



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on December 20, 2023

## Euroskeptic German AfD Party Obtains Historic Win

On Sunday, December 17, the Euroskeptic and anti-globalist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party, or Alternative for Germany, won a mayoral election, making history in the town of Pirna. Residents of Pirna, a town of 37,000 located in Saxony, ignored the state intelligence agency's recent [designation](#) of the party as "extremist" and voted AfD candidate Tim Lochner into office.

After finishing first by an almost 10-point margin in the town's [initial round of voting](#) late last month, Lochner, a 53-year-old master carpenter who is not a member of AfD but ran under its banner, again outdid rivals from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Free Voters in the second round of voting on December 17, obtaining 38.5 percent of the vote as per the final tally.

CDU candidate Kathrin Dollinger-Knuth, with the support of the SPD (Social Democratic Party), Greens, and Left Party, only managed to secure 31.4 percent of the vote, while Ralf Thiele, who launched his campaign as a Free Voters candidate but later went independent, garnered 30.1 percent.

On the evening of December 17, after all of the votes were counted, Lochner, who has ruffled the feathers of Germany's establishment parties and press by highlighting his country's ongoing population exchange, [voiced his gratitude](#) to supporters and pledged that "I will see through the seven years," elaborating that he would work to solve problems with "calmness."

In a [post](#) to X, previously Twitter, AfD co-leader Alice Weidel characterized Lochner's victory as a historic moment. "Congratulations to Pirna! #AfD candidate Tim #Lochner was elected the first AfD mayor there, far ahead of his competitors. Thanks to the many voters who made this historic result possible for the AfD!" she penned.

Thiele declared that there was a "countrywide trend" that proved that the AfD was "becoming stronger."

Not surprisingly, Germany's left-liberal parties expressed disappointment and upset with the AfD's triumph, claiming that the victory was a clear indicator that German democracy was under siege.

Reacting to Lochner's win, Left Party politician Clara Büniger [tweeted](#):

Advent, Advent, democracy is burning. A mayor who ran for the AfD, which was recently classified as "certainly right-wing extremist" in Saxony. All democratic parties must now act together. Civil society in #Pirna needs support.



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The state association of the Greens in Saxony, just like the Left Party's Bunger, rehashed the usual leftist script that the AfD was somehow anti-democratic.

Writing on X, the Greens declared:

We stand firmly on the side of the democratic forces in #Pirna and the region. We must now do everything we can to strengthen our coexistence and strengthen trust in our democracy again.

Earlier in December, the president of the Saxon branch of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), Dirk-Martin Christian, alleged that the AfD had officially been classified as extremist due to its "anti-constitutional agenda." The new legal status would permit the BfV to mobilize surveillance and intelligence means to gather information about AfD activities without limits.

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, who previously [wrote](#) for a far-left antifa magazine, the press organ for the Bund der Antifaschistinnen und Antifaschisten (VVN-BdA) (which has been deemed as a left-wing extremist organization by Bavaria's state intelligence agency), urged German firms to "take a clear stance" against the AfD, igniting sharp criticism from the party.

Faeser, who during her two-year tenure has witnessed a [steep rise in violent crime in Germany](#) and has [instructed](#) the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) to loosen security checks for asylum seekers, posited without providing substantiation that the "climate of division and resentment that the AfD is fomenting is deterring highly qualified workers and skilled workers from abroad."

The AfD's landmark victory in Saxony signified the third of its kind for the party, following Robert Sesselmann's [first-place win](#) in district council elections in Thuringia's Sonneberg district and [Hannes Loth's victory](#) in the mayoral election in the town of Raguhn-Jenitz in Saxony-Anhalt in July 2023.

Responding to his triumph in July, Loth, a farmer who studied agricultural engineering, admitted, "I am totally surprised, flabbergasted, and I would like to thank all voters."

He added that the result was due to "a symbiosis of my good work here on the city council and the positive mood for the AfD in Germany at the moment."

The AfD has enjoyed rising support among German voters in recent months, at a time when the approval ratings of all three parties in the country's ruling "traffic light" coalition have hit record lows. In October, the AfD noted its best-ever performance in a western German state, garnering 18.4 percent of the vote in the Hesse regional election.

An opinion poll by YouGov conducted in early December involving 2,119 respondents indicated that most Germans unfavorably regard German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's performance thus far. The survey disclosed that respondents also disapprove of Scholz's traffic-light coalition government.

Based on the YouGov survey findings, some 74 percent of respondents said Scholz was doing a poor job, with only 20 percent viewing his performance in a positive light. As for the entire coalition government, 73 percent said they were unhappy with it, while only 22 percent responded that they were satisfied. This is the worst monthly figure since the coalition came to power.

Some 77 percent said they placed little or no trust in the way Scholz was governing Germany, a figure that reached 60 percent among supporters of the chancellors' own Social Democratic party.

When questioned about which politician they would like to assume the role of chancellor in the country,



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15 percent named Bavarian Governor Markus Soeder, with the AfD co-chairwoman and leader of the party's parliamentary group, Alice Weidel, obtaining the support of another 12 percent. Sahra Wagenknecht, who was a prominent member of the Left Party but announced back in October that she would form a new party, garnered 8 percent. Other political figures lagged behind this trio.

Similarly, in early December, ARD-DeutschlandTrend portrayed a bleak picture for Scholz, with just 20 percent of respondents assessing his work as satisfactory, and only 27 percent saying that he can do the job at all.

Meanwhile, 82 percent of Germans were dissatisfied with the performance of the country's traffic-light coalition government. Of the ministers, a slight majority of respondents (52 percent) ranked defense chief Boris Pistorius favorably. Other ministers did not obtain the backing of over 38 percent of respondents.

To make matters worse for Scholz, opposition parties have lambasted the German government for its 2024 budget, which has been widely perceived to increase inflation and mount a larger burden on households amid the German government's desire for expanding aid to Ukraine.

On December 13, Germany's three-party coalition of the social democratic SPD, the Greens, and the liberal FDP [publicized](#) an agreement regarding next year's budget after a constitutional court ruling that [obstructed](#) the government's financial plans for the time being, at least.

The court ruling resulted in a 17 billion euro hole in the budget, which the government has opted to fill through cuts and tax hikes. "The government will stick to its goals ... but we must do so with less money which means cuts and savings," Scholz said.

Government plans divulge that the so-called climate and transformation fund, which bankrolls measures such as the renovation of old housing stock and oil and gas heating systems, would be reduced by 12 billion euros in 2024. However, a rise in the CO<sub>2</sub> surcharge on fuel, heating oil, and gas will be [increased](#) faster than previously intended.

In response to government budget plans, Martin Reichard, a member of the Bundestag for the AfD, tweeted:

Gasoline, electricity, food, oil and gas, everything that is essential for life will become even more expensive in 2024. Once again, the red-green lunatics are squeezing the citizens. Climate protection, support for Ukraine, spending on mass migration and the so-called citizens' allowance, 47% of which is paid to migrants (especially Ukrainians) are more important than the welfare of Germany!



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