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Far-right anti-science - an aspect of populism sustained through the mainstream?

Albersmann, Jonas

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Master Thesis

**Far-right anti-science – an aspect of populism sustained through
the mainstream?**

Jonas Albersmann – s4517822

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Prof. dr. I.C. van Biezen

Dr. J.A. Robison



**Universiteit
Leiden**

Abstract

Populism increasingly engages with anti-science sentiments targeting researchers and academic institutions. This thesis investigates how such narratives are used by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, identifying four different dimensions within the concept of anti-science. Beyond that, this paper investigates whether these narratives have reached the mainstream discourse through CDU/CSU. After conducting a ten-year discourse analysis of parliamentary speeches and newspaper articles using Atlas.ti, with a focus on the climate change issue, this paper considers the anti-science concept as a part of populism used to influence the political discourse. While it has not reached the mainstream discourse through CDU/CSU, a rhetorical adoption of climate denialism, originally rooted in anti-science, has occurred after COVID. Thus, suggesting a slow normalisation process of rhetoric grounded in anti-science. The findings may reflect a broader shift of the mainstream to the right, or the CDU/CSU deliberately taking up narratives from far-right actors. Finally, the thesis contributes to the post-truth discussion and studies on the rhetorical mainstreaming of the far-right. Future research could elaborate on the intersection between rhetorical adoption and issue ownership.

Keywords: populism, anti-science, discourse analysis, political communication, mainstreaming, rhetorical adoption, climate change

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Far-right anti-science – an aspect of populism sustained through the mainstream?

The current political climate is characterised by uncertainty on many levels. Far-right populism plays a significant role in this. It not only impacts the international order by promoting nationalism but also creates major changes in the internal affairs of countries. The latter can be connected to right-wing populism, which is often associated with neglecting institutions within the current democratic system. Cas Mudde (2019) speaks of “anti-system” parties (p.7). These tendencies can be observed concerning scientific institutions as well. Donald Trump famously leaving the WHO might only be the tip of the iceberg (The White House, 2025). Budget cuts have been introduced for a wide range of scientific institutions and projects, thus threatening their independent work (Halpert, 2025). The US is no outlier in this regard. One can observe these tendencies in central Europe as well. The German far-right party AfD has continuously denounced climate science and specifically targeted gender studies as illegitimate, including personal threats to researchers. Thus, providing vital ground for research. This paper therefore focuses on the anti-science environment and discourse in Germany.

Given the significance of delegitimising science by far-right populists, one should pay specific attention to the matter. Thereby, the importance should not only lie in whether far-right populists are engaging in anti-scientific notions. One can argue that rather, it is more crucial if these sentiments are accepted within the broader political or societal discourse. Because if that is the case, far-right parties would not act isolated anymore, but succeed in spreading the ideology into broader spectrums of society, to the mainstream. This is what the paper aims to contribute to the discussion. Hence, the following research questions are investigated: *How are anti-science sentiments, used by far-right populists?* After, the focus switches to the question of *Are these sentiments mainstreamed beyond the populist discourse?* Analysing this is particularly significant because historically, the centrist

conservative party played the biggest part in separating mainstream politics from right-wing extreme views (Nettelblatt, 2022). It is typically summarised by the German term ‘Brandmauer’, a firewall separating the conservative forces from working with the far-right. If one can see populist, and especially anti-science sentiments within this political force, it would bring meaningful insights into the dynamics of the separation from the far right, also in terms of discourse and rhetoric. Thereby, the study will provide insights into how successful the AfD is in translating specific sentiments across party borders.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers focusing specifically on populism that makes use of sentiments hostile towards science, scholars, or the ‘scientific elite’ have tried to conceptualise this reality in different ways. Early approaches included the presentation of *anti-intellectualism*, which was followed by *science-related populism*, *epistemological populism*, and *counterknowledge* to understand these practices (Hofstadter 1964; Mede & Schäfer, 2020; Saurette & Gunster, 2011; Ylä-Anttila, 2018). These concepts are highly interconnected and build on each other. The following section will present these and their interrelations.

Populism

Populism is one of the most important features of the political landscape. Populist parties, especially the right wing, have gained a substantial amount of power across the globe in recent years. Populism can be defined as a political tactic, ideology, communication style, political style, or discourse (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Laclau, 2005; Mudde, 2004; Moffit, 2016; Weyland, 2001). In this section, populism will be treated as an ideology, as it forms the basis for different styles that always take up elements and build on this ideological lens.

Mudde (2004) developed his definition, which is widely regarded as the most encompassing

definition of populism as an ideology. According to him, it should be seen as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.” (p. 543). Therefore, the ‘elite’ is seen as the primary adversary. This specific focus on the elite has been termed anti-elite populism by Jagers and Walgrave (2007) and will play a central role in this paper, as it focuses on a particular scientific elite. Nevertheless, there is another element that is not specifically mentioned in the definition by Mudde (2004) but is central to populism. This is the creation and separation between groups within society. This is why the author refers to the ‘pure people’ (p.543). Only a part of society is accepted to represent it.

Populism and anti-science sentiments

When talking about anti-science, one must introduce concepts related to the matter with Hofstadter and his book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1963). Anti-intellectualism played a significant role in shaping the perception of science in society. To conceptualise it, three main features were used. First, the author established anti-rationalism, which refers to the rejection of critical thought in everyday life. Second, unreflective instrumentalism refers to the preference for short-term success in any regard, regardless of long-term consequences, as would involve careful reasoning to determine. The last type is most relevant for political science and especially for the study of populism. Here, the author points out an *anti-elitist* form of anti-intellectualism. He described it as a “distrust, and perhaps even dislike, for individuals who claim to have superior knowledge or wisdom about a subject matter” (p.468). This third type of anti-intellectualism is central to this paper as it clearly involves the element of populism, which sees the ‘ordinary people’ in an antagonistic relationship with a ‘corrupt elite’ (Mudde, 2004). In total, anti-intellectualism can generally be defined as a “generalised suspicion and mistrust of intellectuals and experts of whatever

kind” (Merkley, 2019, p. 29). It is worth noting that while one can see an element of populism in this definition, Hofstadter (1963) did not develop the concept based on populism. Other researchers have taken this further and related these sentiments about science specifically to populism.

Beyond anti-intellectualism, Mede and Schäfer (2020) conceptualised a specific branch of populism that strongly makes use of anti-intellectual sentiments. Science-related populism is specifically suggesting an antagonism between the people and an academic elite. So far, this seems to fit into the anti-elitism concept, as well as Mudde’s (2004) definition of populism. However, the authors went further in their concept. They established that this antagonism exists because this elite would illegitimately claim science-related decision-making authority as well as sovereignty about truth-telling (p.484). Thus, they separated between rejecting the power and authority of scientists, and as truth-based legitimacy. Finally, their concept takes a different angle than anti-intellectualism, since it does not focus on anti-science sentiments within society. Rather, it focuses on how populists are making use of these, moving from a demand-side to a populist supply-side approach (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012).

