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ARGUMENTS IN THE EXPLANATION OF THE 2017 ELECTION SUCCESS OF THE GERMAN POLITICAL PARTY “ALTERNATIVE FÜR DEUTSCHLAND”¹

Igor Hanzel*

ABSTRACT

The federal elections of 2017 led for the first time since WWII to the entrance of a right-wing political party, namely, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) to the German federal parliament (Bundestag). Prominent explanations of the success of the AfD were given in the sociological works of Wolfgang Heitmeyer and in the political economy of right wing populism as developed by Philip Manow. I analyzed, from the point of view of modern theory of arguments, the methodological nature of these explanations. I showed how to approach methodologically the structure of arguments and reconstructed the general structure and specific social science features of arguments employed in these explanations.

Key words: Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), 2017 election to the German Bundestag, Explanation, Structure of argument, Toulmin, Walton, Heitmeyer, Manow

Introduction

The AfD is a newcomer to the German political scene. It was founded only recently, in 2013, and after its election success to the European Parliament in 2014 and subsequent election successes to the local parliaments in Germany between 2014 and 2017, it has become in the 2017 election to the Bundestag the third strongest political party in Germany.² In the 2019 elections in Saxony,

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² On the political practice of the AfD in the Landtags see Schroeder et al. (2017). On the political practice of the AfD in German Bundestag one year after the 2017 election and the way to handle it, see Ruhose (2019). For a political-science analysis of the election success of the AfD in the 2017 election to the Bundestag published in this journal see Lenč (2019) and Novotný and Šárovec (2018).

Brandenburg, and Thuringia, the AfD became the second strongest party in the parliaments of these states. As of March 2020, representatives of the AfD are present in all German local parliaments.

The string of election successes of the AfD is viewed by social scientists as part of the rise to prominence of right-wing populism and of the election successes of right-wing populist parties in western Europe. A group of German social scientists (Sauer *et al.*, 2018, p. 16) have offered a tentative explanation for this—namely, that it is

a phenomenon of relatively affluent societies, which, however, are subject to a dynamic process of social cleavage. Right-wing populism seems to thrive especially where the relevant segments of the population have the feeling that they are under threat of ending up on the “losers” side if the ruling policy management continues in its present form. Representative polls confirm that the majority of the population rated their own material position still as passable; and yet the present-day capitalism is causing, as it were, sub-luminal (*untergründige*) crisis-processes and negative developments that are reflected in fears for the future.

However, once this tentative description of the causes for the rise to prominence of right-wing populism and the election successes should be spelled out in a more detailed way, then alternative and, in fact, competing explanations can be presented.³ In the contemporary discussion on the causes of the success of the AfD, it is possible to find three main directions of social science reasoning and their corresponding hypotheses: the economic direction, the cultural direction, and the political direction.⁴

In the *economic* direction, the Modernization-Losers-Hypothesis (MLH) is stated; it is as follows (Rippl and Seipel, 2018, p. 240):

MLH: Material deprivation and perception of economic threat mobilize sympathy for the AfD.

In the *cultural* direction, the Cultural-Backlash-Hypothesis (CBH) is claiming validity; it is as follows (Rippl and Seipel, 2018, p. 240):

CBH: Feelings of cultural threat mobilize sympathy for the AfD.

This hypothesis identifies as the driving force of the success of the AfD the liberalization of cultural values in Germany that manifested itself in overcoming

³ For a detailed overview of these explanations see Falkner and Kahrs (2018).

⁴ In this three-fold distinction I draw on Rippl and Seipel (2018).

of traditional norms and pluralization of ways of life. This liberalization was—so goes the CBH—perceived by parts of the German population not as a positive phenomenon but as a threat to traditional forms of life—the issue of immigration to Germany taking here center stage.

Finally, in the *political* direction, the Post-Democracy-Hypothesis (PDH) is stated as follows (Rippl and Seipel, 2018, p. 241):

PDH: Political alienation mobilizes sympathy for the AfD.

According to this hypothesis, economic globalization has led to a decline of the influence of the electorate over the function of state institutions. Instead supra-nation-state institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the EU, and internationally (globally) operating companies determine in ever-increasing ways the policies of institutions at the level of the nation-state.⁵ One of the effects of this has been the alienation of the electorate from traditional political parties.

It holds that the relevant data, as presented by the proponents of these hypotheses, seem to confirm all three of them.⁶ The reason for this is, in my view, that the causes for the success of the AfD lie in all three dimensions: the economic, the political, and the (socio-)cultural. Thus, for a hypothesis explaining the success of the AfD to be superior to those three hypotheses, it has to address the respective causes according to all three dimensions and thus somehow unify the three hypotheses. Such a unifying hypothesis was presented by **Wolfgang Heitmeyer** in (2001; 2018) and (Klein and Heitmeyer 2011).

As I will show, the economic aspects of **Heitmeyer's** hypothesis can be completed by bringing in the political economy of right-wing populism proposed by **Manow** in (2018).

What has to be stated here from the point of view of the methodological aims of my pursuit is that **Heitmeyer** presented in his paper (2001) and in (Klein and Heitmeyer 2011) a *prediction* concerning a possible rise and success of a right-wing populist party in Germany and where this prediction was based on already existing, empirically identified right-wing populist attitudes in a large

⁵ For details on the issue of post-democracy see Crouch (2004).

⁶ On these data and the respective hypotheses see, for example, Inglehart and Norris (2017), Koppetch (2019), Lengfeld (2017; 2018), Lengfeld and Dilger (2018), Lux (2018), Merkel (2017), and Tutić and von Hermanni (2018).

portion of German population.⁷ In the 2001 paper, **Heitmeyer** made the following prediction for Germany: “The right-wing populism is likely to be the central problem of the future. Its chances are likely to increase the more, the bigger ... the defects of the liberal democracy become” (2001, p. 527).

An even more specific prediction was made a decade later with respect to groups within the German population that, as empirical research discovered, felt alienated from the established political parties (Klein and Heitmeyer, 2011, p. 371):

The consequences anticipated from this perspective are considerable. If one does not succeed in reintegrating these groups of persons, then good chances of approval have those groups that can instrumentalize mistrust and political alienation, thus especially groups that can be found in the right-wing populist spectrum. More or less charismatic leading personalities will make an attempt to win sympathy and neglected citizens should, by means of a so-called “closeness to people,” perceive the signal that their interests will be given special consideration.

