

THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Number 150 • July / August 2017

THE NATIONAL INTEREST

nationalinterest.org

Number 150 • July/Aug 2017

Hal Brands and Eric Edelman **Global Disorder**
Zalmay Khalilzad **Congagement with China**
Dov S. Zakheim **Citizen Clem**
Paul J. Saunders **Washington's Warnings**
Anatol Lieven **The New Nationalism**



THE END OF ALLIANCE

Michael Lind

EDITOR *Jacob Heilbrunn*

The National Interest • 1025 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. • Suite 1200 • Washington, D.C. 20036
Phone (202) 467-4884 • Fax (202) 887-5222 • editor@nationalinterest.org

The contents of *The National Interest* are copyrighted. ©2017 The National Interest, Inc.
All rights reserved. Reproduction and distribution of this material is permitted only
with the express written consent of *The National Interest*.

Teutonic Tremors

By Thomas Meaney

In Stuttgart I was awoken by a large man outside my hotel window wearing a niqab. “I am the protest for the AfD / and that is totally ok!” went the hoarse refrain. It was the annual convention for the Alternative für Deutschland, Germany’s no longer fledgling far-right party. More than four thousand of the faithful had converged in Stuttgart to make it the largest rally of its kind in Germany since the war. (Unlike other German political parties, which send delegates to conventions, the AfD leadership, true to its populist credo, had invited all members to attend.) For AfDers passing by, the niqab man from Pforzheim was a *Charlie Hebdo* caricature come alive: a bit of a chore for the media-relations department, perhaps, but nevertheless a rude emblem of the cause. As I walked across the Stuttgart Messe from my hotel to the convention hall draped in the party’s sky-blue banners, the AfDers came under fire from young Greens and Antifascist protesters stationed in the adjacent parking lot, lobbing cake and packets of excrement over the security perimeter. “Blue is the new Brown!” they shouted. “Voting AfD is so 1933!” An Austrian venture capitalist directed me toward some cover, as we followed the AfD leaders through a thick row of bushes up an embankment into the main hall. “AfD forced

to cut path through bushes. What poor rabbits!” was the comment of the *Tageszeitung*. “At least the bushes were German bushes.”

As a right-wing party that is likely to gain seats in the Bundestag in this September’s federal election, the AfD is more than a novelty in postwar German politics. In a country dominated by Angela Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU), however, there are only so many inroads it can make before its more viable platforms are cannibalized by the CDU. Ever since Merkel was caught unawares on her right flank, she has been speaking AfD talking points—from the proposed burqa ban to the swifter banishment of undesirable refugees—and thus far has gamely contained the threat. Merkel benefits, too, from previous practice down the slalom course to the chancellorship, which requires a hard-right turn on bended knee for her sister party’s constituents in Bavaria—where she tightly smiles alongside its local chieftain, Horst Seehofer, a man who has publicly accused her of conducting a “reign of injustice.” Then comes a soft slide to the center for the rest of the year in order to blur the miniscule differences between her party and the Social Democrats. What makes the AfD upstarts irritating for Merkel is that they make this blurring maneuver more difficult.

Inside the vast, hangar-like space of the Stuttgart Messe, the AfDers were already tipsy with the feeling of making history. The Alternative für Deutschland is a party of elbow patches and ascots, but also one of

Thomas Meaney is the fellow in residence at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam. He has reported from Germany for the *London Review of Books*, the *Guardian* and the *New Yorker*.

leather bodysuits and high-and-tight haircuts. Milling about the breakfast tables were men in *Trachten* jackets, surgically sculpted women, a Trappist monk, a child on an electronic scooter, and a man in a green uniform modeled on the one his ancestor wore in Blücher's army at Waterloo ("Napoleon was the beginning of this EU shit"). The atmosphere was warm and burgherly, with a slightly forced sense of camaraderie. Conspiracy theories were politely passed around as if they were snaps of newborn children. There was the reaffirming presence of right-wing neighbors, brothers and sisters from Austria and Switzerland and German-speaking enclaves beyond. In a corner of the room I saw Václav Klaus standing alone, testing the coffee. Fed up with the staid rituals of Germany's *Altparteien*, "the old parties," the AfDers were preparing themselves for unknown territory: an open-floor debate over issues, and with it, the prospect of the sort of political exhilaration the rest of Germany regards in bad taste. A YouTube video AfDers like to circulate shows Merkel pulling the German flag out of the hands of one of her colleagues at a Christian Democrat rally, disposing it out of view of the camera and giving him a reproaching shake of the head. In Stuttgart, the German national flag and the AfD flag were everywhere, rivaled only by the awkward presence of placards for Turkish Airlines, the refugee carrier of choice.

