneous, with large cities attracting migrants, while small settlements suffer from a lack of population. This leads to conflict between the economic center and the periphery, as well as to the fact that the urban population considers itself less religious and votes less for the CDU (Arzheimer, 2014). In 2013, 12 electoral districts were areas of super electoral

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support: Hochtaunus II, Hochtaunus I, Main-Taunus I, Main-Kinzig III, Eschwege-Witzenhausen, Offenbach Land II, Wetterau II, Offenbach Land III, Odenwald, Limburg-Weilburg I, Bergstraße II, Main-Taunus II. The worst results were shown in such large cities as Frankfurt am Main and in the capital Wiesbadan. In 2018, there were no significant changes, the areas of super electoral support remained approximately the same, some became simply stronger, some weaker, in total there were 11 of them: Fulda II, Main-Kinzig III, Wetterau II, Hersfeld, Fulda I, Schwalm-Eder II, Lahn-Dill I, Vogelsberg, Main-Kinzig II, Main-Kinzig I, Lahn-Dill II. The Main-Kinzig region has the strongest and most stable support in Hesse throughout the elections. Frankfurt am Main and Wiesbaden are consistently the weakest, as are the areas around. The only exception occurred in the 2018 elections due to the significant fragmentation of cities into electoral districts. Thus, the region Frankfurt am Main I became an area of support for the AfD, despite the fact that the rest of the city remained significantly worse in terms of results.

2014 was a very important year for the AfD. This year, elections were held in three key states - Saxony, Brandenburg and Turingia - the states of eastern Germany. Elections to the European Parliament were also held this year. In all three federal states, the party showed a very strong result. And most importantly, in all three federal states the AfD were able to get into parliament for the first time. Similar to the elections to the Bundestag, the elections to the state parliaments of these states are the most successful of all. During this time, the AfD has already participated in all three state elections twice and has significantly improved its result.

Brandenburg is divided into 44 electoral districts. The capital of the federal state is Potsdam. In the center of Brandenburg is Berlin, which is considered a separate territorial unit. The AfD received 9 areas of super electoral support in 2014: Oder-Spree II, Frankfurt (Oder), Spree-Neiße I, Märkisch-Oderland IV, Oberhavel III, Oder-Spree III, Teltow-Fläming III, Havelland II, Oberhavel I. In the second elections in 2019, there were 1 more of them, that is,

a total of 10 areas of super electoral support: Oberspreewald-Lausitz I, Spree-Neiße II, Spree-Neiße I, Elbe-Elster II, Oder-Spree II, Dahme-Spreewald III, Oberspreewald-Lausitz II/Spree-Neiße IV, Oberspreewald-Lausitz III/Spree-Neiße III, Märkisch-Oderland III, Uckermark I. In both elections, these areas are located next to each other in the eastern part of Brandenburg, in the so-called Spree forest area. And in both elections, the federal state capital Potsdam was the weakest city in terms of electoral support. The strongest and most stable were the Spree-Neiße and Oder-Spree regions.

This is followed by the equally important elections in Saxony, 2014 and 2019, respectively. This federal state has 60 electoral districts. The capital is Dresden. The results in both elections in terms of the distribution of electoral support are absolutely identical. The amount of support increased, but the areas did not change at all. In 2014, there were 12 areas of super electoral support: Bautzen 5, Görlitz 3, Görlitz 2, Bautzen 1, Görlitz 4, Meißen 2, Meißen 3, Görlitz 1, Vogtland 2, Saxon Switzerland-Eastern Ore Mountains 1, Saxon Switzerland-Eastern Ore Mountains 2, Saxon Switzerland-Eastern Ore Mountains 4. In 2019 there were 13 of them, but they did not change at all: Meißen 2, Görlitz 2, Görlitz 3, Sächsische Schweiz-Osterzgebirge 4, Bautzen 1, Bautzen 5, Görlitz 1, Meißen 1, Bautzen 4, Sächsische Schweiz-Osterzgebirge 3, Meißenche Schweiz-Osterzgebirge 3, Meißen , Erzgebirge 3, Sächsische Schweiz-Osterzgebirge 2. The weakest support is again in the two large cities of the federal state - the worst in Leipzig and then in the capital Dresden. Support in Saxony has grown proportionally, but this is so far the first federal state where the location in terms of areas of electoral support has not changed at all.

Saxony itself is a very specific federal state. The people of Saxony see outsiders, as well as the unification of Germany, capitalism and globalization, as a threat to the established way of life. There is a very radicalized electorate here. For example, in 2015, every Monday marches were held in Dresden against Muslim migrants ('The trouble with Saxony', 2015).

The last elections to the state parliaments in 2014 were elections in Thuringia, the second elections were held in 2019. Thuringia is divided into 44 electoral districts. The capital of the federal state is Erfurt.

In Thuringia, the situation is slightly different. During the period of two elections, support increased significantly, but it was not stable, the areas of electoral support changed. Thus, according to map 3, support is very fragmented across the federal state. Part is located to the northeast - closer to Saxony-Anhalt, and part to the west in the very center of the federal state. In 2014, there were only 9 areas of super electoral support: Ilm-Kreis II, Saale-Holzland-Kreis II, Greiz I, Gera I, Gera II, Greiz II, Saalfeld-Rudolstadt II, Saalfeld-Rudolstadt I, Gotha I.

