

World

We are stronger than ever, German hard right warns

The AfD's army of new MPs headed straight into battle on their first day in parliament, **Oliver Moody** writes

The new Bundestag was not two minutes old before the hard-right Alternative for Germany party launched its first offensive.

The 2025 class of MPs had just taken their seats when Bernd Baumann, the AfD's chief whip, stood up to accuse the "cartel" centrist parties of "gigantic electoral fraud" and of riding roughshod over the will of the people by ramming a string of constitutional changes through the old parliament.

Shouting over appeals from the father of the House to stick to the agenda, Baumann declared: "We from the AfD are stronger than ever before. You will not thwart our rise with your tricks."

On that point he was indisputably right. After last month's election the AfD is now the second-largest party in the Bundestag and the dominant force in the opposition, holding nearly a quarter of the seats in the chamber and the right to plum posts on various committees. It has doubled its representation, fielding so many additional MPs that some of them had to sit on folding chairs at the opening session.

The party is also polling at a record 23.5 per cent, up three points since the election and within touching distance of becoming the most popular party. The strategy for the next four years is now clear: all-out parliamentary warfare.

The AfD is locked out



Alice Weidel, the AfD joint leader, in the Bundestag yesterday

of government as Friedrich Merz, the election winner and leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), tries to form a ruling coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

Instead it has signalled that it will use every point of order and procedural trick in the Bundestag's rulebook to annoy, embarrass, divide and harangue the parties of the centre.

This began right at the start of the first sitting, when the AfD challenged the right of Gregor Gysi, a left-wing politician who is the longest-serving MP, to make the first speech.

Baumann used the primetime platform to lambast Merz, the incoming chancellor. "If you vote for the CDU, at the end of the day you will get the green left," he said. "You will get open borders, mass immigration, 72 genders and the rainbow flag flying from the top of the Bundestag."

If anyone had expected the German parliament to settle down after a succession of uncharacteristically bilious debates during the election campaign, their hopes were misplaced.

In an opening speech so long and rambling that other MPs started chatting *sotto voce* and at least one performatively buried his nose in a book, Gysi tried to set the tone with an appeal for a less aggressive and aloof style of politics. "For ourselves and for our people I would like to see a lively Bundestag, in which we absolutely make tough arguments and decisions but without abuse, without insults, without unfairness," he told the chamber.

He got his response from Stephan Brandner, the AfD's deputy leader, who accused the CDU of capitulating before the

"stunted Germans" of the centre left and issued an ominous warning to his fellow MPs.

"You can do what you want — you have the majority. We accept that," Brandner told the centrist parties. "But you should also know you are the past of an old, ruined Germany. We are the future of a blossoming blue Germany."

With no new government to propose state business, all the Bundestag had to do was go through the formalities of constituting itself and electing a new speaker, known as the president, and a team of deputies.

Yet even that proved fraught. First an AfD attempt to rewrite the rules to make it easier to remove sitting speakers was blocked. Then the party's candidate for a deputy speaker's role, Gerold Otten, was rejected three times in a row. By convention each of the German parties appoints one MP to the post, but the AfD's rivals are reluctant to give it any more power to influence the tone or the order of business in parliament.