This closely ties to the concept of epistemological populism. It was first introduced by Saurette and Gunster (2011, p. 199) and focuses on the authority to provide knowledge tied to populism. Specifically, in how populist actors are trying to channel traditional power structures that allow experts and scientific personnel to have epistemological power. They conceptualised the term, giving it different elements. These are a combination of giving personal experience more value than knowledge created by theories or studies, including emotional intensity as an indicator for the reliability of an opinion. Further, rejecting other forms of knowledge as “elitist and therefore illegitimate” and referring to ‘common sense’ as a final argument to denounce scientific opposition. Therefore, epistemological populism is

created through discourse (Villadsen, 2020). Overall, epistemological populism generally denounces expertise and searches for knowledge formation within the ‘common people’ regarding real-life experience as expertise.

Despite populists rejecting the scientific elites, researchers agree that they do not condemn science in general. It seems that populists engage with scientific language when it suits their claims. It was described as performing popular intellectualism that fits into the realm of preferring the ‘common sense’ or experimental approaches over other scientific approaches (Ylä-Anttila, 2018). Thus, one can say that the concept of science-related populism does not go far enough to encompass the response of the populist towards scientific authority (Meyer, 2023). Instead, they introduce *counterknowledge*, an important term when it comes to the explanation of the ways that populists are not only rejecting scientific truth-telling or decision-making authority but introducing their own answers to scientific problems (T. S. S. Ylä-Anttila, 2017; Zolides, 2022). They defined the term as: “alternative knowledge which challenges establishment knowledge, replacing knowledge authorities with new ones, thus providing an opportunity for political mobilisation” (Ylä-Anttila (2018, p. 359). Applied, counterknowledge would work by (actively) creating communities that would challenge the expert consensus by proposing new forms of knowledge. Thereby, these communities not only reject the scientific elite but actively contribute to building new epistemic networks and narratives.

One can then go further and relate the counterknowledge communities to conspiracy theorists. Thereby, it is not the case that all alternative science communities make use of conspiracy theories. However, the mechanism of reversing the power relations of knowledge creation works in similar ways, as the conspiracists are positioning themselves to hold expert authority over a certain issue. Denouncing the scientific elite and countering their narratives by spreading one’s own. This led Ylä-Anttila (2018) to describe conspiracism as a “type of

counterknowledge per excellence” (p.6). This concept therefore not only rejects experts or scientific authority, as was the case in anti-intellectualism, science-related populism, and epistemological populism, but goes beyond that, by focusing on the creation of alternative realities and knowledge. This is also reflected in the rise of ‘alternative media’ within the radical right (Haller et al., 2019). The conceptualisation of counterknowledge is deeply discursive and can therefore be seen in a discursive context in this paper.

Populism as a discursive strategy and its mainstreaming

Discourse is commonly defined as social use of language, which ‘contributes to the ‘construction’ of social reality’ (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013, p. 78). This means that it has a direct impact on people’s lives. In this light, the sentiments of rejecting scientific knowledge and authority could influence how the population thinks about these institutions. When talking about far-right populist use of discourse, one would most likely focus on the concept of populism as a political style or a communication style. This goes beyond the ideological definition of the first section. In this sense, it is worth following the work of Moffit (2016) about political *style* as a concept beyond content in the sense that style also goes beyond the discourse alone. However, Villadsen (2020) proposed that *style* cannot be separated from Mudde’s (2004) populist ideology. It should thus not be seen as a neutral endeavour but tied into the ideological and hierarchical processes that far-right populists engage in.

In this paper, another focus will lie on the communication style of populists. That entails not only testing whether populists are making use of specific populist content, such as anti-elitism, an appeal to the people, or in this case denouncing the scientific elite and engaging in counterknowledge. It includes, beyond the mere content, the way these issues are addressed, picked up in the discourse, and potentially influencing mainstream debates about certain issues (De Vreese et al., 2018). When investigating the communication style and the

discourse of populists, one must mention the work of Laclau (2005) who has suggested that concepts like ‘the people’ are constructed through discourse and are given meaning through this process. This allows populist parties to conceptualise and use “empty signifiers” (p.69) to construct their reality of ‘the people’ who commonly oppose the ‘elite’ in an antagonistic relationship. Through this, it becomes possible to construct different types of *elites* or *people* that the parties are trying to appeal to. Thus, appealing to specific identities as ingroups or outgroups becomes possible based on ideological goals (Eslen–Ziya & Giorgi, 2022). These different applications of identities and societal groups through discursive construction were referred to as a hegemonic moment by Laclau (2005). This mechanism can also be tied to anti-science sentiments as populists are then calling for folk wisdom exercised by ‘common people’ instead of scientific institutions (Eslen–Ziya & Giorgi, 2022). Following Laclau (2005), it would be relevant to see how populists construct these instances or institutions through their discourse. In other words, *how* populists refer to these institutions matters to understand their perception of them. The overall investigation of the discourse around the concepts will headline the following research questions: *How are anti-science sentiments used by far-right populists?*

The second part of the analysis covers: *Are these sentiments mainstreamed beyond the populist discourse?* Although mainstream is a commonly used term, it needs to be clarified what exactly one means by it. Overall, the mainstream is constructed and never permanently the same. It is in flux. For it to be constructed, there needs to be a minority or extreme position, which at the same time is in flux as well. Beyond these main criteria, (Brown et al., 2021, p. 170) conceptualised mainstreaming as a “process by which parties/actors, discourses and/or attitudes move from marginal positions on the political spectrum or public sphere to more central ones”. This would shift what is seen as admissible within the political or public debate. Studies have focused on how far-right parties are moving closer to the mainstream

and have been normalised or accepted by the majority. However, this can work oppositely, with the mainstream moving closer to the far right, thus making it more acceptable (Brown et al., 2021).

When investigating the mainstream, one must include the notion of normalisation. Different topics or sentiments can become normalised, leading to greater acceptance of them in society. This happens through reinforcing arguments that belonged to different fields earlier (Krzyżanowski, 2020). Overall, “normalization describes how ideologies are incorporated into the mainstream through recontextualizations and semiotic reinterpretations” (Rheindorf & Wodak, 2019, p. 307) This touches upon the notion of the inclusion of multiple topics in different discourses, not only focusing on arguments but also including music or popular culture as a platform that can drive normalization. Wodak (2021) develops this further by including deliberate provocations from the far right, which are distributed by the media and finally taken up by conservative parties. Thereby reaching the political mainstream. Thus, a major conservative party rhetorically taking up narratives that were formerly controlled by far-right actors alone would contribute to the normalisation of those topics in the discourse.

