Hoyerswerda 1991

The Political Debate and Media Coverage in the Aftermath of Xenophobic Violence in Reunified Germany

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Content

Abstract

In most societies, there are people with extremist sentiments against other parts of the population. When a radicalisation of these sentiments leads to violent incidents, this escalation demands action from the government. In such a case, the public opinion on the victims, the perpetrators and the government is an important factor to take into account. This opinion is strongly influenced by the media and especially by the coverage of the political debate, since politicians appear to be a credible source and because if the media create a negative image of the government this might increase further radicalisation.

This study focusses on the political debate in the aftermath of right-wing motivated violence in Hoyerswerda in 1991 and the media coverage of both the incident and the debate. It uses the analytic framework of framing to analyse reports of the parliamentary debate and the related media coverage in the news magazine *Der Spiegel*. This analysis shows that in the media; immigrants were mainly framed as the cause of increased violence, perpetrators did not receive much blame for their actions and the government was criticized for its contribution to the problem through inaction and the creation of inculpate frames of the victims. However, most of this media coverage was either a representation of the political debate, or comparable to its content, including the critique on the government's reaction.

These findings indicate that a possible negative impact on the public opinion through the media – which could have led to increased extremism - was mainly caused by the content of the political debate. Thus, governments should in the first place focus on the course of the political debate itself in order to create more positive media coverage and avoid losing political legitimacy through the creation of a negative image by the media.

Introduction

Germany might forever be associated with the events that unfolded in the first half of the 20th century. The rule of the Nazis had tremendous consequences for all citizens, but most of all for those who were considered the enemy of the German people. Ever since the end of the Second World War, the government and population of both the *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (BRD) and the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (DDR) have tried to prove this association to be no longer appropriate or well-deserved. It could be argued that during the Cold War and the division of the nation, indeed Germany's right-wing activities occurred only relatively marginally. However, since the *Wiedervereinigung* (the reunification of East and West Germany) in 1990, things have changed. In the early years of the nineties and also more recently in 2015 and 2016, right-wing extremism and related violent incidents have raised to worrisome properties, both in quality and in quantity.

In February 2017, the BBC reported that in the past year in Germany nearly ten right-wing motivated attacks on immigrants took place every day.[1] CNN stressed the same lines: "Germany: Thousands of migrants targeted in attacks last year", speaking of over 3500 incidents in 2016.[2] Both of these channels based their headlines on a report published by the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (domestic intelligence service). This report shows an increase of 13,6% in right-wing hatred, aggression and politically motivated crime in 2016.[3] A factor that contributes substantially to this increase of right-wing violence is "fremdfeindliche Gewalttaten" (xenophobic violence), including arson attacks, personal violence, or (attempted) murder. It might not be coincidental that the increase in xenophobic violence shows to be corresponding with the increasing number of immigrants entering Germany. In 2016 nearly 800.000 people applied for asylum in this country.

The German government carries the responsibility to tackle this immigration issue, as well as the resulting problems, with great urgency. Angela Merkel's liberal politics and "Willkommenskultur" (culture of welcoming refugees), best recapped in her own words: "Wir

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[1] Germany hate crime; nearly 10 attacks a day on migrants in 2016. (27.02.2017), retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39096833 (viewed 10.01.2018)

[2] Germany; Thousands of migrants targeted in attacks last year. (27.02.2017), retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/27/europe/germany-attacks-on-migrants/index.html (viewed 25.02.2018)

[3] Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Verfassungsschutzbericht 2016, retreived from https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/2017/vsb-2016.pdf?__blob=publicationFile (viewed 10.01.2018)

schaffen das!" (we will make it),[4] has turned out to be troublesome. After all, welcoming refugees into the country while being unable to protect them from violent attacks by extremists, (which might be similar to the reason these people fled their home-country in the first place) demonstrates a clear political shortcoming if not an outright failure.[5] However, finding a solution for this complex issue is not simple. Closing the German borders to stop the influx of refugees might cause suffering, but granting refugees more rights in order to promote integration might fuel the hatred on the right. In order to obtain a better understanding of how to cope adequately with the situation at hand, looking back in time might reveal valuable insights for contemporary political decision making.

This study focuses on an earlier episode of xenophobic violence in Germany. The years 1991, 1992 and 1993 show remarkable resemblance with the contemporary xenophobic violence in Germany. The number of incidents were vast and the actual deeds increasingly violent. High unemployment rates, growing poverty, the idea of unjust treatment by the government and nationalistic pride are factors mentioned in the literature to explain the rise of right-wing sentiment and the ultimate escalation of the situation.[6] Whereas it is difficult to identify and measure all influential factors, the increasing number of asylum-seekers represents an undisputed parallel between these periods. Wars in the Middle-East and former Yugoslavia were the primary reason behind this development. Refugees fleeing from these wars - but also economic migrants - became a target for aggression, especially by the (East) German youth. The most infamous incidents are four attacks on asylum seekers and their residences in Hoyerswerda (1991), Rostock-Lichtenhagen (1992), Mölln (1992) and Solingen (1993). These incidents became known for their cruelty and violence, combined with the amount of support the perpetrators enjoyed from bystanders and the German public. Another reason why these incidents are still being remembered is the immense media attention they received.

However, the role of the media in these xenophobic incidents is seen as larger than only generating attention in the aftermath of these incidents. Academia have studied the

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[4] Sommerpressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel (31.08.2015), retrieved from https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2015/08/2015-08-31-pk-merkel.html (viewed 28.02.2018)

[5] Jäckle, S., & König, P. D. (2017). The dark side of the German 'welcome culture': Investigating the causes behind attacks on refugees in 2015. *West European Politics*, *40*(2), 226.

[6] Krell, G., Nicklas, H., & Ostermann, A. (1996). Immigration, asylum, and anti-foreigner violence in Germany. *Journal of Peace Research*, *33*(2), 155.

potential impact of the media in the developments of anti-immigrant sentiments as well as the impact of media coverage in the aftermath of violent incidents on further escalations. Most of the findings indicate that the impact of the media depends for a large part on the influence the media have on public opinion. The claim that media influence public opinion was already made by American journalist Walter Lippmann in 1922. In *The World Outside and the Picture in our Heads* Lippmann states that there is a discrepancy between what is going on in society and what people actually see of this. Public opinion is derived from a collection of images in people's heads. According to Lippmann, these images are partly a representation of what people have witnessed in their own lives, but depend for a large part on what people have seen in the media.[7] Specifically, concerning the issue of immigration, the influence of the media on public opinion gains most attention by scholars concerning negative framing of the immigrants. Within framing theories, the general assumption is that certain issues can be seen from different perspectives which determine implications for a variety of values or considerations.[8] The evaluation of an issue, which leads to a certain opinion, depends on an individual's "frame of thought". This frame, dominates a person's consideration and opinion about a certain topic.[9] For example, if someone's frame of thought is that foreigners only cause trouble, then subsequently, other considerations based on the same topic and related to the same value, will be influenced by this frame. Mostly, frames consist of a mix of considerations that can change over time. Since frames play an important role in someone's consideration and ultimately someone's opinion, intentional framing is used to influence opinions to increase potential consensus on an issue. Changing or manipulation someone's frame of thought, for example concerning a policy change, is mainly done by highlighting certain aspects, like possible outcomes and implications, and linking those to important values. That way, someone's consideration about whether or not to go along with the policy change (i.e. by voting for or against it) can be influenced by the relation to the value.[10]

In the case of framing of the issue of immigrants, certain methods are identified that especially influence the values related to this minority in a negative sense. These are dehumanisation, through the alienation of the minority from the majority and the use of

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[7] Lippmann, W. (1922), The world outside and the picture in our head, *Public Opinion.*

[8] Chong, D. & Druckman, J. (2007), *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10:1, 110-111.

[9] Ibidem, 113.

[10] Jacoby W.G., (2000). Issue framing and public opinion on government spending. *American Journal of Political scienc*e, 44:756-757.

negatively associated metaphors.[11] When these reach the public, they can trigger negative (and sometimes hostile) reactions towards immigrants. These reactions are partly justified on ground of the protection of a certain "in group" from the "threats" that immigrants and refugees allegedly pose according to the media.[12] In the same lines, professor of communication Yariv Tsfati, concludes from a study on the position of the Palestinian minority that biased media influence public perceptions of the minority. Tsfati sees this as an influential factor in the crisis between Israel and Palestine.[13] A German panel research shows similar findings. The German public attitude towards immigrants becomes increasingly negative and racial when people are frequently exposed to negative portrays of this minority. On the contrary, frequent exposure to more positive framing has a decreasing effect on racial prejudice over time.[14]

Another influential element of the media, is the impact of selectiveness in covered stories. German political scientist prof. dr. Christiane Eilders, studied the influence of selectiveness and media attention in the case of right-wing hatred in the early nineties. She found that the four aforementioned incidents at the beginning of the nineties were covered extensively, whereas subsequent violent events were more likely to be covered if they showed similarities with the four main events in terms of victims, location and type of event.[15] This process had as a result that xenophobic violence was increasingly generalized in Germany. The four major key events were seen as "prototypes"[16] and subsequent violent incidents showed increasing similarities with these events which indicates a certain degree of imitation.[17] The selectiveness and the extent of media attention does however not only influence the reactions and developments within society but can also effect the political reactions. It can be argued that the political attention on the matter was partly due to the extensive media attention these incidents received, since if a certain topic is discussed more frequently in several (leading) media, politicians usually show more reaction as a result of the

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[11] Esses, V. M., Medianu, S., & Lawson, A. S. (2013). Uncertainty, threat, and the role of the media in promoting the dehumanization of immigrants and refugees. *Journal of Social Issues*, *69*(3), 522.