Figure 3 – AfD electoral support in the state elections of Turingia in 2014
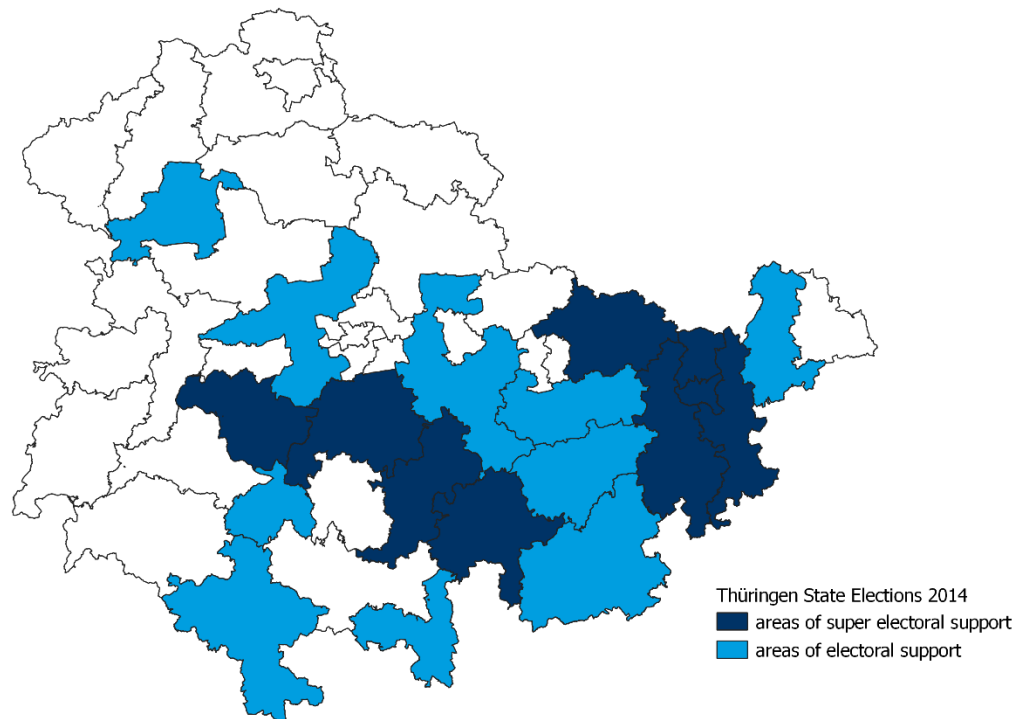
Data: Landeswahlleiter Thüringen, custom map.

But in 2019, the areas have become even more fragmented. Thuringia does not have the usual groups of areas that were noticeable in the elections to the Bundestag or in other federal states of Germany. On the contrary, between the two elections, the areas changed dramatically and only the Gera region remained the only stable one. So, in the 2019 elections, the AfD gained 10 areas of super electoral support: Gera II, Altenburger Land I, Saalfeld-Rudolstadt I, Saale-Orla-Kreis II, Altenburger Land II, Ilm-Kreis II, Gera I, Saalfeld-Rudolstadt II , Hildburghausen I / Schmalkalden-Meiningen III, Kyffhäuserkreis II. At the same time, as can be seen on map 4, they are widely scattered over federal land - a piece in the north, a little in the northeast, stability in the center, and another new piece in the south.

Figure 4 –AfD electoral support in the state elections of Turingia in 2019
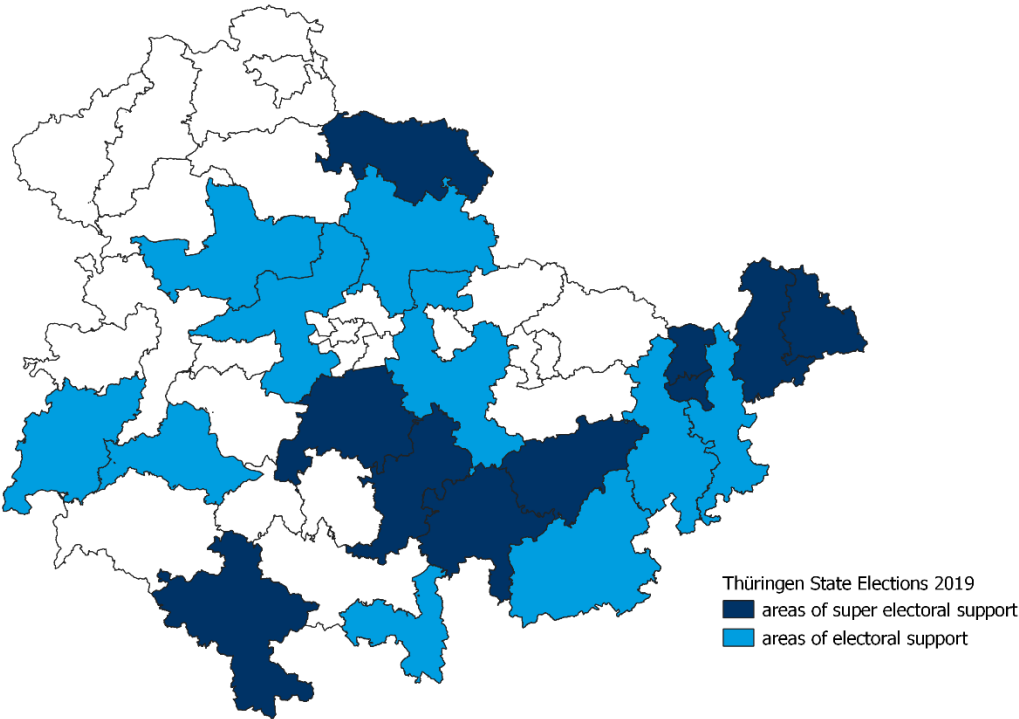
Data: Landeswahlleiter Thüringen, custom map.

At the same time, it is also noticeable that the AfD lacks support in the capital of the federal state - Erfurt, as well as in the no less small city of Weimar. Despite all this, Turingia is an important federal state for the AfD and has strong support.

In 2015, the AfD took part in two elections - in Hamburg and Bremen. These are two territorial units with a special status at the federal state level, but the bachelor's work will not consider the elections in Bremen, since there are only two electoral districts. But in Hamburg, the AfD also managed to participate in the elections twice already, the second elections were held in 2020.