The convention was not merely intended to channel grievances and rage. It was also meant to prove to the German press that the AfD was not a flash phenomenon, but a professional, fully functioning political party. To that purpose, the AfD leaders onstage lapsed into reflexive procedural frenzy—*Vereinsmeierei*—about how to conduct the voting: voting about whether to vote with electronic devices or a show of hands. A 1,250-page party program had been circulated. Clauses appeared on a giant blue screen, and AfDers queued in two lines

for the microphones to make changes and offer amendments. "Burqas and hijabs do not belong in Germany," read one clause. "But," said a plaintive man in plaid, "we cannot just ban all headgear—handkerchiefs on women's heads is the traditional German style—our grandmothers wore those!" "We need to make it specific: only burqas and niqabs should be banned—we need to be precise in our language." Germany's status as a country of immigrants was roundly rejected. "We should be a land of skilled immigrants," shouted one man. Mild applause. "We should be a land of no immigration except special immigration that we want," said another man. Raucous foot-thumping. Already a few hours in, the appetite for debate was quelled. The AfDers waited for their pet issues to come on the screen, which made them brush other people's pet issues away from the microphone as soon as possible. We were moving at a brisk, auction-style pace. In the controversial categories, the more radical proposals rose to the surface as if obeying some hidden political law. There was disagreement over the merits of market reforms, the NATO alliance and the public funding of German theater, but one clause garnered no dissenters; it was the tie that bound: "Islam does not belong in Germany."

Though it is hardly a difficult feat, leadership of the Alternative für Deutschland has more eye-catching creatures than the rest of the German political establishment combined. There is the gamine party cochair, Frauke Petry, and her husband, Marcus Pretzell, the AfD cohead of North-Rhine Westphalia, who were once treated as enterprising transgressors by the German tabloids. But now, in their effort to turn the party in a more "realistic" direction to woo "moderate" voters, they have been beaten back by a portion of the party that wants the AfD to be a "fundamental opposition" party that does not seek to soften its



tone in order to make alliances, but rather to force other parties to toe its hard line. Petry likes to quote Kant, cites the studies of the Oxford economist Paul Collier and claims to have developed her views on Islam from deep teenage reading of V. S. Naipaul. Pretzell has called for more Germans to own firearms—which confuses almost everyone—and is an expert at worrying the elderly about the EU’s plans to abolish paper money. Then there is Alexander Gauland, the face of the “fundamental” opposition camp. He is a disgruntled CDU exile, prone to regular Trumpian outbursts, who holds a personal vendetta against Merkel for crushing his rebel CDU faction that secretly plotted against her. Together with the fresher face of Alice Weidel, a former Goldman Sachs foot soldier in China, who is the AfD’s latest sop to its pro-business constituents, Gauland is the candidate for the AfD’s bid to enter the Bundestag in the general election in September. Holding up the party’s base is Beatrix von Storch, an AfD representative to the EU, whose grandfather, Lutz Krosigk, was the short-lived Nazi chancellor after Hitler. A duchess of the House of

Oldenberg who clings to her aristocratic roots and wears riding outfits at her public appearances, she is the party’s talk-show warrior. The AfD’s resident Islam expert is Hans-Thomas Tillschneider, a small man in his thirties, who was born in Romania and who has published peer-reviewed articles in American journals on Koranic jurisprudence. The house philosopher is Marc Jongen, an assistant professor of aesthetics at the University of Karlsruhe, who was born in Italy (“South Tyrol” on his curriculum vitae) and became a German citizen five years ago.

Finally, there is Björn Höcke. A former history and gym teacher, he is the AfD’s steely-eyed Robespierre, whose yearning to normalize Germany’s Nazi past makes the more practical AfDers perpetually try to purge him from their ranks. As Höcke entered the hall late on the first day of the convention in Stuttgart, he was loudly cheered by his faction. An avowed anti-Atlanticist who claims “our once respected army has deteriorated into a de-gendered and multi-culturalized response force in the service of the USA,” Höcke worries openly about the dilution of the ethnic German

Image: Frauke Petry.

population due to the “reproductive strategies” of Africans. In a country where the average birth rate is 1.38 children per family, no one can fault the AfD leadership for not doing its part to perpetuate the German Volk. Höcke has four children; the AfD’s other co-chair, Jörg Meuthen, has five; Petry and Pretzell recently added a ninth child to their combined eight, in time for the federal elections in September.