[12] Esses, Uncertainty, threat, and the role of the media in promoting the dehumanization of immigrants and refugees, 524.

[13] Tsfati, Y. (2007). Hostile media perceptions, presumed media influence, and minority alienation: The case of Arabs in Israel. *Journal of Communication*, *57*(4), 646.

[14] Schemer, C. (2013). Media Effects on Racial Attitudes: Evidence from Two Panel Surveys in Germany, 532.

[15] Eilders, C. (2000). Media as political actors? Issue focusing and selective emphasis in the German quality press. *German Politics*, *9*(3), 203.

[16] Brosius, H. B., & Eps, P. (1995). Prototyping through key events: News selection in the case of violence against aliens and asylum seekers in Germany. *European Journal of Communication*, *10*(3), 407.

[17] Brosius, Prototyping through key events, 397.

attention.[18] Most of the academic work on the relation between the media and the political debate is done in this order, where the media are seen as a political actor that influences politics.[19] Less attention has been paid in scholarship to the reverse relation: the impact the political reaction to xenophobic violence has on the media. There are however reasons to assume that this relation indeed works both ways.

Firstly, the impact the media have on public opinion depends partly on the "credibility" of the source that is used by the media. Page *et al.* researched the estimated impact of news coverage depending on this credibility and found that experts and politicians enjoyed the highest impact rates.[20] That is, when the media cover the opinion of an expert or represents what is said by politicians on a certain matter, the expected impact of this story on the public opinion is higher than when this link, to either of this group, is absent. Hence, according to Page *et al.*, news coverage of a political reaction to an event has more influence on the public opinion than other coverage.

Secondly, when the political debate is the subject in the media, the content of the story can influence further developments based on the how the government is depicted by the media. In the aftermath of extremist violence, political trust can be an important factor to avoid further escalation. That is, according to Ehud Sprinzak, radicalization depends partly on the degree of legitimacy a government enjoys from its citizens. Legitimacy here, is the right and especially the acceptance and trust a society has in its government. Thus, when society trusts its government, for example in solving critical situations, there is a lower chance that people radicalize into extremism.[21]

In various studies it is emphasized however, that an effort by the government to control the impact of a political reaction on the media, can have different outcomes.[22] The media are used by governments to communicate a political interpretation in order to get public support, but journalists may alter certain interpretations to stay closer to the mainstream of the political debate, since that is what readers favour.[23] Research on the

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[18] Eilders, Media as political actors?, 203.

[19] Page, B. I. (1996). The mass media as political actors. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *29*(1), 20-24. and: McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public opinion quarterly*, *36*(2), 176-187.

[20] Page, B., Shapiro, R., & Dempsey, G. (1987). What Moves Public Opinion? *The American Political Science Review, 81*(1),39.

[21] Sprinzak, E., (1991) 'The process of delegitimization: Words a linkage theory of political terrorism', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3(1), 55-57.

[22] Liu, B. F., Horsley, J. S., & Yang, K. (2012). Overcoming negative media coverage: Does government communication matter?. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *22*(3), 612.

[23] Kosho, J. (2016). Media Influence On Public Opinion Attitudes Toward The Migration Crisis. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, *5*(5), 89.

success of political public relation (PR) strategies in the German debate on immigration between 2000 and 2002, executed by German communication scientists Romy Fröhlich and Burkhard Rüdiger, shows that media coverage more often represents what is said in press releases of political parties than a specific media or public opinion.[24] This can be seen as an indication that the media simply communicates what it reads or hears from politicians. Thus, according to Fröhlich and Rüdiger definition of the goal of political PR, which is that "the use of media outlets [as a way to] communicate specific political views, solutions and interpretations of issues in the hope of garnering public support for political policies or campaigns"[25], implicates that the politicians simply have to expect the political debate to be represented in the media and not per se interpreted or translated.

In contrast to this claim, Thomas E. Patterson, professor of Government and the Press at Harvard University, presents different findings in *Bad news, bad Governance*. Patterson emphasizes that a descriptive style of reporting, where ideas and views of the government were simply represented has given way to a more interpretive one. This indicates that the power of journalists has increased in terms of the shaping of public opinion. In his eyes, media focus more on negative political outcomes and contribute to the dissatisfaction with political leaders.[26] In their case study of 9/11, Gross et al., show that negative media coverage of a political reaction indeed fed political distrust.[27] In the case of xenophobic violence in Germany in the 1990s, one could argue that political distrust was an important cause for anti-immigrant sentiments as well.[28]

This thesis builds upon these findings and focuses on the relation between political reactions and media coverage. Taking the case study of Hoyerswerda, it deals with the question how in this specific episode the political reaction was translated, understood and appreciated by the media. In this double-analysis, different groups of actors are distinguished: immigrants and right-wing extremists (i.e. victims and perpetrators) and politicians. Based on their influence on public opinion, in the reconstruction and analysis of the events following

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[24] Froehlich, R., & Rüdiger, B. (2006). Framing political public relations: Measuring success of political communication strategies in Germany. *Public Relations Review*, *32*(1), 24.

[25] Froehlich,. Framing political public relations 18.

[26] Patterson, T. E. (1996). Bad news, bad governance. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *546*(1), 101-103.

[27] Gross, K., Aday, S., & Brewer, P. R. (2004). A panel study of media effects on political and social trust after September 11, 2001. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, *9*(4), 65.

[28] Krell, G., Nicklas, H., & Ostermann, A. (1996). Immigration, asylum, and anti-foreigner violence in Germany. Journal of Peace Research, 33(2), 155-156.

the incidents in Hoyerswerda, special attention is paid to the framing of these factions in both the political arena and the media. The more specific question of research is: *How did the media cover the violent incidents against asylum-seekers in Hoyerswerda in 1991 in terms of the framing of immigrants and extremist and the translation of the political debate?*

In order to answer this question, the analysis will focus on two subsidiary key elements. The first part elaborates on the political reaction. This reaction however consisted out of multiple different aspects (e.g. police interventions, policy changes, public speeches), which potentially influenced the media. This study analyses mainly the political debate as a reaction related to the riots in the direct aftermath and focusses specifically on the discussion about planned actions and how immigrants and extremists were framed in this debate. The second part of the thesis elaborates on the media. More exactly, on how the political debate was translated, interpreted and appreciated by the national media and again how immigrants and extremist were framed within this representation.

In answering these questions, this study aims to contribute to the academic debate about the influence of political reactions on media coverage. The implications of the findings of this study are however not just a contribution to the academic debate in this particular field, they might also be useful for governments as a case study of the influence of the political debate on public opinion through media coverage, specifically in terms of framing. That is, governments could use these findings in their construction of a political reaction and take them into account in the course of the political debate, assuming that politicians aim to avoid to negatively influence public opinion. Hence, knowing to what extent the political debate might impact the public opinion through the translation of the debate in the media, is a relevant factor to take into account. In East-Germany shortly after the reunification, but potentially also in the contemporary situation based on the theory of "legitimization[29], the influence of the translation of the media on political trust is crucial to avoid further escalations.

The hypothesis of this study is that the government indeed influences the media. Fröhlich and Rüdiger's theory[30] that the media mostly simply represent the political debate, may stand to some extent. However, it is expected that the media interprets and translates

[29] Sprinzak, The process of delegitimization, 56.
[30] Froehlich, Framing political public relations.

certain elements more extensively as is emphasized by Patterson.[31] Both kinds of coverage have impact on public opinion. The direct representation of the debate gains most impact through the theory of credibility[32] and the 'translation' through a possible 'delegitimization'[33] of the government. If this study indeed shows that the media coverage of the political debate relies mainly on translations and appreciations, then governments have to focus on how to avoid a possible loss of political legitimacy.

