

Q. & A.

TRACKING THE THREATS TO GERMAN DEMOCRACY

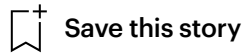
With elections looming, Germany faces a weak economy, a rising far right, and a faltering political class.

By Isaac Chotiner

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Source photograph by Jens Schlueter / Getty



In December, the German government—a coalition led by Olaf Scholz’s Social Democrats—lost a no-confidence vote. Elections will be held next month. Scholz came to power after the sixteen-year reign of Angela Merkel, but has become unpopular amid a stagnant economy—one that was once the pride, if not exactly the envy, of the continent. The favorite in the election is the center-right Christian Democratic Union (C.D.U.)—which Merkel once led—although support for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) has been growing in the country’s east. (Elon Musk recently made news, and attracted Scholz’s scorn, for saying that he hoped the populist AfD, which is defined above all else by its extreme hostility to immigrants, would win the election.) The most likely result is another coalition government, this one led by the C.D.U. and including the Social Democrats.