Like most political parties, the AfD leadership can be roughly divided between opportunists and ideologues. Petry and Pretzell pride themselves on their entrepreneurial instincts and wish they could run the party more like a business. Their faction of the party grasps the basics of Facebook and Twitter, has much of the youth wing behind it and is determined to get as many seats as possible in the Bundestag, with the eventual prospect of joining coalitions. They are neoliberal fellow travelers, admirers of Schröder’s political savvy, and were against Brexit until they were for it (rather touchingly, they first looked up to the Tories as experienced elders in the noble work of destroying the EU from within, until the Tories accidentally ejected themselves from Brussels altogether). Solemnity now replaces laughter when Trump’s name is mentioned. Petry and Pretzell differ from the opportunists in other alt-right parties, such as UKIP, in the quality of their desperation. Whereas the several UKIP leaders and high-level Tory sympathizers could gamble on a populist program, assured of comfortable lives regardless of the result, for Petry and Pretzell politics is an existential affair: failure means facing lawsuits (that their political office, under German law, currently protects them against), possible financial ruin and, all too likely, obscurity.

The ideologues of the AfD are known as the “Erfurt” faction, ever since they published a resolution in the Thuringian capital in March 2015 that sought to undo

what they saw as the creeping normalization of the party. Centered around Höcke and Gauland, with Meuthen as their unassuming front man, the ideologues of the AfD reject any attempt to institutionalize distance between the AfD and openly extreme-right and Nazi parties, such as the National Democratic Party (NDP), as well as street movements, such as PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamicisation of the West). Typically, they justify these relations using 1968-style rhetoric, calling for openness, plurality, tolerance and deviance. In terms of the economy, Höcke and Gauland’s faction is hostile to free-market principles, as well as the European Union, however much it facilitates Germany’s regional economic dominance. Höcke calls for, in echt Nazi diction, “the organic economy.” It is not so much the implosion of the Third Reich that the Erfurters lament, but rather the terms imposed upon them by the Allies. For Höcke, 1945 was not very different from Versailles: a people forced to give up too much for what was essentially a bogus form of independence brokered and overseen by two superpowers. Unlike Petry’s faction, the Erfurt faction does not need to dog whistle in public; they just put their lips together and blow.

On my second day in Stuttgart, I found the spacious and well-stocked pressroom on the second floor of the Messe, where many of the reporters were watching the AfD proceedings through glass, at a comfortable distance. We were surprised to see that the anti-1968 appeals used to gin up the crowd got louder shouts of affirmation than the anti-Islam jeers. Nevertheless, it was difficult not to notice how Islamophobia was the glue that bound various factions together and kept the room on the same footing. Islam, as Mary McCarthy once said of anti-Semitism in America, also provides some AfDers with



their only access to intellectual life. There were men all around the room eager to lecture about the secret network of imams (whose portraits they carried on index cards), or the plot by George Soros to retroactively avenge the Nazis who destroyed his childhood by overwhelming the continent with Muslims. But despite the occasional chuckles at absurdities proposed by the AfDers, there was little sense of how the mainstream German journalists themselves had contributed to the populist phenomenon below, in particular its anti-Muslim elements. In the 2000s, the mainstream *Der Spiegel* ran covers that mirror the arguments and iconography of the current far-right popular magazine, *Compact*.

AfDers can legitimately point to the fact that they are being scorned by the same press that pushed the same clash-of-civilizations mind-set until very recently, and still does in mildly more subtle forms. For party members in the East, where there are very few Muslim immigrants, many of the earliest and most enduring images of Islam that they carry in their heads came from the mainstream German press. Nevertheless, there is still widespread confidence in German media circles that the AfD can

be crushed. “We—whoever we exactly are—we have the newspapers, the schools, the tv, the cultural institutions,” the *Zeit* writer Bernd Ulrich told me. He continued:

It’s not easy for my younger colleagues to understand, but we have been here before in the 1970s and 80s and we—feminists, gays, liberals—we won. Now we’re the “liberal hegemons” or whatever you want to call us. The question is: what does fighting mean today?