Methodology

This case study focusses on the riots that unfolded in Hoyerswerda between the 17th and the 23rd of September 1991. During these days, two major incidents took place. First, a group of young right-wing extremists or "Neonazis", physically attacked a number of Vietnamese guest workers. These guest works then fled into a residence, where another 120 guest workers lived. The extremist followed them, after which more and more people gathered around the residence. The situation escalated when people started throwing Molotov cocktails and rocks at the building. The police had difficulties to control the situation. Eventually, after three days, on the 20th of September the police evacuated the guest workers to protect them from further harm. The situation in Hoyerswerda did not calm down however. Extremist, and a growing number of bystanders, relocated to a residence which inhabited over 240 asylum-seekers. In the weeks before, there had been a number of violent incidents involving the residents of the centre. Now the situation escalated in the same way as had happened before at the guest workers residence. People threw rocks and Molotov cocktails, bystanders applaud and the police could not control the situation. Ultimately, after three days of riots, fights and agony, the asylum-seekers were also evacuated. In total thirty-two people got injured and over eighty people were arrested. [34] During the weekend after this incident, local police recorded another 78 subsequent raids. On the contrary, a couple of days after the end of the riot, a solidarity march gathered over four thousand protesters against violence.[35]

This case study is used specifically because it represents the ultimate escalation of right-wing anti-immigrant sentiments and because it was the first large scale and media

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[31] Patterson, Bad news, bad governance.
[32] Page, What Moves Public Opinion?
[33] Sprinzak, The process of delegitimization.
[34] Antifaschistisches Infoblatt Nr. 92, Berlin. 15. September 2011a
[35] Fuchs, C. & Goetz, ., (2012) Die Zelle. Rechter Teror in Deutschland. Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 54.

covered incident in a series of violent events. Furthermore, it set the tone of the political debate that was continued also after the later incidents. The double-analysis of this research focuses on the political debate and the corresponding media coverage. The media analysis is based on the content of a German newspaper. In historical research, newspapers are seen as a "record [of] the political and social views that made most impact at the time" they were written.[36] Nowadays there are several new media that can be used for analysis, but Spiro Kiouse found that newspapers have more 'credibility' than online news or TV broadcasts.[37] Thus, to be able to link possible findings to the influence on public opinion, newspapers are the obvious choice. In order to realise a manageable analysis, the media coverage is limited to what is written in the German weekly published magazine *Der Spiegel.* This magazine is seen as a highly influential medium in the German press due to the central role it has played in different discoveries of high profile political affairs and the large amount of copies (over 700.000) sold weekly. *Der Spiegel* first published in 1946 and has ever since been seen as a *Leitmedium* (leading medium) in the German press.[38]

In the debate on negative framing of refugees in Germany, the two most quoted newspapers are *BILD Zeitung, Die Welt* and both their Sunday editions *BILD am Sonntag and Welt am Sonntag.* These papers contained negative frames of asylum-seekers on a general basis, but are generally seen as positioned on the right side of the political spectrum.[39] *Der Spiegel* is a left-wing orientated paper and is less likely to have the intentional fuelling of hatred towards immigrants in mind. Furthermore, the online archives of *Der Spiegel* are publicly available, making a complete analysis of the written content possible.

The research of the publications of *Der Spiegel* is executed by the so called qualitative content analysis. The main consensus about this approach is that this form of analysis is meant to discover: "[W]ho says what, through which channel, to whom and with what effect".[40] Lasswell, Lerner and Pool said: "… content analysis operates on the view that verbal behaviour

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[36] Tosh, J. (2010). *The pursuit of history*. Routledge, 97.

[37] Kiousis, S. (2001). Public trust or mistrust? Perceptions of media credibility in the information age. *Mass Communication & Society*, *4*(4), 384-385.

[38] Weischenberg, S.,Malik, M., and Schol, A. (2005), Journalismus in Deutschland, *Institut für Journalistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft der Universität Hamburg.*

[39] Deutschland Funkkultur, "Hetze gegen Scheinasylanten und Asylmisbrauch" retreived from: http://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/diskurs-um-flucht-und-asyl-in-den-1990er-jahren-hetze-gegen.976.de.html?dram:article_id=402509 (viewed 25.04.2018)

[40] Lasswell, H., Lerner, D., & Pool, I. de Sola. (1952). The comparative study of symbol: an introduction. Stanford University Press, (as cited in) Macnamara, J. R. (2005). Media content analysis: Its uses, benefits and best practice methodology. *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, *6*(1), 2.

is a form of human behaviour, [..] and that the communication process is an aspect of the historical process.[41] With this view in mind, the analysis in this study is accordingly structured and subsequently leads to the following approach. Firstly, articles in *Der Spiegel* about *the Asyldebatte (debate about the right of asylum), Asyllanten (asylum-seekers), Asylrecht* (right of asylum), *Rechtsextremismus* (right-wing extremism), *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* (hostility to foreigners) and *Fremdfeindlichkeit* (xenophobia) in the timeframe between one week previous to the riots in Hoyerswerda until the end of 1991, will be examined within the analytic framework of framing. All articles are selected on the basis of the presence of above-mentioned keywords in the title of the article. In the media and in the political debate, the concerned minorities (i.e. political refugees, economic refugees, asylum-seekers, guest workers) are not always clearly defined and separately addressed. In this study, this part of the population is addressed as 'immigrants', except if a more precise designation is needed for clarity.

Secondly, the examined content will be related to the political debate as described in chapter one. Thirdly, all articles that include the abbreviation *AgAG* (which stands for *Aktionsprogramme gegen Aggression und Gewalt* or action-programme against aggression and violence, a political reaction against the right-wing violence, further discussed in the next chapter) in either the title or in the body of the article, are included in the analysis of the media representation. An action-programme is a different form of a political a reaction than the political debate, however the programme was extensively discussed within the debate and can be seen as an example of how the different political parties thought about how to solve the issue.

The analysis of the media coverage is the central element of this research. However, in order to relate the findings of the media analysis to the actual political reactions, it is necessary to research this on the basis of primary sources as well. Secondary literature or other secondary sources about the political reaction might contain interpretation or other influences that deviate from the original reaction. This could influence the analysis of how the media translated the political debate. Hence, the political reactions are based on the findings in reports of plenary parliamentary debates. These reports, dated from the incident in Hoyerswerda until the end of 1991, were searched for the keyword: "Hoyerswerda" and

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[41] Ibidem, 2.

analysed according to the same methodology as mentioned above, thus with primary attention towards framing. The use of a single keyword is chosen to limit the research to the actual reactional debates in the parliament and exclude the broader general discussion about the law on asylum.

The first chapter includes the findings of the research on the political debate and specifically how immigrants and extremist were framed in this reaction. The second chapter covers the representation and translation of the political reaction by the media and also incorporates an analysis of how this media coverage relates to the actual debate as stretched in the first chapter. The study is finalized with a conclusion including the findings and implications of this research in an attempt to answer the central research question.

Chapter 1. Political Reactions

The violent escalations in Hoyerswerda on immigrants, consequently put the debate on the rights of asylum even more prominently on the agenda in the German parliament. The so called *Asyldebatte* (debate on the rights of asylum) had already started at the end of the 1970s. At the time, the debate was concerned with the growing number of immigrating guest workers, who came to Germany for economic reasons and the question of whether these immigrants would be longer needed and welcome.[42] In the mid 1980's however, more and more economic immigrants used the law for political refuge in Germany to apply for asylum. In this period, the German government, led by the *Christlich Demokratische Union* (CDU) and the *Christlich-Soziale Union* (CSU) started a campaign against the abuse of this right in an attempt to decrease the number of immigrants entering Germany but possibly also as a political strategy to gain electoral success. This debate carried on over two decades until a compromise was reached on the 6th of December 1992 to execute a change in the constitution. On the 26th of May 1993 the ruling parties CDU, CSU and the *Freie Demokratische Partei* (FDP) together with support of the oppositional *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD), implemented the constitutional change, limiting the possibilities for refugees to enter the country. As a result, the number of immigrants were indeed drastically reduced, which might have positively contributed to the decrease of violent incidents such as the riots in Hoyerswerda.

The debate itself however, was seen by the opposition as a part of the underlying cause of the xenophobic violent escalation in the first place.[43] The fierce fashion in which the debate took place in the *Bundestag* (parliament) and also the representation and interpretation of the debate in the media might have fuelled, supported and justified right-wing sentiments and hatred towards immigrants. How then did the government react after it turned out that anti-immigrant sentiments could drastically escalate, and more specifically, how were extremists, immigrants and politicians framed within this political reaction?

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[42]Herbert, U. (2001). *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge*.266.

[43] Deutscher Bundestag, Stenographischer Bericht, Plenarprotokoll 12/43, 25.09.1991, 3575.

The Political Debate

In 1991 the German government was ruled by a coalition of the *Union* (CDU and CSU) and the FDP. The opposition was formed by the SPD as the largest opposition party, together with *Bündnis '90/ Grüne* (Die Grünen) and *Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus* (PDS)/ Linke Liste. Helmut Kohl of the CDU was the *Bundeskanzler* (federal chancellor) in his fourth term.