Here one needs to distinguish between taking up policy issues or engaging in similar rhetoric. It has been shown that mainstream parties have continuously adopted policy issues from the far right (Bale & Kaltwasser, 2021; Bayerlein, 2021). However, rhetorical adoption as researched in this paper, needs to be seen as separated from issue adaptation. Research has shown several instances where conservatives adopted far-right rhetoric. Thereby they made these narratives, and ultimately the issues themselves acceptable, sayable, or even ‘common sense’ within the discourse. A famous example is Nicolas Sarkozy, a conservative party leader, using far-right discursive elements ultimately leading to an acceptance of the far-right beyond a mere protest party. The process took place because Sarkozy used, among other

elements, emotionality claims, divisive language towards not only immigrants but different groups within the poor, as well as attacks on intellectuals (Mondon, 2012). This was not the case for the French environment alone. Similar processes happened in Australia, where mainstream parties incorporated populist narratives intending to secure voters from the far-right (Wear, 2015). One could therefore speak of a reoccurring feature within mainstream conservative parties, irrespective of their country's history and political culture. It is also evident that mainstream politicians like Sarkozy rhetorically participate in anti-intellectualism and other cultural concerns like national pride in addition to rhetorically appealing to immigration, which is perhaps the largest issue of far-right populists (Mondon, 2012). Overall, Lamour (2024) has stated that political opportunists would be most likely to engage in far-right discourses. This could happen based on content or style, leading to giving the far-right the power to determine how reality is best described. This leads to the assumption that rhetorical adoption of far-right positions, like anti-science, is likely to happen also by German conservative mainstream parties such as CDU/CSU as a tool to appeal to AfD voters.

Method

Research design

Germany was chosen as a case study for this research as it provides several aspects that make this selection adequate and unique. It has a large and growing far-right populist party that has been associated with neglecting branches of science. Simultaneously, the most powerful mainstream party is the conservative union, which provides a good basis to investigate the mainstreaming of far-right discourses. It is an appropriate actor for analysis, as research has found that conservative ideology is influencing climate change denial, therefore

showing anti-science sentiments in this regard (Krämer & Holtz-Bacha, 2020). This German political environment shares structural and ideological features with the other Western European countries like Austria or France. These have been categorised to represent similar tendencies involving far-right populist and mainstream right parties (Mondon, 2012; Schwalbach, 2022; Wodak, 2019). Accordingly, this paper conceptualises Germany as a typical case to investigate anti-science within populist parties and the popular discourse, which leads to this case selection (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). This increases the external validity of this study as the results might offer insights relevant to other cases within the Western democratic system.

This research used a discourse analysis focusing on power relations created through language. Especially within populism, power plays a role as the most common narrative is usually based on powerful elites deciding over the ‘pure’ people (Mudde, 2004). Similarly, when investigating counterknowledge, power is influential as the agents of these alternative epistemological groups are often creating these to reverse the power structures that are present in society (Ylä-Anttila, 2018). Furthermore, a discourse analysis closely tied to social constructivism allows for the uncovering of societal relations. This method is well-suited to investigate statements of science populism and their impact on the mainstream discourse. Within the discourse analysis, special attention was paid to the mechanisms conceptualised in the previous section to see whether these are applied in political reality.

The AfD was one focus of this research as they are the dominant populist party in Germany and a driving force for influencing German public discourse. Especially right-wing populism has been successful in curating the discourse in recent years by introducing formerly excluded and taboo topics back into the mainstream (Wodak, 2019). Beyond that, was generally linked to reject institutions, which include scientific institutions as well (Mudde, 2019). Defining what it means for sentiments to reach the ‘mainstream’ can be

challenging. Thus, testing this involved the incorporation of the discourse pushed by the CDU/CSU, the largest political union in the newly elected German parliament.

Studies have focused on populism that features strong anti-science sentiments during the pandemic or in relation to the climate crisis (Chen et al., 2023; Merkley, 2019). However, there seems to be a gap when talking about science and populism reaching the political mainstream. Therefore, a timeframe of 10 years was chosen to investigate in what way and how claims from the far right have changed, and if this has influenced the communicative and discursive strategy of the conservative and mainstream parties. Thus, opening an investigation into rhetorical mainstreaming or the adoption of rhetoric across party borders. The topic of climate change was a dominating factor since this topic could be considered as a continuous feature of politics, while it is highly scientific at the same time. Finally, the chosen time frame built an especially crucial case, since the AfD was able to double its share in votes during that period (Fleck, 2025), ascending to the second-strongest party in Germany today. Thereby, it makes it highly important to understand the underlying mechanisms of mainstream discourses that might have contributed to this development.

These mechanisms were analysed using Atlas.ti. It is suitable for qualitative discourse analysis as it enables the qualitative coding of content, thereby helping to find underlying concepts, relations and sentiments. The coding followed an inductive approach to allow the finding of main themes and concepts within the data. The codes were generalised after, aiming to find the main concepts of anti-science sentiments within the data, while simultaneously allowing for investigation of discursive strategies around these very concepts and how they translate into the mainstream. Overall, one could categorise these and several other codes within the four different science populism theories. However, as stated in the theoretical framework, these theories heavily build on each other. Accordingly, within Atlas.ti, the codes for these were not mutually exclusive, as different elements of a single

quote could correspond to different elements, making it possible to attribute a quote to more than just one of the four dimensions.

Corpus

The data for the first analysis was based on speeches by politicians in parliament. This was done to assess most effectively what the respected parties were deliberating on the centre stage of German politics. Parliamentary speeches were scraped from the database [opendiscourse.de](https://www.opendiscourse.de). Since the AfD entered parliament in 2017, it marked the start of the time frame. 2022 concluded the time frame, as it was the last year one could extract data from. The speeches were chosen by purposeful sampling. The criteria were that speeches included passages and sentiments about science. Therefore, speeches were pre-read and selected based on these criteria. In total, 121 speeches of AfD MPs were analysed. This concludes the corpus for the first part of the analysis to answer the first section of the research question.