Given the fact that **Heitmeyer’s** prediction was fulfilled—namely, a right-wing populist party in the incarnation of the AfD became successful—this prediction is assigned here the methodological status of an *explanation* of the AfD’s election successes. In fact, **Heitmeyer** himself, in a backward glance, assigned to his reasoning from the first decade of the 2000s the status of explanation: “Long-term developments led to the success of the AfD—namely, the interplay, in the course of an accelerated globalization, of authoritarian capitalism, depletion of democracy (*Demokratieentleerung*), and the processes of social disintegration” (Heitmeyer 2018, p. 328).⁸ My methodological analysis will focus on the structure of arguments in this explanation.

I will start with an examination of the concept of populism and state the criteria according to which populism can further be classified as being of a right-

⁷ This identification was performed by the method of structural equations. For coefficients correlating social position, political alienation and mistrust against political elites with right-wing populist orientations as well as coefficients correlating social position and economic attitudes with animosity against foreigners, devaluation of the homeless and the long-term unemployed see Klein and Heitmeyer (2011, p. 376, p. 378) and Heitmeyer (2018, p. 200, p. 203). For the most recent survey on right-wing attitudes in Germany see Zick - Küpper - Berghan (2019).

⁸ Following Klein and Heitmeyer (2011, p. 361), I translate the German term “Demokratieentleerung” as “depletion of democracy.”

wing type. Next, I will present information on AfD's electorate and an explanation of the 2017 election success of the AfD based on **Heitmeyer's** concept of authoritarian capitalism complemented by **Manow's** political economy of right-wing populism. Then, I will show how to approach methodologically the structure of arguments and reconstruct the general structure and specific social science features of arguments employed in that explanation. Finally, as a conclusion, I will draw the methodological moral of my article.

My methodological approach will draw on the modern theory of argumentation, based on which an understanding of argument can be stated as follows:⁹

- 1) An argument A is a sequence Q of propositions p_1, p_2, \dots, p_n expressed in a language L by means of statements s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n and where for this sequence it holds that
- 2) Q can be reconstructed in the framework of a certain system S_i , stated in language L^* , as a relation of inference $R(P, C)$, where P is a set of suppositions (premises) and C is the thesis (conclusion) of the argument and where
- 3) P has in R with respect to the thesis C (in the context of the employment of the argument A) at least one of the following *methodological* functions: (a) P supports (justifies) or challenges the thesis C ; (b) P explains C ; (c) P is the basis for the prediction of C ; (d) P justifies an action whose intention and/or motivation is expressed by C .

As to the system S_i , in the framework of which the reconstruction of the sequence Q of an argument A is performed, it holds that this system enables one to specify certain methodological characteristics, or parameters, to which the reconstruction then assigns the respective actual values of these parameters. The following list states two important *methodological parameters* that can be used for the characterization of an argument:

- 1) the structure of the argument
- 2) the modal character of the conclusion of the argument

This paper will focus on the actual values of these parameters in the explanation of the success of the AfD in the 2017 election to the Bundestag.

⁹ This understanding of arguments was suggested to me by Dr. L. Bielik. See also Besnard and Hunter (2008, p. 2), (Homer-Dixon and Karapin (1989, p. 391), Govier (2010, p. 1), Johnson (2000, p. 125), (Pinto 2001, p. 32), and Wohlrapp (2014). On the disputes about the meaning of the term "argument," see Goodman (2018).

1 The Concepts of Populism and Right-Wing Populism

The political development of Europe since the implosion of the communist regimes in the central and eastern parts of Europe has been characterized by the phenomenon of an increase in popular support for populist parties and especially in western European countries by an increase in popular support for right-wing populist parties. This increase in support for right-wing populist parties was accelerated by the occurrence of a world economic crisis of 2008 and its after-shock in the form of a Euro-crisis. These phenomena triggered a profound transformation in the political landscape of Germany, where the AfD appeared as the first far-right-wing party in the Bundestag since the 1950s. To shed light on the nature of the AfD as a *populist* and as a *right-wing* populist party, it is necessary to explain these two predicates.

The standard and widely accepted understanding of *populism* draws on its definition by **Mudde**—namely, that populism is “*an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and that argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people*” (Mudde, 2004, p. 543).¹⁰

This understanding of populism was further developed by **Spier**, who uses four distinctive aspects of populism. The first, which he views as a universal trait of populism, is appeal to “the people” (*das Volk*), the “common man in the street.”¹¹ What “the people” refers to in populism, according to **Spier** (2010, p. 20), is:

a more or less homogeneous mass. The difference of interests between different classes, layers or professional groups, are to a great extent denied ... Very often, “the people” is romantically inflated; many positive properties are ascribed to it. It is simple, sincere, reasonable, works hard, and lives a decent life.

The second aspect of populism involves agitation against, possibly imaginary, enemies who are allegedly antagonistic to “the people.” The agitation is directed toward enemies in the *vertical* dimension, in the sense of the ruling elites, the establishment, at the top of the society, while “the people” are, with

¹⁰ For Mudde’s views on populism, see also his 2007 work. For Margaret Canovan’s views on populism see, for example, (1999; 2004). For more recent papers on the concept of populism see Part I in the volume Fitzi and Mackert and Turner (2018).

¹¹ The expression “the people” as the English translation of the German “das Volk” is in singular.

respect to those enemies, the ruled entity. The ruling elites are viewed by populists as (Spier, 2010, p. 21):

corrupt, selfish, and oriented toward maintaining power ... Populism can also be understood precisely on the basis of an aggressive and purposeful opposition to the 'establishment' as a strategy for seizing power that seeks approval by the majority and where an elite, which is excluded from power, wants to seize power by means of a mobilization of large parts of the population.

The third aspect of populism is the existence of a charismatic leader who presents himself or herself as the one who understands the "little man in the street" and who is viewed as the figurehead of the respective populist movement.

The fourth aspect of populism is flexibility; its organizational structure is that of "party against all parties." The preferred label for such structure is usually that of "movement," "league," "list," and so forth.

Steiner and **Landwehr's** understanding of the phenomenon of populism is similar, that is, as a "rejection of the ... elites and of their values in the name of 'people' or 'will of the people'" (2018, p. 467). **Steiner** and **Landwehr** broaden this characterization through a delineation of three dimensions of populism's position with respect to democracy.

