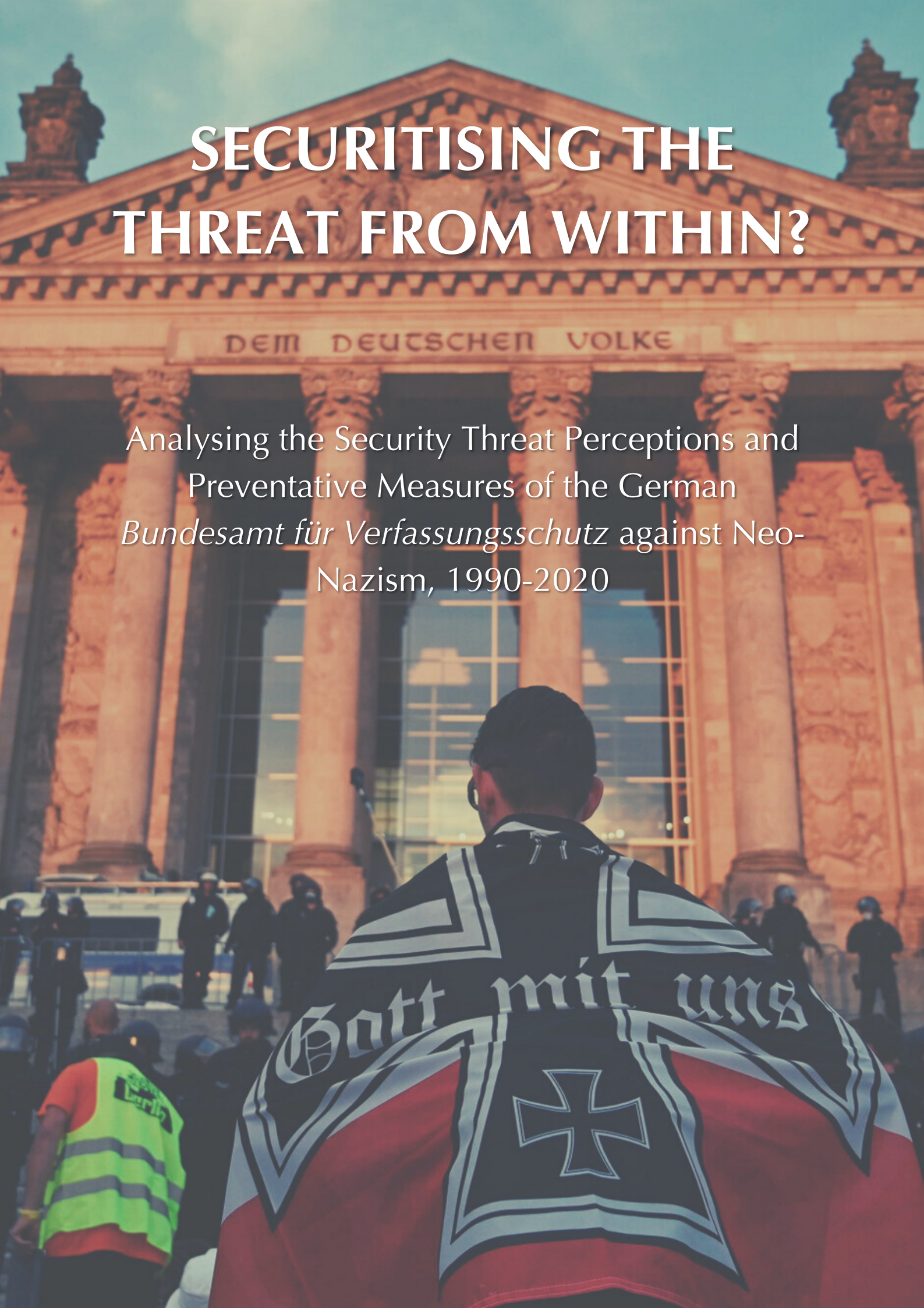


# SECURITISING THE THREAT FROM WITHIN?

Analysing the Security Threat Perceptions and  
Preventative Measures of the German  
*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* against Neo-  
Nazism, 1990-2020



## Securitising the Threat from Within?

An Investigation into the Security Threat Perceptions and Preventative Measures of the  
German *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* against Neo-Nazism, 1990-2020



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**Image front page:** Picture of a demonstrator wrapped in a flag of the German empire joining the anti-lockdown demonstrations in Berlin on August 29, 2020, taken by John MacDougall/Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Source: John MacDougall/AFP, published in Sophia Ankel, "QAnon has become a Powerful Force in Germany, helping to drive Europe's biggest Anti-lockdown Movement," *Insider*, November 21, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/qanon-german-anti-lockdown-protests-infiltrated-by-us-conspiracy-2020-11?international=true&r=US&IR=T>.

## Abstract

How did Germany securitise neo-Nazism over the past decades? The major threat of neo-Nazism has haunted Germany for a long time and several scholars have criticised the German approach to combat neo-Nazism by referring to Germany's "blind eye" toward neo-Nazism and even suppose that Germany is underestimating its impact. However, an extensive identification of the security threat perceptions, preventative measures, and key actors to understand the German approach toward neo-Nazism is lacking up to this point. Based on an extensive analysis of the annual reports by the German domestic intelligence agency, the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (BfV), and a comparison of two neo-Nazi attacks before and after the German reunification, this thesis will try to fill this gap. Specifically, the ideas and narratives of the BfV were analysed by applying Securitisation Theory to identify how the BfV perceived and reacted to neo-Nazism from 1990 till 2020. Further evidence was found by comparing the Munich Oktoberfest bombing in 1980 and the Halle attack in 2019. While the annual reports revealed that the BfV did securitise and acted upon the neo-Nazi threat throughout the years and indicated a more optimistic view compared to previous research, the case study comparison slightly nuanced this impression as the Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 was somewhat less securitised with fewer preventative measures compared to the Halle attack of 2019. Through these analyses, this thesis adds a key understanding of Germany's security thinking and preventative approach toward neo-Nazism to grasp how Germany acts upon and perceives the threat today.

**Keywords:** neo-Nazism, Germany, preventative measures, securitisation processes, case studies

## Acknowledgements

This master thesis felt like an incredible challenge to me, having a social sciences background, with no previous experience in historical research. But the master of International Relations in Historical Perspective with its highly interesting courses and incredibly skilled teachers has prepared me well for writing this piece. This thesis challenged me, more than ever before in my studies, on a creative as well as analytical level, but also in terms of planning and perseverance. Fortunately, I received a lot of support from a specific group of people along the process, whom I would like to thank explicitly for their constant support.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Lorena De Vita. Thank you for all your feedback, tips, and critical questions, which have helped me to take this thesis to the next level. Throughout the whole process, you pushed me to my limits because you believed it was there. I want to thank you for your endless belief and trust in me.

In addition, I would like to thank my fellow students, in particular Tess and Lotte. The endless days in the library were bearable because of your presence. It was pleasant to share our frustrations and concerns, but also our achievements and successes. Thank you for your advice, new perspectives and motivating words whenever needed.

I also want to thank my dear family, friends and boyfriend for their endless patience and belief in me, even at times when I did not myself. Thank you for listening to my frustrations and worries over these past months.

Last but not least, a special thanks goes to my grandparents, Irmgard and Reiner, who have taught me the beautiful German language and culture. I am incredibly grateful that I had the opportunity to write this thesis about Germany, a country that has, and always will have, a special place in my heart.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	2
Acknowledgements .....	3
Table of Contents .....	4
List of Abbreviations and Glossary.....	5
List of Figures and Tables .....	8
Introduction .....	9
Historiography.....	13
Academic and Social Relevance .....	16
Theoretical Framework .....	17
Methodology .....	20
Chapter 1 – The Development of Neo-Nazism in Germany after World War II.....	22
Denazification and Origins of Neo-Nazism in West and East Germany after 1945.....	22
The Continuous Rise of Neo-Nazism in the 1980s in West and East Germany .....	26
Neo-Nazism after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989-1990.....	29
Chapter 2 – A More Optimistic View? ‘Waves’ of Security Perceptions and Measures in the <i>Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz</i> Annual Reports.....	32
1990-1999 – From Politicised to Securitised .....	32
2000-2009 - The Dark Shadow of 9/11?.....	35
2010-2020 – The Turning Point of the NSU.....	38
Concluding Remarks .....	41
Chapter 3 – Case Study Comparison: The Oktoberfest Bombing and Halle Attack.....	43
Comparative Approach .....	44
Case Study I: Oktoberfest Bombing of 1980 .....	44
Case Study II: Halle Attack of 2019 .....	45
Comparison Case I and II: Similarities .....	46
Comparison Case I and II: Differences .....	48
Concluding Remarks .....	52
Discussion & Conclusion .....	54
Bibliography.....	59
Appendix – Plagiarism Rules Awareness Statement .....	68

## List of Abbreviations and Glossary

BfV	<i>Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz</i> (Office for the Protection of the Constitution)
BKA	<i>Bundeskriminalamt</i> (Federal Criminal Police Office)
BMI	<i>Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat</i> (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community)
BND	<i>Bundesnachrichtendienst</i> (Federal Intelligence Service)
<i>Bundesrepublik</i>	Federal Republic of Germany
<i>Bundestag</i>	Federal Parliament of Germany
BVerfSchG	Act Regulating the Co-operation between the Federation and the Federal States in Matters Relating to the Protection of the Constitution
CDU/CSU	<i>Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich-Soziale Union Bayern</i> (Christian Democratic Union of Germany/Christian Social Union of Bavaria) <sup>1</sup>
DRP	<i>Deutsche Reichspartei</i> (German Imperial Party)
DVU	<i>Deutsche Volkunion</i> (German People's Union)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic

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<sup>1</sup> In the Federal Parliament of Germany, the CSU form one party with the CDU, often referred to as the Union. Duitsland Instituut, "Politiek en Staatsinrichting: CSU," accessed May 19, 2022, <https://duitslandinstituut.nl/naslagwerk/188/csu>.