As a second layer, popular newspaper articles from the German media landscape and CDU/CSU parliamentary speeches were included. From the articles, direct quotes of politicians were used to focus on the direct messages by politicians and to avoid journalistic framing. The sampling method was the same as for the speeches. In both cases, the gathering was done year by year, to allow for an assessment of rhetoric over a large period. A second layer was included to assess how pure political content is translated and featured in the mainstream public discourse. As well as means to analyse how far CDU/CSU members were making use of anti-science sentiments. Here, 68 speeches were analysed. Around half of the number of AfD speeches, as this layer consists of a combination of news articles and speeches. To gather these news articles, the database NexisUni was chosen. Search strings like ((AfD OR "Alternative für Deutschland" OR CDU OR "Christlich Demokratische Union") AND ("anti-wissenschaftlich" OR "wissenschaftsfeindlich*" OR "wissenschaftsskeptisch*" OR "epistemologischer Populismus" OR "wissenschaftsbezogener

Populismus" OR "Anti-Intellektualismus" OR "populistische Wissenschaftskritik") AND (("Klimawandel" OR "Corona" OR "Covid" AND "Wissenschaft") OR "Forschung" OR "Experten" OR "wissenschaftlicher Konsens") AND ("sagte" OR "meinte" OR "behauptete" OR "kritisierte" OR "warnte" OR "argumentierte" OR "warf vor" OR "stellte infrage") were used to gather the most relevant articles. Several articles from each month are selected covering the full 10 years. To adequately assess broad discourses and reduce media bias, influential papers from different ideological perspectives were included based on the selection by Wettstein et al. (2018). Their selection encompassed tabloid outlets, quality newspapers, and weekly publications: BILD, B.Z., Die Zeit, FAZ, Focus, Der Siegel, and Süddeutsche Zeitung. In total, 158 news articles were analysed. Quotes featured within the results were translated using the translator tool DeepL Translate.

Results and Discussion

AfD Anti-Science usage

First and foremost, it was clearly visible that the AfD strongly used anti-science sentiments in their political communication within the German parliament. These took different shapes, but one could see a pattern that the four main types of anti-science populism played the overarching role. Beyond the main categories, different subtopics were discovered. The most important subtopic was the government would undermine scientific freedom by controlling scientists and their institutions. This was followed by positioning the economic success of Germany against climate protection. The third most important subcode was covered in a different direction. Here, the AfD was deliberately making use of scientific processes by citing scientists or institutions to support their claims. It is important to mention that anti-science sentiments could be applied to any major political issue including sub-

issues. This makes it usable within populism following Mudde's (2004) 'thin cantered ideology' which explains that populism can be applied across the political board, with room for change and redevelopment.

Anti-Intellectualism

This first category characterised by a general dislike or distrust of experts was not the most significant. Still, anti-intellectualism played an overarching role in AfD speeches. This quote can be seen as a prime example. *"Precisely because residual CO² cannot be predicted, because the so-called experts cannot, it is necessary to do the Trump. Let's end the farce of Paris"* (Rainer Kraft, 13.12.2019). Here, one could see the denunciation of scientists. This was done by using the word 'so-called' to insinuate a lack of legitimacy and authority of scientists. This mistrust of experts was used to legitimise the claim that Germany should exit the Paris climate agreement. It is striking that not only does the mistrust of experts play a role, but the speaker also makes a further point that it would be impossible to predict residual CO² in the atmosphere. As this was claimed without any proof, one can say that the rejection of scientific reason and general dislike would be enough to end the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, by describing something as impossible, the speaker claimed authority over the matter thereby challenging power relationships between him and scientists.

Epistemological Populism

As this section is all about channelling epistemological power structures, as elaborated in the framework, the following results are structured to be presented in that manner. Attesting personal experience as more valuable than expert-driven information is a major part of the concept. This was observed in the following quote. *"Modelling? There are real people out there in the medical professions who have been doing their jobs every day for over two years, with and without vaccination"* (Kay Uwe Ziegler, 28.04.2022). Data on COVID infections was denounced, and the personal experience of nurses was given more

value. With this, it was suggested that a vaccination obligation for healthcare workers would be introduced without reason. Furthermore, by describing these workers as ‘real’ people, science-based decision-making would not take ordinary people into account while simultaneously denouncing the legitimacy of the scientific profession. Thereby, the speaker channelled the power relation of science-based decision-making to have more value than ordinary workers. Finally, the speaker pointed out that medical workers have carried out their tasks during the whole pandemic, partly without vaccination. This illustrates the perceived irrelevance of the Covid vaccination. As a result, the scientific insights are treated to be less relevant than the perceived reality of ‘the people’.

This quote stemmed from the discourse around COVID vaccinations and therefore marked a very specific moment in time in which scientific insights were generally checked in high amounts. The next quote, however, dealt with the energy transition topic, a highly recurring topic that also features elements of epistemological populism. *“Unfortunately, the debate about the energy transition has undermined the free and social market economy, but also common sense. Scientific principles are being superseded by superficial knowledge and belief”* (Steffen Kontré, 02.11.2018). One could unpack several layers from this, but the most striking part was the deliberate reference to common sense. This is the most typical feature of this category. Nevertheless, one needs to examine the context in which the speaker uses it. The energy transition is antagonistic towards common sense, meaning that climate protection would hurt the economy. Economic prosperity is thereby positioned as the most desirable goal. In the final part of the quote, the speaker put his position as scientifically grounded and rejects the drive for climate protection as driven by belief and not backed by facts. This again channels the power structures of what knowledge can be seen as legitimate. To conclude, this section showed that the AfD presents itself on the side of scientific legitimacy, while at the

same time condemning it, which is an important insight to consider when investigating the ways anti-science is used.

Science-Related Populism

This branch of science populism, specifically highlighting and channelling the decision-making and truth-telling authority of the elite, was featured second most often in the speeches. The following quote illustrates how both authorities were challenged. *“The danger is simply too great at the moment that science is being misused here for socio-political goals, one could also say that propaganda is being carried out under a scientific guise”* (Marc Jongen, 02.06.2022). Multiple things are to be taken away from this. First, it was suggested that the scientific body is not working independently but is controlled by the political body. Through this, the truth-telling authority was questioned, but not because science would generally lie. It was questioned through a different elite, in this case the ruling parties, interfering with scientific integrity. Thus, the AfD ultimately positioned itself on the side of ‘free’ science, thereby creating a picture of a power-abusing ruling class that would manipulate the people through science. This goes beyond epistemological challenges and fundamentally questions ways of how science should be carried out. The AfD ultimately accused the governing elite of being hostile towards science itself. It thereby undermines the truth-telling authority of these institutions. On the contrary, the party did acknowledge science in some ways, but the fact that the ruling elite would skew the results or manipulate scientific freedom creates an environment where truth-telling authority would be undermined by the government. And with that, the decision-making authority as well. Since the decisions would be made on false or manipulated facts. This led to the result that the AfD challenged said authorities through a created narrative of governmental involvement in scientific institutions and processes.

