

The Congruence of the Discourse of Frauke Petry of the AfD and Angela Merkel of the CDU on Islam and Muslims in Germany

©Daurius Figueira

December 2016

A Deconstruction of the Discourse of Frauke Petry of the Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Corporate media assailed Petry and the AfD as a right wing extremist entity driven by Islamophobia and went after Petry in a strategic manner to expose Petry and the AfD for what the corporate media said they are. In this assault the discourse of the AfD was utilised to frame interviews with Petry which focused on specific issues that corporate media insisted will confirm the truth behind their discourse, of Petry and the AfD, and in doing so the worldview of Petry was marginalised. The embrace of specific positions of the discourse of the AfD by the Christian right of mainstream German politics especially on Islam and the reality that within the CDU led by Merkel (see: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/merkel-under-fire-from-critics-within-the-cdu-a-1125213.html>) there are factions calling for a deeper embrace of AfD discourse with political allies of the CDU also calling for a further move to the right has now placed the agenda of the corporate media and their discourse in dire straits as it can damage the mainstream Christian right wing parties. What was extremist and Islamophobic before is now mainstream right wing discourse as the neo-liberal project embraces extremism to ensure its survival indicating that power, especially hegemonic power is amoral and must relentlessly strive to abrogate law. The AfD has now to respond to this strategy as the general election due in 2017 looms.

Der Spiegel Online published an interview with Petry dated March 30, 2016 titled "AfD Head Frauke Petry 'The Immigration of Muslims Will Change Our Culture.'" On the nature of the AfD Petry states; "The AfD is a liberal-conservative party. Furthermore, I think it's wrong to see the political battle between left and right as a fight between good and evil. In Germany, the right is associated with xenophobia and the politics of the Nazi regime." The AfD is a political party in the same vein as the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) headed by Chancellor Angela Merkel as it accepts the European liberal conservative political worldview excluding it from being a neo-Nazi party of the right. Petry insists that in Germany all that are defined as being right wing political entities are deemed neo-Nazi organisations and the left are those acceptable mainstream anti neo-Nazi parties as the CDU. AfD is falsely branded a right wing extremist party for Petry. Petry states: "If there wasn't this association with good and evil, then I would have no problem saying: Yes, the AfD is partly that which the Christian Democrats once

were: a right-wing democratic party.” The AfD is a right wing democratic party as the CDU once was and because of this failure of the CDU the AfD intends to capture the voter base of the CDU of the electorate of Germany thereby replacing it as the dominant liberal-conservative party of German electoral politics. What then is the political reality that will enable the rise of the AfD? Petry states: “people are seeing that they are no longer being taken seriously as the sovereign by the political establishment.” The political establishment of Germany which comprises all mainstream parties has then alienated the electorate and because of this the AfD has been given the opportunity to capture the voter base of the CDU. One strategy utilised to accomplish this capture is: “It requires a lot of courage in Germany to stand up and express ideas that one knows are currently not being expressed by a majority of the populace.” The AfD is bold and courageous as it unleashes in the public domain ideas that challenge the hegemony of mainstream political discourse as it moves to win political power by de-legitimising the hegemonic discourse of the political establishment. The embrace of extremist ideas by the CDU affirms the effectiveness of this strategic instrument in the discursive wars of electoral politics in Germany.

Petry in the interview then delves into specific ideas of the AfD that sets it apart from the German political establishment as follows: “Germany’s currency and migration policies are currently destroying European solidarity, and the return to the idea of one’s own nation in all European countries is a natural corrective to Brussels centralisation.” Germany’s position on the Euro and Merkel’s decision to open Germany’s doors to refugees have damaged the EU project by questioning its legitimacy with the rise of nationalism in EU member states impacted negatively by the Euro and the tidal wave of migrants descending on Europe. The resort to nationalism was the response to actions taken by the EU that gravely impacted the quality of life of citizens of the EU thereby it was a response to Brussels centralisation even imperialism and in this scenario Merkel, the CDU and her political allies are major players. On German patriotism and national identity Petry states: “We believe that a healthy patriotism should be natural in Germany. This stance includes taking responsibility for our history, but it also presupposes a healthy relationship to our identity. We think that it’s wrong that German politicians are exclusively wrapping themselves in the cloak of guilt.” A German patriotism and identity underpinned by guilt over Germany’s Nazi past is a

