

World reacts to Merz' German election win amid warnings on far-right surge

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Berlin, February 24 (RHC)-- Many world leaders have congratulated Friedrich Merz, leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), for winning the German elections.

However, as the reactions rolled in, some were also wary, while others were focused on the surge of the far right as the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party celebrated its best showing at the polls at 20.8 percent as it finished second.

Merz, on track to become the next chancellor, now faces the tricky challenge of building a coalition government, returning Europe's biggest economy to growth and navigating a complex geopolitical situation.

Here are some of the most notable international reactions:

European Union

European Council President Antonio Costa said he looks forward to working with Merz to make a more prosperous and "autonomous" Europe in challenging times.

High Representative of the European Union Kaja Kallas urged the swift formation of a new government: "The German people have made a choice, and now they need to put together the government. I hope that they do it as fast as possible because we really need to move on with the decisions also on the European level that require German participation."

United States

President Donald Trump lauded the German conservative's victory, but mostly what he saw as his own role in it, with an all-caps post on his social media account.

"Much like the USA, the people of Germany got tired of the no common sense agenda, especially on energy and immigration, that has prevailed for so many years," the post said.

"This is a great day for Germany, and for the United States of America under the leadership of a gentleman named Donald J Trump. Congratulations to all – many more victories to follow!!!"

Russia

The Kremlin reacted cautiously to Merz' victory, saying it would have to wait and see how ties between Russia and any new German government evolved.

"Each time (there's a new government) we want to hope for a more sober approach to reality, for a more sober approach to what could be issues of mutual interest (between Russia and Germany), mutual benefits," said spokesman Dmitry Peskov. "But let's see how it will be in reality."

France

President Emmanuel Macron said he spoke with Merz and congratulated him, adding that Paris is determined to work with Germany towards a stronger Europe.

"In this period of uncertainty, we are united to face the great challenges of the world and our continent," he said on X.

United Kingdom

Prime Minister Keir Starmer congratulated Merz and the CDU on X, saying he looks forward to "working with the new government to deepen our already strong relationship, enhance our joint security and deliver growth for both our countries".

Ukraine

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the results marked a “clear choice from the voters” in Germany and Kyiv is prepared to work to protect lives, bring peace and strengthen Europe during the war with Russia.

“Europe must be able to defend itself, develop its industries and achieve the necessary results. Europe needs shared successes, and those successes will bring even greater unity to Europe.”

NATO

Secretary-General Mark Rutte congratulated Merz, saying he looks forward to working with him “in this crucial moment for our shared security”.

“It’s vital that Europe step up on defence spending, and your leadership will be key.”

Israel

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu congratulated the alliance between the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union, on a “clear election victory” in a social media post.

“Looking forward to working closely with your upcoming government to further strengthen the partnership between our two countries,” he said to the new leaders of one of Israel’s closest allies in Europe.

Hungary

Prime Minister Viktor Orban refrained from congratulating the winning alliance and instead hailed the far right.

“The people of Germany voted for change in immense numbers,” he wrote on X. “I want to congratulate [chancellor candidate] Alice Weidel on doubling AfD’s share of the votes. Good luck and God bless Germany!”

Italy

Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini’s take was that change is winning in Germany after the significant increase in seats for the far right.

“AfD doubles its votes, despite attacks and lies from the left: stop illegal immigration and Islamic fanaticism, enough with the eco-madness, prioritise peace and jobs, Europe must be radically changed,” he said in a post on X.

Austria

The leader of the far-right Freedom Party of Austria, Herbert Kickl, said the result had left a “huge hole” in the “firewall” erected to keep the AfD out of power.

People “no longer want to put up with paternalism, illegal mass immigration, the resulting Islamist terror and security chaos, climate communism and the destruction of prosperity,” he said.

The leader of Germany’s Central Council of Jews, Josef Schuster, expressed his shock, telling the Welt newspaper: “Although this result was to be expected, according to the polls, I am also shocked this evening by the electoral success of the AfD, which has doubled its share of the vote in just three years.”

“It should concern us all that one-fifth of German voters cast their ballots for a party that is at least partly right-wing extremist, that in both words and ideology has connections to right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism,” he added.

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