Figure 5 – AfD electoral support in the state elections of Hamburg in 2015
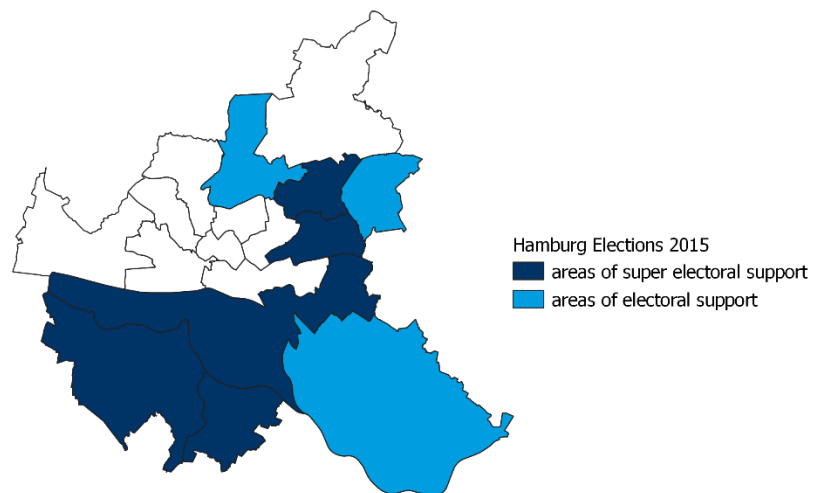
Data: Landeswahlleiter Hamburg, custom map.

In 2015, the AfD had 5 areas of super electoral support: Harburg, Süderelbe, Billstedt - Wilhelmsburg - Finkenwerder, Bramfeld - Farmsen-Berne,

Wandsbek. As can be seen from map 5, these regions are located to the east and run along the border with the city center. The situation is similar in the elections in 2020, the areas have changed only quite a bit.

However, it is much more important that this is the first election, where support for the AfD has decreased. And, accordingly, the number of support areas decreased. So, in 2020 elections there are 4 areas of super electoral support: Süderelbe, Billstedt - Wilhelmsburg - Finkenwerder, Rahlstedt, Harburg.. From map 6, geographically, they have not changed much. The region of Altona in both elections remains the worst in terms of electoral support. In addition, very weak support for the AfD is visible in the center of Hamburg.

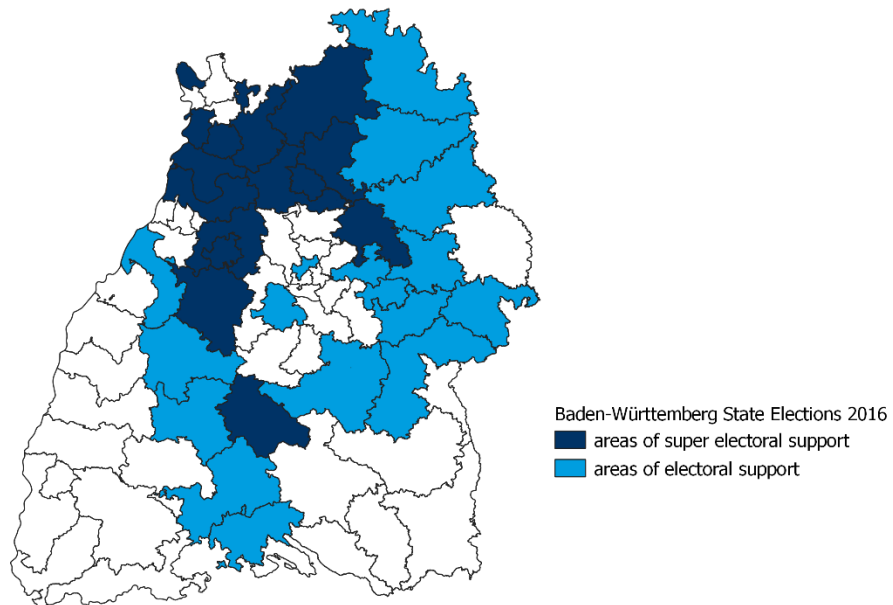Figure 6 – AfD electoral support in the state elections of Hamburg in 2020
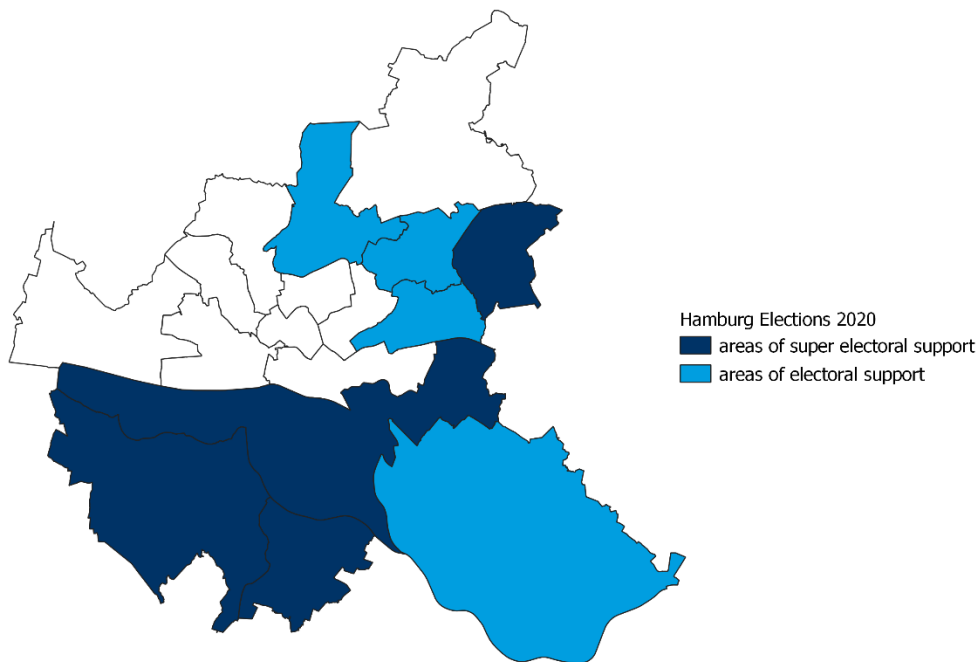
Data: Landeswahlleiter Hamburg, custom map.

