Germany’s far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) likes to cloak itself in the language of democratic accountability. Parliamentary questions, its lawmakers insist, are a core right — a way to reflect citizens’ concerns and scrutinize government power. But as the case of Thuringian AfD lawmaker Ringo Mühlmann illustrates, oversight can shade into something far more troubling: the systematic probing of security vulnerabilities in a country on the frontline of Europe’s confrontation with Russia.

At first glance, Mühlmann’s questions look procedural, even banal. How many military transports have passed through Thuringia? What technologies does the police use to counter hostile drones? Which systems have been tested, and how effective are they? Taken individually, each inquiry can be defended as a legitimate exercise of parliamentary prerogative. Taken together, however, they form a mosaic — one that reveals patterns, capabilities, and potential weaknesses.

This is the essence of the concern raised by Germany’s security establishment. Modern intelligence gathering rarely depends on a single classified document. It thrives on aggregation: assembling fragments of open, semi-open, and seemingly harmless information into a coherent picture. In that sense, the AfD’s flood of questions is not noise. It is signal.

What makes the situation particularly sensitive is context. Germany is a key logistics hub for Western military support to Ukraine. Thuringia, despite being a state parliament with no formal role in foreign or defense policy, sits on transit routes that matter. When a regional lawmaker repeatedly asks for granular details about transport modes, frequencies, and stops, the relevance goes far beyond local governance.

AfD leaders bristle at the suggestion that they are acting as Moscow’s “Trojan horse.” They argue — not without some formal logic — that ministers bear responsibility for withholding classified information. If sensitive details are disclosed, they say, blame lies with the government, not the questioner. This defense, however, is legally tidy and politically evasive. It ignores the reality that power in democracies is not just about rules, but about norms and intent.

The danger does not lie solely in what the government answers. It lies in what persistent questioning signals to hostile actors. A sustained focus on drones, hybrid threats, sabotage, and military logistics advertises where attention should be paid. Even redacted answers, when multiplied by hundreds or thousands of inquiries, can still narrow uncertainty for an adversary.

Data underscores the scale of the issue. AfD lawmakers account for a striking share of all security-related parliamentary questions at both the state and federal level. This is not curiosity; it is strategy. Since entering parliament, the party has used inquiries not only to burden ministries but to map institutions it defines as enemies — from intelligence services to police forces to infrastructure operators.

Whether the AfD is acting “on behalf of the Kremlin” is, in a sense, beside the point. As scholars of the party’s Russia policy note, conviction and alignment can produce the same outcome as direct coordination. If a party consistently advances narratives favorable to Moscow, opposes aid to Ukraine, and fixates on Western security vulnerabilities, the effect is indistinguishable from cooperation — regardless of motive.

This exposes a structural weakness in democratic systems. Parliamentary oversight is designed to constrain executive power, not to enable foreign intelligence collection. Yet open societies are uniquely vulnerable to actors willing to exploit transparency against itself. The AfD is testing the limits of that vulnerability.

Germany’s challenge, then, is not merely to rebut insinuations or deny individual requests. It is to confront a harder question: how to protect national security without hollowing out democratic rights. That balance will define not only the response to the AfD, but the resilience of liberal democracy in an era of hybrid warfare.

In the end, the warning is clear. When oversight becomes saturation, and accountability becomes accumulation, democracy itself can be turned into an instrument of exposure. Europe has seen this playbook before — and it rarely ends with benign intentions.