Right-wing sentiment in the new *Bundesländer* (the former DDR provinces that became part of the Republic after the reunification) had been on the agenda in the parliament also before the excess in Hoyerswerda. The first time this particular incident was subject during the parliamentary debate, was on September 25th 1991, three days after the riots had ended. During this particular discussion, the perspectives of the different parties of the coalition and the opposition on the more general issue of *Ausländerpolitik* (policy on foreigners) were clearly reflected in the speeches. In general, all speakers recognised the gravity of the issue and started off with a rejection of the violence. For example, by stating:

> "Wir wollen, sollen und müssen ein ausländerfreundliches Land bleiben. Rechtsextremismus und Gewalt dürfen bei uns keinerlei Chancen haben!" (we want to, we will and we have to stay a foreigner friendly country. Right-wing extremism and violence cannot have any chances here).[44]

This is a clear goal, but the real question is how this could be achieved. In order to tackle extremism and "not giving it a chance", it is essential that a government takes the right countermeasures. The most logical step would be to determine the root causes of the issue and subsequently formulate a plan how to change these. In the debate, the causes that were mentioned behind the developments and the emphasis on possible solution differed substantially per party. To give an impression of the debate, and to be able to compare the debate with its representation in the media, some reactions are mentioned below that can be seen as examples of the opinions of the different parties.

Johannes Gerster of the CDU saw the new *Bundesländer* and the newly won freedom in the former DDR as a factor for the escalation of violence. In the socialist DDR, anti-fascism was the norm and all right-wing sympathy was officially denied, resulting in exploding

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[44] Plenarprotokoll 12/43, 3565.

numbers now that the socialist regime had fallen. Likewise, the lack of international contact in the former DDR had resulted in xenophobic tendencies. Another central issue, according to Gerster, was the abuse of the asylum law by immigrants. Two thirds of the immigrants entering Germany were no rightful political refugees. This abuse of the law had allegedly led to unrest and discontent by the German public. Gerster's proposed solution was formed around the latter claim and entirely based on the creation of new laws on asylum in order to create a satisfied German population through an effective decrease of immigrants entering the country.[45] The CSU, the Bavarian sister-party of the CDU, argued in line with Gerster. They highlighted the socialism of the DDR as the underlying cause of the riots. That is, the German population of the former DDR had to live with foreigners who partly enjoyed more rights than they had themselves (the right to travel to West-Germany and hence, often earn a bigger salary through an income from the West). Thus, the problem clearly lay with the constitution and could only be solved by a changing it and speeding up the procedure of acceptance or denial of refugees in order to send back unlawful immigrants.[46]

The opposition had different ideas on both the causes and remedies of the issue. According to Ottmar Schreiner of the SPD, the *Union*'s solution to the problem actually described the problem itself; they used the incidents to engage in *Parteipolitik* (politics to gain political popularity and hence electoral success) instead of finding real solutions. Schreiner emphasized that the CDU used the unrest that had manifested in Hoyerswerda to blame the SPD and the shortcomings in the constitution. However, changing the law after such an incident would mean to obey to the wishes of those using violence. In the view of the SPD, the CDU did not propose any real solutions except for a change of the constitution. Schreiner then proposed to try and tackle the real root cause of the large number of refugees entering Germany; the harsh circumstances in their home-countries. Raising development aid for those countries in need would be a good start. Furthermore, the SPD stretched to put pressure on Turkey in order to stop human rights abuses that resulted in increasing numbers of refugees entering Germany.[47]

The FDP in turn saw what happened in Hoyerswerda as an issue of the local governments, in the way they accommodated asylum-seekers and the handling of the new

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[45] Ibidem, 3565-3566.
[46] Ibidem, 3571-3572.
[47] Ibidem, 3566-3568.

residents by the local population. They emphasized political cooperation, a halt to *Parteipolitik*, and the creation of more tolerance. They did not however stretch tangible ideas on how to manifest these solutions.[48]

The claim, that the policy on foreigners, as manifested by the coalition, was without perspective and had contributed to the escalation of the situation, was also backed by *Die Grünen.* According to *Die Grünen*, the *Parteipolitik* of both the CDU and the FDP showed a lack of differentiation of the scope of immigrants entering Germany. Refugees, asylum-seekers and immigrants were all put in the same corner. Instead, *Die Grünen* saw the psycho-social and socio-cultural aspects of right-wing hatred as the root cause of the issue. As a solution, not the law had to change, but rather democratic values had to be strengthened.[49]

Gregor Gysi of PDS/Linkse Liste, in his turn directly addresses the policy of the coalition and the way they had talked about the issue in their speeches. Gysi emphasized that the frames that were used by the CDU: *massenhaftes asylmisbrauch* (massive scale abuse of the right on asylum), *Scheinasylanten* (bogus asylum-seekers) and *Schmarotzer* (parasites), could have negative outcomes on the public opinion on immigrants. He also accused the CDU of agreeing with the extremist in terms of the desired outcome of their actions and that they would only differ in the way how to reach the desired result. This point was made clear by mentioning: "Wir [the CDU and the extremists] sind uns im Ziel einig, wir unterscheiden uns nur in der Methode" (we agree on the outcome, differ only in terms of method).[50] Furthermore, emphasizing cultural differences between Germans and immigrants as the main issue and changing the constitution in order to stop the problems at hand, was seen by *Die Linke* as xenophobia itself. By closing German borders in an attempt to keep out the misery of the third world, one would only create an illusion not a solution. Instead, Gysi stretched solidarity as a possible solution. In bordering states, where xenophobic violence occurred, nation-wide protest marches and displays of solidarity filled the news, which he saw as a positive contribution.[51]

In sum, when taking into consideration these reactions as represented in the parliamentary debate, the ruling coalition saw as the main problem behind the incidents in Hoyerswerda the law and the abuse of that law by "Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge" (economic

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[48] Ibidem, 3569.
[49] Ibidem, 3569-3570.
[50] Ibidem, 3942.
[51] Ibidem, 3573-3574.

refugees). Solutions were subsequently mainly focussed on a change of the law in order to create satisfaction amongst the local population through a reduction of the number of immigrants entering Germany. This constitutional change was depicted as a solution for a large problem and the possible positive outcomes were highlighted in the political debate. Other, more negative, implications of the new constitution, (e.g. a possible humanitarian crisis at the borders and the lack of professional personal to enforce the new law) were disregarded. Simultaneously, the positive implications were linked to important values of society like maintaining a certain welfare standard and guaranteeing public safety.[52] All of these features of the political debate correspond with the aforementioned techniques of intentional framing to increase consensus on a policy change.[53]

As became clear however, not the entire parliament agreed on this approach. The opposition on the contrary affirmed first and foremost the politics of the coalition itself as the main problem. SPD, Die Grünen and PDS saw the way immigrants were blamed for what happened as a factor that increased further hatred and violence. Moreover, the opposition collectively blamed the coalition for the performance of *Parteipolitik* with selfish goals in mind, instead of pursuing solutions for the problem at hand. Solutions would instead, according to the opposition, have to be focussed on a change in foreign policy towards the home countries of the refugees, on a more active contribution of national politicians, in the form of actual presence at the scenes, and on solidarity in an attempt to bring to a halt these outbursts of violence.

Hence, on a more abstract level, in the debate there are three groups to be identified that are involved in causing the situation. These are the immigrants, the extremists and the politicians. Within each group there were different underlying causes mentioned and frames emphasized by different parties, indicating each group's contribution to the problem. Firstly, immigrants were framed as an issue because they arrived in too large numbers and abused the legal system. Secondly, the image was created that extremists became violent mainly because of circumstances related to the reunification of Germany. And lastly, politicians were depicted as contributors in the fuelling of hatred by the way the problem was addressed in the debate. These frames potentially influenced public opinion in case they were represented

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[52] Ibidem, 3571-3572.
[53] Jacoby, Issue framing and public opinion on government spending, 756-757.

by the media. All three of these groups did gain attention and for immigrants and extremists, strategies were formulated how to deal with their negative influence. Immigrants had to be stopped through a change of the constitution, extremists had to be stopped by changing the circumstances they encountered and the political debate was addressed within the debate itself, but no real solutions were formulated. It is clear from the characterization of the political debate, that the change of the constitution enjoyed most attention, which puts the immigrants on the first place when it comes down to who is addressed first in an attempt to solve the issue. But what about the extremist, how did the German government plan to change the circumstances and put a halt to the violent outbursts? To answer this question, this thesis looks at a political initiative against extremism. The overall analysis of this study focuses mainly on the political 'debate' and not the implementation of the outcomes. However, this initiative was broadly discussed within the debate and it gives a clear picture of the mutual political critique that existed in the *Bundestag.*

A Political Initiative

At the start of the 1990's, before the period when right-wing motivated violence occurred on a daily basis, few state-sponsored initiatives against right-wing extremism existed in Germany. The large number of incidents and especially the four main earlier mentioned cases, put initiatives for prevention and repression higher on the agenda. The most prominent reactional initiative was the *Aktionsprogramm gegen Aggression und Gewalt* (AgAG) (action programme against aggression and violence). This programme had been in development even before the escalation in Hoyerswerda, but enjoyed an accelerated progress and implementation process afterwards. The mission of the programme was twofold. Firstly, a reduction of violence, especially concerning young perpetrators by offering of alternatives, integrating existing youth support programmes and pacifying public spaces. Secondly, the mission was to develop youth care structures in the new *Bundesländer*.[54] Initially, the programme ran from the start of 1992 until 1994, when an extensional version of the programme continued until late 1996. The programme was state-sponsored and under development and supervision of the former *Bundesministerium für Frauen und Jugend* (ministry of women and youth).

