

Germany before the national parliamentary election: narratives on German radio

Political topics and actors of higher and lower saliency

Recordings analysed from January 20 to 31, 2025 – Published 20th February, 2025.

Objective: What messaging were German audiences exposed to on German Radio Stations – one month before the national elections? A visualization

We are a research company eager to pursue a Whole-Of-Society approach. With our own R&D, we contribute to bringing facts to democracies.

The present analysis of German radio messages in January 2025 (see methodology next page) aimed at answering the following questions:

- ▶ What were Germans exposed to prior to the 2025 national elections?
- ▶ What were the salient topics?
- ▶ Who dominated the public discourse?
- ▶ What role does media – radio – contribute to shaping beliefs?



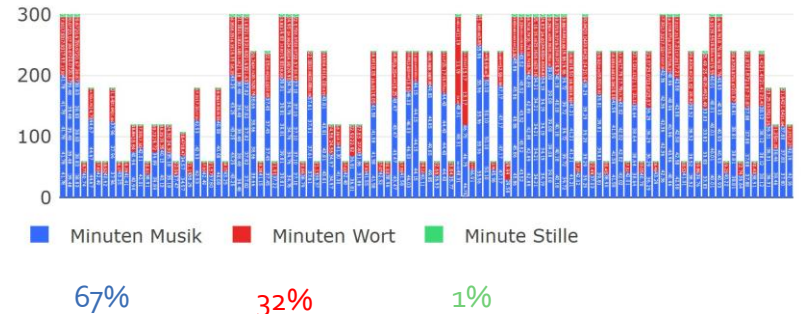
Methodology: Analysis of German radio during pre-election period

- ▶ **Qualitative Research 2.0:** AI-/LLM-based Media Extraction + ChatGPT + Qual. Deep-Dive
- ▶ **Research Method:** analysis of transcripts of radio broadcast in Germany for the period from January 20 to January 31, 2025. The following radio stations were analysed (**300 hours in total**):

Top5 Radio | Drive- and Prime-Time 6 am – 9 am & 4 pm – 6 pm

- ▶ RADIO NRW (private)
- ▶ Bayern1 (public, Bayerischer Rundfunk)
- ▶ WDR2 (public, Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR))
- ▶ SWR3 (public, Südwestrundfunk (SWR))
- ▶ 1LIVE (public, WDR)

Musik-Wort Verteilung – Monitor | Select Recordings - M5

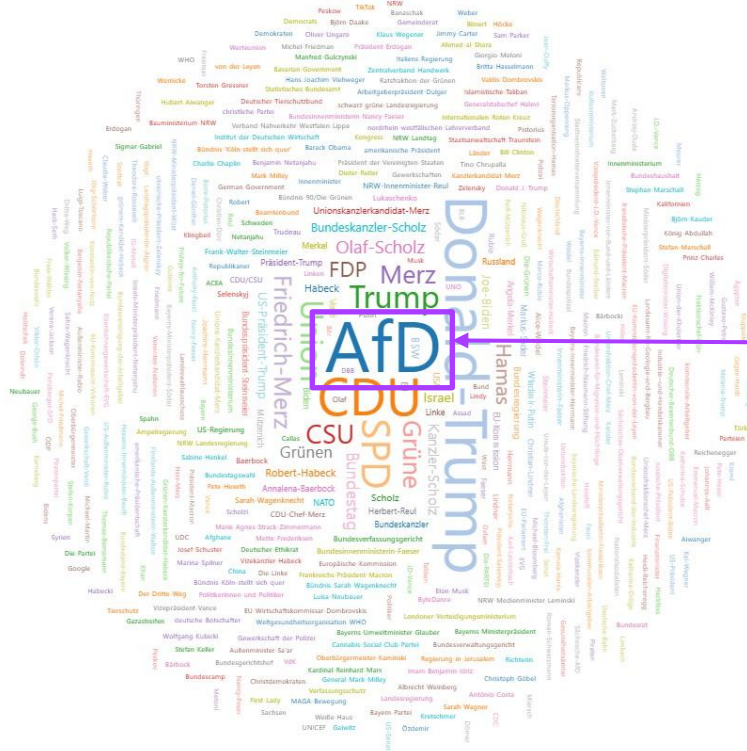


The data were prepared by **AudioIndex** (Vienna based **technology startup**, focusing on **auditory media content with the help of AI**) via automatic recording of the broadcast and automatic transcription, delivered in a dashboard allowing for search tools and a statistical analysis of the key words used. We then extracted the relevant text passages (excluding music and non-political content), which were analysed via our research team and ChatGPT₄.