In 2016, the AfD participated in a large number of elections to land parliaments. These were elections in Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Sachsen-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Berlin. Until 2020, the AfD managed to participate in these elections only once.

Baden-Württemberg consists of 70 electoral districts. The capital of the federal state is Stuttgart. Baden-Württemberg is characterized by a Swabian culture that cultivates diligence, self-sufficiency, intransigence and workaholism (Wehling, 1993). As can be seen from Map 7, the main electoral support for the party is located in the north of the federal state.

Figure 7 – AfD electoral support in the state elections of Baden-Württemberg in 2016


Data: Landeswahlleiter Baden-Württemberg, custom map.

The strongest area of super electoral support is the city of Pforzheim. As in the rest of the federal states, the capital Stuttgart, on the contrary, is the weakest point of support. In total, there are 15 areas of super electoral support in Baden-Wuttemberg: Pforzheim, Mannheim I, Backnang, Bruchsal, Enz, Schwetzingen, Calw, Neckarsulm, Wiesloch, Bretten, Eppingen, Heilbronn, Balingen, Neckar-Odenwald, Sinsheim. A noticeable white spot on the map is Stuttgart, which is surrounded by areas of electoral support.

The Rhineland-Palatinate consists of 51 electoral districts. The capital is the city of Mainz. In this federal state, the AfD received 11 areas of super electoral support: Ludwigshafen am Rhein II, Ludwigshafen am Rhein I, Germersheim, Worms, Frankenthal (Pfalz), Mutterstadt, Zweibrücken, Kaiserslautern I, Donnersberg, Speyer, Pirmase.

Figure 8 – AfD electoral support in the state elections of Rheinland-Pfalz in 2016

Rheinland-Pfalz State Elections 2016
areas of super electoral support
areas of electoral support
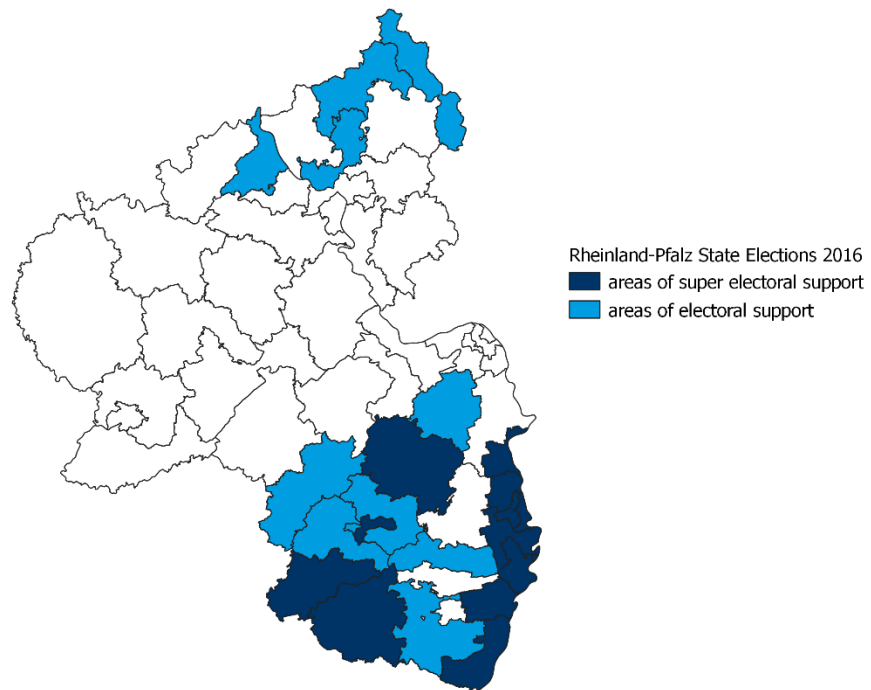
Data: Landeswahlleiter Rheinland-Pfalz, custom map.

Electoral support is mainly found in the south of the federal state, but there are several regions of simple electoral support in the north. The capital Mainz is the weakest support region and Ludwigshafen am Rhein is the strongest.

A similar situation follows in Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Saxony-Anhalt is divided into 43 electoral districts at the time of the elections (from 2021 there are 41 electoral districts), and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern into 36 electoral districts. The capital of Saxony-Anhalt is Magdeburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is Schwerin.

However, there are differences further. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern everything is the same - the capital of Schwerin is the weakest point of support, Vorpommern-Greifswald is the strongest. There are only 9 areas of super electoral support: Vorpommern-Greifswald III, Vorpommern-Greifswald II, Vorpommern-Greifswald V, Vorpommern-Rügen V, Vorpommern-Rügen III - Stralsund I, Mecklenburgische Seenplatte-I - Vorifomdnmern Vorpommern-Rügen IV, Mecklenburgische Seenplatte V.

However, this is not the case in Saxony-Anhalt. This is the first federal state where the capital Magdeburg is not just a point of support, but an area of super electoral support. So, in this federal state, the AfD has 13 areas of super electoral support: Gardelegen-Klötze, Oschersleben, Salzwedel, Magdeburg II, Halle III, Weißenfels, Haldensleben, Blankenburg, Wernigerode, Halle II, Stendal, Magdeburg I, Magdeburg III. Moreover, in all regions of Saxony-Anhalt, support is particularly strong and the difference is only a few points.

Finally, Berlin, which, like the whole country, is divided. As map 9 shows, there is a clear division between West and East Berlin in the 2016 elections. And almost all parts of east Berlin are areas of super electoral support for the AfD. There are three areas of super electoral support: Berlin-Treptow-Köpenick, Berlin-MarzahnHellersdorf, Berlin-Lichtenberg. In addition, there are

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two support areas in the northwest of Berlin: Berlin-Reinickendorf, Berlin-Spandau - Charlottenburg Nord. At the same time, support in the center of Berlin is declining by almost 2 times, which indicates a serious division of the city.

