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*Deekeling Arndt*

# ELECTION OBSERVER

The Newsletter on the  
**2025 Federal Election**

*by H/Advisors Deekeling Arndt*

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# ELECTION OBSERVER

## Merkel's Memoirs: I Am So Free

To understand the present and shape the future sustainably, it can sometimes be helpful to take a look at the past. The recently published memoirs of Chancellor Angela Merkel, titled *Freedom*, provide much material for reflection. Over more than 700 pages, the former Chancellor recounts her life in East Germany and her time as a politician in reunified Germany. The reception of her memoirs has been largely critical. Following the motto, *I Am So Free*, Merkel refrains from revisiting past battles or retrospectively justifying her actions. Following Merkel's numerous public appearances, the stage, however, now again belongs to her immediate successor and his challengers. On December 16, the Bundestag will vote on the confidence motion presented by Chancellor Olaf Scholz, thereby paving the way for its dissolution. The parties will then have two months to campaign for votes.

## / What we know and hear...

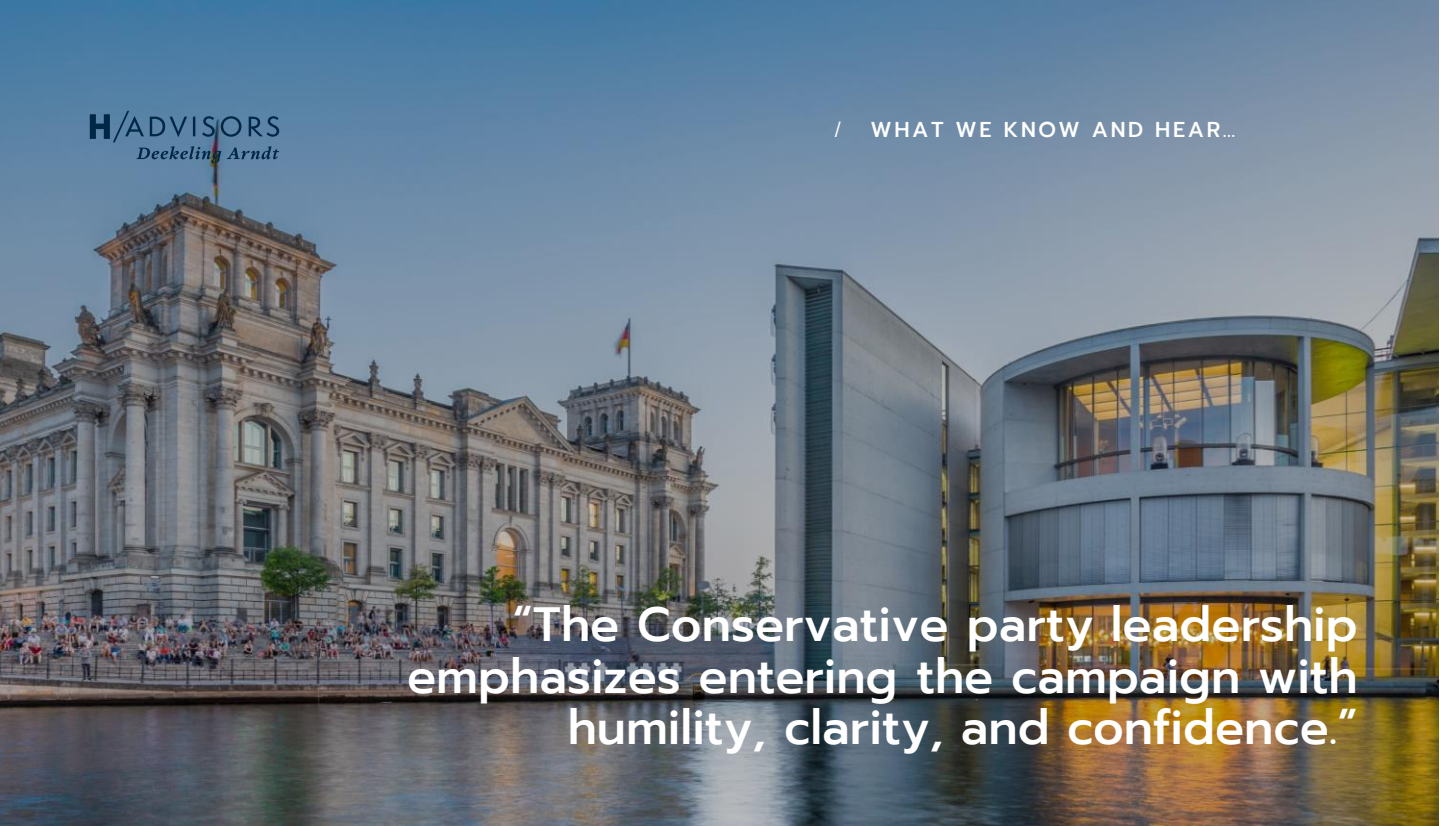
### ...from the Social Democrats (SPD)