<https://audioindex.ai/>

Results

The right-wing party AfD was number 1 on the German radio news (among persons/ parties/ institutions), almost dominating the German information field



▶ The AfD was mentioned most often and took up the most time in the radio news during the monitored period. The party enjoyed the highest profile, which may have an impact on the upcoming vote.

▶ This party was presented only as a party, without much mention of its leader, Alice Elisabeth Weidel (only 6 references). Thus, it makes the party independent of the image of its leader and contributes to strengthening the “political brand” AfD – whereas other parties have more relative mentions of their leaders (see examples page 6).

Narratives on AfD: Despite the alarmist and cautionary tone, the repetition of and high exposure to right-wing ideology is advertising in itself

Condemnation, resistance and opposition to AfD

AfD as a **threat** to democracy

Condemnation of CDU's willingness to accept AfD votes by various prominent personalities (incl. former chancellor Merkel and German Catholics - ZdK)

Debates **on stricter migration laws** and asylum policy, on security issues (e.g., after violent crimes)

Political and moral crisis, taboo breaking

AfD's **legal** classification as right-wing **extremist**

Debate in the Bundestag (notably chancellor Scholz against candidate Merz)

Street protests (mentioning numbers of participants in demonstrations, naming the cities)

Fear of normalization, influence on German society and rising **popularity**

„Donald Trump“ was amongst the most frequently mentioned entities among persons/ parties/ institutions

Entities (part 1) (in a list only entities with references >=10)	number of references	% among all references in a list (2862 references in total)	% among all entities in a list (419 entities in total)	Entities (part 2) (in a list only entities with references >=10)	number of references	% among all references in a list (2862 references in total)	% among all entities in a list (419 entities in total)
AfD	298	10.41	71.12	Israel	32	1.12	7.64
Donald Trump	246	8.60	58.71	Joe Biden	28	0.98	6.68
CDU	215	7.51	51.31	US-Präsident Trump	25	0.87	5.97
SPD	156	5.45	37.23	Bundeskanzler Scholz	25	0.87	5.97
Trump	121	4.23	28.88	BSW	20	0.70	4.77
Union	114	3.98	27.21	Habeck	20	0.70	4.77
CSU	94	3.28	22.43	Robert Habeck	18	0.63	4.30
Grüne	90	3.14	21.48	Bundesregierung	16	0.56	3.82
Merz	90	3.14	21.48	Scholz	16	0.56	3.82
Friedrich Merz	83	2.90	19.81	Biden	13	0.45	3.10
FDP	73	2.55	17.42	Unionskanzlerkandidat Merz	12	0.42	2.86
Hamas	64	2.24	15.27	EU-Kommission	10	0.35	2.39
Olaf Scholz	53	1.85	12.65	Präsident Trump	10	0.35	2.39
Bundestag	49	1.71	11.69	Linke	10	0.35	2.39
Grünen	47	1.64	11.22	EU	10	0.35	2.39
Kanzler Scholz	37	1.29	8.83	Bundespräsident Steinmeier	10	0.35	2.39

The presidential election in the United States and the upcoming parliamentary elections in Germany were the main topics on the radio during the monitored period – most certainly shaping perceptions of Germans due to the high repetition of his name. It appears that the German election is very much in the shadow of the events in the new US government.

The discussion of democracy and values is relatively small in the context of the election



- ▶ Prominent topics about safety/ security and immigration policy dominate.
- ▶ Topics like democracy, justice/ fairness, climate, freedom, peace are small.
- ▶ The protests following the CDU/CSU-AfD ideological alignment appear negligible in direct comparison.

Asylum, security and protection rank highly

entities	number of references	% among all references in a list (1916 references in total)	% among all messages related to democracy (796 messages in total)
Bundestag (parliament)	356	18.58	44.72
Wahl (election)	245	12.79	30.78
Gesetz (law)	208	10.86	26.13
Partei (party)	181	9.45	22.74
Asyl (asylum)	118	6.16	14.82
Sicherheit (safety/ security)	93	4.85	11.68
Schutz (protection)	93	4.85	11.68
Abstimmung	75	3.91	9.42
Verfassung	64	3.34	8.04
Demokratie	57	2.97	7.16
Debatte	52	2.71	6.53
Klimaschutz	41	2.14	5.15
Werte	23	1.20	2.89
Frieden	22	1.15	2.76
Presse	20	1.04	2.51
Wähler	19	0.99	2.39
Gesellschaft	18	0.94	2.26