The first dimension is that of *majoritarianism*, which describes the position of populism in (possible) conflicts between the will of the majority and the rights of minorities. So as populism views "the people" as a homogenous entity whose will should be identical to the will of those who hold political power, "the will of the majority has the privilege of unconditional legitimacy even when it endangers the rights of the minority" (Steiner – Landwehr, 2018, p. 468).

The second dimension is *immediacy* (Steiner – Landwehr, 2018, p. 468). Because the will of the ruled and of the rulers is assumed to be identical, the ruling policy of the latter should directly and unconditionally express the will of "the people."

Finally, the third dimension is *antipluralism* (Steiner – Landwehr, 2018, p. 469). The requirement of an unconditional expression of "one will of the people" implies a rejection of political pluralism and the pluralistic forms that enable different interests in the society to be balanced.

Let me now turn to the concept of right-wing populism. This concept can be derived from the concept of populism by adding to Spier's first characterization of populism—, the vertical opposition drawn as "the people versus elites"—, an

additional, *horizontal* aspect. Thus opposition is construed as that between “the people” and other groups in society that are viewed as outsiders not belonging to “the people” and as (an actual or a potential) threat or even enemy of “the people” and wherein “the people” is understood as unified on the basis of shared ethnicity and/or culture. This essential feature of right-wing populism is described by Häusler as the “exclusion of specific groups of people, stylized into enemies. In the form of an ‘identity-populism,’ the right-wing populism is characterized by a radicalization and essentialization of the cultural affiliation (*Zugehörigkeit*) by a devaluation of the ‘others’” (2013, p. 13).

To these “others” and outsiders belong, according to right-wing populism, primarily, refugees and immigrants, but also any other social, cultural, or ethnic minorities, women thriving for equal rights, and gays, all of whom, it is claimed, endanger the purity and homogeneity of “the people.”

2 Data on AfD's Electorate

The 2016-elections to the Landtags of Rheinland-Pfalz, Baden-Württemberg and Sachsen-Anhalt stood for an “electoral and political breakthrough of the AfD” (Wiegel, 2017, p. 42), because they bore witness to an important shift in the electorate basis of the AfD. Not only was this party able to acquire double-digit election results, but more importantly, it was able to attract for the first time large numbers of workers, unemployed persons and, in addition, also attract a large part of those, who had not participated in previous elections.

According to 2016 data presented in (Hambauer and Mays 2018), 33 percent of would-be AfD voters had a low level of schooling compared with 11 percent of potential voters for other parties, while 26 percent had a high level of schooling compared with 43 percent for other political parties. 27 percent of would-be AfD voters viewed themselves as workers compared with 12 percent of would-be voters for other parties. As to white-collars, 53 percent of would-be-AfD voters belonged to this group compared with 70 percent of potential voters for other parties. Among the group of would-be AfD voters, 57 percent regarded themselves as belonging either to the lower class, to the working class, or the lower-middle class; for the “Christian” parties CDU/CSU and the social democrats (SPD), 30 percent and 38 percent, respectively, of potential voters reported belonging to the lower class, the working class, or the lower-middle class. These data on the electorate thus indicated that by 2016, the AfD

become the representative of the “small people” in Germany.¹²

This new character of AfD’s electorate became manifest at the federal level in the 2017 election to the Bundestag.¹³ Here members of the lower socioeconomic strata were attracted by the AfD to such a degree that 28 percent of voters from these strata voted for the party. In addition, the AfD was able to massively increase its electoral basis among the middle class, of which 20 percent voted in favor of the AfD.

The following data are also relevant for the electorate of the AfD.¹⁴ There exists a specific geographic distribution of this electorate: it is strong in Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, and Saxony—that is, in relatively wealthy states with a strong industrial basis. In addition, there exists an overall higher pro-AfD inclination among voters in eastern Germany compared with voters in western Germany. It is worth mentioning that the election successes of the AfD took place long after the 2008 world economic crisis—namely, during a period of strong recovery of the German economy in which skilled workers in the manufacturing industry had not been excluded from wage- and income-increases.

How then do we, using this data, explain the election successes of the AfD? Using quasi-economic terminology of political demand by the electorate and political supply provided by a party, this means to explain the causes that created, in the first place, the demand for a type of political party exemplified by the AfD.¹⁵

3 Manow’s Political Economy and Heitmeyer’s Prediction

3.1 Manow’s political economy of right-wing populism

As to the economic causes that led to the 2017 election success of the AfD, **Manow** addresses two aspects of the globalization process that has been accelerating during the last three decades: the cross-border movement of

¹² Similar data on the voting-preferences for the AfD in 2016 were provided in Brenke and Kritikos (2017)

¹³ I draw on Vehrkamp and Wegschaider (2017).

¹⁴ These data are taken from Manow (2019, pp. 79-83).

¹⁵ Due to a limitation of space I do not analyze here the supply-side, that is, the nature of the AfD as a political party. The following publications prove its right-wing populist nature: Baron (2018), Bergmann *et al.* (2018), Dietl (2018), Franzmann (2018), Friedrich (2017; 2018), Goerres and Spies and Kumlin (2017), Jesse (2019), Lees (2018), Pfahl-Traubner (2019), Plehwe (2017), Schmitt-Beck (2017), Schröder (2018), and Wiegel (2017). For the political programs of the AfD from 2016-2019, see (2016a; 2016b; 2017; 2019a; 2019b).

capital and the cross-border movement of persons. These two aspects, such is **Manow's** explanatory thesis, led to economic and political effects that are relevant for a certain type of country (2018, p. 19):¹⁶

Migration becomes a political problem, where the welfare-state is generous *and* accessible ... These are at the same time countries whose openness to foreign trade, free movement of commodities, in short, commodity globalization causes fewer problems and this *because* the welfare state is generous and comprehensive, because the socio-political compensation mitigates the distribution-effects of the free movement of commodities and capital.

The conclusion drawn by **Manow** is then that in Germany, as a country of such a type as he described, political protest is oriented not against the free movement of goods and services but rather against migration—that is, in a manner that is symptomatic for right-wing populism.

Manow complements this politico-economic characterization of Germany by a differentiation between two types of cross-border migration: worker-migration and refugee-migration. Finally, to provide the conceptual means for the explanation of the rise of the AfD, **Manow** also differentiates between two categories of workers: the so-called “labor-market-outsiders”—that is, people with a low level of schooling performing simple forms of works especially in the service sector—and the category of the so-called “labor-market-insiders”—that is, regularly employed skilled workers employed in the manufacturing industry.