After nearly two weeks of a partially public debate, the SPD has decided to nominate incumbent Chancellor Olaf Scholz once again as its candidate. The party launched its campaign with an "Electoral Victory Conference", presenting itself as combative. "We fight for..." is the slogan, supplemented with concrete commitments like "We fight for social policies." Key campaign promises include raising the minimum wage to €15, securing jobs through greater economic innovation, affordable housing, increased social benefits, a secure pension at 67, continued support for Ukraine, strengthening the Bundeswehr, and accelerating the expansion of renewable energy. Scholz has announced plans to confront populists during the campaign and position the

SPD as a centrist force. SPD party chairs Saskia Esken and Lars Klingbeil, along with General Secretary Matthias Miersch and Federal Manager Jessika Wischmeier, are finalizing a 60-page election program. There are six working groups focusing on "Healthcare and Nursing," "Sustainable Economy," "Strengthening Families," "Good Work and Stable Pensions," "Modern State," and "Housing and Construction."



Meanwhile, Scholz's minority government continues to operate. The Chancellor visited Ukraine for the second time since Russia's invasion. Following a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, his



**“The Conservative party leadership emphasizes entering the campaign with humility, clarity, and confidence.”**

visit to Kyiv signals efforts to find a solution to end the war. Meanwhile, the red-green cabinet continues working on legislation, although their majority in the Bundestag remains uncertain. For example, plans to reduce grid fees for companies to provide short-term economic relief face fierce opposition.

...from the Conservatives (CDU and CSU)

With a significant lead in opinion polls, the Union parties are preparing to take over government responsibility after the upcoming election. The Conservative party leadership emphasizes entering the campaign with humility, clarity, and confidence.

The first draft of a government program was completed by the end of November, with the final version set for approval on December 17, 2024, at an event at the Berlin Telegraph Office.

Shortly before the election, the CDU and CSU plan to unveil a 10-point action plan outlining measures to be implemented during the first ten cabinet meetings.

Internally, discussions are underway about possible cabinet reshuffles under a Chancellor Friedrich Merz. Proposals include merging the Economy and Labor Ministries, creating a standalone Digital Ministry, and reducing the number of government commissioners to a maximum of 10 to 15. A freeze on civil servant appointments is also being considered.

The CSU has already claimed specific ministries, with Günther Felßner, President of the Bavarian Farmers' Association, slated to become Federal Agriculture Minister. Other potential CSU ministerial candidates include Alexander Dobrindt, head of the CSU parliamentary group, and Dorothee Bär, a close confidante of party leader Markus Söder.

### ... from the Greens

The Greens have restructured their leadership, with Franziska Brantner and Felix Banaszak newly installed as federal chairs to support Chancellor candidate Robert Habeck and mobilize the party. Since the end of the coalition government, the Greens have gained 15,000 new members. The party will officially enter the "hot campaign phase" on January 12. The decision to appoint Jung von Matt, the agency behind Angela Merkel's 2017 CDU victory, for managing the Greens' campaign ties in with Habeck's announcement to capitalize on what he calls the "Merkel gap" left by the CDU's repositioning.

Responsibility for the election program lies with a "Five-Person Team" comprising Habeck, Brantner, Banaszak, and campaign managers Andreas Audretsch and Frederic Carpenter. At the same time, the party seeks broad social participation. Recommendations, suggestions and ideas can be sent to the e-mail address [programm25@gruene.de](mailto:programm25@gruene.de). The team will finalize the program in January, with a vote scheduled at a national party conference on January 26, 2025.

