

Germany's Struggle with Rising Far-Right Sentiments and the Implications for Democratic Integrity

The recent protests in Germany, escalating on 20 Jan 2024, mark a turning point in the country's socio-political scene, showing widespread disapproval of the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party. Triggered by the AfD's clandestine meetings in November 2023, discussing the deportation of "non-assimilated" populations, the protests have drawn participants from various societal groups, reflecting Chancellor Olaf Scholz's criticism of these plans as contrary to democratic values. This unrest coincides with the parliament's approval of a new, inclusive citizenship law, indicating a deepening ideological split in German society.

The AfD, initially a eurosceptic party in 2013 and entering the Bundestag in 2017, has risen to 23% in polls, significantly up from 10.3% in the 2021 federal election. Its far-right views, including deportation discussions, have sparked public outrage. The party is also linked to the Identitarian Movement, a European ethno-nationalist group. AfD's use of provocative social media strategies, similar to former US President Donald Trump's tactics, has further ignited public anger.

The German government's introduction of the inclusive citizenship law, a day before the protests escalated, serves as a response to the far-right's rise. The law, easing naturalization and allowing multiple citizenships, reflects the government's commitment to a diverse society and counters far-right extremism. However, AfD's growth post-2021 shows a segment of the population leaning towards nationalist and anti-immigration views.

The ongoing protests, mainly in urban areas, pose risks of supply chain disruptions, business impacts, and travel delays due to potential road closures and clashes between protesters, counter protesters, and law enforcement. Entities in Germany should prepare for these disruptions to protect their operations and personnel.