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[54] Aktionsprogramm gegen Aggression und Gewalt (AgAG) Hintergrundinformationen, BIK NETZ *Präventionsnetz gegen Rechtsextremismus.* Retreived from:
https://www.vielfalt-mediathek.de/data/biknetz_agag_faktenblatt.pdf (viewed 23.03.2018)

Angela Merkel was Minister of Women and Youth from 1991 until 1994 before she became Minister of Environment, Secretary General of the CDU and ultimately Federal Chancellor. Merkel was born in the DDR and could allegedly relate to what was going on in the recently unified eastern provinces. The escalations in the right-wing circuit were often blamed on the readiness to use violence especially amongst the youth. Merkel and her ministry recognized the need for action and officially started the AgAG shortly after the riots in Hoyerswerda had taken place. Merkel stressed the importance of such a programme but simultaneously warned to only blame the youth for what had happened. According to Merkel, the public facilities in cities like Hoyerswerda, especially those designed for leisure or the spending of free time, were scarce and underdeveloped and had as a result that free time was often spend in ways that increased possible contact with radicals.[55]

Consequently, in Merkel's view, the central elements of a prevention programme had to include the following aspects. Firstly, strengthening existing youth work programmes and organisations, especially by creating and providing spaces where youth can gather and share experiences. Secondly, promote intercultural youth work where different cultures can meet to prevent xenophobia. Thirdly, create and promote support organisations for those youngsters that were most prone to lose contact with society and drift off. Fourthly, especially in the new eastern provinces, create areas and spaces for the youth to spend their free time. Fifthly, support and educate involved youth workers to enable responsible pedagogical behaviour.[56]Achievements according to Merkel consisted of around hundred fifty new projects in over thirty regions. Some of these projects had, according to Merkel, successfully reintegrated youngsters - with a tendency to right-wing motivated violence - into society and thus potentially prevented violent action. Merkel also admitted that obviously not all violent actions could have been stopped, not even with a budget of over forty million Deutsche Mark.[57]

The programme faced considerable political critique from the opposition. Most of that criticism can be seen in the larger picture of the political debate and is built around the accusation that the *Union* was abusing the situation in order to promote campaigning

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[55] Angela Merkel, *Jugendliche gewaltbereitschaft und rechtsextremismus - ursachen, formen, therapien,* speech at the Ministry of Women and Youth, 03.04.1993, Bulletin 28.93
[56] Ibidem.
[57] Ibidem.

strategies and that this strategy negatively influenced the situation and fuelled hatred.[58] Members of the CDU defended their approach however, by emphasising that the constitution only had to change, when other measures to reduce the abuse of the right on asylum would be inefficient. Furthermore, they underlined that the debate itself was not the problem, but if measures would prove inefficient it would be the real source of fuelled hatred on the right. Extremist would after all not be influenced by what they see in the media, but what happened on the streets.[59] PDS and *Die Grünen* did not buy this however, and called Merkel's proposal a cover-up initiative in order to freely pursue aforementioned political goals and campaigning purposes.[60] In their eyes, the entire programme was in fact a theatre for public relation by the *Union* instead of a real solution.[61]

The existence of the programme shows that there was at least an attempt to tackle the problem of xenophobic violence from two sides and not only by changing the law on asylum. The true intention and the success of the programme was however clearly criticised by the opposition. This could have had negative influences on the situation in at least two ways. Firstly, in a more direct manner, if the programme proved to be inefficient, the problem would not be solved and a lot of money could have been wasted. Secondly, if the public increasingly shared the idea that politicians are not effectively countering extremists, and simultaneously immigrants are increasingly blamed for incidents like those in Hoyerswerda, the situation can deteriorate through the negative effect of framing and a lack of trust in the government.[62][63] Especially the latter process depends heavily on how the public debate is represented by the media and hence received by the public. To find out how the media covered the political debate and the government initiative the next chapter focusses on the corresponding media coverage of *Der Spiegel.*

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[58] Deutscher Bundestag, Stenographischer Bericht, Plenarprotokoll 12/47, 10.10.1991, p3941-3942
[59] Plenarprotokoll 12/47, 10.10.1991, p3940-3941
[60] Ibidem, 3942.
[61] Deutscher Bundestag, Antwort der Bundesregierung, auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpke (PDS), 12.5.1993, Drucksache 12/4787.
[62] Liu, B. F., Horsley, J. S., & Yang, K. (2012). Overcoming negative media coverage: Does government communication matter? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *22*(3), 604-607.
[63] Sprinzak, The process of delegitimization.

Chapter 2. Media Representation

This chapter contains a reconstruction and an analysis of the news coverage by the German weekly published news magazine Der Spiegel in the aftermath of the right-wing motivated riots in Hoyerswerda. Articles included in the analysis are concerned with the political reactions of the German government and the broader issue of rising right-wing sentiment and violence. Additionally, this chapter deals with the way immigrants, extremists and politicians were framed within the media and how this relates to the framing in the political debate.

Media Coverage of the Political Debate

Right-wing motivated violence against foreigners was an issue in Germany already before the riots in Hoyerswerda. Possibly, not everyone was aware of these violent incidents, however the fact that Germany was going through a migration-crisis was clear for everyone. One week before the riots, *Der Spiegel* dedicated its title page, and hence three relatively long articles, on what they called "Der Ansturm der Armen" (the stampede of the poor).[64] These reactions on the migration-crisis were more in general and not per se related to violent incidents. As became clear from *Der Spiegel's* coverage, the general political point of view was that immigrants were abusing article sixteen of the German constitution (political persecuted people enjoy the right to asylum) and that the German law was making it too simple for immigrants to enter the country and too hard to send them back home. The result; steadily growing numbers of immigrants entering the country. The opinions of the different political parties on the issue of changing the law was also clearly mentioned. The CDU was in favour of an adjustment of article sixteen, whereas SPD and FDP were against it. All parties agreed however, on the fact that they needed to do something in order to decrease the number of immigrants entering and staying in Germany.[65] Thus, so far, the media coverage of the political debate was in accordance with the political debate, as described in chapter one, indicating a representation and not a translation of the content.

After what happened in Hoyersweda, the political debate, as covered in *Der Spiegel,* did not change much compared to before. Political reactions were not really based on the violent actions, but on a continuation of the debate on how to stop the general migration-

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[64] "Einwanderungsland Deutschland", *Der Spiegel,* 37/1991
[65] "Grundgesetz: Streit um Asylrecht", *Der Spiegel,* 39/1991

crisis. The arguments and assumptions stayed the same, only the urgency to find a solution increased. That is, extremists did not become the central topic of the debate, nor did the possible ways to stop them. Still, immigrants were framed as the cause of the situation based on their growing number. As covered in *Der Spiegel*, politicians described the problems as firstly; the increase of radicalisation and extremism was a result of the growing numbers of foreigners entering Germany. Secondly; the liberal character of the law itself and the abuse of that law additionally, was leading to violent reactions of the people. Thirdly; to stop further radicalisation, politicians had to find ways to decrease the amount of people entering the country instead of finding other ways to tackle extremism.[66] All of these stated root causes of the violence and the proposed solutions were hence based on the same assumption: immigrants are the problem and Germans simply reacted to it. This assumption was hence also mentioned in the media, as a representation of the political debate. According to Page *et al.*'s theory of credibility, this representation might have had a substantial influence on the public opinion on immigrants, since the government is one of the most credible sources.[67] Furthermore, since the political debate, about finding adequate measures to decrease the flow of immigrants, did not really produce any tangible results, people might have increasingly lacked political trust which subsequently might have negatively influenced political legitimacy. According to Sprinzak's theory, this lack of legitimacy leads to increased radicalisation and could hence be a reason for (potential) extremists to become more violent and take measures into their own hands.

The way *Der Spiegel* translated the political debate on this issue depicts an image that, indeed politicians argued that radicalisation and violence could only be stopped by reducing the number of immigrants. In an evaluation of the way the debate unfolded, *Der Spiegel* wrote:

> "Eine steigende Welle der Gewalt gegen Flüchtlingsunterkünfte quer durch die Republik, - und alles von den Parteien begleitet mit einer unsäglichen Asyldebatte und immergleichen Schuldzuweisungen."[68] (a rising wave of violence against refugee

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[66] "Asylrecht: Bewegung im Parteienstreit", *Der Spiegel* 41/1991

[67] Page, B., Shapiro, R., & Dempsey, G. (1987). What Moves Public Opinion? *The American Political Science Review, 81*(1) 23-43.

[68] "Asylrecht: Bewegung im Parteienstreit", *Der Spiegel,* 41/1991.

residences straight through the republic, and all of that accompanied by an unspeakable debate on asylum and always the same accusations).