### ... from the Liberals (FDP)

The FDP is dealing with severe problems at the start of the election campaign, primarily facing difficulties in explaining its past actions. With the publication of the so-called "D-Day" paper, which outlined a detailed plan for the party's exit from the traffic light coalition, using terms such as "open field battle," the

FDP has created a massive credibility problem. The risk of failing to pass the five-percent threshold in the federal election is acute at the beginning of the campaign. To prevent this from happening, the new general secretary Marco Buschmann has been asked to step in. The former justice minister takes over the position from Bijan Djir-Sarai, who, along with federal manager Carsten Reymann, resigned after revelations about the FDP's role in the collapse of the traffic light coalition. Party leader Christian Lindner has denied any knowledge of the controversial paper. Buschmann is a long-time confidant of Lindner. His nomination was not a surprise and is largely welcomed within the party. The new general secretary is seen as experienced and level-headed. His task will be to organize a successful election campaign despite the strong headwinds.

Work on the election program, which is deliberately intended to be compact at 10 to 20 pages, is already underway. The focus will be on economic policy topics, based on the position paper "Wirtschaftswende Deutschland" (Economic Turnaround Germany) that Lindner presented shortly before the collapse of the traffic light coalition as the central foundation.

The election program is set to be adopted by the party executive committee on December 17. The FDP wants to clearly distinguish itself from its former coalition partners in the traffic light coalition. There is ongoing discussion about whether the party should make a coalition declaration, unlike in the 2017 and 2021 campaigns.





Since Lindner has ruled out a renewed cooperation with the SPD and Greens, the only remaining potential coalition partner would be the CDU/CSU. However, there are now voices within the CDU that, following the debacle surrounding the "D-Day paper", question the seriousness and reliability of the Liberals. The FDP's stance on the coalition issue may be decided at a special party congress in Potsdam on February 9, 2025.

... from the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW)

The new Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) is set to participate in two state governments (Brandenburg and Thuringia) but remains in the organizational setup phase nearly a year after its founding. The party's formation in three additional states is pending.

Hamburg's regional branch is scheduled to establish itself on December 15, with Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein following before the anticipated federal election date of February 23, 2025.

Regional lists have already been established in North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Lower Saxony, and Bremen. Sahra Wagenknecht, co-chair and founder, leads the North Rhine-Westphalia list, followed by BSW Secretary-General Christian Leye. Other top candidates include co-chair Amira Mohamed Ali in Lower Saxony and Bundestag member Alexander Ulrich in Rhineland-Palatinate. Christopher Schulze has secured the lead position in Bremen.

The party's electoral program, titled *Germany, but Sound and Fair!*, advocates for the formation of an

expert government to address crises and restore trust in the state and democracy. Proposed measures include lowering energy costs, reducing bureaucracy, and investing in infrastructure. The BSW also seeks greater social justice through tax cuts, a minimum wage of €15, and a pension reform modeled after Austria.

... from the Left (Die Linke)

Die Linke is striving to ensure its return to the Bundestag following the departure of the figure Sahra Wagenknecht and her followers. Veteran politicians are leading the charge to rescue the party. Campaign leaders include Bundestag member Heidi Rechinnek and co-chair Jan van Aken. However, the campaign's most recognizable faces are Gregor Gysi (78), Bodo Ramelow (68), and Dietmar Bartsch (66), dubbed the "Mission Silver Curl" team.

The trio aims to win direct mandates in Berlin, Erfurt, and Rostock, thereby ensuring Die Linke remains in the Bundestag. Gysi is optimistic and has publicly expressed aspirations to serve as the oldest member of the next parliamentary session. While the party has yet to finalize its election program, it is expected to focus on social justice, climate protection, and peace, with a prominent call for a nationwide rent cap.

... from the Alternative for Germany (AfD)