GTAZ	Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre
IGR	<i>Informationsgruppe zur Beobachtung und Bekämpfung rechtsextremistischer/-terroristischer, insbesondere fremdenfeindliche Gewaltakte</i> (Information Group for Monitoring and Combating Right-wing Extremist/Terrorist, in particular Xenophobic, Acts of Violence)
MDR	<i>Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk</i> (Central German Broadcasting)
MfS/Stasi	<i>Ministerium für Staatssicherheit</i> (Ministry for State Security) <sup>2</sup>
NDR	<i>Norddeutscher Rundfunk</i> (Northern German Broadcasting)
NPD	<i>Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (National Democratic Party of Germany)
NSU	National Socialist Underground
RAF	<i>Rote Armee Faktion</i> (Red Army Faction)
RTV	Right-wing Terrorism and Violence
SED	<i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</i> (Social Unity Party of Germany)
<i>Schiermwelle</i>	Graffiti wave in the 1950s in Germany
ST	Securitisation Theory

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<sup>2</sup> MfS and Stasi are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

VBRG	<i>Verband der Beratungsstellen für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt</i> (Association of Counselling Centres for Victims of Right-wing, Racist and Antisemitic Violence in Germany)
<i>Vergangenheitsbewältigung</i>	Coming to terms with the past, specifically the Nazi past in Germany
WSG	<i>Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann</i> (Military Sports Group Hoffmann)



## List of Figures and Tables

<i>Figure 1.</i> Hate crimes in 2019 and in 2020 in Germany.....	17
<i>Figure 2.</i> The securitisation spectrum.....	18
<i>Table 1.</i> Overview Similarities between Case Study I and II. ....	48
<i>Table 2.</i> Overview Differences between Case Study I and II. ....	51

## Introduction

Decades after the atrocities of the Holocaust and despite the victory of the Allied forces over Nazi Germany in 1945, there is a “fringe” portion of many societies across the world that keep the Nazi ideology alive.<sup>3</sup> Painfully enough, the phenomenon of neo-Nazism causes major problems in the country where Nazism originated, Germany. Since the late 1960s, groups with a strong neo-Nazi motive committed numerous violent, even terrorist, attacks in Germany, of which the direst the bombing of the Munich Oktoberfest in 1980.<sup>4</sup> On this day, Gundolf Köhler, connected to a neo-Nazi organisation, killed thirteen people and injured more than 200 people.<sup>5</sup> Also in more recent years, many violent neo-Nazi terrorist attacks took place in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik*), such as the attempted massacre of worshippers at a Jewish synagogue in Halle and the murder of pro-refugee *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (CDU) politician Walter Lübcke, in 2019.<sup>6</sup>

Neo-Nazis are described by Lee McGowan as a small section of right-wing extremists, who glorify aspects of the former Nazi regime, deny the events of the Holocaust, and reject the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>7</sup> As estimated by the German domestic intelligence service, the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (hereafter BfV), the total number of right-wing extremist violent offences increased in 2020 by five per cent compared to 2019.<sup>8</sup> Even more, in 2021 the BfV stated that the high level of willingness to use violence, even terrorism, remains a constant factor of right-wing extremism.<sup>9</sup>

To this day, German authorities seem unable to effectively suppress this urgent neo-Nazi threat. This is seen in, for example, the discovery of the National Socialist Underground

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Hille, “Right-Wing Terror in Germany: A Timeline,” *Deutsche Welle*, February 20, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/right-wing-terror-in-germany-a-timeline/a-52451976>.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The ‘National Socialist Underground’ and the History of Terror from the Far-Right in Germany* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2016), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Manthe, “On the Pathway to Violence: West German Right-Wing Terrorism in the 1970s,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 33, no. 1 (2021): 62, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1520701. Terrorist attacks will be defined here as politically motivated crimes, intended to guide, or influence governmental policy, see Charles L. Ruby, “The Definition of Terrorism,” *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 2, no. 1 (2002): 10, DOI: 10.1111/j.1530-2415.2002.00021.

<sup>6</sup> Hille, “Right-Wing Terror in Germany: A Timeline.”; Ryan Shaffer, “Neo-Nazism in Germany and Beyond,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 8 (2020): 1847, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2020.1828703>. Terrorism will be defined in this thesis as the systematic adoption (or threat) of violence used to intimidate groups of people for political purposes based on Tjore Bjørge, see Tjore Bjørge, *Terror from the Extreme Right* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Lee McGowan, “Right-Wing Violence in Germany: Assessing the Objectives, Personalities and Terror Trail of the National Socialist Underground and the State’s Response to It,” *German Politics* 23, no. 3 (2014): 200, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644008.2014.967224>.

<sup>8</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Brief Summary 2020 Report on the Protection of the Constitution,” June 15, 2021, [https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/verfassungsschutzberichte/2021-06-brief-summary-2020-report-on-the-protection-of-the-constitution.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=11](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/verfassungsschutzberichte/2021-06-brief-summary-2020-report-on-the-protection-of-the-constitution.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=11).

<sup>9</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Brief Summary 2020.” Right-wing extremism will be defined in this thesis as actors who openly reject the democracy and use violent or other non-conventional means to cause political change characterised by anti-democracy, nationalism and racism based on Cas Mudde’s definition, see Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2000); Cas Mudde, “The War of Words Defining the Extreme Right Party Family,” *West European Politics* 19, no. 2 (1996): 225-248, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402389608425132>.

(NSU), a neo-Nazi movement responsible for several attacks between 2000 and 2007 against people of Turkish and Greek descent.<sup>10</sup> The NSU was able to commit these homicides because German security authorities failed to identify the right-wing extremist motive behind the killings, thinking foreigners were responsible for the attacks.<sup>11</sup> Columnist Samira El Ouassil states that this development “is an expression of the institutional problem” that Germany has, whose government turns a “blind eye” to the neo-Nazi threat.<sup>12</sup> This concern is shared among journalists and even academics such as journalist Frank Jansen, who argues that right-wing violence is “insufficiently perceived” by the German authorities and academic Bob de Graaff, who addresses that German domestic intelligence fails to identify right-wing perpetrators “year after year, murder after murder”.<sup>13</sup> The German approach to combat neo-Nazism thus seems to be at stake which will therefore be the topic of this thesis.

The period from 1990 till 2020 will specifically be investigated, a timeframe that can be perceived as an important turning point after Germany’s reunification in 1989-1990. During this period, a high increase is visible in neo-Nazi attacks principally against guest workers and asylum seekers.<sup>14</sup> This period brought new opportunities for the neo-Nazi movement, in their eyes, such as the chance to channel discontent towards the new German ‘system’ among former East Germans.<sup>15</sup> The end of the Cold War also brought an end to the military stand-off between East and West and the threat of nuclear weapons, which had dominated security thinking for more than forty years.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the vanishing of the nuclear threat demanded new security arrangements within Europe.<sup>17</sup> The shift in security perceptions and high increase of neo-Nazi violence after 1989-1990 could have greatly affected the German approach against neo-Nazism.

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<sup>10</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 129; Samira El Ouassil, “10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung: Borniertheit, Rassismus, Vertuschung, Verdrängung,” *Der Spiegel*, November 4, 2021, <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/nsu-10-jahre-spaeter-borniertheit-rassismus-vertuschung-verdraengung-kolumne-a-91442a7a-da6d-4e01-9116-8201e9750a35>; Helen Pidd, “How could German Neo-Nazi Killers have evaded Police for 13 Years?,” *The Guardian*, November 18, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/18/how-german-neo-nazis-evaded-police>.

<sup>11</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 129; El Ouassil, “10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung,”; Pidd, “How could German Neo-Nazi.”