Figure 9 – AfD electoral support in the state elections of Berlin in 2016
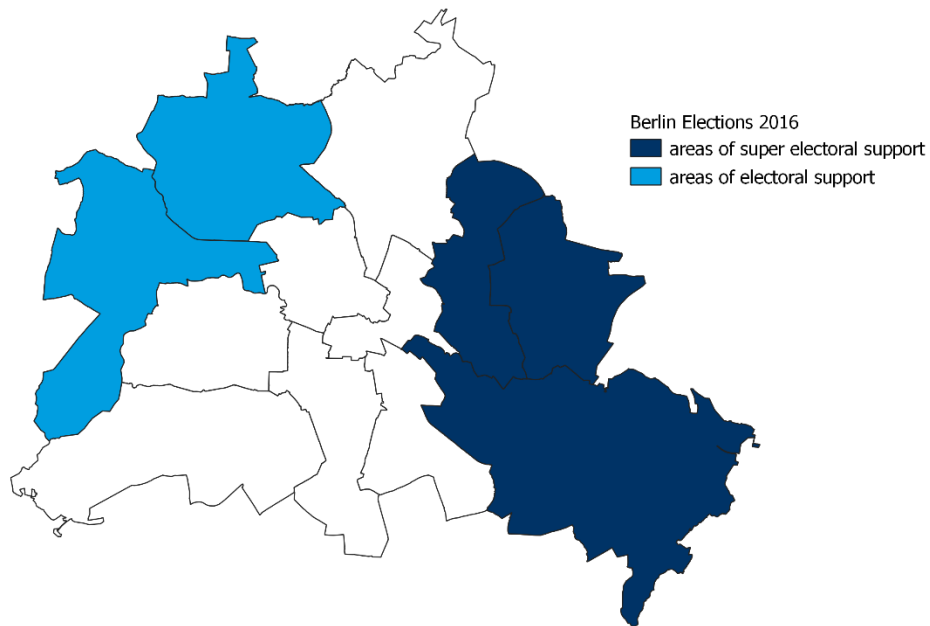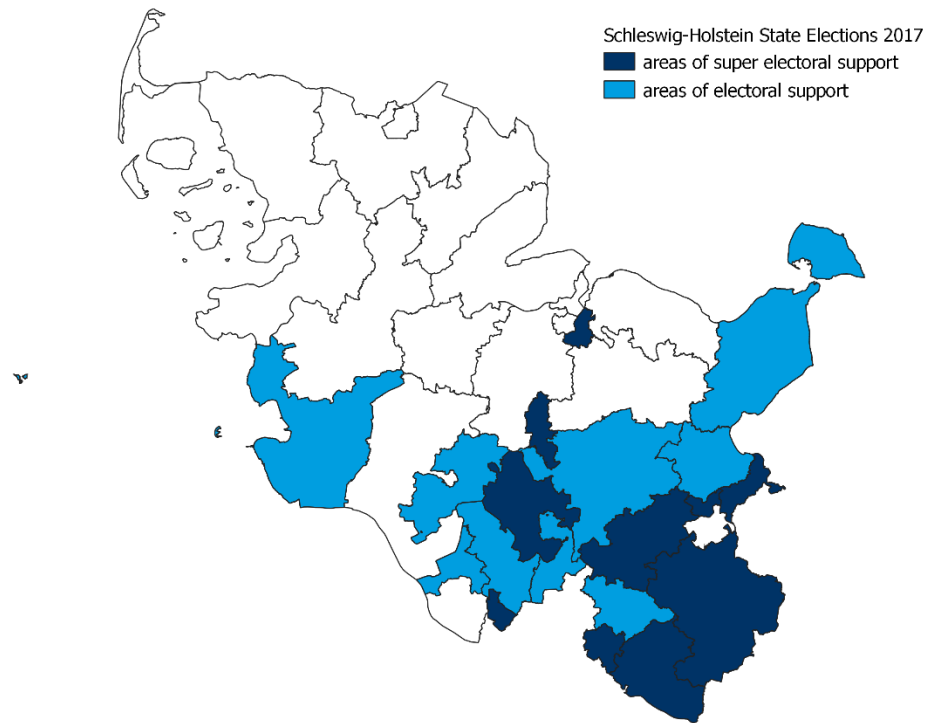

Data: Landeswahlleiter Berlin, custom map.

In 2017, the AfD participated in elections in the remaining four states: Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein, North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony. In these elections, the AfD did not gain a large number of votes, although they entered the parliaments of all federal states. It is also important that all these four lands are located in the west or northwest of Germany.

Saarland has an unusual system of division of electoral districts. In general, the federal state is divided into three parts, but for the purposes of

bachelor's work, regional division into 51 parts will be considered. The capital of the federal state is Saarbrücken. Saarland is the second federal state where the capital is an area of electoral support for elections. The support is not strong here, but the city was included in the list of areas of electoral support. Otherwise, in this federal state there are 12 areas of super electoral support: Homburg, Sulzbach, Blieskastel, Neunkirchen, Bexbach, Gersheim, Friedrichsthal, Quierschied, Völklingen, Spiesen-Elversberg, Grossrosseln, Wallerfangen.

Next is Schleswig-Holstein, which is divided into 35 electoral districts. The capital is Kiel. In this capital, a similar situation occurred as in Berlin. The city is divided into several electoral districts and, accordingly, the situation turned out that western and northern Kiel are not areas of support, while eastern Kiel is an area of super electoral support. In total, there are 10 areas of super electoral support in this federal state: Lauenburg-Süd, Lübeck-West, Neumünster, Kiel-Ost, Lauenburg-Nord, Stormarn-Süd, Lübeck-Ost, Segeberg-West, Pinneberg, Stormarn-Nord. As can be seen on map 10, all of them are mainly located in the southeast of the federal state and adjoin Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Figure 10 – AfD electoral support in the state elections of Schleswig-Holstein in 2017

Data: Landeswahlleiter Schleswig-Holstein, custom map.

