"GERMANY FOR GERMANS:" Examining the social media use of two major political parties in Germany

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Christliche Demokratische Union (CDU)

- Established, center-right party in power
- Traditional conservatism
- New focus on security and immigration
- Historically popular, but losing some support

Alternative für Deutschland

- Newer right-wing populist party
- Anti European Union → Anti immigration
- Supports traditional families and values, closed borders and direct democracy
- Rapidly gaining support

Social Media & Language Use

- Social media increasingly popular for political entities; used to reach base and public
- Facebook most popular social media platform in Germany
- Twitter less popular, favorite of politicians
- Use of language, punctuation, emoji all part of communicative repertoire; social action

RESEARCH QUESTION

- **How do the CDU and AfD use social media to communicate with their followers?**

## METHODS

Data Sources

- AfD and CDU Twitter and Facebook posts

Data Analysis

- Posts from December 1, 2016-March 20, 2017 coded for relevant categories
- Categories emerged through repeated, systematic observation and analysis of data as it was coded (grounded theory)

CONTENT

- Crime, safety: Major focus of both parties
- CDU: solidarity with/recognition of crimes, highlights safety-oriented policies (current and proposed)
- AfD: critiques CDU government for not protecting "Germans;" crime is increasing
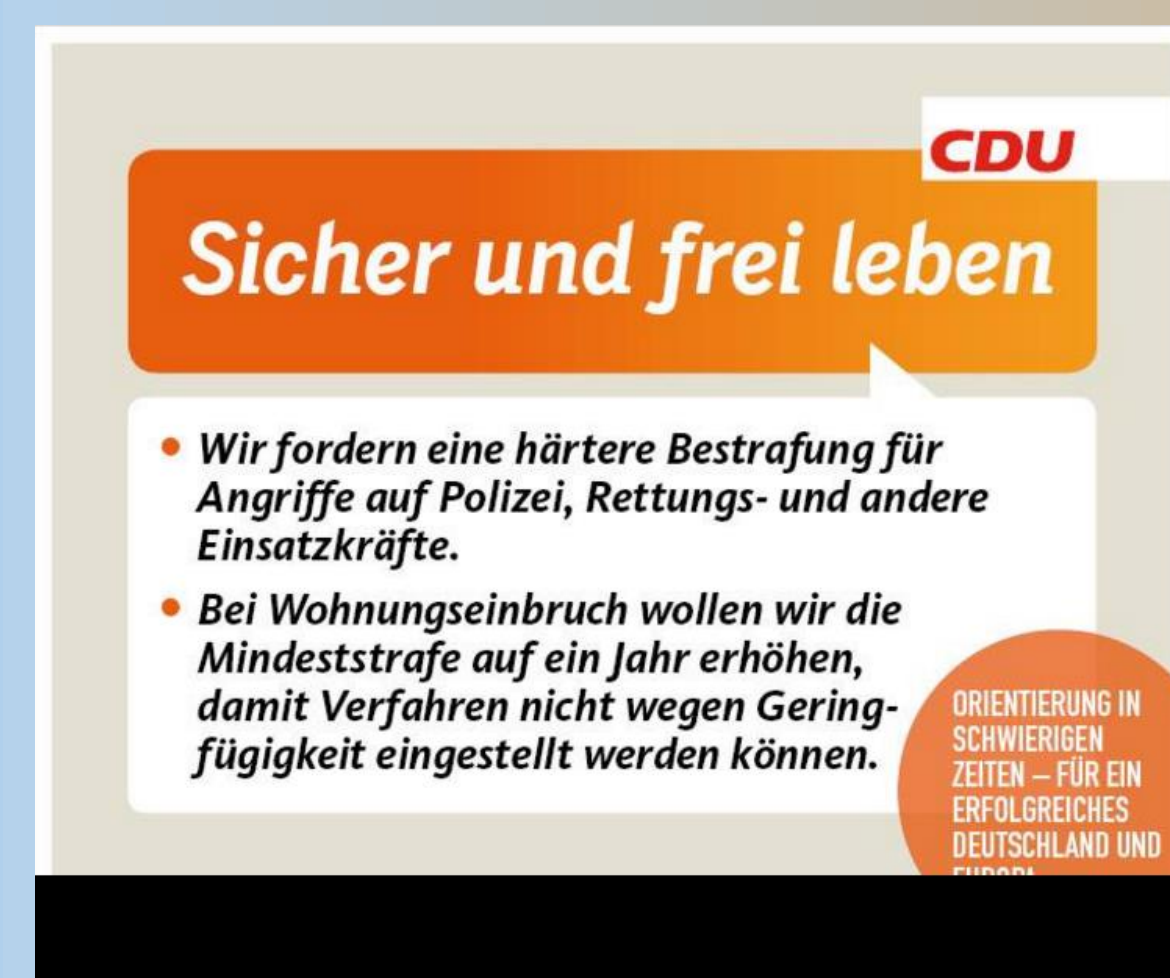
LANGUAGE USE

- Prolific use of exclamation points
  - AfD: in almost 30% of posts (mostly Facebook)
  - CDU: in almost 10% of posts (mostly Twitter)
- Both use exclamation points in:
  - Exclamatory phrases, rallying cries
  - Emphases of striking facts and ideas:
    - CDU tendency: Positive information
    - AfD tendency: Negative affect, often outrage

IMAGES

- Both parties' images mostly of people; CDU posts candid images of their officials and people at CDU events
- AfD: images communicate their idea of who a "typical German" is to contrast with "foreigners," migrants

CONCLUSIONS

AfD:

- Communicates ideologically informed notions of who is "German" via use of imagery and exclamatory rhetoric

CDU:

- Focuses more on the party's successes, results