The most curious lapse in the German media’s coverage of the AfD concerns the story of its origins. It is almost universally acknowledged, even by the AfD’s own party leadership, that the Alternative für Deutschland started out as a “professors’ party,” founded in 2014 by Bernd Lucke, a mild-mannered economics professor at Hamburg. In his own telling, Lucke started the AfD with a group of like-minded academic and journalist colleagues who felt betrayed by Merkel’s second extension of debt relief to Greece in 2012, and her claim that no “alternative” was possible. The AfD initially presented itself as the party of fiscal sanity who feared the “structural majority” of debt-



ridden countries in the eurozone, a threat rendered more real by the arrival of Macron in the Élysée. And yet, in addition to these concerns, the anti-immigrant, antirefugee seeds were there in the party from the beginning. Hans-Olaf Henkel, Lucke's firmest and highest-profile supporter (he was the former president of the Federation of German Industry) and the personal funder of the initial AfD campaign, is a long-time *Islamkritik* and a supporter of Thilo Sarrazin. A former board member of the German Bundesbank, Sarrazin published the best-selling 2010 tract, *Germany Abolishes Itself*, which warned of Turkish immigrants' innate mental deficiencies and called for safeguarding the German Volk from genetic contamination. When Petry and Pretzell wrested control of the party from Lucke and Henkel, it was more a change of party habitus than of party substance. The danger of the AfD for German politics comes less from the radical-right faction of Höcke and Gauland—who speak to the already converted—than from the burgherly imprimatur that Lucke and Henkel managed to stamp on the party, which has now been expanded by more skillful operatives like Petry and Weidel. Their first

goal is not to make xenophobia into policy but to make xenophobia more *salonfähig*—publicly utterable and acceptable.

It is tempting to compare the AfD to the right-wing “flash” parties that flared across the German political landscape in the 1980s and 90s, and comforting to think it will peter out in the same fashion. But the party has several qualities that distinguish it from its postwar right-wing predecessors. Most critically, it has no former Nazis of 1940s vintage in the leadership, or even in its upper ranks. Also, while the AfD owes much of its strength to the former East, it is by no means a regional party. It has also appeared at a much more propitious time than its predecessors. The “grand coalition” between the SPD and CDU has anesthetized the bases of both parties, making them each at times vulnerable to attack on the right and left flanks. Merkel's trademark strategy of adopting popular SPD policies as her own has had the effect of moving the CDU to the center, leaving it exposed on the right. “Never allow a democratically legitimate party right of the CSU,” warned Franz Josef Strauss thirty years ago—and with good reason. But

Merkel has since swiftly corrected course, and adjusted her policies rightward in response to the AfD's proposals. As long as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan does not reopen the gates to refugees before September, and as long as there is no major terrorist attack on German soil, the AfD may require more imaginative maneuvers than fearmongering and cultural resentment if it wants to regain its political momentum.

But another unique characteristic of the AfD speaks to its staying power in German politics. The party has actively entered into the state, in ways unthinkable for far-right-wing parties of the past. AfD members already occupy minor and major bureaucratic and administrative positions across the land. The police spokesman for the state of Thuringia, Ringo Mühlmann, sits on the local AfD Board. The chief public prosecutor of Berlin, Roman Reusch, is an active member of the party. These men, invaluable

for the pragmatic program of the party, give the impression that the AfD is more than a mere protest party and that is capable of administrative burdens. When I asked Petry what her model for the party strategy was, she pointed to the example of the Greens and then corrected herself: "But of course we don't drag our heels like the Greens, and we'll learn from their mistakes."

The AfD hardly operates in a vacuum. There is a constellation of smaller far-right political formations—Die Rechte, Die Freiheit, Der Dritte Weg and the Reichsbürgerbewegung, to name only a few—that surround it. There is also a series of amorphous street movements that have been fueled by economic grievances, and ignited by anti-refugee sentiments, which feed into the AfD membership. The most well-known is PEGIDA, founded in 2009 by the petty criminal and house burglar Lutz Bachmann. It was initially aimed against pro-Kurdish demon-



strations in Dresden. Bachmann was alarmed to find a debate about the Turkish state being waged between rival Turkish groups on the streets of his own city: wasn't the monopoly of public disturbance supposed to be in German hands? The small marches he organized in downtown Dresden—conveniently, the same sites of protests against the collapsing GDR—soon expanded into hundreds, and at some rallies, thousands of people. “Winter is Coming Merkel,” they chant, with placards that depict the chancellor as Hitler or as a Muslim. “*Wir sind das Volk*,” they shout, appropriating the same cheer that was used in 1989 against the GDR. Petry the *streber* and Bachmann the agitator have never gotten along, but they are careful to speak respectfully about each other's organizations, since at least half of PEGIDA supports the AfD.