North Rhine-Westphalia is perhaps the westernmost federal state of all and at the same time the largest. It is divided into as many as 128 electoral districts. The capital is Düsseldorf, but there are plenty of other large cities in the region.

Figure 11 – AfD electoral support in the state elections of North Rhine-Westphalia in 2017
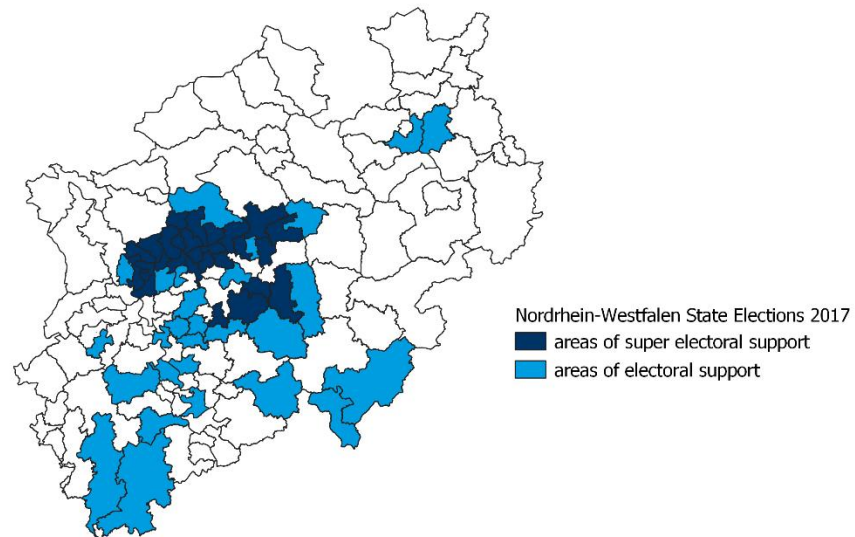

Data: Landeswahlleiter Nordrhein-Westfalen, custom map.

Among other things, as can be seen on map 11, North Rhine-Westphalia has the most unusual location of electoral support areas. If in the rest of the federal states the areas are very crowded and, as a rule, adjoin the eastern part of the federal state, here for the first time they are concentrated in the center. In total, the AfD in this federal state has 26 areas of super electoral support, which is the largest in all of Germany, but this is precisely due to the number of electoral districts. These areas include: Gelsenkirchen II, Duisburg IV - Wesel V, Gelsenkirchen I, Essen I -, Mülheim II, Duisburg III, Essen II, Oberhausen I, Herne I, Recklinghausen II, Bottrop, Recklinghausen III, Bochum III - Herne II , Duisburg II, Recklinghausen I, Hagen I, Wuppertal I, Märkischer Kreis I,

Oberhausen II - Wesel I, Bochum I, Recklinghausen V, Duisburg I, Dortmund I, Hagen II - Ennepe-Ruhr-Kreis III, Unna II, Unna III - Hamm II, Dortmund III. The AfD has very weak support in the capital Düsseldorf, in Koln and etc. However, there is huge support in the not-so-small towns of Essen and Dortmund. Considering all this, this federal state is so far the most different of all in terms of the location of electoral support.

Finally, Lower Saxony is the last federal state. It is divided into 87 electoral districts. The capital is Hanover. As can be seen from map 11, there is already a familiar clustering in the eastern part of the federal state.

Figure 12 – AfD electoral support in the state elections of Lower Saxony in 2017
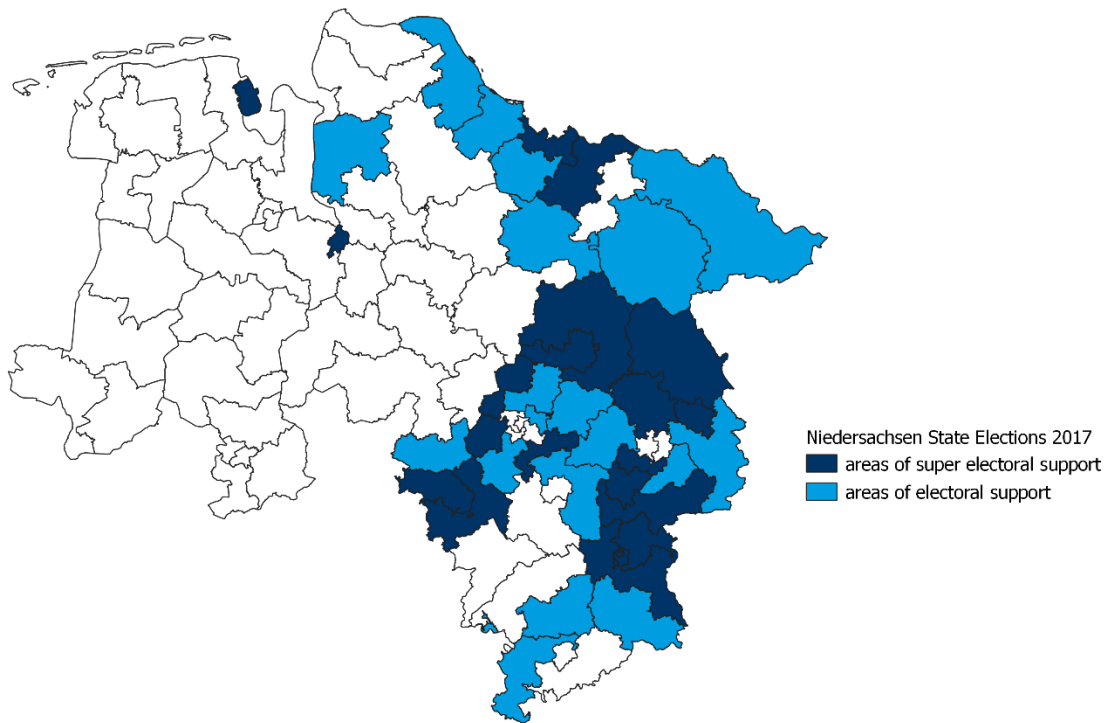


Data: Landeswahlleiter Niedersachsen, custom map.