patriotism and identity that is flawed as it resorts in a mal-developed identity and by extension patriotism that works to the detriment of Germany's national interest. This cloak of guilt that covers and distorts German politics and German political action can only result in a servile Germany on the world stage. Petry states: "Germany's past is used to justify all kinds of things. We Germans have weighed ourselves down with a special kind of guilt. One hears that we need to merge Germany into a larger Europe so as to forever prevent the resurrection of German nationalism. But nationalism and patriotism are regularly thrown in the same pot. Even Germany's current, disastrous migration policy can't get by without references to Germany's past. The real responsibilities that we should draw from Germany's past are the preservation of democracy, freedom and the rule of law." Germany's Nazi past is an effective weapon used against Germany because of the cloak of guilt worn by Germans and acted upon by the German political establishment. In this war on Germany and Germans the nation fails to learn the proper lessons from their Nazi past which is the imperative to preserve democracy, freedom and the rule of law. With this lesson learned Germans can then discern that nationalism and patriotism must be separated as patriotism and identity are the imperatives of the new post Nazi German citizenry not nationalism. From this discourse articulated by Petry one can posit that the cloak of guilt and the actions derived from its hegemony over the German social order will increasingly seduce guilt ridden Germans to embrace Nazi discourse and worldview as the German citizenry becomes increasingly alienated from the political establishment.

Petry in the interview provides two examples of political action driven by the special kind of German guilt that has ultimately threatened the security of Germany and German citizens these are: a tsunami of refugees descending on Germany and the failure to secure Germany's border from the threats arising generated by the tsunami of refugees. Petry states: "I am not against immigration, but why do you think that the respect for other opinions makes immigration a necessity? One thing is clear: the immigration of so many Muslims will change our culture. If this change is desired, it must be the product of a democratic decision supported by a broad majority. But Ms. Merkel simply opened the borders and invited everybody in, without consulting the parliament or the people." A tsunami of Muslim refugees was invited into Germany in an

undemocratic manner by a politician acting out the special kind of German guilt without consideration of the impact this tsunami of Muslims will have on German culture, identity and the social order. For Petry Merkel was duty bound to win public affirmation before putting out the welcome mat to Muslim refugees given the price Germans will pay for this Muslim migration. Petry on the use of force to secure Germany's border in response to the tsunami of Muslim refugees states: "after listing off various options for securing the border, I mentioned that the use of armed force in the case of an emergency is consistent with German law, a step which I personally, explicitly do not want." The tsunami of Muslim refugees assaulting Germany's border if defined as an emergency as a threat to German security can be met with lawful lethal force and Petry's personal aversion to the use of legal lethal force is of no relevance in this situation for the rule of law is paramount. Again that special kind of German guilt created the problem and failed to protect German interests as the threats arising from the tsunami of Muslim refugees manifested themselves. Is Petry also plagued with this special kind of guilt or is her personal aversion to the use of legal lethal force simply discourse for consumption by the German electorate? Since the tsunami of Muslim refugees present a clear and present danger to the viability of German culture and identity how far would she go to protect her culture and identity? And how far would Germans impacted by Petry's discourse go to protect their culture and identity from the Muslim threat? This question arises again over Petry's position on Pegida as follows: "Pegida of early 2015 is not the same as the Pegida of today. We are currently seeing the radicalisation at the top of the leadership. A year ago, we made sure to speak with the people who join the Monday protests in Dresden, and still think that was the right thing to do. But we believe that the solution for our country can't be found on the street." Pegida in 2016 is not the same as in 2015 hence the need to distance AfD from the new Pegida for the solution to Germany's problems lies in mainstream politics not in street level agitation and mainstream electoral politics demands being electable. AfD has then in 2016 to discontinue with street politics and rubbing shoulders with movements that harm their electability as the AfD now has traction in its targeted political market. Which fits strategically into Petry's agenda to attain political power in Germany which she states as follows: "We don't have as much time as the Greens to mature. But so far we have shown that we learn relatively fast. I think that we will reach 25, 30 percent if we work hard and the other parties

continue to make the same old mistakes. Then we will be able to decide who to form with and who not. We know where we want to go. How the other parties might develop seems unclear to me at the moment?" The strategy is to capture 25 to 30% of the votes in a general election then get into government via a political coalition which indicates that the prime directive is being in government which means that a coalition with the CDU is in the cards. The strategy adopted by the CDU to ward off the challenge of the AfD has been revealed since this interview and as the general election of 2017 looms the burden is now on the AfD and Petry to respond in the manner required to maintain and boost their electability.