<sup>12</sup> El Ouassil, “10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung.”

<sup>13</sup> Frank Jansen, “Die Dimension wird immer noch völlig unterschätzt,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 26, 2019, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/gewalt-durch-rechtsextreme-die-dimension-wird-immer-noch-voellig-unterschaetzt/24497746.html>;

Bob de Graaff, James Nyce, and Chelsea Locke (London, United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016), 156.

<sup>14</sup> Lee McGowan, “Much More Than a Phantom Menace! Assessing the Character, Level and Threat of Neo-Nazi Violence in Germany, 1977–2003,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 14, no. 2 (2006): 262, DOI: 10.1080/14782800600892291.

<sup>15</sup> McGowan, “Much More Than a Phantom Menace!,” 261; Fabian Virchow, “The Groupuscularization of Neo-Nazism in Germany: The Case of the Aktionsbüro Norddeutschland,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 38, no. 1 (2004): 58, DOI: 10.1080/0031322032000185587.

<sup>16</sup> Steve Marsh, and Wyn Rees, “Introduction: The Nature of Security,” in *The European Union in the Security of Europe: From Cold War to Terror War* (Milton Park, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2012), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Prasad P. Rane, “NATO Enlargement and Security Perceptions in Europe,” *Strategic Analysis* 29, no. 3 (2005): 471, DOI: 10.1080/09700161.2005.12049819.

This thesis will identify and contextualise the key factors, security threat perceptions, and preventative measures for the understanding of Germany's approach toward neo-Nazism. The security threat perceptions will be based on the Securitisation Theory (ST) of the Copenhagen School. Security threat perceptions are the observations by state or political actors that an issue is posing an existential threat.<sup>18</sup> The ST will be further elaborated upon in the theoretical framework. Preventative measures are defined here as actions aimed to make it as difficult as possible for actors to conduct violent attacks.<sup>19</sup> Preventative measures are thus intended to stop, in this case, neo-Nazis from carrying out violence.

The conceptualisation of neo-Nazism is rather difficult, as it is often linked to right-wing extremism and terrorism. The BfV defines right-wing extremism as characterised by nationalist, anti-Semitic, racist, and xenophobic ideas.<sup>20</sup> Neo-Nazism is referred to as an “ideological strand” within right-wing extremism and also based on racism, anti-Semitism, nationalism, and anti-pluralism.<sup>21</sup> The ideology is furthermore guided by historical National Socialism, the denial of the Holocaust events and rejection of the Federal Republic of Germany as a creation imposed upon the German public by the Allied forces.<sup>22</sup> The main organised right-wing extremist parties in Germany are the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD), the *Deutsche Volksunion* (DVU) and the *Republikaner*.<sup>23</sup> Generally, neo-Nazis are organised in associations or so-called “comradeships” (*Kameradschaften*).<sup>24</sup> Throughout this thesis, right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism will be used interchangeably as the characteristics of both ideologies mainly overlap and according to the BfV, most German right-wing extremists glorify National Socialism, an important neo-Nazi component.<sup>25</sup>

This research will give a better idea of what is already known about, and what is not, yet, known about *how* Germany securitised neo-Nazism and *how* these perceptions translated into measures over the past thirty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The hypothesis is that the answer to the questions proposed below will provide insight into Germany's securitisation of neo-Nazism and knowledge about measures against this threat over the past decades to

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<sup>18</sup> Columba Peoples, and Nick Vaughan-Williams, “Securitization Theory,” in *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2010), 71.

<sup>19</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Economic and Scientific Security,” accessed February 18, 2022, [https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/EN/topics/economic-and-scientific-security/economic-and-scientific-security\\_node.html#doc725704bodyText3](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/EN/topics/economic-and-scientific-security/economic-and-scientific-security_node.html#doc725704bodyText3).

<sup>20</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Right-wing Extremism,” accessed February 13, 2022.

[https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/EN/topics/right-wing-extremism/right-wing-extremism\\_node.html#doc725682bodyText2](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/EN/topics/right-wing-extremism/right-wing-extremism_node.html#doc725682bodyText2).

<sup>21</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Right-wing Extremism.”

<sup>22</sup> McGowan, “Right-Wing Violence in Germany,” 200.

<sup>23</sup> McGowan, “Much More than a Menace!,” 256.

<sup>24</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Right-wing Extremism.”

<sup>25</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Right-wing Extremism.” If explicit reference is made to neo-Nazism or right-wing extremism in used quotes or texts, this terminology will be adhered to throughout this thesis.

understand *how* Germany perceives and acts upon the threat today. The following research question will be addressed:

*How was the threat of neo-Nazism perceived and prevented by the German government from 1990 till 2020 explained through securitisation processes?*

Some of the subsidiary questions that this thesis purports to answer are:

- 1) *How was the threat of neo-Nazism perceived and communicated by the German government from 1990 till 2020?*
- 2) *Which preventative measures against neo-Nazism were adopted by the German government from 1990 till 2020?*

As there are various governmental agencies in the *Bundesrepublik*, this thesis will investigate the domestic intelligence agency - the BfV. The BfV was founded in 1950 to gather domestic intelligence information and to flag threats by political extremists, terrorists, and espionage activities.<sup>26</sup> The agency gathers information on political endeavours directed against the democratic basic order and implements preventative measures against security threats in Germany.<sup>27</sup> Due to the scope of this thesis, there will be an exclusive focus on the BfV, as it is seen as one of the most important federal offices regarding counterterrorism strategies.<sup>28</sup>

The thesis will analyse the annual reports of the BfV, which include highly detailed threat evaluations and provide useful insights into how neo-Nazism is communicated to the public.<sup>29</sup> To find further evidence for Germany's threat perceptions and measures, the differences and similarities of the German approach and threat perceptions in two right-wing attacks are mapped: the Oktoberfest bombing in Munich of 1980 and the Halle attack of 2019.<sup>30</sup> The comparison examines whether a change occurred in approaches and threat perceptions after the

<sup>26</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, "Our History," accessed on March 7, 2022, [https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/EN/about-us/bundesamt-fuer-verfassungsschutz/our-history/history\\_article.html](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/EN/about-us/bundesamt-fuer-verfassungsschutz/our-history/history_article.html); Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 158.

<sup>27</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 158; Harry Richart, "Teutonic Terror: The History of German Counterterrorism Policy," *Ex-Patt Magazine* 4, no. 1 (Fall 2015): 14, <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=ex-patt>.

<sup>28</sup> Richart, "Teutonic Terror: The History of German," 14.

<sup>29</sup> Marcel Schmeer, "Intelligence for the Masses: The Annual Reports on the Protection of the Constitution in West Germany between Cold War Propaganda and Government Public Relations," in *Intelligence Agencies, Technology and Knowledge Production*, eds. Rüdiger Bergien, Debora Gerstenberger and Constantin Goschler (Milton Park, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2022), 249.

<sup>30</sup> Karolina Wojtasik, "Utøya–Christchurch–Halle. Right-wing Extremists' Terrorism," *Security Dimensions* 33 (2020): 90, DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0014.2670; Der Spiegel "Mit Dumdum aus der Schußlinie," October 5, 1980, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/mit-dumdum-aus-der-schusslinie-a-aa35e9f2-0002-0001-0000-000014316876>.

German reunification. The attacks are selected because of the extensive attention they received in the media, resulting in the wide-ranging number of written materials about the attacks. Both analyses are interweaved with sources such as newspaper articles, BfV press releases and website content.

### Historiography

The literature on right-wing extremism and terrorism has focused mainly on extreme right parties and political processes, specifically mapping how these parties and movements try to generate voters in contemporary Europe.<sup>31</sup> To illustrate, the research of Matt Golder investigated the influence of unemployment and immigrants on the support of right-wing extremist parties.<sup>32</sup> Another branch in extreme right-wing studies has focused on the sociological and criminological factors such as how these groups operate and mobilise through framing processes, for instance, in the case of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>33</sup> Hence, there is an extensive understanding of the development, mobilisation and characteristics of right-wing extremism and terrorism in the academic field.

However, only a few scholars explored right-wing extremism and terrorism in Germany and touched upon explanations for the measures adopted by the German authorities. For example, right-wing extremist expert Daniel Koehler investigated the German case and states that the perception of the common public, politics and security agencies' toward right-wing terrorism has been "underestimated".<sup>34</sup> In a similar fashion, Stefan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann argue right-wing violence "was neither considered a major crisis nor a threat to the state or the political order" at least in the 1990s.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, Peter Lehr contends that the right-wing extremist scene did not pose a real threat to Germany and was perceived as of "nuisance value" prior to Germany's reunification.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See for example Andrea Mammona, Emmanuel Godin, and Brian Jenkins, *Mapping the Extreme Right in Contemporary Europe: From Local to Transnational* (Florence, Italy: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012); Matt Golder, "Explaining Variation in the Success of Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 36, no. 4 (2003): 432-466, DOI: 10.1177/0010414003251176.