In Hanover, and in other large cities in this federal state, there is no support for the AfD. This can be clearly seen on the map, where a strong group of areas of electoral support is noticeable, but among them there are white spots, which are personified by large cities where this support is absent. A total of 19 areas of super electoral support in Lower Saxony: Salzgitter, Delmenhorst, Wolfenbüttel-Süd / Salzgitter, Celle, Wilhelmshaven, Wolfsburg, Goslar, Hameln, Rinteln, Seesen, Garbsen, Wedemark, Braunschweig-Süd, Berifgen, Nordh-Nord Wolfsburg, Gifhorn-Süd, Laatzen, Barsinghausen, Bad Pyrmont, Seevetal. Although most of them are in the eastern part of the federal state, several are scattered in the western part.

Based on the results of the electoral analysis of elections in individual states, it can be stated that the patterns are very similar to the elections to the Bundestag. There is a similar pattern of bipolarity, as well as a clear clustering of areas of electoral support.

5.3. European Parliament elections

In total, the AfD participated twice in the elections to the European Parliament, and already in the first elections the party entered parliament. As can be seen on map 12, the European Parliament elections are the most distinctive of all.

Figure 13 – AfD electoral support in the European Parliament elections 2014
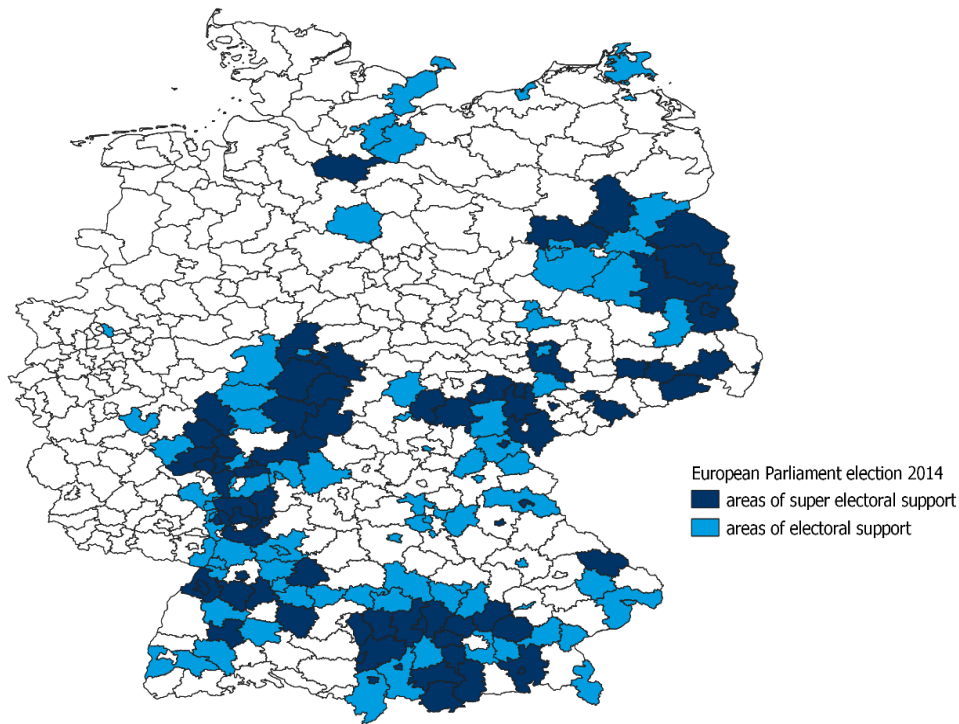
Data: Der Bundeswahlleiter, custom map.

First of all, unlike all other elections, support is very scattered and not concentrated in one place. It slightly repeats the electoral geography of the first elections to the Bundestag in 2013; the AfD has some success in the federal states of Hessen and Baden-Wuttemberg. The same pattern of strong support is visible in the lands of northeastern Germany. However, it also highlights the fact that there are many areas of super electoral support in Bavaria. This is one of the few elections where the AfD does have strong support this federal state.

European elections are also the most volatile of all. So, as can be seen already on map 13, the situation completely changed in the next elections in 2019. Areas of super electoral support disappeared from Bavaria and the federal states of western Germany and remained only in eastern Germany, more or less grouped. Nevertheless, quite a few areas of support are still scattered throughout the country, including in its south.

Figure 14 – AfD electoral support in the European Parliament elections 2019
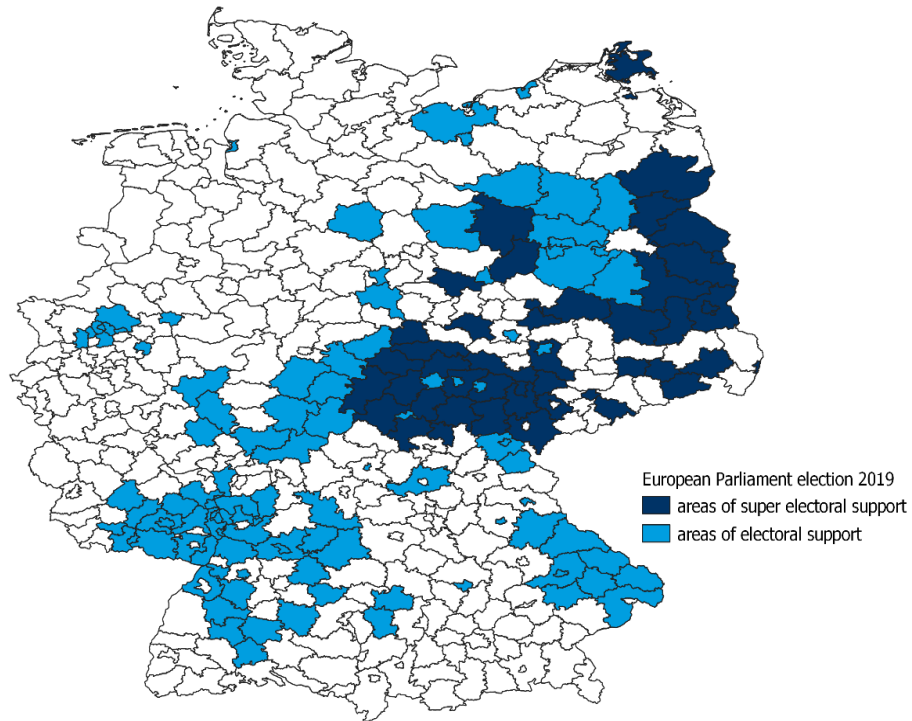
Data: Der Bundeswahlleiter, custom map.