Tim Sebastian of DW interviewed Petry on March 21, 2016 on the televised program Conflict Zone (see: <http://www.dw.com/en/transcript-tim-sebastian-interviews-frauke-petry/a-19152089>). Petry speaking on the use of lethal force to secure the German border states: "I basically quoted a German law that still exists. And as a last resort the use of weapons is possible, but we agree, we all agree on that we never want the last, the ultimate ratio to happen." The line presented in the interview with Der Spiegel is repeated but Petry goes further when she states: "securing German borders, controlling them as now 26 out of 28 European states decided to do so without Germany's help, is something we have to talk about. And if it's a democratic party raising the problem that our border guards, our policemen, are not allowed to do their jobs, because the government basically refuses to take responsibility for our national borders, then it's not a party like the AfD posing the problem, but our government." The guilt ridden political establishment of Germany has surrendered control of Germany's border to the tsunami of refugees and all else that flows within the tsunami and in so doing flouted the laws that exist to protect the border seen in the emasculation of Germany's border guards and its policemen. The political establishment of Germany has then trampled the democracy and rule of law in Germany for their own elitist ends is the AfD then the extremist party or the parties of the coalition government? The parties of mainstream German politics have failed Germany by posing a threat to German democracy.

On the nature of the AfD and its distance from Pegida Petry states: "the AfD is made of all sorts of German citizens and even people living abroad, who think that democracy more often fails not only in Germany but also in Europe, that we

have treaties that are bent if not broken, and we need to get citizens back to behave like citizens, not just like consumers. So it's basically people sharing the idea of preserving what we developed after the Second World War. Not only in Germany, but in Europe." The AfD is a mainstream party intent on preserving the German and European post world war 2 order as it does not look with nostalgia on a past pre-world war 2 golden age. Where then does the EU of the 21st century fit into this AfD project to restore the post-world war 2 order is never discussed in the interview as the focus of the interviewer was on the extremism and Islamophobia of the AfD. On Pegida Petry states: "You see, the problem with Pegida, and the Pegida discussion, is that many people think they know what this movement is about. They put all those different movements from different places in Germany into one pot and they don't actually seem or didn't seem to have read what the AfD on the one hand and also Pegida represented on the other hand, actually wrote about it in the past." Hegemonic discourse in Germany has branded a variety of diverse groups from various parts of Germany as extremists and in so doing is presenting a single homogeneous mass which in reality is diverse and heterogeneous in an attempt to silence them in the social order. One such instance of this is the insistence as borne out by the position of Sebastian in the interview that the leadership of the AfD view Pegida and AfD as natural allies and expressions of the same discourse and worldview. For Petry Pegida and AfD are not natural allies as they don't share the same discourse and worldview and the proof lies in studying the positions of both parties. Petry continues on Pegida as follows: "Again, the Pegida movement is one in German streets of many, many German citizens that feel left alone by German politics because their ideas, their sorrows, their problems, are not being taken up by any other party. And that should be something we talk about." Movements as Pegida are active in German politics because Germans are alienated from mainstream German political parties and are seeking a political home which speaks to the need for and the agenda of the AfD in its strategy to become the new member of the political mainstream in a bid to change it. The issue is not then Pegida and its links to AfD but the fact that the AfD is present and active as an alternative to mainstream politics whilst being mainstream in strategic intent thereby addressing the alienation of German voters. That is the reality that is relevant and the political establishment must respond which they since did in the case of Angela Merkel and the CDU thereby affirming this position of Petry.