Clearly, *Der Spiegel* emphasized the negative influence of the debate on the asylum-law and the lack of political consensus. However, the debate was not only negatively framed trough a translation or appreciation. After a local electoral success of the CDU, *Der Spiegel* wrote in a direct representation, quoting a CDU member saying:

"Nun werde die SPD hoffentlich zur Vernunft kommen und dem Mißbrauch des Asylrechts durch ihr 'Ja' zu einer Grundgesetzänderung ein Ende bereiten helfen."[69] (Now, the SPD will hopefully come to reason and stop the abuse of the law of asylum, by voting 'yes' on the change of the constitution).

This quote indicates that the CDU did not just see the constitutional change as a solution to the violent incidents, but also as a tool for electoral success, which they used against the SPD to pressurize them.

 Der Spiegel also left out certain parts of the political debate on the root causes of violent behaviour, like the socio-economic impact of the reunification of Germany. *Der Spiegel* did not cover this extensively, however, since most of the proposed solutions within the political debate were based on decreasing the number of immigrants, it might be expected that the media coverage focussed on this element as well.

 Political reactions did however also include different measures, especially emphasized by the smaller opposition parties. *Der Spiegel* did mention these in its coverage, but spent more attention on the possible negative effect of the central debate about the law on asylum. The magazine underlined the possible negative consequences by stating that every day the political debate continued and immigrants were depicted as the central problem, was a day won by the extremists.[70] However, the leading political parties CDU, CSU, FDP and SPD tried harder to find a compromise after Hoyerswerda, the general tendency was still the same: they pretended to have the solution for the issue at hand and blamed the other parties for non-cooperation and hence the failure to implement the needed measures. Since the SPD did not

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[69] Ibidem.
[70] "Über den neuen Rechtsradikalismus", *Der Spiegel,* 43/1991.

want to settle with a change of the constitution, the CDU blamed them for interfering with their masterplan. The SPD in turn, blamed the CDU for promoting xenophobia by accusing only the immigrants as being at the heart of the problem. Additionally, to these disagreements between the parties, *Der Spiegel* reported increasing internal animosity in the CDU and the SPD.[71] Members of these parties disagreed on their measures and approaches, which in turn might have promoted political distrust at the level of society. Since, if politicians cannot even agree within their own party, let alone find a workable compromise between the parties on how to operate, how are they going to tackle the problems at hand? *Der Spiegel*'s representation of the debate can thus again be seen as negative; it highlighted shortcomings of political cooperation and even emphasized possible negative consequences in terms of increased hatred if the government would continue in the same fashion.[72] According to aforementioned theory of delegitimization, *Der Spiegel*'s coverage could have led to a decrease in political trust, which in turn might have increase tendencies towards radicalisation. The findings of chapter one show, that the debate indeed contained large disagreements amongst different parties, and that even within the political debate, party members pointed out that their own debate negatively influenced the situation at hand.[73] Hence, the political debate itself and the representation of it might have contributed to increased hatred, but *Der Spiegel*'s translation and especially its evaluation emphasized the political shortcomings and increased political delegitimization.

In the month following the riots in Hoyerswerda, *Der Spiegel* elaborated on several possible solutions that were being put forward by politicians. Apart from the, so strongly by the CDU advertised, constitutional change, solutions included: an acceleration of the examination procedures of newly arrived asylum-seekers to six weeks, direct processing at the borders while asylum-seekers had to stay in camps[74], military control at the borders, and immediate refuse of asylum-seekers who came from certain "politically safe" countries. However, these possible solutions were based on different approaches and angles on how to deal with the crisis, *Der Spiegel* saw all of them as either unrealistic, (processing new asylum-cases within six weeks which usually took eleven months) or inefficient (refusing people of "safe" countries; whereas most new asylum-seekers actually come from Turkey, Romania and

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[71] "Asyl: Asypolitik: Weizsäcker mahnt zur Sachlichkeit", *Der Spiegel*, 47/1991.
[72] "Asylrecht: Bewegung im Parteienstreit", *Der Spiegel* 41/1991.
[73] Deutscher Bundestag, Stenographischer Bericht, Plenarprotokoll 12/43, 25.09.1991, p3569-3570.
[74] "Sammellager: Kommunen gegen Sammellager für Asylanten", *Der Spiegel,* 43/1991.

Yugoslavia, all three politically unsafe).[75] The one attempt to put a halt to extremism that was not concerned with immigrants but with the extremist themselves, was the AgAG (action programme against aggression and violence). *Der Spiegel* however, paid hardly any attention to this programme or the political debate about it. Obviously, the programme had only just started and it could not be expected that it would already show outcomes. Still, it was an initiative that focussed on extremists and not immigrants, an aspect that *Der Spiegel* had extensively criticised in other government plans. The AgAG was only mentioned once between the riots and the end of the year 1991. *Der Spiegel* called the programme: "Glatzpflege auf Staatskosten" [76] (skinhead care on the expense of the state), a description that they had copied from the German newspaper *Die Zeit.*[77] This description emphasised the critique that the programme mainly focussed on financing, rebuilding and renovating youth centres in East Germany. The government was spending twenty million Deutsche Mark (roughly ten million euro) yearly on potential right-wing extremists, without having any proof of the implications this expense would bring about. If positive changes would not follow, according to *Der Spiegel,* it would simply be a treat for skinheads on the expense of the state.[78]

Der Spiegel* described this failure to engage in an effective political reaction, as a cause for increased political distrust by the people. The formulation; "Ob unsere Politiker zu blöde sind, um das hier aus der Welt zu schaffen?" (Whether our politicians are too stupid to get rid of this?)[79] shows dissatisfaction with and little trust in politicians. According to Fröhlich and Rüdiger, the media 'usually' simply represent political views.[80] Here it is clear that *Der Spiegel* interprets the effectiveness of the political reaction and covers the debate negatively. It has to be mentioned however that in *Der Spiegel*'s coverage, it is not always clear whether the critique is against the course of the 'debate' or the implementation of the outcomes, like the extremism prevention programme AgAG. Again however, *Der Spiegel*'s coverage does not deviate far from the content of the debate itself. That is, politicians themselves went as far as to depict other members of parliament as collaborates of the extremists. Also in terms of the AgAG, other political parties had criticized the programme even more extensively than was

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[75] "Asylrecht: Asylverfahren Beschleunigung", *Der Spiegel,* 42/1991 and
"Flüchtlinge: Flüchtlingsstrom aus Jugoslawien", *Der Spiegel,* 49/1991.
[76] "Der lange Weg einer Asylakte", *Der Spiegel,* 51/1991.
[77] "Glatzpflege auf Staatskosten", *Die Zeit,* 50/1991.
[78] "Der lange Weg einer Asylakte", *Der Spiegel,* 51/1991.
[79] "Asylbewerber - Verteilung auf die Bundesländer", *Der Spiegel,* 37/1991.
[80] Froehlich, R., & Rüdiger, B. (2006). Framing political public relations: Measuring success of political communication strategies in Germany. *Public Relations Review*, *32*(1), 24.

done by *Der Spiegel.* Since *Der Spiegel* based their stories mostly on what was actually said in the political debate, the theory of credibility implies that these stories substantially impacted the public opinion[81][82], and simultaneously indicate that *Der Spiegel*'s coverage was actually in line with Fröhlich and Rüdiger's and theory that media coverage mainly represent the actual political debate.[83]

Der Spiegel did not only cover the political debate and interpreted the outcomes of it, they also formulated alternative approaches. Based on interviews with experts, *Der Spiegel* wrote about possible other solution to the situation that had not been mentioned in the political debate. These proposals included firstly: informing the German people correctly, that is, prepare them for a multicultural society instead of shouting that Germany is no *Einwanderungsland* (country of migrants, Helmut Kohl, CDU).[84] Secondly, react faster and harder to violent incidents, because such behaviour should not have been tolerated. Thirdly, show more sympathy with the victims instead of depicting them as part of or even the centre of the problem.[85] However, these alternative solutions might be seen as a positive contribution towards putting a halt to the issues, as long as they underlined the political shortcoming, they might still have led to political distrust. Furthermore, showing more sympathy with the victims cannot only be done by politicians, the media themselves play a central role in this aspect. The coverage of *Der Spiegel* did however include many articles on immigrants, including several interviews were personal stories were told about the life of immigrants and on how they managed to cope with right-wing hatred. The image created around immigrants was however not that of victims, but that of problems. How exactly immigrants were framed and mentioned in these articles is subject of the next paragraph.