entities (cont'd)	number of references	% among all references in a list (1916 references in total)	% among all messages related to democracy (796 messages in total)
Demonstration	15	0.78	1.88
Freiheit	15	0.78	1.88
Staatsbürgerschaft	14	0.73	1.76
Proteste	13	0.68	1.63
Bundesrat	12	0.63	1.51
Media	12	0.63	1.51
Wählen	11	0.57	1.38
Gerechtigkeit	11	0.57	1.38
Vertrauen	8	0.42	1.01
Grundgesetz	4	0.21	0.50
Institutionen	4	0.21	0.50
Stabilität	3	0.16	0.38
Fairness	3	0.16	0.38
Korruption	3	0.16	0.38
Transparenz	2	0.10	0.25
Menschenrechte	1	0.05	0.13
Souveränität	1	0.05	0.13
Inklusion	1	0.05	0.13
Populismus	1	0.05	0.13
Falsche Information	1	0.05	0.13

Narratives on democracy: The upcoming elections were dominated by a discourse around security, leaving almost no room for other topics in the public debate

Domestic political climate shifting to the right

The rise of populist forces like the **AfD**, assessment of the AfD as **an extremist party**

Criticism of the ideological alignment or indirect support/cooperation between CDU/CSU and AfD

Debates **on stricter migration laws** and asylum policy, on security issues (e.g., after violent crimes)

International politics shifting to the right

Donald Trump as new president, his policy and impact on Europe

Election in Belarus with Lukashenko as candidate and criticism from the EU

Scars in the democratic society and reactions to safeguard democracy

Declining trust in institutions and government (post-Covid effect, call for election helpers...)

Public protests against right-wing tendencies and in favour of democracy

Influence of social media on political opinions and election process; call for **regulation of social media** algorithms to prevent anti-democratic content

And what about NATO?

- ▶ In January 25, we published our Séissmograph* on the NATO archetypes. To build on what the social media data had delivered, we had a look at what was said about NATO on the German radio.
- ▶ The quick answer is: Nothing.

AfD

Approx. 3 hours in total of message
out of 100 hours of spoken word

Democracy

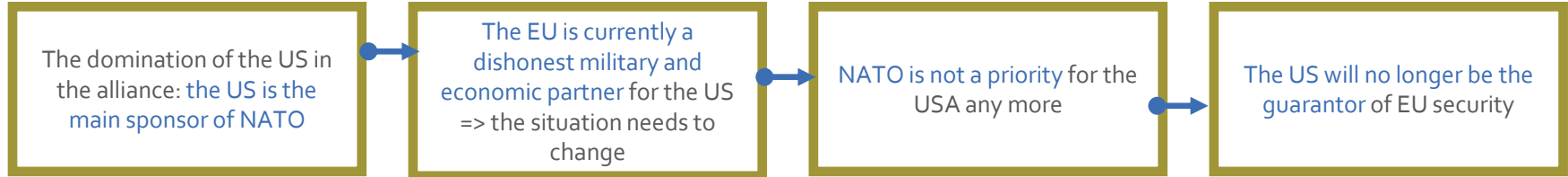
Approx. 1 hour in total
of message out of 100
hours of spoken word

NATO

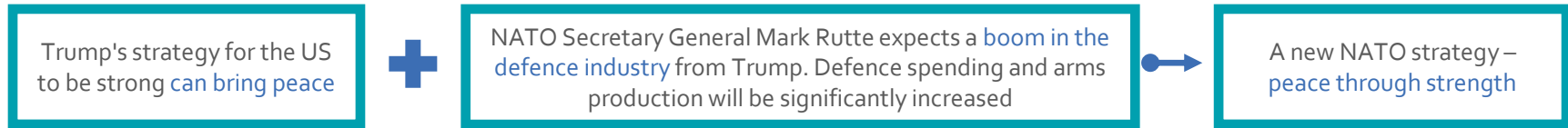
Approx.
4 minutes
out of 100
hours of
spoken word

NATO was almost absent in German radio at the end of January 2025, shortly before the Munich Security Conference 2025. The cacophony of messages and multiplication of side-narratives dilutes any attempt at a clear message.

Narrative #1: Trump neither cares about Europe nor NATO



Narrative #2: Increasing defence spendings to demonstrate strength



Narrative #3: Major threats in the Baltic Sea



Thank you – questions, deep-dives?
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