Thus, the main areas of super electoral support are the federal states of Brandenburg, Thuringia and Saxony, while these three states are precisely stable areas and maintain a similar level of support for several elections. Moreover, Turingia stands out separately, which has become very strong in terms of support in 2019. It is also worth highlighting the lands of Hesse, Baten-Wuttemberg and Bavaria, which in 2014 were areas of super electoral support, but in 2019 they became simple areas of support.

The elections to the European Parliament are unambiguously present with a bipolar pattern, but unlike other types of elections, there is the strongest fragmentation in 2014. However, in 2019 there are already familiar clusters of areas of electoral support.

Conclusion

The bachelor's work examined the results of right-wing party AfD in the three main types of elections in Germany for the period 2013 to 2020, that is, from its creation to the current days. First of all, two types of federal elections were studied - to the European Parliament and to the Bundestag, as well as parliamentary elections in the 16 federal states of Germany. The election results were interpreted using electoral geography and several questions were answered.

First of all, areas of super electoral support and electoral support were established at different levels of elections in Germany. According to the obtained data, Brandenburg, Saxony and Turingia are the main areas of super electoral support for the AfD. These three federal states show not only strong support but also stable one in all types of elections.

Several patterns were then identified. The main pattern that can be traced in all three types of elections is bipolarity, center versus periphery. In all types of elections, there is much weaker support for the AfD in large cities than in small ones. However, there are a few exceptions to this. For example, Saxony-Anhalt, where the capital of the federal state is the area of super electoral support. Or in North Rhine-Westphal, where several large cities are also areas of super electoral support.

A further pattern is that support in the federal states or in the country as a whole tends to the northeast. This means that the areas of electoral support are located in this direction, and occasionally somehow differently. Moreover, this is even noticeable in the capital Berlin, where the city itself is divided, as if by a Berlin wall, into east and west Berlin. Likewise, there are a few exceptions. First, North Rhine-Westphalia, where the areas of super electoral support are located precisely in the center of the federal state, and does not tend to go somewhere to the side. Secondly, Turingia, where areas of super electoral support are scattered throughout the federal state. However, in the case of Thuringia, this is more likely due to the fact that the entire federal state is a strong center of support for the party.

And finally, another pattern is that usually all areas are strongly adjacent to each other. Areas of super electoral support are closely related to each other, and they are surrounded by areas of support. There are probably not many exceptions here, although often the areas of support can be in a completely different part of the region. These clusters of areas were observed in all types of elections, with the possible exception of the 2014 elections to the European Parliament.

However, the last two patterns did not develop immediately. So, for example, at the federal level at first there was a completely different situation. In the first elections to the Bundestag, the AfD had a lot of support in western Germany, in states such as Hesse and Band Wutenberg. And the same thing happened in the first elections to the European Parliament, moreover, there were many areas of super electoral support, including in the south in Bavaria. It was only later and at the federal level that similar patterns were formed, although many areas of support are still scattered throughout the country.

Further in this bachelor's work, it was investigated if the support in elections of different types differs. Ultimately, there are not many differences. They do exist, but in general, electoral support is the same at all levels of elections. As can be seen from the aforementioned patterns, there are not many exceptions. They exist, and most of all in the elections to the European Parliament, but in the end they all strive in the same direction.

Finally, the main question of the bachelor's work was how the electoral support of the AfD changed between 2013 and 2020. The unequivocal answer is that the AfD's electoral support has changed dramatically.

In the elections to the Bundestag, support for the AfD grew very much and even became an indirect cause of the political crisis in the country. From the point of view of electoral geography, support was unable to gain a foothold in the federal states of western Germany, but, on the contrary, concentrated in those federal states where the party was initially doing well. The AfD owes its victory to such federal states as Thuringia, Saxony and Brandenburg. And despite the fact that in other federal states electoral support also increased, based on the areas

of super electoral support, they did not have such a strong impact on the AfD victory.

Then, in other federal elections to the European Parliament, an almost similar situation occurred. Again, the party was unable to gain a foothold in the lands of western Germany and despite the fact that there are many areas of electoral support left in Bavaria, all the main electoral support of the AfD shifted to the same federal states of eastern Germany. In particular, Thuringia and Brandenburg are again playing a key role. In the elections to the European Parliament, it is especially noticeable how support for the AfD is weakening in some places and strengthening in others.

Finally, elections to the parliaments of the federal states. Despite the fact that they have similar trends for AfD, support in all federal states has changed dramatically. In some federal states it has increased, in some, on the contrary, as in Hamburg, for example, it has decreased. However, with all the changes in the support itself, the areas of electoral support and areas of super electoral support for the AfD have not changed much over these years. They could slightly change their location, but nothing more.

In general, AfD has a fairly stable support. Despite floating support in the states of western Germany and especially Bavaria, the party currently has protection in the form of the eastern federal states.

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