Manow's explanation thesis of the election success of the AfD is that in Germany (i.e., in an exporting country with a high-level of productivity), with its high level of wages and high level of status-preserving measures for labor-market-insiders and some form of basic social security for labor-market outsiders, the influx of refugees into the systems of both social security and social welfare was viewed negatively by parts of the German population and, especially, by labor-market insiders.

What made this negative view on refugee immigration even stronger were, according to **Manow**, the neo-liberal reforms of social-welfare and the labor market. During the course of these reforms (2018, pp. 65–66),

¹⁶ To the other type belong countries in which not the cross-border movement of persons but the cross-border movement of capital leads to political changes in the form of the rise of left-wing populism. This holds, according to Manow, for example, for Greece. In this way, Manow explains how economic globalization led in Europe to the rise of two different forms of populism: right-wing and left-wing types.

the importance of the elements of social-security was reduced and in return more weight was placed on “activation,” “social investment,” and minimal income ... The social policy with its emphasis on activation led to a—significant, in part—reduction of the previous status-security... The change from *welfare* to *workfare*, for which these new reforms of the social state stand, increased the pressure on receivers of social benefits and in this way reduced the social state’s previous orientation to social status.

Are **Manow’s** explanation-theses confirmed by the data on the electorate of the AfD?

In addition to the data mentioned in Part 2, **Manow** showed the following (2018, p. 90):

(1) For East (i.e., the territory of the former German Democratic Republic), the memory of people’s unemployment back in the year 2000 had a tangible impact on their pro-AfD voting behavior in the 2017 election to the Bundestag.¹⁷

(2) The massive influx of refugees into Germany in the years 2015–2016 combined with the consciousness about the demise of the social-welfare state due to the Agenda 2010 and subjecting labor-market insiders to the threat of being degraded to labor-market outsiders was—as the data showed—an important factor contributing to the massive increase of the popular vote for the AfD between the 2013 and the 2017 elections to the Bundestag. While in the 2013 elections the AfD, with just 4.7 percent of the popular vote, did not make it to the federal parliament, by 2017 it had already become the third strongest political party in Germany, with 12.6 percent of the popular vote.

Manow explains the political impact of that combination as follows (2018, pp. 87–88):

The Agenda 2010 ... played in the German context an important role, because the drastic reduction of the time for which one could receive unemployment benefits ... has led to a situation wherein ... insiders could very quickly (in normal cases just in twelve months) become outsiders ... The Agenda 2010 had in this regard violated the interests of a group of employees who made up the core of the “German [export] model”—namely, the skilled workers ... This “Agenda-effect” surfaced during the course of the refugee-crisis.

¹⁷ For an analysis of these memories see Köpping (2017).

Now it was clear that in the case of unemployment, after just one year, one in fact ended on the same level of social security provided by the state as the refugees, completely independent of level of schooling, previous merits, and thus the amount of money paid into the social-security-system as well as the duration of payment into this system. In the corresponding milieu this would contribute to resentments of the massive immigration.

3.2 Heitmeyer on authoritarian capitalism

Heitmeyer coins the concept of *authoritarian* capitalism by employing the following two theses.¹⁸ The *first* is that the relation between global capital and the nation-state policy had undergone a fundamental change. While the former's power had increased in the last decades due to globalization, the ability of the nation-state to intervene economically rapidly decreased. The reason for such a diagnosis is that even if political power were still located at the level of the nation-state, the formation of decisions is withdrawn from the decisions of the parliament and thus also withdrawn from democratic decisions. Instead, decisions at the level of the nation-state are geared toward the interests of internationally operating capital.

Heitmeyer's diagnosis here is as follows (2011, p. 364):

The institutions of a representative democracy that is constituted at the level of the nation-state undergo ... a drastic *loss* of control, while the internationally operating companies have an immense *win* of control over flow of finances, jobs, and corresponding pulses of precarization. A capitalism that is equipped in such a way develops authoritarian features on the basis of its increase of power, because it can carry through its maxims independently from the politics at the level of the nation-state.

The empowering of capital led, according to **Heitmeyer**, at the political level to damage to the quality of democracy. This damage he labels as the *depletion of democracy*; the latter being a cluster concept for the following five phenomena (2001, pp. 520–525; 2011, pp. 364–366):

- 1) *abatement of democracy* due to the delegation of political decisions to outer-parliamentary, usually economically strong groups, thus diminishing the influence of the vast majority of the population.

¹⁸ Here I draw on Klein and Heitmeyer (2011) and on Heitmeyer (2001; 2018).

- 2) *erosion of democracy* due to attempts of government to extend control over the population at the expense of freedom-rights;
- 3) *neglect of democracy* due to the decline of activities of collective actors, such as trade unions, whose critique and protest do not have sufficiently strong and powerful enough effects;
- 4) *disregard for democracy* due to the elites' lack of consciousness about justice and responsibility toward the population, as often manifested in corruption scandals and scandals related to illegal financing of political parties;
- 5) *doubts about democracy* in the population due to the latter's skepticism about the possibility of solving social problems through democratic processes.

Heitmeyer's *second* thesis is that the increase of power on the side of capital manifests itself in the social sphere, where economic logic invades all spheres of social life. Here, at least the following three mechanisms seem to be at work. First, a devaluation of noneconomic functions of institutions—for example, when social relations are sacrificed to professional success or when schools focus on the normed performance of children and not on the development of children's personality. Second, noneconomic institutions adapt to economic requirements by being structured by these requirements—for example, when family life has to be organized according to economic necessities. Third, economic norms penetrate into noneconomic institutions—for example, through the enforcement of quantitative criteria, such as the number of acquired grants for an evaluation of university research.

In a next step, **Heitmeyer**, in order to explain how depletion of democracy and economization of the social (*das Soziale*) can in combination endanger the democratic attitudes of a population, addresses the issue of social integration. His thesis is that the emergence and securing of democratic attitudes essentially depends on the quality of social integration in the following three dimensions.

First, integration in the *socio-structural* dimension concerns participation in the acquisition of the material and cultural goods of society which is objectively satisfied by access to jobs, housing, and the necessities of every-day life, and subjectively satisfied in the form of satisfaction with one's professional and social position. Second, integration in the *institutional* dimension concerns the balancing of mutually conflicting interests and where, objectively, basic

democratic principles must be respected while subjectively being recognized as a citizen with equal rights whose voice is to be heard has the most relevance. Third, integration in the *communal* dimension concerns, objectively, social membership and the establishment of relations between persons for the purpose of self-realization, while subjectively the emotional support of others is necessary for one's protection against identity crisis, loss of orientation, confusion of values and impairment of self-esteem.