<sup>32</sup> Golder, "Explaining Variation in the Success," 460.

<sup>33</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 254; See for example Rory McVeigh, Daniel J. Myers, and David Sikkink, "Corn, Klansmen, and Coolidge: Structure and Framing in Social Movements," *Social Forces* 83, no. 2 (2004): 653-690, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3598343>; Manuela Caiani, "Radical Right-wing Movements: Who, When, How and Why?," *Sociopedia.isa* (2017): 1-15, DOI: 10.1177/205684601761.

<sup>34</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 251.

<sup>35</sup> Stefan Malthaner, and Peter Waldmann, "Terrorism in Germany: Old and New Problems," in *Confronting Terrorism: European Experiences, Threat Perceptions, and Policies*, ed. Marianne van Leeuwen (The Hague, Boston: Kluwer Law International, 2003), 126.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Lehr, "Still Blind in the Right Eye? A Comparison of German Responses to Political Violence from the Extreme Left and the Extreme Right," in *Extreme Right Wing Political Violence and Terrorism*, eds. Max Taylor, P.M. Currie, and Donald Holbrook (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury, 2013), 207.

Also, counterterrorism specialist Anna Meier discusses that in Germany, despite the discourse that constructs violent events as “turning points” for a change in policymaking, attacks showed the persistence of power relationships in society.<sup>37</sup> Meier uses first-hand insights from German national security elites to demonstrate white supremacist violence does not receive the same treatment as violence from other ideologies.<sup>38</sup> The most common answer from the interlocuters to show that the security agencies were taking the threat seriously was explained by “more personnel” that was hired, hardly demonstrating that they were taking the threat seriously.<sup>39</sup>

Thus far, the academic literature points toward the idea that the neo-Nazism threat is perceived as secondary compared to other threats in Germany but does not particularly map the causes for this alleged underestimation. However, some scholarly work demonstrates the significance of investigating these causes, as governments ‘performative power’ of counterterrorism is significant for its effectiveness, as argued by Beatrice de Graaf and Bob de Graaff.<sup>40</sup> The ‘performative power’ is the extent to which a national government is able, through its official counterterrorism policy and discourse (e.g., statements, remarks, and measures), to “sell” their solution to terrorist events and mark the discourse regarding terrorism and counterterrorism.<sup>41</sup> These findings pave the way for a closer examination of the communication of the neo-Nazi threat by German authorities. De Graaf already applied the concept of ‘performative power’ to counterterrorism strategies in Germany by focusing on the left-wing extremist threat in the 1970s.<sup>42</sup> The findings revealed that the left-wing extremist threat caused a “democratizing” effect and sparked the discussion about the “value of democracy” in West Germany.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, to focus on the communication and prioritisation of threats through ST and the explicit emphasis on neo-Nazism, could expand de Graaf’s research by investigating Germany’s ‘performative power’ in the context of a different threat and time period.

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<sup>37</sup> Anna A. Meier, “The Idea of Terror: Institutional Reproduction in Government Responses to Political Violence,” *International Studies Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2020): 9, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqaa034>.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Beinart, “Trump Shut Programs to Counter Violent Extremism,” *The Atlantic*, October 29, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/trump-shut-countering-violent-extremism-program/574237>; Ben Quinn, “Far-Right Fundraising Not Taken Seriously by UK, Report Finds,” *The Guardian*, May 31, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/31/far-right-fundraising-not-taken-seriously-uk-government-extremists>. White supremacy is defined as a system of oppression consisting of institutions, narratives and practices that identify white people as the dominant group in society. Meier, “The Idea of Terror,” 2.

<sup>39</sup> Meier, “The Idea of Terror,” 9.

<sup>40</sup> Counterterrorism is defined by Todd Sandler as the actions taken by governments, military alliances, international organisations, private corporations, or private citizens to reduce the threat and consequences posed by terrorism. See Todd Sandler, “Terrorism and Counterterrorism: An Overview,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 67, no. 1 (January 2015): 12-13, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oeq/gpu039>.

<sup>41</sup> Beatrice de Graaf, and Bob de Graaff, “Bringing Politics Back in: The Introduction of the ‘Performative Power’ of Counterterrorism,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3, no. 2, 267, DOI: 10.1080/17539153.2010.491337.

<sup>42</sup> Beatrice de Graaf, *Evaluating Counterterrorism Performance: A Comparative Study* (Milton Park, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2011), 69.

<sup>43</sup> de Graaf, *Evaluating Counterterrorism Performance*, 69.

While there are no signs of literature that explicitly attempt to explain Germany's approach toward neo-Nazism through ST, there is evidence of securitisation processes or even a lack of these processes. For example, Lehr argues that right-wing extremist groups seemed to have been tolerated to a certain extent and “grudgingly” accepted as belonging to society.<sup>44</sup> Lehr furthermore states that when it comes to acts of violence directed against targets not perceived as symbolic and instrumental, being neither the state nor the population at large, it loses these elements of “shock” and the feeling of “insecurity”.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, as neo-Nazi violence is directed at minority groups it could lose the elements of shock and insecurity and explain the reduced sense of insecurity regarding neo-Nazis. Thus, the characteristics of neo-Nazism could explain why the threat is not effectively securitised in Germany.

Lastly, several authors touch upon another important factor influencing the effectiveness of German measures: the controversial use of so-called V-persons (*Vertrauenspersonen*) by intelligence services. These people are active members of extremist or terrorist groups approached by the intelligence services to secretly work for them.<sup>46</sup> Klikauer demonstrates that many of these infiltrates grew close to neo-Nazism either through personal links or out of ideological reasons.<sup>47</sup> As such, the use of infiltrates could make the German approach particularly vulnerable.

To conclude, the aforementioned literature maps general indications about Germany's possible “underestimation” of the neo-Nazism threat and touches upon the possible factors that could underlie this perception, such as the V-persons and the characteristics of neo-Nazism.<sup>48</sup> The literature also demonstrates the significance to investigate the causes for Germany's threat perceptions by referring to the ‘performative power’ of counterterrorism measures.<sup>49</sup> However, although there are signs indicating the importance to explain Germany's approach against neo-Nazism through threat perceptions, the historiography has so far not investigated this connection explicitly. This is where this thesis will add significant value, by supplementing the literature through insights into *how* the neo-Nazi threat was perceived in Germany and *how* these led to certain measures.

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<sup>44</sup> Lehr, “Still Blind in the Right Eye?,” 188.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 204; Wilhelm Heitmeyer, “Right-wing Terrorism,” in *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, ed. Tore Bjørgo (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2005), 141.

<sup>46</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 158.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Klikauer, “The Public Prosecution of Right-Wing and Racist Violence: An Investigation into Structural Deficits and Continuation – The Example of the NSU Killings and the Terrorist Attack on the Oktoberfest [Staatsanwaltschaftlicher Umgang mit rechter und rassistischer Gewalt: eine Untersuchung struktureller Defizite und Kontinuitäten am Beispiel der Ermittlungen zum NSU-Komplex und dem Oktoberfestattentat],” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 1 (2020): 205, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1080/09546553.2019.1693782>.

<sup>48</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 251; Lehr, “Still Blind in the Right Eye?,” 204-207; Meier, “The Idea of Terror,” 9; Klikauer, “The Public Prosecution of Right-Wing,” 205.

<sup>49</sup> de Graaf, and de Graaff, “Bringing Politics Back in,” 267.



### Academic and Social Relevance

The thesis topic is academically relevant since right-wing terrorism has not received as much academic attention as, for instance, Jihadist terrorism.<sup>50</sup> For example, Arun Kundnani pointed to the “singular” attention given to extremist Islam by excluding left-wing and right-wing extremists’ forms which are perceived as “no more than a public order threat”, especially in the post 9/11 discourse.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Bart Schuurman concludes in his keywords analysis of 3,442 articles of terrorism literature published between 2007 and 2016 that research on terrorism continues to be primarily focused on Islamic terrorism.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, Al-Qaeda and Jihadism accounted for 74,5% of the extremist and terrorism research topics.<sup>53</sup> This is a dangerous blind spot that allows non-jihadist forms of extremism to develop relatively unnoticed.<sup>54</sup>

This underrepresentation of right-wing extremism also fosters the perception of terrorism as coming from non-state actors and jihadists - biases that contribute to societal polarisation by stirring up the image that terrorism originates from only one community.<sup>55</sup> This trend is particularly alarming because of the significant danger posed by right-wing extremism in Germany. Namely, the hate crimes based on xenophobic, anti-Semitic, racist, and anti-foreigners motives rose dramatically from 2019 to 2020 in Germany (see Figure 1). Furthermore, the Association of Counselling Centres for Victims of Right-wing, Racist and Antisemitic Violence in Germany (VBRG) documented 1,322 right-wing, racist, and anti-Semitic attacks in eight of sixteen German federal states, which means that at least three to four people were victimised by right-wing violence per day in 2020.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Daniel Koehler, “Violence and Terrorism from the Far-Right: Policy Options to Counter an Elusive Threat,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, February, 2019, 4, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Koehler-Violence-and-Terrorism-from-the-Far-Right-February-2019.pdf>; Bart Schuurman, “Topics in Terrorism Research: Reviewing Trends and Gaps, 2007-2016,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 12, no. 3 (2019): 475, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2019.1579777>.