The interview inevitably raises Petry's position on Islam and Muslims in Germany. Sebastian poses the first question as follows: "Let's talk about Islam, attitudes to Islam. Islam, you said, conveys a vision of the state 'that is totally foreign to that which we know in Europe.' Why does that matter to you? Petry replies: "Shouldn't we care about views that do not agree with our democratic and liberal order of state?" "Well, you know as well as I do that the idea of state of many let's say, not the Islam as whole because there are many different ways you can live Islam, that they don't agree for example the German Grundgesetz and many other democratic societies. Let's take the Sharia..." Petry's position is that there is a fundamental contradiction between Sharia law and the German Grundgesetz or the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany which means that Islam rejects the democratic and liberal form of the German state which raises the questions whether Muslims can live in Germany whilst adhering to Sharia law and if they are in fact Muslims if they accept the German Grundgesetz and forsake Sharia. Petry continues as follows: "you get your cultural education and you have to think about how this cultural education, also in terms of religion, agrees with democratic society in the centre of Europe. And we do not see that there are differences. Let's take for example the attitude of the Islam towards Christianity and Judaism. Very difficult isn't it?" Muslims carry a specific cultural education, a worldview that places Muslims in contradiction to German society and law in spite of the diversity in the manner Islam is lived. Muslim refugees from Muslim lands therefore carry this antagonistic cultural education at its most potent thereby posing the gravest threat to the German social order. Where does this antagonistic cultural education originate Petry doesn't say? The salient issue that arises for Petry is then Muslim integration and it needs to be rigorously defined. Petry states: "what we mean is that in fact Islam, just taken by itself with its attitude towards democratic societies, is in fact problematic. But if we talk about fully integrated Muslims and we have many of them living in Germany, who many times have for themselves created again a distance to this sort of very fundamental Islam, of course they belong to Germany." What Petry describes as "very fundamental Islam" is then a barrier to the creation of the desired "integrated Muslim" who is a German. The goal then is to have Muslims walk away from this rejected Islam and accept integrative Islam but Petry fails to define both forms of Islam. From Petry's stated position earlier in the interview it is expected that this integrative Islam must accept the paramountcy of German

Grundgesetz over Sharia law and the daily praxis of Muslims in Germany. This position is summed up in Petry's statement: "Islam is not a part of Germany but fully integrated Muslim citizens, they are a part of Germany." This statement begs the question: can there be Muslims without Islam? On this Petry is silent or maybe this question is totally irrelevant because Muslims are a minority in Germany with little, if any, impact on the outcome of general elections. Petry insists that there are integrated Muslims in Germany in keeping with her model as follows: "interesting in Freiburg we have just found out and you can find every word in the internet, especially people with a migration background voted for the AfD and I have met quite a few people who have migrated from an Islamic background, for example from Lebanon or from Turkey, and who say: 'Yes we have come to Germany in order to live in a free and democratic society and what happens now with this sort of migration, the experience is capable to destroy that sort of Germany and we don't want to have to flee again.'" Petry has discovered in Germany integrated Muslims and much more importantly integrated Muslims who voted for the AfD making them by extension Muslims who support the right wing extremist Islamophobe AfD. Petry insists that these are Muslims who have willingly accepted the Basic Law of the Federal Republic and rejected very fundamental Islam and by extension Sharia law. These are Muslims who were vetted and accepted migrant applicants unlike the tsunami of Muslim migrants that swamped Germany on the invitation of Angela Merkel and therefore pose the gravest threat to the process of the selection of Muslim migrants to Germany who are desirous of becoming integrated German Muslims. Petry on this states: "I think in our country and also in Europe, it's us having to decide which sort of migration we want to accept in our countries." There is then a choice between a duality of migration types and Merkel chose unilaterally to unleash upon Germany the destructive evil twin of the duality. For Petry the strategy is clear target Merkel and her coalition on the evil unleashed by her tsunami of refugees and in response the CDU and the coalition has responded by embracing positions that were described by the coalition and corporate media as extremism previously.