Klein and Heitmeyer in their paper (2011) claimed that under the realities established by authoritarian capitalism in Germany, integration in the three dimensions (socio-structural, institutional, and communal) could not be warranted and, therefore, Germany would face increased deficits in integration. In the context of introduction of Agenda 2010, enacted in Germany in the early 2000s, **Klein and Heitmeyer** had already witnessed that the shift in control from the German state to globally operating capital had effects in the socio-structural dimension like increased pressure on employees in the labor-market, the dismantling of social security, and the increase in the number of precarious jobs. **Klein and Heitmeyer's** prediction was that the processes of disintegration would not stop there and would, via the mediation of depletion of democracy and the economizing of the social, infiltrate the institutional and communal dimensions and from there proliferate further.

Klein and Heitmeyer describe the processes of depletion of democracy leading via socio-structural disintegration to alienation from and mistrust of political elites and then, in a next step, offer the following explanation of how the economization of the social leads to *economistic attitudes* (2011, p. 369):

Due to the endangered or precarious participation in the socio-structural dimension, competition as behavioral maxim gains importance because it promises—with respect to the preservation of status—success, while cooperation loses its importance ... For the purpose of his or her own positioning and sufficient participation, the subjugation of subjects under the requirements of the economic sphere appears vital ... What follows from this for the communal dimension is its devaluation, because the requirements for this dimension (emotional bonding, loyalty, empathy) are overridden by the requirements of socio-structural integration. The maxim of orientation to the principle of competition invades more and more into noneconomic spheres and displaces the communal dimension of integration. The

orientation to economic values in noneconomic institutions ... becomes a part of individual and social identity. If this is the case, then we speak about the economistic attitudes, which are characterized by an evaluation of noneconomic institutions according to economic criteria.

Klein and **Heitmeyer** then address the issues of political alienation and mistrust of political elites. Political alienation they characterize by symptoms like a mismatch between entitlement and reality, the perception of both the ineffectiveness of his or her own political action, and the perception of a loss of political power—power being here related to legitimation by means of participation, that is, that political decision should be based on the preferences of the population.

Mistrust of political elites means that the population loses trust in the political elites' willingness and ability to successfully solve population's problems. This success is judged by the population not only by the announcements and promises made by the politician, but also by population's perception of its own participation in political power and perception of protection against the risks of disintegration. If the political elites are judged to be unsuccessful and, in addition, they deviate from their announcements and promises and instead implement political decisions that ignore the interests of parts of population, then the latter lose their trust in the political elites.

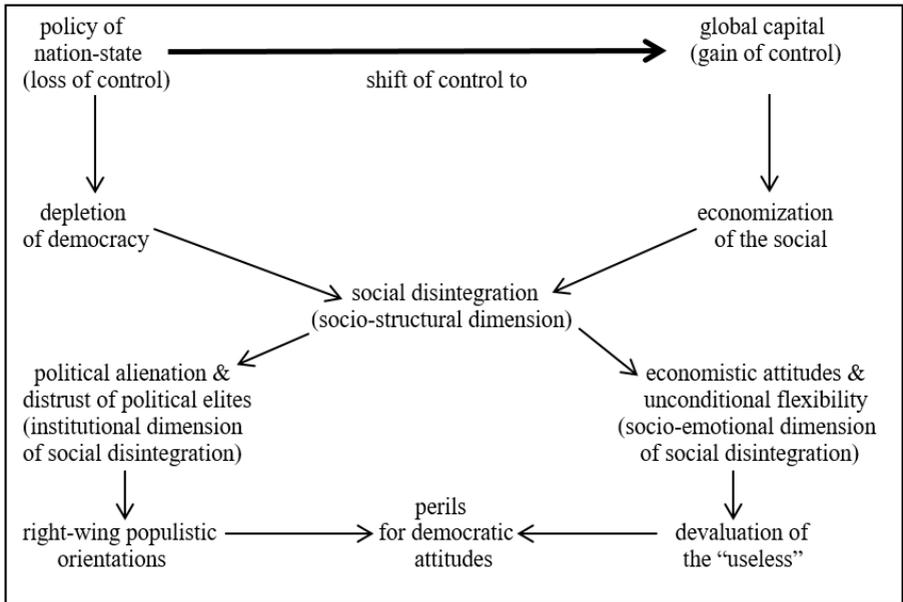
The appearance of both mistrust of political elites and political alienation are interpreted by **Klein** and **Heitmeyer** to be symptoms of political resignation and apathy among large parts of the population. As indicators of this they view the fact that these symptoms can be found primarily among the socio-economically disadvantaged and manifest themselves in their lack of participation in elections. On this basis **Klein** and **Heitmeyer** made in 2011 the prediction about Germany's political future, mentioned earlier, concerning the possibility of the emergence and success of a right-wing populist party.

Finally, **Klein** and **Heitmeyer** address the phenomenon of economistic attitudes as an effect of the economization of the social. Among these attitudes they list, for example, the extension of time spent at work at the expense of time spent with family and friends, and the purposeful establishment of social contacts. **Klein** and **Heitmeyer** also show that requirements of the economic sphere, such as unconditional flexibility, mobility, efficiency, and innovativeness penetrate into noneconomic spheres where they begin to function as behavioral imperatives.

Klein and **Heitmeyer** predicted that once imperatives such as efficiency, utility, usability, and profitability that guide human action are employed in the social sphere, then certain groups of people are perceived to be less “valuable” because from the point of these imperatives they appear to be redundant. **Klein** and **Heitmeyer** also predicted, and their prediction was empirically confirmed by them, that among these groups one would find people who are homeless, the long-term unemployed, and immigrants who are also very often, due to their lower level of education, unemployed and thus perceived, from the point of view of those imperatives, to be useless beneficiaries who parasitize the German social welfare system.

Klein and **Heitmeyer** schematically represent the course of their argumentation, shown by the thin arrows, leading to the explanation of the rise of perils for democracy in Germany, as follows: (2011, p. 363):

Figure 1: Klein’s and Heitmeyer’s course of argumentation in the explanation of the rise of perils for democratic attitudes



As already stated, **Heitmeyer’s** predictions in (2001) and (2011) about a possible rise and success of a right-wing populist party in Germany can be

assigned, in light of the election successes of the AfD, the methodological status of an explanation. Figure 1 can thus be transformed into a figure for the explanation of AfD's success in the 2017 election to the Bundestag.