<sup>51</sup> Witold Mucha, “Polarization, Stigmatization, Radicalization. Counterterrorism and Homeland Security in France and Germany,” *Journal for Deradicalization* 10 (Spring 2017): 234; Arun Kundnani, “Spooked! How Not to Prevent Violent Extremism,” *Institute of Race Relations*, 2009, 40, [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2009-10/doc1\\_10339\\_766129050.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2009-10/doc1_10339_766129050.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Schuurman, “Topics in Terrorism Research,” 472-473.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 476.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Association of Counselling Centres for Victims of Right-wing, Racist and Antisemitic Violence in Germany, “Rechte, Rassistische und Antisemitische Gewalt in Deutschland 2020 – Jahresbilanzen der Opferberatungsstellen,” May 4, 2021, <https://verband-brg.de/rechte-rassistische-und-antisemitische-gewalt-in-deutschland-2020-jahresbilanzen-der-opferberatungsstellen/>.

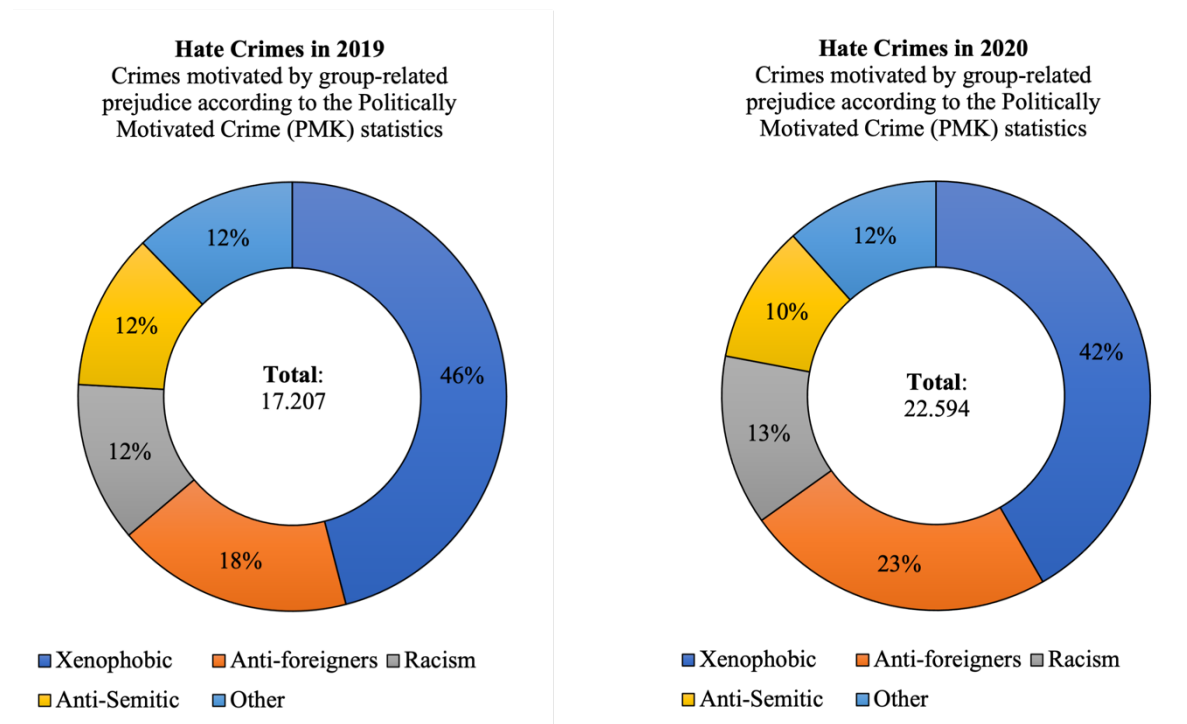


Figure 1. Hate crimes in 2019 and in 2020 in Germany.

Source: Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, and Bundeskriminalamt, *Politisch motivierte Kriminalität im Jahr 2020*, May 4, 2021, [https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/2021/05/pmk-2020-bundesweite-fallzahlen.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/2021/05/pmk-2020-bundesweite-fallzahlen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4); Andreas Speit, “Rechtsextreme Gewalt in Deutschland,” *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, February 2, 2021, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/rechtsextremismus/dossier-rechtsextremismus/324634/rechtsextreme-gewalt-in-deutschland/>.

The alarming trend of increasing neo-Nazi violence also has societal consequences, as this violence directly targets the democratic principles of tolerance and pluralism in societies.<sup>57</sup> By providing a better idea of the effectiveness and securitisation processes of the German government toward right-wing violence, this research hopefully provides an important step in improving the protection of the German public.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Securitisation Theory (ST)*

To analyse the security threat perceptions in the BfV annual reports and case studies, the ST of the Copenhagen School will be utilised as a theoretical framework. The theory asserts that when a threat becomes urgent on a national level it justifies a high degree of resources and responses, referred to as the “securitisation process”.<sup>58</sup> Specifically, securitisation is the act of

<sup>57</sup> Koehler, “Violence and Terrorism,” 13-14.

<sup>58</sup> Peoples, and Vaughan-Williams, “Securitization Theory,” 77.

making an issue a security issue, perceiving an issue as an *existential threat* requiring extraordinary measures.<sup>59</sup>

Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde argue that this process of securitisation can be interpreted as a spectrum that runs from non-politicised (not a political issue), to politicised (part of the public debate), to a securitised issue (the issue is thought of as an existential threat and justifies extraordinary responses) (see Figure 2).<sup>60</sup>

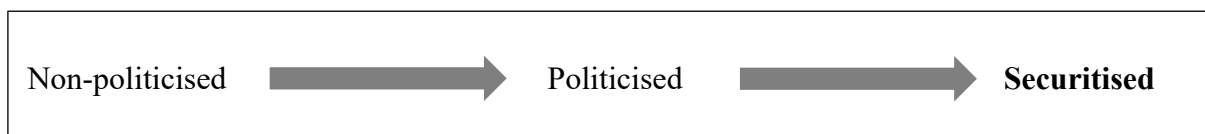


Figure 2. The securitisation spectrum.

Source: Columba Peoples, and Nick Vaughan-Williams, “Securitization Theory,” in *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2010), 77; Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado, United States: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 23.

This securitisation process is based on different components, such as the *referent objects*, the entities that need to be secured from threats and have a justifiable value, for example, the state.<sup>61</sup> Ole Wæver identifies the *speech act* mechanism as another element within the securitisation process, frequently referred to as the securitising move.<sup>62</sup> This move is initiated by the *securitisation actor*, such as a state or political representative, who moves a particular development in a specific area and claims the right to use the means necessary to block the threat.<sup>63</sup> That is, through speaking of an issue as a security issue, the securitising actor legitimises measures.<sup>64</sup> Another function belongs to the *audience*, those the securitising actor needs to convince to take extraordinary measures.<sup>65</sup> Once the threat has been restrained or the referent object is no longer perceived as in need of protection, Buzan et al. speak of *de-securitisation*.<sup>66</sup>

ST will function as an analytical tool to distinguish whether the neo-Nazism issue is perceived as a security risk in Germany and through which specific processes this securitisation

<sup>59</sup> Peoples, and Vaughan-Williams, “Securitization Theory,” 77.

<sup>60</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado, United States: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 27.

<sup>61</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 36.

<sup>62</sup> Ole Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York, United States: Columbia University Press, 1998), 7, <https://www.libraryofsocialscience.com/assets/pdf/Waever-Securitization.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” 7

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 41.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

appears. ST will further assist in identifying the securitising actors, referent objects, existential threats, speech act mechanisms, and means necessary to combat the neo-Nazi threat in Germany.

### *Comparative Approach*

To get insights into the security threat perceptions and measures of the BfV over time, the comparative approach of Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka will be applied before properly comparing the responses and securitisation processes of the BfV toward the Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 and the Halle attack of 2019. The case studies are then linked to each other by placing and analysing them under the framework of ST.