Counterknowledge

With this topic, attention will be brought to the biggest category that emerged from the AfD speeches. Most codes were attributed to this. As stated before, AfD positioned itself on the side of scientific integrity and freedom. This section takes things further, as it explores the deliberate usage of science to spread information against the mainstream opinion, to strengthen their own positions and to weaken the mainstream arguments. One example was the following. *“Leading virologists and medical associations have come together to say that a lockdown is unnecessary. Chancellor Merkel, please finally listen to these experts and stop this panic policy”* (Sebastian Münzenmaier, 29.10.2020). Here, experts were deliberately used and trusted to speak out against current policies initiated by the government. From this quote, one could get the impression that the entire scientific consensus supports the position of the AfD. That is, because they combined virologists and other institutions to agree on one very broad question with the same answer. Thus, the government was positioned to lead Germany in the opposite of what the scientific consensus would be. Finally, the policy was lifted with the emotional claim of causing panic, which underlined the gravity of the perceived ignoring of scientific evidence.

Counterknowledge could also be observed within the climate debate. Here, another aspect of the concepts was featured. Engaging in popular intellectualism, providing own calculations to reject hypotheses. *“NO_x emissions in Germany fell by 60 per cent between 1990 and 2016. Even the ADAC has written this. Where do I find this effect of the massive NO_x reduction in Germany in the climate records, if NO_x supposedly has the significance attributed to it? Nowhere. (...) Where is there a single observable effect that the actions are having an impact? There is none”* (Rainer Kraft, 10.10.2018). Once again, multiple layers were poured into one quote. The main aspects regarding counterknowledge could be observed as the speaker was calculating in the speech. It had the outcome that the polluting

gas NO_x would not affect climate models despite less pollution. This popular intellectualism was used to discredit the climate protection and energy transition in its entirety. It thus reflects Ylä-Anttila's (2018) claims about the concept. Overall, the supposed calculation was used to discredit climate politics, not only of the government but also of the green and left. Therefore, it is evident that the AfD engaged with counterknowledge to push and dismantle climate policies, using emotional language, which underlines the antagonism towards political opponents.

Overall, the analysis focused largely on the topics of climate change and COVID. Nevertheless, the AfD related other topics to anti-science narratives. A prominent one was gender. Here, the research branch of gender studies, but also post-colonial studies, was denounced as a whole and attributed to the left elite. Generally, anti-science sentiments were rarely spread in isolation. As could be seen from the quotes, it was often connected to different issues such as the economy or the perceived oppression of citizens, especially during COVID. This can be seen as an indicator of anti-science sentiments being used as a floating signifier, following the Laclaudian interpretation of discourse, to not only support claims that suit the AfD's narratives but also to steer the discussion in their favour. This would explain the ambivalent relationship with science, which ranges from simple rejection to active support depending on the context. Active rejection occurred at times within the climate context, but most prominently with gender. Deliberate support for a branch of science typically occurred during COVID. Treating science as a contested concept by using it as a floating signifier allows the party to make use of and redefine it according to its needs. Ultimately, this questions the standing of scientific institutions within society.

Support for this interpretation comes from Boecher et al. (2022) who show that while the AfD rejects research branches completely, they still make use of scientific standards and

research-backed claims to support their own policy ideals. The authors distinguished the AfD's communication into science-based and populism-based. However, this paper argues that using narratives around science is fundamentally engrained in populism and is being used as a tool to divide, recontextualise, and shift discourses. It therefore challenges the insights of Szabados (2019) who does not consider science to be enshrined within populism. However, as all branches of anti-science were used clearly, this paper argues the contrary based on the AfD data. In terms of the pragmatic use of science, Saresma and Palonen (2022) align with this. Following their analysis of the far-right Finnish populist party, science is discredited when it is linked to ideologically opposite claims by the left 'elite', such as gender. However, this paper's analysis has shown that it does not only have to be the left 'elite' associated with science or scientists that can be criticised. Also, the government, largely consisting of conservative forces at the time of analysis, can be discredited for its policy using science to underline the claims. Thus, this paper suggests a rhetorical pragmatism in using science as a floating signifier as a means of shifting political discourse to the AfD's position. Its usage therefore goes beyond anti-elitism and general anti-science attitudes, as part of institutional rejection. The AfD uses science as an interpretative concept, a floating signifier, to challenge the hegemonic discourse. The latter is characterised by the temporary pinning of meaning to a concept through articulation and consent (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985). This could especially be observed when counterknowledge is being used to twist the perception of science by introducing seemingly scientific calculations.

Furthermore, these results have shown that anti-science cannot be generalized into one entity but has several (four) branches that operate on different levels. Although they are all related, one must acknowledge that they impact discourse in different ways. Especially when denouncing its general legitimacy and questioning scientific freedom through alleged political involvement, as featured in science-related populism, it could greatly impact trust

levels. After having eroded general trust, counterknowledge can be a great asset in not only denouncing the legitimacy of institutions but also creating alternative realities that can steer the discourse beyond scientifically backed claims to favourable positions for the AfD. This could especially be effective when using ‘scientific’ language that might appear to hold actual scientific grounds (Ylä-Anttila, 2018, p. 358). However, it should be acknowledged that counterknowledge is the one branch standing out. It can substantially reinvent the discourse, while the other types could be generalised into anti-science embedded into populism. Overall, it can be argued that the various ways in which anti-science is used fit into the broader context of post-truth politics. An environment where (scientific) facts are frequently exchanged with emotional claims (O’Callaghan, 2019). In this case, it translates to purposefully cherry-picking scientists’ claims as a method to challenge hegemonic discourse through counterknowledge.

CDU/CSU and Science in the Parliament

CDU/CSU parliamentary speeches revealed no evidence of anti-science use. In fact, many times the party engaged on the contrary. Deliberately opposing AfD rhetoric and anti-science through several different aspects are part of the bigger picture that this analysis drew. Generally, science was favoured as it was seen as an investment that would benefit the economy in the long run. The party mentioned innovations as the desired outcome of these investments. Such sentiments were especially present in the pre-covid years with a spike in 2019. The support for science was manifested through policy, such as increasing funding for scientific institutions. Hence, underlining the positive stance on science. 2018 to 2022 had a strong representation of policy-based support for science. This excerpt of a speech by Andreas Steier encompasses these stances. *“We clearly stand for academic freedom. (...) During the pandemic we have seen that we have a very good infrastructure here. And we are*

also equipping this infrastructure with good financial resources. We may not know if and when which invention or innovation will benefit us, but we do know that there is no progress and no future without innovation” (19.11.2021). To begin with, innovation, financial progress, and gain were laid out as the goal. By stressing uncertain outcomes, the party underlined this striving for innovation and progress. Finally, the pandemic was mentioned as a time when strong scientific infrastructure was needed. This served as an example of successful science policies and was therefore mentioned in direct association with more investments for scientific institutions. Moreover, the quote illustrated scientific freedom as an important topic, especially during the COVID years. At the same time, the AfD suggested governmental control over scientific results. This is important in so far that CDU/CSU speakers were specifically reacting to these claims, as this quote shows. *“The AfD, of all parties, is now suggesting that science is being influenced and pressurised by the federal government's policies”* (Astrid Mannes, 11.02.2021). In fact, this topic was the most frequently mentioned within the entire dataset and reached its peak in 2020/21. Especially through the last quote, one could see a deliberate rejection of AfD stances on science, thereby creating a separation between the parties.