In order to do so, I introduce three additional elements into Figure 1. First, the political supply provided by the AfD and, second, the influx of approximately one million refugees into Germany between 2015 and 2016.¹⁹ This influx should not, according to **Heitmeyer**, be viewed as the cause of AfD's success in the 2017 election to the Bundestag, "because the attitude-potential on which the success of the party is based, already existed long before ... 2015. The refugee-movement thus represents at best a kind of *accelerating factor*" (2018, p. 344).

The third element is **Manow's** political economy of right-wing populism, which I introduce into the first level of Figure 1 that addresses the issue of shift of control. The reason for this introduction is that this level needs of an additional characterization of global capital as it functions in Germany. This characterization was provided by **Manow**, who described Germany's economy as export driven, with high productivity, high wages of labor-market insiders, and so forth.²⁰

Before I reconstruct Figure 1 by introducing the three additional elements and thus turning it into a figure of explanation of the AfD's success, I will give a brief overview of those parts of the modern theory of argumentation that are relevant for this reconstruction.

4 The Structure of Arguments

4.1 Toulmin's original model

According to **Toulmin** (2003), arguments can be characterized as consisting of the following elements:

- 1) *Claim, or conclusion, (C)* stands for an assertion to which the claimant is committed. In case this claim is challenged by an

¹⁹ For an analysis of this event and its impact on the federal election in Germany in 2017 from the point of view of political science see Mader and Schoen (2019).

²⁰ The data that were employed by Klein and Heitmeyer here were not collected by them; they relied on data provided by other authors.

interrogator, the former has to justify the assertion.²¹

2) The justification is based on the introduction of certain *data* (*D*) upon which *C* can be founded.

3) In case the interrogator in turn questions the move from *D* to *C*, the claimant has to present certain additional statements enabling one to make the step from *D* to *C*. These statements have the status of *warrant* (*W*).

4) The warrant is related to certain other assertions—namely, those that assign to it certain currency and authority. These assertions are labeled *backing* (*B*).

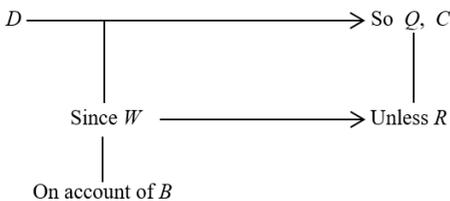
5) The warrant has a certain strength that it confers to the move from *D* to *C*.

6) *W*'s authority enabling the move from *D* to *C* could decrease or even be completely lost in certain circumstances; this decrease or loss is expressed by a *rebuttal* (*R*).

7) The qualifier *Q* states the degree of force with which the claimant states *C*—for example, as necessary, possible, probable.

Toulmin's understanding of the structure of an argument is schematically represented in Figure 2:²²

Figure 2: Outlay of an argument according to S. Toulmin



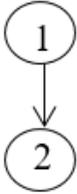
4.2 A modification of Toulmin's model

A modification and, in fact, broadening of **Toulmin's** view on the structure of arguments draws on **Walton's** differentiation between four basic types of arguments (1996, pp. 85–91): single, linked, convergent, and divergent. A *single* argument has only one premise and one argument; it is represented in Figure 3.

²¹ See also Govier (2010, p. 6), and Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin (2010, p. 52).

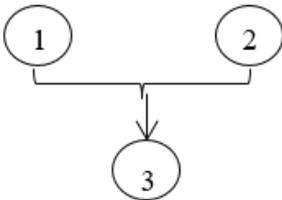
²² For this figure, which differs in certain aspects from Toulmin's representation, I draw on Brockriede and Ehniger (1960, pp. 44–45).

Figure 3: Structure of a single argument



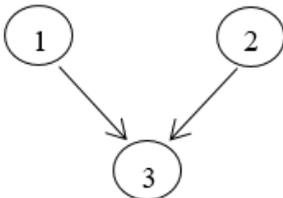
A *linked* argument, represented in Figure 4, has at least two premises, which together give support to the conclusion.

Figure 4: Structure of a linked argument



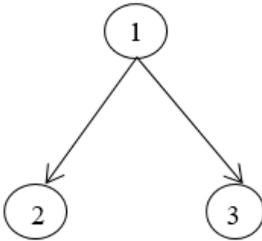
A *convergent* argument has at least two premises, so that each gives an independent reason for accepting the conclusion; the convergent argument, in its simplest form, is represented in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Structure of a convergent argument



Finally, a *divergent* argument has at least two independent conclusions, inferred from one and the same premise; this structure is represented in Figure 6.

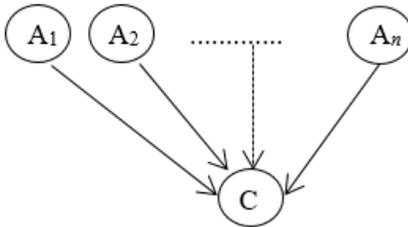
Figure 6: Structure of a divergent argument



Until now I have restricted myself to analysis of just one argument. In reality, arguments usually comprise long chains of intertwined arguments. Arguments set up by sub-arguments can be analyzed in more detail by drawing on the following typology:²³

1) A *multiple* argument yields the conclusion *C* on the basis of arguments A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n , which do not depend on each other—that is, each could stand alone and each should be sufficient for deriving the conclusion. The scheme for this type of argument is as follows:

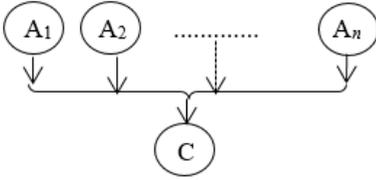
Figure 7: Structure of a multiple argument



2) *Coordinative* argument. Here singular arguments together and only in combination yield the conclusion. Figure 8 shows this:

²³ Here I draw on van Eemeren and Grootendorst and Henkmans (2002, pp. 64-74). While these authors use the term “argumentation,” I employ the term “argument.”