The comparative approach states a few issues that will be reflected upon before executing the comparison such as the consideration of appropriate units of comparison (e.g., cultures, regions, nations).<sup>67</sup> The units of comparison are, in this case, the securitisation processes and measures adopted by the BfV, federal states Bavaria (Munich) and Saxony-Anhalt (Halle) and the regional authorities. Furthermore, the objects must have a minimum similarity to study them regarding their differences, which in this case can be perceived in the right-wing extremist motive of both attackers.<sup>68</sup> Also, the actual intent of the comparison should be defined, which is to identify the differences and similarities in securitisation processes and measures of the BfV before and after the German reunification.<sup>69</sup> Also, the presumptions, experiences, and values of the researcher need to be reflected upon.<sup>70</sup> Lastly, the terms and concepts of the case studies should be considered, the most important being the neo-Nazism conceptualisation in each specific case.<sup>71</sup>

The comparison between the Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 and the Halle attack of 2019 allows for an indication of the similarities and differences in the securitisation processes and measures of the BfV toward the neo-Nazi attacks before and after the German reunification, to perceive if a change has occurred in the BfV's approach and security perceptions.

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<sup>67</sup> Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, "Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems," in *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective*, eds. Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 26.

<sup>68</sup> Haupt and Kocka, "Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems," 27; Wojtasik, "Utøya–Christchurch–Halle," 90; Der Spiegel, "Mit Dumdum aus der Schußlinie."

<sup>69</sup> Haupt and Kocka, "Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems," 27.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. The application of the conditions from the comparative approach will be elaborated upon in further detail in Chapter 3.

## Methodology

The above-mentioned theory and approach will be applied to contextualise the three elements: security threat perceptions, measures, and key factors. Specifically, ST will be used to investigate how the BfV securitised neo-Nazism and assist in analysing the ideas and narratives adopted in their discussion of neo-Nazism. For this analysis, the BfV's annual reports from 1990 to 2020 will be investigated.<sup>72</sup> The annual reports are chosen because of their "unique form" of governmental communication which can be read in various historical contexts to perceive state perceptions of danger and the threat communication efforts.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the reports allow researchers to map the perceptions of states, or in this case, intelligence services.<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, after reflecting on the comparative approach, the ST will also be used in the analysis of the case studies to perceive differences and similarities in the securitisation processes of the BfV. For the comparison, sources such as newspaper articles and website content will be employed to create an overview of the casualties, perpetrators, course of the attacks and to provide relevant information about how the BfV discussed the attacks in the media. The German national newspapers and magazines that will be used are, among others, *Der Spiegel* (left-liberal), *BILD* (centre-right) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (moderate-left) to strive for a broad political spectrum of objective newspapers.<sup>75</sup> Also, to get an overview of discussions of neo-Nazism on the regional level, some public regional media platforms such as the *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* (NDR) and *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk* (MDR) are utilised.<sup>76</sup>

The analytical findings are supplemented by data on right-wing terrorism from national and European agencies. Numbers from national agencies are gathered from, for example, the the VBRG, which is committed to providing support to victims of right-wing, racist, and antisemitic violence across Germany.<sup>77</sup> Other numbers will be gathered from European institutions, such as from the Right-wing Terrorism and Violence (RTV) dataset, presenting new and updated annual data reports on severe right-wing attacks in western Europe.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> The BfV annual reports and other German primary and secondary sources used in this thesis are translated by the author herself, as the author reads and speaks the German language fluently (C1/C2 level), German being her second language.

<sup>73</sup> Schmeer, "Intelligence for the Masses," 265.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Hans J. Kleinsteuber, and Barbara Thomass, "The German Media Landscape," in *European Media Governance: National and Regional Dimensions*, eds. Georgios Terzis (Bristol, United Kingdom: Intellect Books, 2007), 112-113; Deutschland.de, "National Newspapers in Germany," 26 March, 2020, <https://www.deutschland.de/en/topic/knowledge/national-newspapers>.

<sup>76</sup> Kleinsteuber and Thomass, "The German Media Landscape," 113.

<sup>77</sup> Association of Counseling Centers for Victims of Right-wing, Racist and Antisemitic Violence in Germany, "Über uns," June 6, 2022, <https://verband-brg.de/ueber-uns/#der-vbrg>;

<sup>78</sup> Jacob Aasland Ravndal, Sofia Lygren, Lars Wibe Hagen, and Anders Ravik Jupskås, "RTV Trend Report 2019: Right Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe 1990-2018," *Center for Research on Extremism: The Extreme Right, Hate Crime and Political Violence*, 2019, <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/publications/c-rex-reports/2019/rtv-trend-report/c-rex-rtv-trend-report-2019.pdf>.

This thesis will proceed with Chapter 1, offering a diachronic analysis on the development of neo-Nazism in Germany and the measures adopted against security threats by the German government before the reunification. Next, Chapter 2 will analyse how the BfV perceived and acted upon the neo-Nazi threat in their annual reports from 1990 to 2020. Specifically, the ideas and narratives adopted by the BfV to describe the neo-Nazi threat will be mapped. To find empirical evidence for the results of Chapter 2, Chapter 3 will compare and analyse the differences and similarities in threat perceptions and approaches by the German authorities in the two case studies, the Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 and the Halle attack of 2019. The analyses are followed by a discussion and conclusion, along with limitations and recommendations for future research. This design allows for an understanding of *how* Germany perceived and securitised the neo-Nazi threat after the German reunification.

## Chapter 1 – The Development of Neo-Nazism in Germany after World War

### II

Despite the denazification policies implemented after the Second World War, frequently referred to as the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to the terms with the past), neo-Nazism appeared on the horizon as a new problem in Germany, just a few decades after 1945.<sup>79</sup> This chapter will diachronically analyse the history of neo-Nazism in Germany and Germany's approach to the issue. Special attention is drawn to the differences and similarities in the two separate states the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), vital for the understanding of the securitisation processes and measures by the BfV after German reunification.

Before delving into the history of neo-Nazism, the context after the Second World War should be addressed, as Germany was divided into the two separate states by the Allied forces after its loss, affecting the approach and growth of neo-Nazism. After Germany's defeat in 1945, the Allies were uncertain about what to do with post-war Germany, specifically the Soviet Union and western powers (i.e., the United States, France, and United Kingdom) had conflicting opinions.<sup>80</sup> These differences laid the foundations for the "double transformation" in 1949 in which Germany became a divided nation.<sup>81</sup> Consequently, two separate states emerged: the FRG, occupied by the American, British, and French forces, and GDR, supervised by the Soviet Union.<sup>82</sup> The GDR remained a communist state and FRG established a western democracy.<sup>83</sup>

In this chapter, secondary and primary sources are analysed to map the emergence and development of neo-Nazism chronologically and how it was responded to in the FRG and GDR. This is followed by a discussion of the neo-Nazism development after the German reunification without the discussion of measures and threat perceptions of the BfV, as this will be the focal point of Chapter 2.

### Denazification and Origins of Neo-Nazism in West and East Germany after 1945

After the Second World War, the Allied forces created a plan for the future of Germany and agreed on three policy goals: demilitarisation, denazification, and democratisation.<sup>84</sup> These

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<sup>79</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: A Nazi Past in Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8; Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 2.

<sup>80</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2020: The Divided Nation* (Hoboken, United States: John Wiley & Sons, 2021), 122.

<sup>81</sup> Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2020*, 122-125.

<sup>82</sup> David E. Weiss, "Striking a Difficult Balance: Combatting the Threat of Neo-Nazism in Germany While Preserving Individual Liberties," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 27, no. 4 (November 1994): 906. West Germany and the FRG and East Germany and the GDR respectively will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

<sup>83</sup> Weiss, "Striking a Difficult Balance," 906.

<sup>84</sup> Weiss, "Striking a Difficult Balance," 903.

goals provide the basic understanding of both West and East Germany's respective policies to their Nazi past, and in turn, how they dealt with the increase of neo-Nazism in the years to follow.<sup>85</sup> The notable difference between West and East Germany should be considered in the mutual hostility between the East and West in the Cold War context.

The western Allies in the FRG approached the denazification process from an individual level, designed to purge all former Nazi officials or known members of the Nazi Party and to forbid Nazi organisations and institutions.<sup>86</sup> As stated by Jeffrey Herf, the social democrats in the FRG argued that a democratic and socialist Germany must confront and defeat anti-Semitism by placing the memory of the Jewish persecution at the centre of German memory.<sup>87</sup> The Allies and the German public were however sceptical toward this denazification program because of its inadequacies and inefficiencies, as it turned into an "enormous bureaucratic machine".<sup>88</sup> And in 1949, many former Nazis were even reintroduced into German society.<sup>89</sup> Although "inadequate and delayed as it was" there was a much more decisive confrontation with the Nazi crimes compared to East Germany.<sup>90</sup>

In East Germany, the year 1945 was marked as the "zero hour", concealing the belief of a new moral beginning and the establishment of an anti-fascist democratic order.<sup>91</sup> The Soviet Union placed a far greater emphasis on dismantling the German industry in its denazification strategy compared to the western individual approach.<sup>92</sup> The political leaders of the GDR, such as Walter Ulbricht, also believed that their opposition to Nazism "exempted them" from taking obligations that arose from the Nazi crimes.<sup>93</sup> East Germany rather wanted to forget the Holocaust and suppress a sympathetic treatment of Jewish matters, related to the forgetting of the Soviet Union's western alliance during the Second World War, Soviet triumphalism and the emergence of the Cold War.<sup>94</sup> East Germans were even willing to adopt the language of anti-Semitism, perceived in the refusal to create an adequate trial program for crimes of the Nazi era and the rejection to recognise the Holocaust memory.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Weiss, "Striking a Difficult Balance," 903.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 904.