More than any other major country in western Europe, the Germans have been successful at containing right-wing extremism at the parliamentary level in the postwar period. Each side of the divided Germany dealt with the political inclusion of former Nazis in a different way. The East Germans created a special party for them called the NDPD, which served as a halfway house for former Nazis of middling rank who could be assured of a stable status in the GDR, though without the promise of rising high. In the West, the political opportunities for former Nazis were boundless, and the CDU, the CSU and the FDP swelled with their ranks (while the intelligence agencies overflowed with them). In response to the events of 1968, the NDP—an openly fascist party—was created by former Nazis. But despite some early electoral successes and political pressuring, the NDP now mostly functions like a wildlife preserve for the extreme-right scene, where the German state can more easily keep track of it. In January, the Federal Constitutional Court declared the NDP to be too small to be dangerous, a

shrewd ruling that sought to deny the party any martyrdom that might have come had they outlawed it.

The intellectual origins of the AfD's ideological wing can be traced back to the tumult of the 1960s, but it is not found in the circles that founded NDP, but rather in a group that would come to call itself “conservative revolutionaries.” The key figure was the historian and journalist Armin Mohler. Born in Switzerland in 1920, Mohler had failed to persuade the Nazi authorities to take him into the SS during World War II. After serving prison for deserting the Swiss army, Mohler returned to Germany, where he completed a doctoral dissertation at Heidelberg University under Karl Jaspers. He later served as a secretary for his hero, Ernst Jünger, and went on to be a Paris correspondent for *Die Zeit*. His dissertation, later expanded into a book, *The Conservative Revolution in Germany 1918–1932*, has become an urtext for extreme-right German intellectuals. In it, Mohler uncovers what he takes to be the lost conservative and rightist traditions of Weimar Germany that were obliterated by the success of National Socialism. Many of these “revolutionaries”—Ernst Jünger, Otto Strasser, Claus Stauffenberg—supported the National Socialists at the beginning without joining the Nazi party, which they took to be a crude expression of their own hopes to reinvigorate and purify the German race through revolutionary violence, what the sociologist Hans Freyer called the “revolution from the right.” It was more their suspicion of Hitler's method, rather than any particular policy, that frayed the relations between some of the conservative revolutionaries and Nazism. They worried about Hitler's military blunders, and that an authoritarian state was becoming a totalitarian one, as the führer vitiated the old diplomatic corps and the Junker class. In a clever turn of phrase, Mohler calls conservative revolutionaries the “Trotskyites of

National Socialism,” since they were, in his mind, persecuted all the more fiercely for being right-wing heretics of the Nazi cause. Mohler’s diagnosis of the state of Germany in the 1960s was acute: he believed the triumph of American-style decadence and materialism in Germany was more dangerous than the Soviet threat. The Americans, according to Mohler, had forestalled any revolutionary conservatism in Germany, only allowing for forms of “gardener-conservatism” and the “humility-conservatism” of the Christian Democrats.

For Mohler, 1968 was not a momentary charge forward for the Left, but rather a quiet victory for the liberals, who consolidated their hold on German society by making some superficial cultural changes while getting the leftists to sign up as citizens of the market state. It did not take long, as Mohler saw it, for the new generation to fold up its Maoism and start vacationing in Tuscany. Unlike other powerful right-wing thinkers who never could shed their Nazi diction, Mohler was among the first to mobilize left-liberal language for his own cause: it would take “civil courage” to beat back the ascendant liberal hegemony. He went so far as to draw parallels between true Germans in post-1945 Europe and the underclass of American blacks, who he liked to claim were the only troops to offer water to German soldiers when they liberated the concentration camps. As for the confrontation with its Nazi past, which the 1968ers take such pride in, Mohler interpreted their effort as a peculiar political illness: an extreme form of moral one-upmanship that had culminated in a nationalism of antinationalist self-hatred. This is what the conservative revolutionaries set out to reverse. Toward the end of his career, Mohler found some solace in the possibility of authoritarian states in the rising Asian Tigers. The 1980s saw the first arrival of a full-fledged conservative revolutionary party, Die Republikaner, founded

in Munich by Franz Schönhuber, a protégé of Mohler, but it was still too regional, attached too much old Nazi stigma and too unfocused on any particular issue to take off.