Figure 8: Structure of a coordinative argument



3) *Subordinative* argument. Here certain singular arguments are made to support other singular arguments; the whole sequence of premises and conclusions is ordered in a “layered” manner. The scheme is as follows:

Figure 9: Structure of a subordinative argument

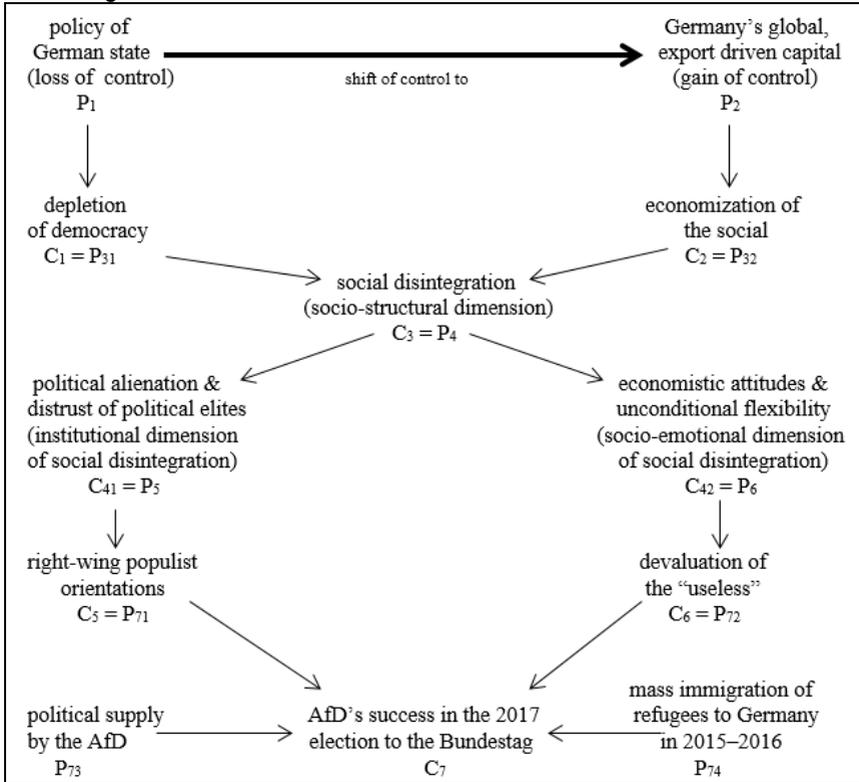


5 Structure of the Argument Explaining the 2017 Election Success of the AfD

The structure of the argument explaining the success of the AfD in the 2017 election to the Bundestag I represented in Figure 10. The elements in the figure are designated by the symbols “P” and/or “C” to indicate the element’s status as a premise and/or conclusion of a particular argument nested in the larger explanatory argument.²⁴

²⁴ “P” stands for “premise of the *i*-th argument,” “C_{*i*}” represents the “conclusion of the *i*-th argument,” “P_{*jk*}” represents the “*k*-th premise of the *j*-th argument,” “C_{*i*} = P_{*kl*}” represents “the conclusion of the *i*-th argument is the *l*-th premise of the *k*-th argument,” “C_{*ij*} = P_{*kl*}” stands for “the *j*-th conclusion of the *i*-th argument is the *l*-th premise of the *k*-th argument.”

Figure 10: Structure of argument explaining AfD's success in the 2017 election to the Bundestag



By examining the schematic representation of the argument represented in Figure 10 in view of the classifications of arguments above, we can see that the overall argument explaining the 2017 election success of the AfD is built upon particular arguments of three types.

First, the overall argument involves four *single* arguments: (a) an argument inferring depletion of democracy (C_1) from the loss of control by Germany's state policy (P_1); (b) an argument inferring the economization of the social (C_2) from the gain of control of German capital (P_2); (c) an argument inferring right-wing populist orientations (C_5) from political alienation (P_5); (d) an argument inferring the devaluation of the "useless" (C_6) from economistic attitudes (P_6).

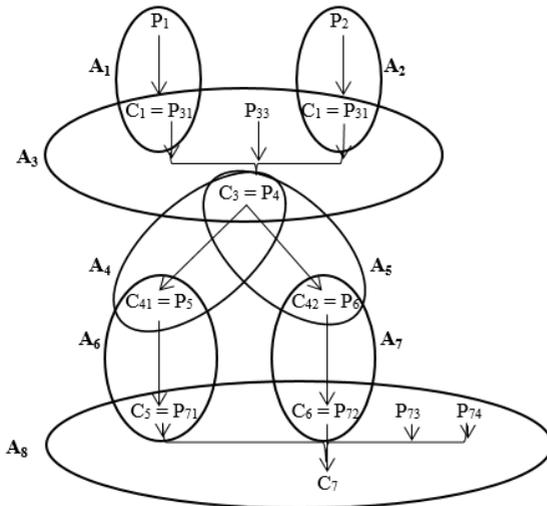
Second, the overall argument involves *linked* arguments, as is, for example the inference of social disintegration (C_3) from a combination of depletion of

democracy (P_{31}) and economization of the social (P_{32}). Using this type of argument it is possible to express that the category of social disintegration has here, with respect to the depletion of democracy and the economization of the social, the status of a “bundling function.”²⁵

Third, the overall argument involves one argument that is of the *divergent* nature for the inference of political alienation and distrust of political elites (C_{41}) and of economic attitudes and unconditional flexibility (C_{42}) from social disintegration (P_4). This type of argument enables one to express that the latter has as effects attitudes in the forms described by the conclusions C_{41} and C_{42} .

By combining Figures 7 through 9 with the representation of the explanation of AfD’s success in Figure 10, one can express this explanation in terms of the constituent arguments as represented in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Explanation of the 2017 election success of the AfD by means of eight interconnected particular arguments A_1 through A_8



One can readily see from Figure 11 that the explanation of the 2017 election success of the AfD presented above is set up by a chain of eight interconnected particular arguments which together form two *coordinative* arguments (from A_1