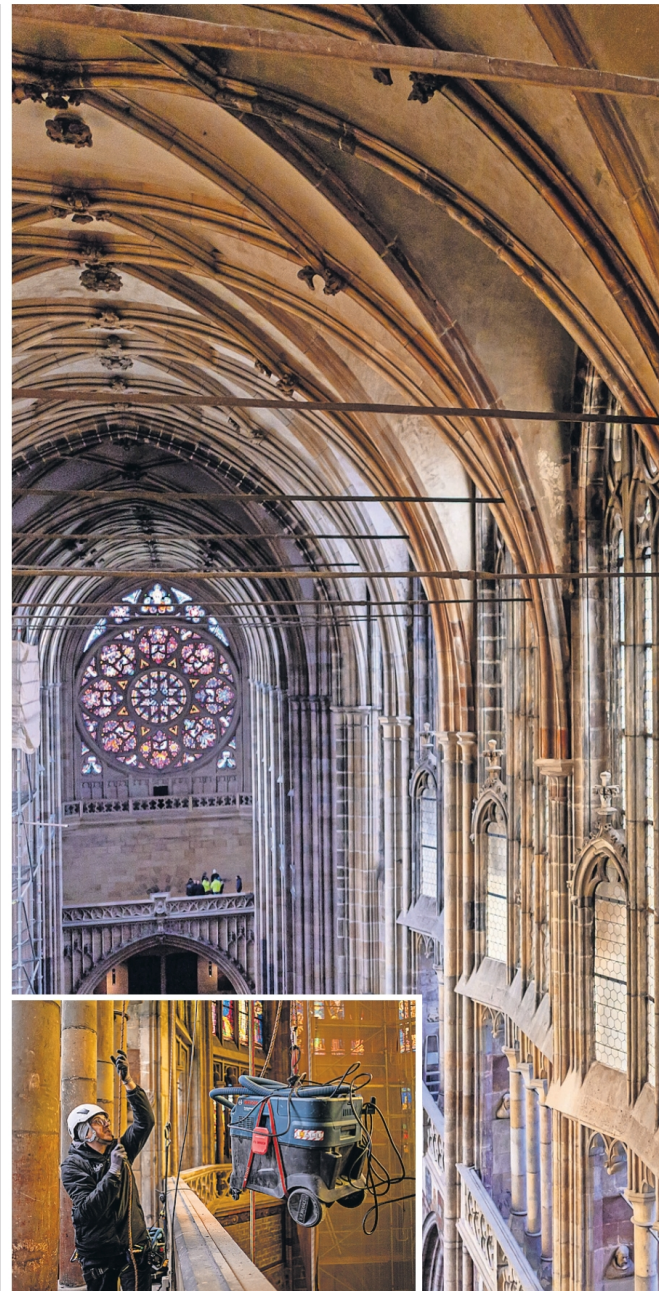
"We could put Jesus Christ up as our candidate and he wouldn't get voted in," Baumann complained to Phoenix, a television channel.

Julia Klöckner, a veteran MP from the CDU and former minister who was elected as the new speaker, vowed to restore the public's trust in democracy with a culture of honourable compromise and rigorous but measured debate.

"The constitution of a new Bundestag is always a moment of celebration," she said. "It's an event that binds continuity with the new, with renewal."

Yet the sheer physical size and volume of the AfD presence in the room — 152 of the Bundestag's 630 MPs — left some politicians in no mood to celebrate and feeling that not all renewal was positive.

"I find it a little depressing to see the long row of AfD seats when you come in," said Serap Güler of the CDU.



Heavens above Workers in Prague had to attach their vacuum cleaners to ropes

Iran video boasts of missile bunker

Iran
Samer Al-Atrush
Middle East Correspondent

Iran has revealed another "missile city" in a video showing an underground complex purported to house thousands of ballistic weapons.

The video was released by the semi-official Tasnim news agency, which identified the footage as "one of the hundreds of missile cities" operated by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. It showed officers standing in a military vehicle as it drove past the missiles in a tunnel.

Iran has released several such videos

in recent months in an apparent response to American and Israeli threats to target its nuclear facilities. President Trump has sent a letter to Iran urging the country to negotiate a nuclear deal or face possible action.

Iran has denied it is seeking a nuclear weapon, but officials have said they might reconsider building one if Israel attacks their facilities. The country has a stockpile of enriched uranium that could easily be converted to weapons grade if it decides to build a bomb.

Iran has dismissed the possibility of direct negotiations while Trump pursues a "maximum pressure" campaign against it, including more sanctions.

However, Abbas Araghchi, the foreign minister, said on Monday that "the way is open" for indirect talks.