This can be interpreted through the lens of Foucault's (1995) concept of Discipline and Punishment, in a broader sense. The CDU claims the position of trusting science as the hegemonic norm. By deviating from this norm, the AfD is marked as transgressive. In response, this leads to a denial of legitimacy of the AfD through rhetorical and symbolic punishment for crossing the discursive normality created by the CDU/CSU. This discursive normality views science as a regime of truth that is politically untouchable. On the other hand, frequent reactions to the claims propagated by the AfD might suggest a rather successful influence by the AfD on political discourse, at least in terms of attention given to their claims. Ultimately, trust in science is used to create a discursive separation emphasising

the differences between CDU/CSU and AfD. This moves beyond the agnostic pluralism concept of Mouffe (2013) which describes the inevitability and necessity of conflict within the political. In this context, however, one can make the case that CDU/CSU are discursively constructing the AfD as radical by placing them outside the hegemonic narratives. This could be understood as a political strategy to prevent voters from drifting off to the far-right.

Beyond the stance of science alone, climate change as an issue was investigated. Within this issue, the sentiment of believing in climate change based on scientific grounds dominated. This is contrary to the AfD position, which was built on rejecting scientific reasons for human-created climate change. Further, it was underlined through active rejection of the AfD narrative. In general, an observable peak of this rhetoric occurred in the year 2020/21, although it is constantly present. Despite the clear stance, a separation of political positions was visible. Voices warning about too much climate protection were present as well. These specifically draw a conflict between economic success and climate protection. *“It is therefore not feasible to tighten the fleet targets (...). This would massively endanger Germany as a business location”* (Georg Nüßlein, 03.07.2018). Comments like this did not occur often within the speeches, and it would therefore be wrong to assume that it reflects the position of the entire Union. Additionally, no shifts were observable over time regarding an increase or decrease in these positions. It must therefore remain categorised as individual events.

Nevertheless, the Union is not united about climate protection. A contradiction within the party, that accepts the scientific grounds of climate change, while seeming to be split on how to act upon it. This leads to the conclusion that no adoption of anti-science had occurred within the parliamentary sphere. Still, critical voices on the climate issue were present within the party. Especially because these comments appeared as single entities in the early years of the analysis, it aligns with the research of Kallis (2013), who describes that ideas outside the

mainstream need ‘early adopters. Individuals who breach the boundaries of the official party, or mainstream position. This could mark the starting point of a discursive shift, readjusting the boundaries of radical thought through normalization. The quote of Nüßlein could be an example of such early adopters within the CDU/CSU party. Lamour (2024) supports this, deepening the implications of rhetorical adoption by mainstream parties to be a driver of normalisation for far-right narratives.

Anti-Science in the public discourse

Beyond the political discourse of AfD and CDU/CSU, the public discourse included another layer of revelations about the relationship of the parties with science and climate change as its main control objective. The most important insight was that the separation from anti-science by the CDU/CSU was not as clear-cut as was the case in the speeches. It is still true that the Union did not engage in anti-science categories per se, but when investigating rhetorical adoption, the picture becomes less clear. The analysis revealed that rhetorical adoption had been present almost during the entire time, with moments of increase. This was the case from 2017 to 2020 with another increase being recorded after 2022. At the same time, it is important to note that rhetorical adoption occurred more often than clear rhetorical rejection of AfD sentiments.

The rhetorical alignment seemed to not always be as significant as after 2023. During the earlier years, reports included only the conservative part of the CDU/CSU engaging in anti-climate and at times anti-science rhetoric. Therefore, one cannot speak of these narratives reaching the mainstream and being encompassed by the entire party. This overlaps with earlier findings for speeches. Yet, this switched in the final years of analysis, post-COVID. The leaders of CDU (Friedrich Merz) and CSU (Markus Söder) were both advocating for less climate protection. Especially in the case of Merz in 2020, it was done in

a way that was found typical for conservative forces. This featured the narrative of protecting climate change by means of technological innovation such as not yet existing fluid reactors (taz, 14.03.2020). The AfD used the same approach. This shows that CDU climate policy is based on liberal environmentalism, which assumes that economic growth and climate protection are not at odds with each other (Krogmann, 2025). These narratives from the Union but also the AfD are operating within the neoliberal system that is seen as the norm, thereby enjoying hegemonic power. Ultimately, both conservative parties are using science narratives. From their perspective, it is to be supported as a means of generating a monetary return on investment or contributing to solutions for climate change. Thus, aligning with the discourse of the speeches.

Beyond these overlapping features, Merz established a rhetorically comparable narrative towards the AfD when he said that the government's climate policy would be *"steered by left-wing ideologues from the academic milieu who have basically never met the SPD's old clientele in their lives"*. He concluded the statement by claiming *"It's not as if the world is going to end tomorrow"* (SZ, 29.07.2023). This aligned with AfD narratives in terms of denouncing climate change as motivated by left ideology. He thereby questioned the legitimacy of climate scientists and denied them a connection to reality as they would not be connected to the (real) SPD voters, anymore. In other words, it describes an antagonism between the people and an academic elite. Features that clearly reflect anti-science and populist elements. These positions reaching the top of the party can be characterised as a rhetorical normalisation event, encompassing the full party position behind these claims. Meaning, this position might have reached a hegemonic moment within the party, a new normality that could spread to society at large (Laclau, 2005). Furthermore, since this paper states that anti-science is embedded within populism, it comes as no surprise that anti-science is also in some ways present in CDU narratives when populist rhetoric is adopted. This means

that anti-science should be seen as a significant addition to Moffitt's (2016) political style which complements it. Based on this concept, anti-science would be an aspect of the *style*, just as Villadsen (2020) concludes. Seeing the bigger picture, it would mean that when any party adopts far-right populist rhetoric, anti-science will likely be featured.