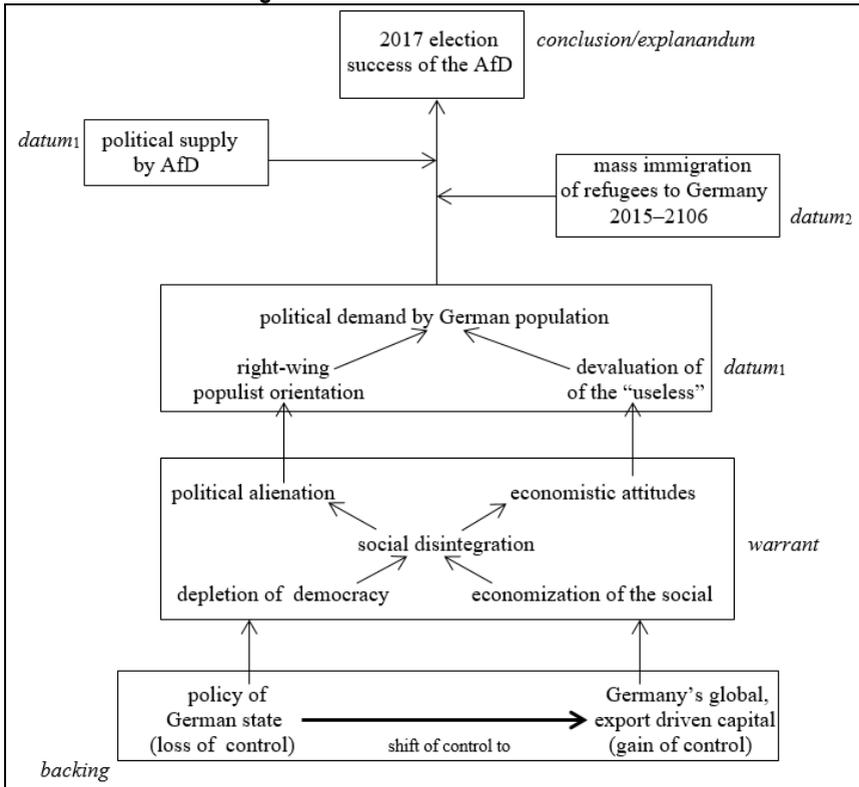
²⁵ This status of the category of social disintegration was brought to my attention by Wolfgang Heitmeyer in an email communication.

and A_2 to A_3 ; from A_6 and A_7 to A_8) and four *subordinative* arguments (from A_3 to A_4 ; from A_3 to A_5 ; from A_4 to A_6 ; from A_5 to A_7).

6 The Social-Science Nature of the Explanation of the 2017 Election Success of the AfD

The representation of the structure of argument in Figure 1 can also be used to reconstruct the argument that yields as its conclusion and explanandum the 2017 election success of the AfD. This representation is, in addition, also suitable for highlighting the social-science nature of that explanation. By applying **Toulmin's** terminology of *data*, *conclusion*, *warrant*, and *backing* to Figure 10, the latter can be redesigned as follows:

Figure 12: Toulminian elements in the explanation of AfD's success in the 2017 election to the Bundestag



Here, employing **Toulmin's** terminology, datum₁, datum₂, and datum₃ jointly make up the first explanans for the conclusion/explanandum. A deeper justification of this explanation can be performed by turning the two constitutive components of datum₁—namely, right-wing populist orientation and the devaluation of the “useless,” into two separate explananda. To each of these explananda **Heitmeyer** assigns the respective explanans: to the former, political alienation, and to the latter, economic attitudes. I regard these two explanantia as part of what **Toulmin** labels *warrant*.

Into this warrant belongs in addition, the category of social disintegration which has the status of a common explanans for both political alienation and economic attitudes. Still in the framework of this warrant, that common explanans has the status of a “bundled” explanandum whose explanans is set up by a combination of description of depletion of democracy and description of economization of the social. Finally, each of these elements is assigned its own explanans at a level that is the most ultimate and most fundamental; I designated this level using **Toulmin's** term *backing*.

The methodological characterization of the explanation of the 2017 election success of the AfD as a network set up by explanans-explanandum-pairs enables to characterize the *social-science* nature of this explanation. This explanation stands at its first, most superficial level for a description of an event as a consequence of the action of social actors of a certain type in specific social circumstances: the election-behavior of a part of the German population due to (a) its right-wing populist orientation, (b) its stand of devaluating the “useless,” (c) its acceptance of the political offerings of AfD, and (d) its impression of the mass immigration of refugees.

A deeper seated explanation is provided by a complex that describes certain objective political processes (depletion of democracy and economization of the social) to which the actors are subjected, combined with description of their subjective perception (political alienation, economic attitudes) of these processes.

The ultimate level of explanation is that wherein the objective politico-economic processes are described. By introducing this description, **Heitmeyer's** explanation of the 2017 election success of the AfD reaches its end-point. According to this explanation, made up of three interlinked levels, the warrant fulfills the role of a mediating link between the level of data and the level of backing. The necessity of providing such a mediating link in the explanation of the 2017 election success of the AfD was described by **Heitmeyer** in the following *methodological* reflection (2018, p. 229):

At this point, a methodological remark is required on the development of the societal and political climate in the Federal Republic of Germany, on the political supply of the authoritarian national radicalism [by the AfD] as well as on the connection between these two elements ... I have pointed out that the events with consequences threatening the open society and liberal democracy are to be understood and explained only, if the preceding processes are investigated. To these grave events belongs the success of the authoritarian national radicalism—most clearly visible in the 2017 entry of the AfD into the Bundestag. In order to explain these processes I combined different theoretical approaches into one framework of analysis. This framework should be used for the representation of relations between authoritarian capitalism, the processes of social disintegration, and depletion of democracy in the political system. Only by considering all of these factors does it become understandable how the AfD could have acquired such a societal and parliamentary influence. Here it should be emphasized again that what one faces here is not a mere “derivation” of these political consequences from structural developments in the economic or political systems. Of central importance here are the experiences and patterns of perception with which human beings react to the respective structural developments. The attractiveness of authoritarian temptations does not arise directly from the economy, but instead arises only by the mediation of the named reactions and processing of crises. Without these mediation-processes it would be impossible to explain the emergence and strengthening ... of the AfD.

Methodological Conclusions

From the point of view of the three methodological parameters stated in the Introduction, the results of a reconstruction of the argument explaining AfD's 2017 election success to the Bundestag can be summarized according to the two points that follow.

First, as to the value of the parameter *structure of the whole argument*, this explanation involves single, linked, and divergent arguments but not convergent

arguments. The explanation also involves an intertwining of arguments, representing subordinative arguments and coordinative arguments but not multiple arguments.

Second, as to the value of the parameter *modal character of the conclusion/explanandum* of the explanation of AfD's 2017 election success it holds that the conclusion/explanandum expresses a *necessity of a practical type* in the sense that the party's success was a necessary outcome of developments that in turn, were the results of previous social actions. If these actions would not have been taken, say the Agenda 2010 had not been introduced or the globalization had not taken the path of a massive disempowering of the German nation-state, then the 2017 election success of the AfD could have been prevented. It is in this sense that **Wieg**el characterized the rise of the AfD by titling his book (2018) *A Preventable Rise*.

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