



Revival of German Coalition Talks

Why in news?

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- Social Democrats have started coalition talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel's CDU for another term after initial reluctance.
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- This comes as a relief as the thaw will see stop the rise of rightist elements.
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How is the political situation within Germany?

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- Germany has a proportional representation system and the recent elections didn't give a clear mandate to any single political grouping.
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- While incumbent Chancellor Ms. Merkel's "Christian Democratic Union" emerged as the largest party, their vote share reduced by over 8%.
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- **Collapse of Talks** - As they didn't have a majority on their own, they had to seek for alliances to form a government.
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- But unlike the previous time when the "Social Democrats (SD)" supported the CDU government, this time, they had initially wanted to sit in the opposition.
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- This was largely to focus on arresting the party's eroding vote base which has come down from 40% in 1998 to around 20% presently.
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- Subsequently, the CDU went ahead into talks with "Greens Party", but an alliance couldn't materialise after months of negotiations.
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- **Revival** - While political uncertainty loomed, the Social Democrats have currently decided to renegotiate an alliance with a minimum work agenda.
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- Notably, the preliminary demands of the SPD regarding guaranteed pension level and child benefits have already been agreed upon by CDU in principle.
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- But considering the ideological differences and the perception that the prolonged coalition has weakened SD might prove blockages in negotiations.
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What are the under currents?

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- **AFD factor** - The election saw the rightist AFD (Alternatives for Germany) emerge as a major player and the 3rd largest entity in the German parliament.
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- AFD is a right-wing party that is anti-immigration and Euro-sceptic, which debuted in the recent election by vehement opposition to Ms. Merkel.
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- Notably, SD's reconsideration for a coalition is also primarily to avoid another election, which might help in enhancing the popularity of the rightist AFD.
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- **Leadership Challenge** - Some within the CDU have started questioning the leadership of Ms. Merkel, who has helmed continuously for 12 year now.
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- But her presence is crucial for preserving the EU, which under threat from populist governments that have sprouted in many European nations.
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Source: The Hindu

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