Iran possesses thousands of medium-range ballistic missiles and has supplied Russia, with which it has broadened its defence co-operation, with weapons to attack Ukraine. Iran deployed missiles twice against Israel last year, causing damage to an airfield and prompting retaliatory airstrikes, according to western officials.

The US is now conducting strikes against Iran's Houthi allies in Yemen. Trump has warned Iran to stop backing the group, which has crippled traffic in the Red Sea with its attacks on shipping.

Oscar winner 'attacked by Israeli settlers'

Israel
Gabrielle Weiniger

An Oscar-winning Palestinian director was attacked by Israeli settlers and detained overnight by the army, his co-director for this year's best documentary feature said.

Hamdan Ballal was with Yuval Abraham, one of four co-directors on *Other Land*, and other Israeli and inter-

national activists in Hebron on Monday when they were approached by more than a dozen people in masks.

Abraham wrote on X that the settlers had beaten Ballal "and he has injuries in his head and stomach, bleeding", before soldiers came to the ambulance that he had called and took him away.

Ballal was held overnight on the floor, Lea Tsemel, one of his lawyers, confirmed.

"I saw someone on the hill with gun, but it was dark — it happened after sunset," said Jenna, 27, a Jewish activist from the United States who was at the scene alongside other volunteers from the Center for Jewish Nonviolence.

She added: "I assumed it was soldiers and approached them. But then it became clear they were settlers attacking, all masked. I couldn't see faces."

How do you fancy a spin in human washing machine?
Page 32



to give St Vitus Cathedral's 33m-high nave its first big spring clean for 40 years



Hamdan Ballal was injured outside his home in Hebron and later arrested

Some of the settlers were said to be known to activists. Ballal is reported to have sustained serious injuries in the attack, which occurred outside his home in the hills of southern Hebron. The two other Palestinians detained by the Israeli army also left the police station in Kiryat Arba, a large settlement.

The documentary *No Other Land* discusses life under Israeli military occupation for Palestinians, focusing on the area of Masafer Yatta as a microcosm for the reality of life in the West Bank.

Palestinian villages in south Hebron are under constant threat from settler attacks, home demolitions and restrictions to land access by the Israeli military. Israel has siphoned off some of the land as a military training zone, part of a wider fight over land since its occupation of the West Bank began in 1967.

Although settlements are considered illegal under international law, a recent report by the Israeli activist groups Peace Now and Kerem Navot says the number of outposts has increased since the government of the prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, took power.

Addressing the arrest, the military said the violence on Monday evening had begun "after a number of terrorists threw rocks toward Israeli citizens and struck their cars" near the village of Susya in Hebron.

Ancient winemaking rises from the ashes of Pompeii

Italy

James Imam Milan

The ancient city of Pompeii was one of the Roman world's great wine hubs, its fertile volcanic soil feeding vines that stretched across the slopes of Mount Vesuvius.

Homes were adorned with frescoes honouring Bacchus, the god of wine, and the town's many taverns hummed with drinkers sipping from goblets.

Now, for the first time since the city was buried in pumice and ash in AD79, wine will once again be made among the city's ruins.

The Pompeii archaeological park has announced a plan to revive local winemaking, forging a 19-year partnership with a local privately owned winery, Tenute Capaldo. The park's vineyards will be expanded by up to 15 acres. The wine will be aged in traditional amphorae. And tours, workshops and tastings will offer fresh insights into wine's role in ancient Rome.

"We will be able to introduce the public to a new kind of archaeology," Gabriel Zuchtriegel, the park's director, said. "One cannot understand the ancient world without understanding agriculture."

The venture will yield three wines at first — two red and one white — marketed under a new label yet to be created. Production will increase gradually and could reach 50,000 bottles annually within five years. "I think we'll have a few bottles by the autumn," Zuchtriegel said.