Framing of Victims

The first problem with the framing of immigrants, was the terminology of the word itself as used in the media. The terms; immigrant, refugee and asylum-seeker, were used so often and intertwiningly, that the exact definitions became blurry. To start with, the earlier mentioned

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[81] Plenarprotokoll 12/43, p3569-3570.
[82] Page, What Moves Public Opinion?
[83] Froehlich, Framing political public relations, 24.
[84] "Einwanderungsland Deutschland", *Der Spiegel,* 37/1991.
[85] "Ein Plädoyer für eine multikulturelle Gesellschaft", *Der Spiegel,* 41/1991.

title page of *Der Spiegel*: "Der Ansturm der Armen" (the stampede of the poor)[86], creates the image that all arriving immigrants were poor. Additionally, the page included the header: "Flüchtlinge, Aussiedler, Asylanten" (refugees, immigrants with German roots, asylum-seekers) which supposes that indeed all these people should be seen as part of a homogenous minority. Then, when writing about xenophobia, the use of the word *Ausländer* (foreigner) points at the assumption that there is hatred against all foreigners and not a specific minority. And indeed, *Der Spiegel* reported that for example, even second and third generation German-Americans with dark skin were increasingly discriminated in the early nineties, however these were no immigrants but had lived in Germany their entire lives.[87] Next to this generalisation there were negative associations created with the foreign population due to the use of terms and metaphors like; *Asylanten-Nachschub* (supply of asylum-seekers), *Scheinasylanten* (sham asylum-seekers) and *Migrationswelle* (migration wave). The repeated use of these terms underlies the supposed large number of immigrants entering the country and emphasises the notion that those people are no 'real' refugees but merely economic opportunists.

Der Spiegel did not use these terms regularly in its own formulations and descriptions but did frequently use them as part of quotations of politicians. Hence, these frames did reach the public and might have influenced public opinion. Terminology however, is not the only possible negative aspect of framing in this case. *Der Spiegel* covered stories on immigrants concerning several different aspects, most importantly here; how immigrants were blamed by politicians as being the cause of so much trouble.[88] Specifically, immigrants were blamed to occupy residencies that were supposed to belong to financially weak Germans. Also, allegedly more and more immigrants became criminally active and most importantly, letting more immigrants in the country would have resulted in depleting of the wealth of the Germans, consequently Germans would become poor as well.[89] These allegations and negative associations might have seriously influenced public opinion. In case these frames would only be based on a certain point of view of the news outlet at hand, the public would easier disagree with what is read due to a lack of credibility. However, these frames were for a large part based on quotes of politicians who naturally enjoy credibility at least to some extent. Thus, politicians formulated a problem, depicted a certain group as to blame for it and

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[86] "Einwanderungsland Deutschland", *Der Spiegel,* 37/1991.
[87] "Rassismus: Schwarze mit dt. Nationalität gegen Rassismus", *Der Spiegel,* 52/1991.
[88] "Der lange Weg einer Asylakte", *Der Spiegel,* 51/1991.
[89] "Asylbewerber Fingerabdrücke", *Der Spiegel,* 43/1991.

subsequently mutually disagreed and proved incapable of solving it. In line with the 'credibility' of the source and the impact on 'legitimacy', an expected consequence would indeed be that certain people radicalise and take matters into their own hands.[90]

Not only the way politicians framed immigrants was represented in the media however. *Der Spiegel* likewise covered statements of citizens that clearly had anti-immigrant sentiments. According to *Der Spiegel,* some people reacted with phrases like: "Da [in das Asylantenheim] sollte man eine Bombe reinwerfen." (one should throw a bomb in there [the asylum-seekers residence]) or: "Frage; was ist ein Türke in Salzsäure? Ein gelöstes Problem! (What is a Turk in acid? A solved problem!).[91] Others reacted not in words but in actions, as happened in Hoyerswerda and in many more East- and West-German cities. The general tendency towards right-wing motivated hatred and violence, especially in East-Germany led to remarkable reactions of the immigrants themselves. *Der Spiegel* reported that those that found residence in the West refused to go to the East (as part of a political effort for reallocation) because of the feared hatred and aggression.[92] Those that had witnessed violent behaviour or hatred in person however, mostly still preferred to stay in Germany rather than to return back home where the situation was even worse. However, many of those who had fallen victim to or had to constantly fear aggression, suffered from depression.[93] Not all the coverage concerning immigrants was however based on negative associations or consequences of their presence. Due to the violent incidents, in many German cities, people went on the streets to demonstrate against the hatred and aggression coming from the extreme right. In over thirty cities, people had actually voluntarily started to protect asylum-seekers residences at night.[94] A counter-movement, or a sign of sympathy at least. The extent to which these positive associations were covered however, is only a fraction of all the negative coverage. However, some politicians emphasised that tolerance and positive association towards immigrants should be enhanced as a part of the political strategy to tackle the problem, most of the debate focused on the negative implications of the presence of immigrants, just like the coverage of *Der Spiegel*.[95] Hence, when immigrants are concerned

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[90] Page, 'What Moves Public Opinion?' 33-35.
[91] "Über Rechtsextremismus u. Gewalt", *Der Spiegel,* 41/1991.
[92] "Die Angst d. Asylbewerber vor den Deutschen", *Der Spiegel,* 41/1991.
[93] "Ausländer-Psychologe zur Angst d. Asylbewerber**,** *Der Spiegel,* 41/1991.
[94] "Bürger: Schutzwachen vor Asylantenheimen", *Der Spiegel,* 42/1991 and
"Die guten Deutschen von Hünxe und ihre Asylanten", *Der Spiegel,* 43/1991
[95] See chapter one

Der Spiegel mostly represented the political debate but also used additional frames that potentially negatively influenced public opinion. But if immigrants enjoyed such unfavourable frames, how then were the extremists depicted, who were in fact the ones that had committed the violent actions?

Framing of Perpetrators

The perpetrators of right-wing motivated violence were mentioned in the context of several different related subjects. Examples of these are; the motivations behind their actions and the extent of the violence and the specific verbal and physical outbursts. A subject that is prominently absent from this list, is that of counter-measures. Although *Der Spiegel* did dedicate a title page to the growing concern of hatred: "Hass, Gewalt gegen Fremde" (Hatred, violence against foreigners)[96], remedies to the issue were not to be found. The causes of extremism however, gained much more attention. Partly based on academic literature and political opinion, *Der Spiegel* saw (the prospect of) unemployment, housing shortages, and the personal financial loss as the main structural reasons why some people turned against immigrants. The fact that in the political debate immigrants were framed as the root-cause of the issue, made things worse. Additionally, often is mentioned that, in the situation of those that became extremists, being able to blame a minority is part of a coping mechanism to deal with one's own problems. Hence, if the immigrants were not in the country, some other minority would be blamed for the personal misfortune.[97]

If the motivations and causes of the behaviour of the perpetrators were clear, why then was it so hard to formulate effective counter-measures? Mostly because in the political debate, measures to tackle the problem did not focus on putting a halt to the crimes of extremists, but on decreasing the number of immigrants entering and staying in Germany, since that would allegedly automatically end the problems. What was actually extensively described were those actions that the perpetrators committed and the sentiment that spread throughout the country. From arson attacks, to personal violence, from threats to killings, right-wing violence was part of Germanys daily routine.[98] Every fourth German thought that actively standing up against immigrants was a good or legitimate thing. Hence, whenever

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[96] "Hass, Gewalt gegen Fremde", *Der Spiegel,* 40/1991.
[97] "Prozeß gegen einen Jungen aus Hoyerswerda", *Der Spiegel*, 50/1991.
[98] "Über Rechtsextremismus u. Gewalt", *Der Spiegel,* 41/1991.

immigrants were publically harassed, abused or likewise, most bystanders would simply watch and not interfere. The riots in Hoyerswerda played an important role in this development. According to *Der Spiegel* it was the end of a taboo. Before, hatred was mainly discussed at home and performed only in some football stadiums and sub-way stations. Afterwards, the public realised that discretion was no longer necessary and consequently hatred moved to the streets and into the public sphere. Even more worrying, after riots like in Hoyerswerda, reactions were mostly concerned on how to accelerate the process of decreasing the influx of immigrants, instead of on how to stop the perpetrators.[99]

Likewise, to the frames of the immigrants, possible perpetrators were framed, generalised and hardly distinguished amongst each other as well. They were called: *Glatzen* (Skinheads), *Schlägertruppen* (combat troops) or *Neo-Nazis* and could be virtually any unemployed East-German youngster who hang out with the wrong friends.[100] This broad description gave rise to the false idea that the group of active extremist was very extensive. The fact that during the riots in Hoyerswerda, at first, most bystanders did little to nothing in order to stop the perpetrators, indicates that there was a certain consensus to the use of violence. The framing of perpetrators in the aftermath, but even more the 'normalisation' of anti-immigrant sentiment, and the lack of attention towards the role of the perpetrators, might have contributed to a growing consensus about the negative role of the immigrants played in the situation, which stimulated a growing consensus towards the constitutional change as the most effective solution.[101]

Outcomes and implications

It has become clear form the analysis above, that there were several issues with the way politics reacted on right-wing violence, how this was covered by the media and the way immigrants and perpetrators were framed in this coverage. Before the incident in Hoyerswerda, *Der Spiegel* reported on the growing concerns about the migration-crisis and how politicians attempted to change the situation by decreasing the number of immigrants entering the country and increasing the number of those being send back. After the incident,