Petry delves into the impact of Islam on Germany's social order encapsulating this impact with the division it's causing. Petry states: "The division is already there; we have to talk about children in school not being able to do their swimming

lessons together. If now we have to talk about separate bathing times in public swimming pools, it's not us creating division, the division is already there because there are different cultural backgrounds. And if I want to move into a new country, if I'm an immigrant, then I think that it is fairly obvious that I have to assimilate to a certain degree into the new country, if I want to be a part of it." For Petry the division is the product of a very fundamental Islam seeking to change the German social order in its image and likeness. The minority Muslim migrants are then actively seeking to subject the majority German population who are citizens of Germany to their will which is an act of open aggression that refuses to recognise the realities of the German social terrain and its power relations. Fundamental Islam is incapable of accepting the German democratic liberal order because of the clash of worldviews hence a range of engagements between fundamental Islam and the German social order will become the order of the day as seen in the case of the assault on mixed gender swimming classes at public schools. This scenario in Germany has arisen as a result of Merkel's decision to abrogate the right of the German state to control its border and to choose those most eligible to settle in Germany as refugees. Petry states; "But deciding about who is migrating and who is not, who is going to be part of a new country is in the end a question of borders" When you relinquish control of your border you cannot determine the fitness of those entering your country.

On how Petry will deal with expressions of Islam in Germany she states: "If we have laws in Germany and want that these German laws are being stuck to, we repress someone?" "So you think that Burkhas and veils should be worn in public everywhere in Germany?" "Why, should they? No, I think they don't have to!" "we think that in German public, at schools, we've had this discussion before in Germany before that this sort of religious costume should not be worn." Petry illustrates how the distinction between Islam and integrated Muslim will be demarcated and policed as the burka and the veil for women will not be allowed in public spaces. The very fundamental Islam will then be faced with sanctions which police what is permissible and not in public spaces.

The stated position of Angela Merkel at the congress of the CDU is as follows: "the full-face veil must be banned wherever it is legally possible", "Here in Germany the laws of our country are applied to everyone equally without any exception", "German law takes precedence over Sharia" and "We have repeatedly

stated that the situation that occurred in late summer, 2015, cannot, and should not, and will not be repeated.” The German border is now closed and the full court press will be deployed on fundamental Islam in Germany for a moment there one was under the impression that Frauke Petry was addressing the congress of the AfD, extremism has now gone mainstream in German electoral politics. The German Bundestag passed a resolution brought by the ruling coalition led by Merkel termed the “Culture Builds Bridges” declaration in which the following ideas are contained: Germany is a European cultural nation, “We want to preserve our country’s rich cultural heritage, which is characterised by the diversity of its citizens, states and regions as well as by its lively art and cultural scene” “that’s the opposite of a culture of isolation and intolerance like that being propagated by right-wing populist movements at the moment.” The declaration sends a message to the German electorate that Merkel’s coalition will not allow the Muslim refugees to assault, dilute and compartmentalise Germany’s European culture there is then no need to elect the AfD to the Bundestag in the 2017 general elections, a message is sent to the AfD not only as to the perceived threat they are posing to Merkel’s re-election as Chancellor and her coalition’s hold on political power but also Merkel’s electoral strategy is premised on adopting the discourse of the AfD to ward off the threat of the AfD. A message is also sent to Muslims in Germany who seek to change the nature and terms of engagement of the German social order which insists that Merkel’s coalition is willing and ready to engage with these recalcitrant Muslims under the rule of law leaving a single choice become integrated, immerse yourself in Germany’s European culture, language, the arts, history and its values. Again one was convinced that this declaration was an AfD document made public in the aftermath of Merkel’s address at the congress of the CDU as what is most striking is the congruence between Petry’s and Merkel’s and her coalition’s discourse of Islam, Muslims and an integrated Muslim. Whatever the outcome of the 2017 German general elections Frauke Petry has already won thanks to Merkel’s unilateral decision borne out of hubris to unleash a tsunami of migrants on Germany and the EU. This tsunami has dramatically changed the terrain of crime, organised crime, the threat of Islamic extremism, the social orders of recipient states and the electoral politics of Europe. One political leader of a single member state of the EU should not have such power and the exercise of it points to all that is wrong with the EU and the threat it poses to the security of Europe. An

unfinished EU political power architecture has generated the gravest threat to the sustainability of the union and there is no political will to address this organic malformation which will continue to spawn the movements to destroy the union.

<https://www.rt.com/news/369368-merkel-germany-burka-ban/>

<http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKBN1452FT>