

Townhall

OPINION

Is Germany's AfD a Libertarian Party?



Rainer Zitelmann
Dec 20, 2025

The opinions expressed by columnists are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of Townhall.com.

According to many polls, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is currently the strongest party in Germany. But where does it stand economically? Alice Weidel, co-chair of the AfD, presented her party as “libertarian” in a chat with Elon Musk. But strong forces within the party are strictly anti-capitalist, particularly in the AfD’s strongholds in eastern Germany.

“If we don’t vanquish the current financial capitalism, we will run this wonderful planet into the ground” – this quote comes from the Thuringian AfD leader Björn Höcke. “We are not on the side of the rich and greedy,” Höcke says in his speeches, polemicizing against those “who have a meeting in Tokyo in the morning, then arrive in Singapore to play golf in the afternoon, only to drink their latte macchiato in a deckchair on the sun terrace in St. Moritz the following evening.” The famous Thuringian AfD politician believes that “the super-rich are trying to exert informal control of the world.”

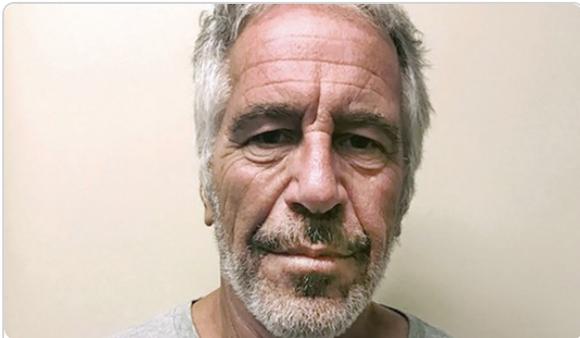
Like his party colleague Maximilian Krah, Höcke describes international investors as “locusts,” a term that originated in the left-wing discourse in Germany.

Benedikt Kaiser, the mastermind of the right-wing anti-capitalists in the AfD, published a programmatic book, “Solidary Patriotism: The Social Question from the Right.” He quotes extensive left-wing authors with approval – from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to Thomas Piketty. His enemies, on the other hand, are the “market radicals,” “neoliberals,” and “libertarians” such as

Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, and Friedrich August von Hayek, all of whom are portrayed in an extreme negative light.

Kaiser's populist social policy demands are indistinguishable from those of the left-wing parties in Germany: he wants income tax to be increased for top earners and the wealth tax to be reintroduced.

Recommended



When the Memes Are Pouring in Regarding the Epstein Files, You Know the Dems Missed the Mark

Matt Vespa



Uh Oh: Brown University Student Claims School President Is Lying About This Part of the Shooting

Matt Vespa

Related:

ELON MUSK

GERMANY

According to these right-wing anti-capitalists, parts of the economy should be nationalized. Götz Kubitschek, also a member of Höcke's circle and one of the pioneers of the anti-capitalist right in the AfD, demands "that the state's job is to ensure basic services in the areas of transport, banking, communication, education, health, energy, housing, culture and security as a state, and not just by creating a regulatory framework for private providers, who are primarily interested in the choicest morsels." And Kaiser believes that consideration should be given to nationalizing all sectors of the economy that are vital to the country's development, such as heavy industry, chemicals, and transport.

Electricity plants, waterworks, and so on, he writes, should not be operated privately either.

Last year, Maximilian Krah was the AfD's lead candidate for the European elections. In a "manifesto" called "Politics from the right," he laid out his policy aims, including on the economy, and highlighted what he describes as a constant tension between right-wing politics and the unfettered market. The market, he continues, shows "no regard for tradition, nature or identity" and has no "human dignity." And that, according to Krah, is why right-wing parties should resolutely oppose "market radicalism." His "manifesto" is dotted with terms typically associated with anti-capitalist, anti-consumerism criticism, for example, when he attacks the "trash and filth of the throwaway society."

Krah is also critical of globalization. Trade restrictions are necessary, he says, because "products carry political and cultural messages." As an example, Krah cites Coca-Cola, which, he claims, represents the "American way of life" and thus promotes "cultural transformation." The political right, he proposes, should also not shy away from opposing "elite migration," by which he means the board members of companies who are not of German descent.

Krah also sets his sights on "plutocratic capitalism." In his opinion, it is necessary to tackle the scourge of the super-rich, especially when the accumulation of wealth – as with internet pioneers – has taken place in one generation. The goals of these super-rich are "mostly opaque and ultimately sinister," he explains.

In a new book about Höcke, the German journalist Frederik Schindler notes that there are two wings within the AfD – pro- and anti-free-market. "At the moment," says Schindler, "the conflict is simmering beneath the surface." However, the conflict between the AfD's anti-capitalists and market economists will erupt again, at the latest, with the adoption of a new basic program, which is planned for 2027. The AfD is contradictory in its approach to everyday

politics, as evidenced, for example, by its current tax program, which contains many proposals that libertarians would readily support. At the same time, with its calls for a “70 percent state pension,” it even manages to surpass the left-wing parties in terms of the unworldliness of its economic policy.

The AfD’s success in elections and polls is currently serving to hold these opposing forces together: They have Weidel, who is proud of her relationship with Elon Musk and even describes her party to him as “libertarian,” and Höcke, with his vehement attacks on the super-rich and capitalism, and then, at a local level, the AfD in the state of Brandenburg, protesting against Musk’s Tesla factory.

Dr. Rainer Zitelmann is the author of “[Hitler’s National Socialism](#).”