The leader of the sister party CSU switched to make equal remarks after COVID. Söder, who was once arguing for increased public awareness of climate protection and an EU-wide ban on combustion engines (Die Zeit, 11.02.2021), redeveloped the narrative to engage on the contrary. Withdrawing the climate targets by describing them as 'failed' and advocating for a stop to the same ban (SZ, 23.01.2025). This illustrated a shift in narratives encompassing the entire Union, with both leaders advocating for less climate protection measures. Moffitt (2021) explains such shifts and the adoption of rhetoric as a means of appealing to far-right voters. However, through these exact practices, sentiments like anti-intellectualism, as present in the outlined quote, are being normalized and made acceptable through the adoption of a leading mainstream party. This is amplified through the deliberate usage of narratives that previously belonged to different environments, such as AfD discourse (Wodak, 2021). In fact, these narratives were unlikely to be featured during earlier years of the analysis. This marks what Krzyżanowski (2020) would call a discursive shift, advancing the boundaries of the sayable leading to a new normality within discourse. Beyond the party alone, through a more civil appearance compared to the AfD, these sentiments can be normalised faster (Krzyżanowski, 2020). Alternatively, one can classify these elements as a sign for the mainstream to shift further to the right (Brown et al., 2021). A further consequence would entail wider traditional media coverage including these sentiments. Although the coverage might be critical, which was largely the case for this analysis, the narratives will still spread leading to a greater chance of adoption. This is only intensified if communicated by mainstream parties (Moffitt, 2021).

Still, one cannot equate the far right and the Union. As was established before, the conservative parties did not fundamentally reject climate change and the scientific basis for it. On this matter, they distanced themselves from the AfD, even placing their position outside of the acceptable norms. What is striking, however, is that the party still seemed to engage in AfD narratives on the same topic, although the basic belief system was not comparable. Therefore, one could describe this as a normalization of anti-climate protection sentiments. For the AfD these were rooted in anti-science, which was not the case for CDU/CSU. However, the result would conclude that the CDU/CSU was advocating for similar goals as the AfD, with sometimes similar language, intensifying post-COVID. The timely development would not necessarily reflect a quantitative increase in these narratives. However, one must acknowledge that when both leaders of the Union parties are drawing these sentiments and divisions, the qualitative implications have increased. Thus, curating ground for normalisation and mainstreaming. Building on the work of Kallis (2013) and Moffit (2021), a timely switch has occurred normalizing early adopters of climate sceptical voices within the parties. Thus, the mechanisms of adoption and mainstreaming follow a framework that has been outlined by research before. Regardless of whether this is a strategy chosen deliberately to attract voters from the right or not, examples from France suggest that this process is highly complicated and can easily result in more support for the AfD, leading to a power loss for CDU/CSU (Mondon, 2012). Additionally, Bichay (2023) elaborates that the accommodation of far-right rhetoric might lead to an increase in legitimacy for these.

Conclusion and Implications

Initially, this paper investigates how anti-science sentiments are used within the German right-wing populist discourse. The AfD applies all four anti-science elements on several sub-

topics while predominantly present within the Climate Change and COVID issue. Due to the large number of sub-issues intersecting with anti-science sentiments, this paper develops the assumption that anti-science is engraved within populism. All subcategories thereby touch on different aspects that can also be found within ideological and discursive populism definitions (Mudde, 2004; Laclau, 2005) By encompassing anti-science sentiments within their communication style, the AfD tries to steer the political discourse to its favourable positions, thereby making science a tool for political communication.

Through the discursive usage of science based on ideological alignment, it is discredited. Hence, it could have implications beyond the political discourse. It might impact trust relationships with science and its representative institutions, ultimately leading to a decrease in their authority. Further along, this paper contributes to the understanding of such practices within populism, perhaps leading to greater awareness among the electorate of how science is being instrumentalized for political gain. Ultimately, this paper would call for improved science communication resulting in a greater ability to differentiate between scientific and scientific reporting.

Eventually, the paper builds on the second research question that investigated whether anti-science sentiments would be mainstreamed beyond the populist discourse through the mainstream right party union CDU/CSU. There are several nuances to the answer to this question. Generally, one cannot conclude that the use of anti-science is mainstreamed. This is made clear through deliberate distancing from these narratives in CDU/CSU speeches, especially during the COVID time. And through general support for scientific institutions and the acceptance of the scientific basis of climate change. While the public discourse largely drew on the same elements, it shifted after COVID to CDU/CSU adopting right-wing populist rhetoric on the climate change issue, including some anti-science elements like anti-intellectualism. Thus, a normalization and elements of mainstreaming of given rhetoric is

suggested. This contradicts the party's main incentive of supporting science and fighting climate change.

Consequently, the mainstream right is fighting a struggle to remain within hegemonic discourse while appealing to far-right voters without losing their base. It is done by moving rhetorically closer to the far-right but staying true to issue positions and beliefs. Implications of such behaviour could entail losing the traditional voter base and not appearing 'sincere enough' to the far-right voter base. A struggle that might lead to a decline in support for the mainstream right Bichay (2023). Further implications would be the start of a normalization of anti-science, and climate sceptical stances within society (Krzyżanowski, 2020). Thus, potentially leading to trust impacts for institutions, as well as declining climate awareness.

The study included several limitations. Speeches from CDU/CSU could not be extracted for the desired time of 10 years. This leads to an incomplete picture, especially in the post-COVID years. Furthermore, not all speeches and articles were analysed, but only those that included visible talk about science. In other words, the purposeful sampling method could not encompass the entire discourse, thereby potentially missing underlining narratives. Further, given that discourse analysis is epistemologically grounded in constructivism, the findings rely on interpretation and are therefore shaped by the theoretical framework guiding the analysis.

Future research could further explore the dynamics between rhetorical assimilation and issue positioning among political actors, particularly focusing on instances where alignment and contradiction coexist. While this paper covered far-right populism and its overlap with the discourse curated by the mainstream right, similar incentives might exist within different ideologies. Future studies investigating left-wing populists' relationship with anti-science sentiments could therefore help to draw a more complete picture about the use of science in politics. Lastly, while traditional media remains relevant for Western democracies

(Woods, 2007), the political is centred in a multimedia environment. This opens the case to investigate the implications of other media forms such as social media, as they are essential to the political discourse of the time.