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[99] Ibidem.
[100] "Terror von rechtsextremen Jugendbanden", *Der Spiegel,* 42/1991.
[101] Ehud Sprinzak, 'The process of delegitimization: Words a linkage theory of political terrorism', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3 (1991) 1, 50-68.

the coverage of the political reaction did not change much. The central discussed issue was still the high number of immigrants. It has become clear that this emphasize, that was clearly made in the coverage of *Der Spiegel,* might have influenced public opinion towards the tendency to indeed see immigrants as the cause of trouble, since solutions were mainly formulated that focused on putting a halt to the influx of immigrants. Furthermore, since these efforts did not prove to be fruitful, and *Der Spiegel* covered this extensively, political legitimacy potentially decreased through a lack of political trust. Politicians amongst themselves also continuously blamed each other for disturbing the process of finding and implementing solutions. A lack of political trust generally has negative influence on inter-social behaviour and trust and can lead to extreme sentiments.[102]

In the media, immigrants were officially blamed for much of what was happening. Also, the way this minority was framed, negatively contributed towards the prejudice, and the association that this problem could only be solved by closing the borders or changing the constitution. Generalizing an entire population led to increased hatred against not only immigrants that had recently arrived, but even those that had lived in Germany for decades. Simultaneously, while immigrants were mostly framed in a negative way, the perpetrators of right-wing motivated violence enjoyed much less attention. Violent actions, and "reactions"[103] against the unwanted newcomers were legitimised and explained as being an "understandable" reaction regarding the situation. *Der Spiegel* reported that even politicians backed this legitimation which made it an officially accepted interpretation of the situation.

In conclusion, the media coverage of the political debate and de framing of immigrants and extremist within, almost certainly negatively influenced the situation at hand. The question is however; who is to blame, *Der Spiegel* or the government? Clearly, *Der Spiegel* mostly represented the political debate, but additionally translated the debate in terms of possible implications and outcomes. But then again, also within the debate itself, these (sometimes very negative) consequences of the course of the political debate were mentioned as well. That is, *Der Spiegel*'s emphasis on the lack of political cooperation and consensus, the inefficiency of the political reactions and even the generalization of the concerning minorities, however highlighted, were all related on existing critique from within the political debate itself. Hence, *Der Spiegel* should not be seen as an instigator of extremist

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[102] Sprinzak, 'The process of delegitimization'.
[103] "Über Rechtsextremismus u. Gewalt", *Der Spiegel,* 41/1991.

sentiments by negatively translating the political debate. Translating certain content is however not the only way to delineate a negative image. Leaving out certain aspects can likewise negatively influence an image. The German government did not spend much time on the role of the extremist when discussion solutions. *Der Spiegel* however, made it look like no time at all was spent on this issue. With only a couple of sentences witnessed on the AgAG and little attention for the concerns of the smaller parties (Linke, Grüne), *Der Spiegel* focussed mainly on the general debate between the CDU and the SPD and more importantly, negatively appreciated the debate and its implications.

Conclusion

In Germany in the beginning of the 1990's, right-wing extremists turned to violent actions against immigrants. The riots that occurred in Hoyerswerda are only one example of the rising number of xenophobic motivated incidents that took place in this period. The government had to react to these developments in order to restrain further escalations. However, formulating an appropriate response and implementing the right measures to successfully counter and prevent extremist violence, proved to be difficult. Many different factors had to be taken into account, an important one of these were the media.

The public opinion, on the presence and the growing numbers of immigrants in Germany, played an important role in the acceptance and reactions against immigrants. Public opinion is partly formed by the media, something that governments have to take into account in the formulation and execution of a response on certain incidents. In particular, the representation of the political debate in the media has great influence on public opinion based on the credibility of politicians as a source.[104] Additionally, depending on how the political reaction is covered in the media, this coverage can decrease political legitimacy, which in turn can lead to increased radicalisation.[105] Within the media coverage of the political reaction and the incident itself, framing of victims, perpetrators and politicians is especially influential in terms of influencing public opinion.

This study analysed the relation between the political debate in the aftermath of the riots in Hoyerswerda, and the coverage of this debate in *Der Spiegel*, paying special attention to the framing of involved groups by both the government and the media. The political debate as such, turned out to be preoccupied with one possible solution to the problem, which was a change of the constitution in order to limit the rights of asylum-seekers and consequently decrease the number of immigrants entering the country. However other solutions were proposed as well, this idea stood central in the discussion which created, or at least emphasized, the image of the immigrant as the causal factor of the problems at hand. The most tangible alternative, in which the government aimed at influencing the perpetrators instead of the victims, was the action programme against aggression and violence (AgAG). In

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[104] Page, B., Shapiro, R., & Dempsey, G. (1987). What Moves Public Opinion? *The American Political Science Review, 81*(1), 23-43.

[105] Sprinzak, E., (1991) 'The process of delegitimization: Words a linkage theory of political terrorism', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3(1), 50-68.

the political debate, this programme enjoyed substantial critique and was mostly seen as a weak and unpromising attempt to overcome the issue of rising right-wing motivated violence in Germany. The programme was however barely mentioned in the media. The little attention it received, was likewise critical and pessimistic about possible outcomes.

From the analysis of the political debate, it has become clear that the German government was struggling to cooperate and find workable compromises. The coalition and the opposition differed substantially in their opinion on how to address the issue. The research on the media coverage underlined these findings. *Der Spiegel*'s coverage included extensive critique on the course of the political debate. The framing of the immigrants as the central problem and the disagreements amongst the different parties were more than once depicted as a source for increased hatred and a justification for extremists to use violence. Through this emphasis, and hence the negative framing of politicians, *Der Spiegel* contributed to a delegitimation of the government which can lead to increased radicalisation. Most of the critique on the political debate in the media was however not so much an interpretation of the debate but rather a representation of already existing critique amongst politicians themselves.

The same holds for the negative frames of the victims that occurred in *Der Spiegel*'s coverage. Most of these frames, like that of immigrants as the root cause of extremist violence, were derived from the political debate and not created by the media. *Der Spiegel* identified the potential negative impact of these frames on the public opinion, however continuously represented them in its coverage and additionally used negatively associated metaphors in the description of the minority. The lack of critical attention on perpetrators was also repeatedly mentioned by *Der Spiegel*. This does however not fully represent the actual political debate as analysed from the reports of the parliamentary debate. Although the political debate did mainly focus on how to deal with the large number of immigrants, perpetrators were discussed as well. By leaving out certain elements of the political debate in its coverage and emphasizing others, *Der Spiegel* partly depicted an even more negative image of the government and diverted from a representational type of coverage towards a more interpretive style. Hence, the media coverage of the political reactions and its appreciation were to a large extent comparable with the actual political debate, with as a main exception the attention witnessed on perpetrators. These findings indicate that both the theories of Fröhlich and Rüdiger (media mainly represents political debates) and Patterson (media

interprets political actions and emphasizes negative aspects) are true to some extent, but in the case of the media coverage in the aftermath of Hoyerswerda, it can be argued that *Der Spiegel* mainly used a representational style of coverage.

These findings implicate that a government should be especially careful in such situations where the coverage of the political debate can deteriorate public opinion. The political debate will be represented in the media and, if it includes extensive mutual critique, this might be used to depict a negative image of the government. Since the government enjoys much credibility as a source and negative appreciations might decrease political legitimacy, coverage of the political debate is especially crucial in times of crisis. Additionally, within the political debate, politicians should be especially careful with framing involved groups since the media will likely represent these frames and refer to politicians as a credible source.

Based on these findings, one could argue that in case a government enjoys political cooperation and a consensus is easier reached within the political debate, the media will consequently cover the political debate more positively. A limitation of this study is however, that it does not analyse another case study in which the government enjoys such high level of cooperation and political consensus. In such a case, the media either stick to a representation of the debate and hence create a more positive image of the government or, the coverage includes a translation of the debate nonetheless, based on the media's own evaluation. Future research could compare different case studies involving different governments or the same government in different periods in order to evaluate the findings of this study.

Disregarding this limitation, it is clear that the media can play an important role in the aftermath of a violent incident through its impact on public opinion. Based on the theory that the politicians are a credible source in media coverage and on the findings that the debate is mainly represented in the media and that translations and appreciations of the debate are mostly derived from the debate itself, it can be argued that governments should beware how the political debate unfolds in order to avoid media coverage that negatively influences public opinion and deteriorates the situation at hand.

After the incidents in Hoyerswerda, three more major right-wing motivated incidents unfolded within three years and these were only the incidents that enjoyed generous media attention. The German government failed to react effectively after Hoyerswerda in order to put an immediate halt to the violence. More recently, Germany is again facing increased right-wing hatred and violent incidents. Again, the government needs to react on these tendencies

and incidents in order to restrain further escalations. In the formulation of a response and a strategy to make this response effective, the findings of this study can be used in an attempt to overcome making the same mistakes.

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