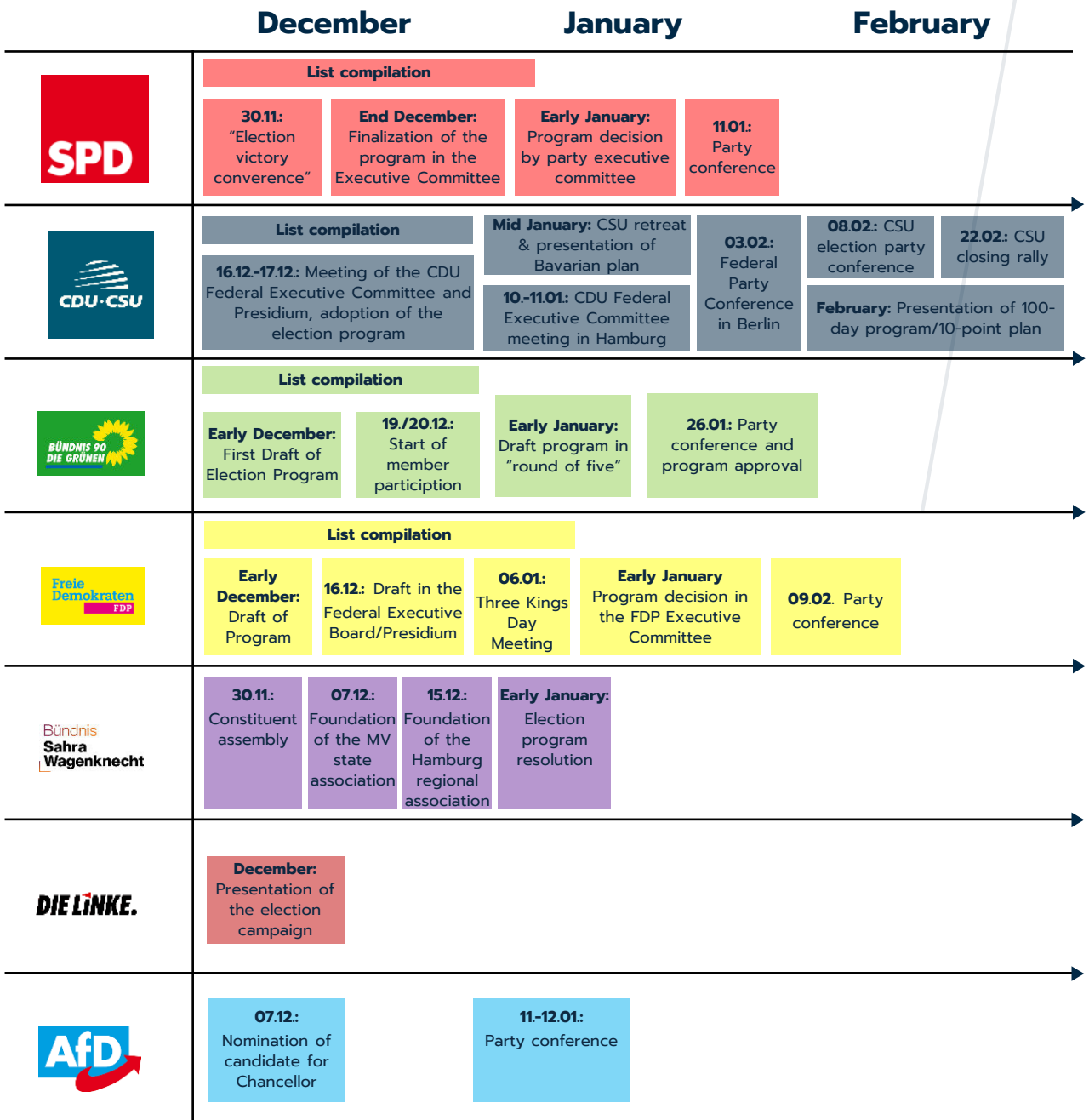
On December 7, the AfD plans to nominate co-chair Alice Weidel as its

candidate for Chancellor. The election program will be finalized at a federal party convention on January 11 – 12, 2025, in Riesa, Saxony. Previews suggest the program will include a call for Germany's withdrawal from the EU and the eurozone. In place of EU membership, the AfD proposes forming a "Wirtschafts- und Interessengemeinschaft" (Economic and Interest Community), with public approval sought through a referendum.

The AfD's economic policy envisions a mix of "market economy, national responsibility, and friendly cooperation among European states," including leaving the eurozone. The proposed alternative currency remains unspecified, but the platform advocates for deregulating cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

The campaign is managed by Republic Relations, the agency already responsible for the AfD's 2021 Bundestag campaign. Social media operations are handled by Tannwald, a firm founded by far-right activist Alexander Kleine. Recent promotion materials, including an AI-generated video and an online game celebrating deportations, have sparked nationwide outrage.

# PROCESSES OF THE PARTIES UNTIL THE NEW ELECTION ON FEBRUARY 23, 2025



## The Election Observer on the 2025 Federal Election...

... is a format created by the public affairs team of H/Advisors Deekeling Arndt. As one of the leading agencies for strategic communications, we provide our national and international clients with consulting services on the great transformation challenges of our times from our offices in Düsseldorf, Berlin and Frankfurt. Together with our partners at H/Advisors, we are active in all relevant markets, stock exchanges and government locations worldwide.

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