Finally, this paper can be seen in the general realm of the ‘war on science’ occurring especially in the US. This research offers a view into an environment that is not yet hostile in absolute towards science, but not immune to it. That statement can be made based on two reasons. First, the AfD pushes anti-science sentiments into the political discourse. Second, the mainstream right is starting to adopt part of the rhetoric on the climate issue that is grounded in anti-science. Thus, this paper captures a moment in time showing the growing influence of far-right sentiments within the mainstream, making the ‘Brandmauer’ question only more relevant for CDU/CSU, in a struggle on how to exist next to the far-right.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Codebook

Code	Subcode	Definition	Example
1. Party	1.1 AfD	Content distributed by the AfD	
	1.2 CDU	Content distributed by the CDU/CSU	
	1.3 CDU 2017–2018	Timely separation of CDU speeches	
	1.4 CDU 2018–2019	“	
	1.5 CDU 2019–2020	“	
	1.6 CDU 2020–2021	“	
	1.7 CDU 2022–2023	“	
	1.8 CDU Speeches	“	
2. Anti-Science Types	2.1 Anti-Intellectualism	Distrust, and perhaps even dislike, for individuals who claim to have superior knowledge or wisdom about a subject matter.	Over 100 so-called experts deal with pseudo-problems. ‘Gender’ is mentioned 388 times and “equality” 827 times. 827 times! That’s downright obsessive.
	2.2 Counterknowledge	Alternative knowledge which challenges establishment knowledge, replacing knowledge authorities with	Leading virologists and medical associations have come together to say that a lockdown is unnecessary. Chancellor Merkel, please finally

Code	Subcode	Definition	Example
		new ones, thus providing an opportunity for political mobilisation	listen to these experts and stop this panic policy
		Channeling power structures hold over epistemology	
	2.3 Epistemological Populism	- rejecting knowledge as elitist - through common sense usage, valuing personal experience more than knowledge created by theories or studies, including emotional intensity	Modelling? There are real people out there in the medical professions who have been doing their jobs every day for over two years, with and without vaccination
	2.4 Science-Related Populism	Elite illegitimately claims science-related decision-making authority as well as sovereignty about truth-telling	The danger is simply too great at the moment that science is being misused here for socio-political goals, one could also say that propaganda is being carried out under a scientific guise
3. Topic	3.1 Anti-Climate Lobbying	Codes involving talk about lobby groups acting against climate policy – affiliated with AfD	In June, the AfD announced a joint press conference with the European Institute for Climate and Energy (EIKE), which has been lobbying against climate protection for years.

Code	Subcode	Definition	Example
3.2 Climate Ideology as Control Mechanism	Climate measures are being imposed as a means to control the people	He claims that climate change is a natural process, contrary to all science. Now it is being reformulated as a climate crisis to scare people, just like the coronavirus propaganda.	
3.3 Economy vs. Climate	Climate protection damages the economy	'Then perhaps we need to talk about whether the Paris climate targets are realistic. That is also part of the truth (...) If I stifle my economy by destroying half the jobs in an industry, then it is not a good goal that I have set myself.'	
3.4 Climate Protection Through Innovation	Themes that promote climate protection beyond classical renewable energy.	Klimaschutz darf aber auch nicht zu einer sozialen Frage werden, sondern muss zu einer Frage der Innovation und des Fortschritts werden.	
3.5 Gender Science	Describing Gender Studies as illegitimate	The party denies gender studies the right to exist.	
3.6 More expenses for the ordinary	Increasing prices through climate measures	We have green inflation.	

Code	Subcode	Definition	Example
3.7 Science Controlled by Politics/Ideology		Political elites would control science and influence the results	It is by no means an isolated case that people who criticise the government are removed from office - so much for freedom of research and freedom of expression in this country
3.8 Scientific Freedom		General claims are made about the situation of scientific freedom	The freedom of science is a great good - as we have already heard today - and freedom of expression is also a great good.
3.10 Rejecting Climate Change		Denouncing the scientific grounds for the existence of climate change	The AfD is not proof to the contrary: its questioning of the climate crisis is based solely on ideology. If it recognised science, it would have no ideological objections to the reduction of CO ² in the atmosphere, as it serves to protect the basis of human life.
3.11 Public Trust Science		Statements about societies' trust in scientific institutions and scientists	Trust in parts of the scientific community has been dwindling for some time now, with the pandemic acting as an accelerant, as described in an international study in the

Code	Subcode	Definition	Example
4. Rhetorical Adoption (by CDU)	4.1 Cultural Populism	Populist elements especially in a cultural sense	science journal Pnas in 2021. Instead, a cult of self-righteousness is flourishing among laypeople 'Instructive democracy', "asylum tourism" or "rule of injustice" are a new CSU soundtrack that sounds more like AfD than Christian social conservatives.
	4.2 Left Ideology Science	Statements about science being dominated by left ideology	Now it is also true that ideology plays a certain role when it comes to climate protection.
	4.3 Less Climate Effort	Statements about aiming for less climate protection measures	Representatives of the so-called Values Union on the right fringe of the party against alleged 'climate alarmism'. The Bavarian Values Union even claims that the sun controls the climate.
	4.4 Sexual Education	Beyond rejection of gender studies, sceptical standpoints on diverse sexual education	Sexual diversity in schools is being used as a campaign issue by the AfD and parts of the CDU/CSU, the keyword being 'early sexualisation'.

Code	Subcode	Definition	Example
5. Rhetorical Rejection (by CDU)	5.1 Believing in Science + Climate Change	Separating itself from AfD rhetorically by specifically stating the importance of science and accepting climate change	You can also see from the forests what climate change is causing. I ask you: do you want to deny all these effects? No, you are not denying the effects, but you keep saying that humans have nothing to do with it at all
	5.2 Celebration of Scientific Success	Pointing out in what circumstances scientific success benefitted society	I am delighted that we are discussing the Federal Government's Federal Report on Research and Innovation today. Anyone who reads the report will get a good sense of why a strong research centre is so important here in Germany.
	5.4 Rejecting Anti- Science	Calling out other parties (mainly AfD) for using unscientific methods in climate change or other questions	You write: There is no scientific evidence of a significant impact on the global climate due to man-made CO ² emissions.\n\nI suggest you start looking at the results and facts of thousands of researchers and scientists
	5.5 Science for Economy	Using science as one piece of the liberal ideal of economic	We are giving science a lot more money. In return, however, we also

Code	Subcode	Definition	Example
		<p>growth through improvement. Science helps in this way within this code</p> <p>Typical codes are innovation or “Technologieoffenheit”</p>	<p>expect massively more results, and not just scientific findings, but also applications, products, and services - in other words, transfer.</p>
	<p>5.6 Support Science Through Policy</p>	<p>Policy decisions that specifically benefit science, rhetorical underpinning</p>	<p>An efficient science system that strengthens teaching and higher education and produces scientific excellence is important. The Federal Government is focussing on profile building and promoting excellence.\n\nWe as a Union are clearly in favour of academic freedom. We strengthen science with a good infrastructure.</p>
<p>6. Reporting Stance</p>	<p>6.1 Stance: Critical</p>	<p>Newspapers use critical reporting frame</p>	
	<p>6.2 Stance: Neutral</p>	<p>Newspapers use neutral reporting frame</p>	