Though one occasionally catches tidy recitations and phrase making of right-wing worthies in contemporary German radical-right magazines—Gehlen, Heidegger, Schmitt—it is perhaps Mohler who is having the greatest moment of all. When I attended a PEGIDA rally in Dresden, I was puzzled by the presence of bare-chested cowboys in Russian-flag capes and Wirmer flags around the Altmarkt square, until it was explained to me that the Wirmer flag was Stauffenberg’s banner, that what was needed was a “Europe of fatherlands,” and that Vladimir Putin was the only man standing up to the American-brokered liberal world order. The brilliance of Mohler’s “conservative revolutionary” position, and what has lent it such an afterlife, is that it more thoroughly questions the legitimacy of the German Federal Republic because it allows its adherents to consider themselves untainted by the Nazi past. The AfDers do not hesitate to portray Merkel as the new führer, and embrace Putin as the antiliberal par excellence.

One of Mohler’s students, Götz Kubitschek, is among the more curious specimens of the extreme-right intellectual scene today. He operates the Antaios publishing house and *Sezession* magazine out of his ersatz castle, “Schnellroda,” in the Saxon countryside, where he lives with his wife, Ellen Kositzka, and their seven children. A German special-operations veteran of the Balkan War, who “reads Homer in the original,” uses the formal *Sie* form of address with Kositzka, deliberately plays up his Swabian accent and makes a display of milking his own cows when visited by members of the German press, Kubitschek is not so much a thinker as a tender of the flame of conservative revolution. His recent collection of essays, *The*

Width of the Narrow Edge, draws on the same repurposed 1968 language that Mohler used to ask why the Holocaust cannot at least be questioned by a free-thinking society, and whether Germans, paralyzed by their memory politics, are also too afraid to ask crucial questions about their self-preservation. In the manner of his fellow Identitarians, and like Mohler before him, Kubitschek channels the language of indigenous rights—the rights of Palestinians to the occupied territories, the right of Laplanders to their ancient sled routes—but applies them, perversely, to the rights of working-class ethnic Germans to maintain their industrialist and agricultural identities that have been under sustained threat from Anglo-American liberal capitalism for more than a century. Though Kubitschek has been kept out of the AfD by the Petry-Pretzell faction, he freely dispenses tactical advice to the party in his essays, believing that the AfD will squander its momentum if it becomes a normal conservative party. To consider the party as an instrument for nudging Merkel to the right is far too modest a goal; to reach its potential it must make the most of the antisylum moment and upend domestic politics by proving that bien-pensant parties cannot govern Germany or protect its sovereignty.

The German debate over the refugee crisis of 2015 has cut through families and friendships across the land, and precipitated a series of feuilleton debates not seen in the country since the *Historikerstreit* of the 1990s. Unlike the debate about that German past, which the liberals handily won, they seem poised to lose the current one. In the pages of *Cicero* magazine, the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk upset liberal sensitivities when he used the language of Carl Schmitt to argue that in today's Germany it is the refugee, rather than the state, who takes the "decision" by crossing the nation's borders. Though hardly a

comprehensive defender of Merkel's policies, the chancellor's most articulate explainer is the political scientist Herfried Münkler, who argues that Merkel did not have much of a choice on the refugee question: she could either pretend to control the situation by granting them entry, or lose control of it by declaring a state of emergency. (This reading has been recently been substantiated by *Die Welt* journalist Robin Alexander's insider account of Merkel's decision to open the border.) Münkler criticizes Merkel for not using her diplomatic skills to get eastern European neighbors to share the burden, which she had often been able to do in the past. The only point to add is that Merkel, ever vigilant of the barometers of popular opinion, was in fact late to the party of pro-refugee sentiment across Germany when she opened the border to refugees in 2015. Her problem was more one of timing in relation to German public opinion. By the time she had embraced her open-door policy, the public enthusiasm had waned, and she shifted her policies rightward accordingly. New restrictions against asylum seekers were put in place, a burqa ban was coyly entertained, and Erdoğan was handsomely paid off to the point that other bouncers at Europe's gates demanded their own bonuses. Facing nationalist pressure from without and within—and what seems increasingly like a mosquito-sized threat in the form of Martin Schultz, the Social Democrat candidate who buzzes a few centimeters to her left—Merkel appears ready to give room on the question of Islam and the question of refugees, but she is likely to stand firm against any necessary reform of the euro, unlikely to be seduced by the "Mozart of Finance." The numbers for 2016 have come in. At 6.6 million euros, Berlin's budget surplus has exceeded even the most optimistic expectations. It is a political economic arrangement better left unmentioned by politicians across the land: bad years for Europe are now good years for Germany. □