<sup>87</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory: A Nazi Past in Two Germanys*, 378.

<sup>88</sup> Weiss, "Striking a Difficult Balance," 905; Alf Lüdtke, "'Coming to Terms with the Past': Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany," *The Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 3 (1993): 549.

<sup>89</sup> Weiss, "Striking a Difficult Balance," 906.

<sup>90</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory: A Nazi Past in Two Germanys*, 385-386.

<sup>91</sup> Michael Neeb, "Rechtsextreme Orientierungen unter Jugendlichen in Ostdeutschland - Ein Erbe der DDR-Erziehung oder Ergebnis veränderter Lebensverhältnisse nach der Wiedervereinigung?," *Dissertation*, 1993,

<https://www.grin.com/document/101488>.

<sup>92</sup> Weiss, "Striking a Difficult Balance," 905.

<sup>93</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory: A Nazi Past in Two Germanys*, 376.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>95</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory: A Nazi Past in Two Germanys*, 384.



Regarding the origins of neo-Nazism in West Germany, there is a divergence among various authors. For example, Koehler states that neo-Nazism traces back to the 1950s, in which nationwide waves of neo-Nazi crimes swept across the country.<sup>96</sup> Specifically, the extreme right-wing *Deutsche Reichspartei* (DRP) members Arnold Strunk and Paul Schönen painted swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans on synagogues in Cologne causing a wave of 470 similar events in the four weeks to follow.<sup>97</sup> This wave became known as the ‘*Schiermwelle*’ (graffiti wave) in the German media.<sup>98</sup> Important to note is the rivalry between East and West Germany, as the incidents confirmed the allegations by the East German propaganda about West Germany having an anti-Semitic and Nazi character.<sup>99</sup> In turn, as the ‘*Schiermwelle*’ matched almost perfectly to the East German accusations, rumours spread among West Germans about the Ministry of State Security (MfS/Stasi) being involved in these incidents.<sup>100</sup>

In contrast to Koehler, McGowan matches the developments of the far-right circles of the late 1960s to the emergence of neo-Nazism in West Germany, referring to the rise and fall of the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD). In the federal elections in 1969, the NPD narrowly missed the necessary votes to enter the federal parliament (*Bundestag*), perceived as a failure by the young NPD members who then opted for the emerging force of neo-Nazism.<sup>101</sup> During this period, neo-Nazi groups emerged by openly declaring their intention to rehabilitate the National Socialism of the pre-1945 period.<sup>102</sup> Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the number of neo-Nazism incidents continued to rise in West Germany, as from 1974 to 1980, the number of active members of neo-Nazi groups increased significantly: from 400 to 1,200.<sup>103</sup> Although there is a debate about time period designated to the emergence of neo-Nazism in the FRG, it can be concluded that the *Schiermwelle* already displayed first signs of neo-Nazism in the 1950s, which eventually developed further in the late 1960s.

A noteworthy development in West Germany’s security approach in the 1950s is the implementation of the Basic Law in 1949, providing a central office for the collection of data

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<sup>96</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 73-74

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Maxwill, “Die Stunde der Schmierfinken,” *Der Spiegel*, December 9, 2022, <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/hakenkreuz-antisemitismus-in-der-nachkriegszeit-a-1006236.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Lorena De Vita, *Israelpolitik: German–Israeli Relations, 1949–69* (Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2020), 120.

<sup>100</sup> De Vita, *Israelpolitik: German–Israeli Relations*, 120.

<sup>101</sup> McGowan, “Much More Than a Phantom Menace!,” 257. Noteworthy is the difference between the NPD and neo-Nazism, whereas the NPD is described by the BfV as a right-wing extremist political party, neo-Nazism should be perceived as an ideological orientation of right-wing extremism. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Begriffe und Erscheinungsformen,” accessed on May 5 2022, [https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/themen/rechtsextremismus/begriff-und-erscheinungsformen/begriff-und-erscheinungsformen\\_node.html](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/themen/rechtsextremismus/begriff-und-erscheinungsformen/begriff-und-erscheinungsformen_node.html).

<sup>102</sup> Virchow, “The Groupuscularization of Neo-Nazism,” 57.

<sup>103</sup> McGowan, “Much More Than a Phantom Menace!,” 257.

for “purposes of protection of the constitution”.<sup>104</sup> In September 1950, the Act Regulating the Co-operation between the Federation and the Federal States in Matters Relating to the Protection of the Constitution (BverfSchG) obliged the federation and the federal states to set up a domestic intelligence service, which resulted in the establishment of the BfV under the *Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat* (BMI).<sup>105</sup> This new necessity to coordinate and cooperate was due to the propagandistic campaign policies by the GDR against the FRG and arose from the “anti-communist consensus”.<sup>106</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, despite neo-Nazism appearing to be a problematic issue in West Germany, there was a different crucial point in its internal security approach: left-wing terrorism. First signs of the security approaches are perceived following the ‘*Radikalenerlass*’ of January 1972, in the so-called Focus Point Program for Internal Security in March 1972, the next step towards the aimed expansion of West Germany’s security organs.<sup>107</sup> During this time, the extreme left-wing domestic terrorist threat emerged, enclosing the greatest challenge to the domestic intelligence services up to that point.<sup>108</sup> The emergence of left-wing terrorism in the FRG traces back to the late 1960s.<sup>109</sup> The most important left-wing group was the RAF, whose terrorist activities reached its peak during the ‘German Autumn’ in 1977.<sup>110</sup> This ‘German Autumn’ was responsible for the creation of several legal and institutional anti-terrorism measures to improve the national intelligence and police forces in the FRG.<sup>111</sup> The BfV also started to counter the international terrorist threat, the most important example being the attack at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972.<sup>112</sup> Thus, the West Germans endeavoured to set up security programs throughout this period mainly centred around the left-wing and international terrorist threats.

In East Germany, there is a similar ambiguity about the origins of neo-Nazism, although this could be influenced by the strict regime of the GDR, which reported little to nothing on the neo-Nazi threat.<sup>113</sup> However, signs of neo-Nazism became apparent in the GDR somewhat later

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<sup>104</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Our History.”

<sup>105</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Our History.”; Richard Warnes, “Germany,” in *Considering the Creation of a Domestic Intelligence Agency in the United States: Lessons from the Experiences of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom*, ed. Brian A. Jackson (Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, 2009), 94.

<sup>106</sup> Schmeer, “Intelligence for the Masses,” 265.

<sup>107</sup> Matthias Dahlke, *Demokratischer Staat und transnationaler Terrorismus* (Munich, Germany: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2011), 49. *Radikalenerlass* was a policy implemented in Germany that allowed screenings of applications and employees of the civil service for their loyalty to the constitution. See Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Vor 50 Jahren: ‘Radikalenerlass’,” January 26, 2022, <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/hintergrund-aktuell/346271/vor-50-jahren-radikalenerlass>.

<sup>108</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Our History.”

<sup>109</sup> Lehr, “Still Blind in the Right Eye?,” 193.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 196

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Warnes, “Germany,” 95.

<sup>113</sup> Bernd Wagner, “Die Stasi und Neonazis in der DDR,” *Journal EXIT Deutschland Zeitschrift für Deradikalisierung und demokratische Kultur*, no. 2 (2013): 68, [https://journal-exit.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/127-501-1-PB\\_BW3.pdf](https://journal-exit.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/127-501-1-PB_BW3.pdf).

compared to West Germany: between 1965 and 1980, the Stasi identified 730 incidents with an extreme right-wing background, although the number of unreported cases was much higher.<sup>114</sup> For example, a non-commissioned officer organised discussions between 1965 and 1970 on the “merits” of the Third Reich using Adolf Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*.<sup>115</sup> In accordance, in the 1970s, alleged wrong decisions in soccer stadiums were referred to with slogans as “Jew-out” (“*Jude-raus*”).<sup>116</sup> The emergence of neo-Nazism in eastern Germany can thus be roughly estimated around the 1965s and early 1970s. Up to this point, it seems there were no signs of measures adopted against the threat in the GDR, at least not in the literature, probably due to the concealment by the GDR leadership of right-wing extremist activities.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, the Cold War context and the related antagonism between East and West influenced the denazification processes of the FRG and GDR. While West Germany, somewhat unsuccessfully, tried to confront the Nazi crimes, East Germany did not confront the Nazi past and even adopted anti-Semitic language. The origins of neo-Nazism in West Germany can be roughly traced back to the 1950s. In the following years, the West German authorities set up security programs, such as the Focus Point Program for Internal Security, mostly triggered by left-wing and international terrorism. The emergence of neo-Nazism in East Germany is perceived from 1965 onwards, which was not accompanied by significant measures. Neo-Nazism in both states thus originated around the same time with a similar degree of reluctance to act upon the threat.