Viticulture arrived in Italy via Greece and the Balkans, hitting its peak in ancient Rome in the 2nd century BC. In his *Natural History*, published partly in AD77 and partly after his death in the eruption of Vesuvius, Pliny the Elder praised the "unrivalled vines of Italy" and documented Roman cultivation techniques.

The Romans mixed red and white grapes in *dolia* — porous earthenware jars — and let them ferment for six months as a white



The archaeological park has announced a plan to revive regional winemaking techniques, expanding its vineyards and ageing wine in traditional amphorae

fungus formed on the surface, lending the wine a signature acidity.

"Its flavours sometimes resembled curry, toasted bread, apples and dried fruits such as apricots," said Dimitri Van Limbergen, an archaeologist at the University of Verona who specialises in ancient agriculture. Herbs, spices and honey were sometimes added to enhance the taste.

Pompeii, with its mineral-rich volcanic terrain in the shadow of Vesuvius, was a hub for wine and drinking culture, boasting at least 200 bars.

Vineyards have been cultivated there since the 1990s by the Mastroberardino family, who replanted native varieties such as Piedrosso and Sciascinoso — grapes known to have grown in the area in ancient times.

Their efforts spawned Villa dei Misteri, a ruby-red wine named after one of the park's most famous sites, whose first vintage of 1,721 bottles was presented for tasting in 2003.

Unlike Villa dei Misteri, which was produced off site, the new wines will be partly

made at the park itself. Tenute Capaldo will construct a cellar there for ageing, although crushing and bottling — which require noisy modern machinery — will take place elsewhere to preserve the park's atmosphere, said Antonio Capaldo, the winery's head.

Expanding the vineyards will allow the park to reclaim "virgin" land once used by Pompeians for winemaking. Untouched for 2,000 years, this soil — sitting among crumbling domiciles just beyond the city's walls — will now host grape varieties like Aglianico, believed to be similar to those used in classical times.

The vines will be grown using ancient techniques, woven through holed stakes to reach heights of up to three metres.

Tenute Capaldo will invest up to €15 million in planting the vines and building the cellar. The land will also be used to grow grain and fruit, fostering the kind of agricultural cross-contamination that once shaped the unique flavours of Roman wine.

Zuchtriegel said ancient Roman wine was known for its intense acidity and would be "undrinkable" today, so Pompeii's new wine will be crafted for modern tastes.

"We want to promote a wine that speaks of a tradition that was born 2,000 years ago and is still alive, having evolved through time," he said.



Fuji eruption could paralyse Tokyo

Japan

Richard Lloyd Parry Tokyo

The Japanese authorities have issued guidelines on how to cope with an eruption of Mount Fuji, warning that people should shelter at home until the fall of ash puts buildings at risk of collapse.

Fuji last erupted in 1707, but remains an active volcano. Although there is no sign of imminent activity, it is inevitable at some point.

An expert panel has submitted to the government detailed steps to be taken in case of a full-scale eruption, which could generate 490 million cubic metres of ash, ten times the amount of

debris created by the devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2011. "The basic rule is to stay inside the ashfall area as much as possible and continue living at home," the panel said in a report submitted to the cabinet office. "Evacuation and other actions should be considered in case of danger to life, such as severe damage to houses."

The greatest danger, level 4 in the report's classifications, would be when the depth of ash exceeded one foot, at which point the weight could cause wooden buildings to collapse. Deep ash is especially dangerous when it absorbs rain, making it heavier. Ashfall of this depth would be expected as far east as

Sagamihara, a western suburb of greater Tokyo, 40 miles from the summit and 20 miles from the heart of the capital.

Depending on how the volcano erupted, as many as 800,000 people would potentially be in the path of pyroclastic flows, clouds of ash and high-temperature gas.

Most of Tokyo's city centre would be expected to get about 3cm (1.2 inches) of ash, but this can be damaging enough. An assessment in 2020 said a relatively small amount would bring trains to a standstill. If there was rainfall at the time, then as little as a 3cm fall of ash would cause short circuits in electrical wires — causing widespread blackouts.