### **The Continuous Rise of Neo-Nazism in the 1980s in West and East Germany**

From the 1980s onwards, neo-Nazi violence in West Germany rose continuously. One of the greatest attacks of this period involved the bombing at the Munich Oktoberfest on 26 September 1980, leaving thirteen people dead and over 200 injured.<sup>118</sup> The organised right-wing extremists also gained increased electoral support and brought issues such as waves of immigration and debates about the Nazi past to the fore.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, neo-Nazi acts declined after 1982, due to the arrests of important neo-Nazi cell leaders from, for example, the

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<sup>114</sup> Adenauer Campus, “Neonazis in der DDR: Das verleugnete Problem,” accessed on May 4, 2022, <https://www.adenauercampus.de/ddrtutorium/staat-und-gesellschaft/neonazis-in-der-ddr>.

<sup>115</sup> Adenauer Campus, “Neonazis in der DDR.”

<sup>116</sup> Neeb, “Rechtsextreme Orientierungen unter Jugendlichen.”

<sup>117</sup> Armin Pfahl-Traughber, “Die Entwicklung des Rechtsextremismus in Ost- und Westdeutschland,” *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, May 26, 2002, <https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/25426/die-entwicklung-des-rechtsextremismus-in-ost-und-westdeutschland/#footnote-target-6>.

<sup>118</sup> McGowan, “Much More Than a Phantom Menace!,” 258.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

*Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann* (WSG).<sup>120</sup> This imprisonment led to a change in tactics of neo-Nazi groups by focusing on rallies and demonstrations to obtain more media attention.<sup>121</sup>

During this period of increasing neo-Nazi brutalities, the western German authorities seem to have failed in taking significant measures, often dismissing the attacks as mere incidents. The neo-Nazi violence was seen as an embarrassment and affected “only” a few social “misfits” in the eyes of politicians.<sup>122</sup> Lehr states that the disorganised and less tangible right-wing scene seemed to be ineffective in creating public outrage and was not met with similar legal initiatives as left-wing extremism.<sup>123</sup>

In East Germany, a similar increase in the number of neo-Nazi attacks can be perceived in the 1980s. At the start of the 1980s, a subcultural skinhead and fascist scene emerged and an increase in the number of right-wing extremist youth was visible.<sup>124</sup> Walter Süß stated that while the first “right-wing” skinheads appeared already in 1982, the Stasi still perceived the “left-wing” punks as the greatest challenge in the mid-1980s.<sup>125</sup> This situation changed after the attack of thirty right-wing extremist skinheads at a punk concert in the Zion Church in Berlin on 17 October 1987, in which visitors had been beaten up while the attackers chanted “Sieg Heil” and “Jews pigs!”.<sup>126</sup> The denial of the presence of right-wing extremists in the “anti-fascist state” could no longer be sustained despite the efforts of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED) and the Stasi to cover them up.<sup>127</sup>

The attack in Berlin was an impetus for investigations in the neo-Nazi phenomena in the GDR but the Stasi ultimately refused to acknowledge the results. Numerous skinheads were brought in ‘preventively’ after the violence in Berlin although the police and Stasi were unable to distinguish right-wing from left-wing skinheads.<sup>128</sup> A secret research project – approved by the Security Department of the SED – was established in 1988, called ‘AG Skinhead’.<sup>129</sup> In this project, several criminologists and sociologists evaluated criminal records and conducted interviews with right-wing radicals.<sup>130</sup> However, the activities of the researchers were resented by the MfS, probably due to the sobering research results that showed some 6,000 neo-Nazis

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<sup>120</sup> McGowan, “Right-Wing Violence in Germany,” 200.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Lehr, “Still Blind in the Right Eye?,” 194.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>124</sup> Neeb, “Rechtsextreme Orientierungen unter Jugendlichen,” Adenauer Campus, “Neonazis in der DDR.”

<sup>125</sup> Walter Süß, “Zu Wahrnehmung und Interpretation des Rechtsextremismus in der DDR durch das MfS,” *Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Abteilung Bildung und Forschung*, 2000, 14, [https://www.stasi-unterlagen-archiv.de/assets/bstu/de/Publikationen/Reihe\\_B\\_01\\_1993\\_Suess\\_Rechtsextremismus\\_Auflage\\_03\\_barrierefrei.pdf](https://www.stasi-unterlagen-archiv.de/assets/bstu/de/Publikationen/Reihe_B_01_1993_Suess_Rechtsextremismus_Auflage_03_barrierefrei.pdf).

<sup>126</sup> Süß, “Zu Wahrnehmung und Interpretation des Rechtsextremismus,” 17.

<sup>127</sup> Süß, “Zu Wahrnehmung und Interpretation des Rechtsextremismus,” 17; Wagner, “Die Stasi und Neonazis,” 68.

<sup>128</sup> Wagner, “Die Stasi und Neonazis,” 69.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

were registered in the GDR, of whom 1,000 recidivists with a propensity for permanent violence.<sup>131</sup> The scientists were ordered to keep quiet and were strictly monitored by the Stasi, as the results were feared to damage the GDR's "anti-fascist" image significantly.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, historian Harry Waibel stated that neo-Nazi crimes were categorised in the Stasi records as "hooliganism", but were not connected to a neo-Nazi motivation "to maintain the lie of the anti-fascist state".<sup>133</sup> Similar to the FRG, the right-wing extremist phenomenon was not perceived as alarming to the GDR.<sup>134</sup>

Whilst the idea of a reunified Germany became prominent in West German society, new opportunities occurred for far-right groups – from their perspective.<sup>135</sup> Specifically, from 1989 to 1990, the far-right groups believed they could create social unrest and political opposition among the eastern Germans, who were perceived as less affected by the 'American way of life' compared to western citizens.<sup>136</sup>

As the GDR came closer to its end, right-wing extremist attacks occurred even more frequently.<sup>137</sup> Accordingly, in 1989, at least 289 crimes with a neo-fascistic motive were registered in the GDR.<sup>138</sup> Shortly before the reunification, the GDR regime initiated 188 preliminary proceedings against people who were investigated for their "statements of a fascist, racist or militarist" character.<sup>139</sup> Bernd Wagner stated that at least 5,000 people formed the "hard core of the East German militant-Nazi movement" at this time, of which 1,000 were registered by the police as right-wing violent recidivists.<sup>140</sup>

To conclude, from the 1980s onwards, neo-Nazi attacks continuously increased in the FRG, not met with significant measures, and even dismissed by governments. Closer to the reunification, the far-right groups perceived "new opportunities" for their scene.<sup>141</sup> Around the 1980s, a shift in the GDR's awareness of the neo-Nazism development is seen in the investigations on the phenomenon, yet ultimately rejected to protect the "anti-fascist image".<sup>142</sup> Closer to the reunification, right-wing extremist activities repeatedly occurred in the GDR.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Wagner, "Die Stasi und Neonazis," 69.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>133</sup> Birgit Wörnke and Julian Feldmann, "Panorama - die Reporter: Der Traum vom Umsturz - Neonazis und die Wende," *NDR*, September 1, 2020, [https://www.ndr.de/fernsehen/sendungen/panorama\\_die\\_reporter/Panorama-die-Reporter\\_sendung1066338.html](https://www.ndr.de/fernsehen/sendungen/panorama_die_reporter/Panorama-die-Reporter_sendung1066338.html).

<sup>134</sup> Wagner, "Die Stasi und Neonazis," 70.

<sup>135</sup> Virchow, "The Groupuscularization of Neo-Nazism in Germany," 58.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Adenauer Campus, "Neonazis in der DDR."

<sup>138</sup> Neeb, "Rechtsextreme Orientierungen unter Jugendlichen."

<sup>139</sup> Adenauer Campus, "Neonazis in der DDR."

<sup>140</sup> Adenauer Campus, "Mythos: "In der DDR gab es keine Rechtsextremisten"," accessed on May 26, 2022, <https://www.adenauercampus.de/ddrtutorium/mythos-und-wirklichkeit/in-der-ddr-gab-es-keine-rechtsextremisten>.

<sup>141</sup> Virchow, "The Groupuscularization of Neo-Nazism in Germany," 58.

<sup>142</sup> Wagner, "Die Stasi und Neonazis," 69.

<sup>143</sup> Adenauer Campus, "Neonazis in der DDR."

### Neo-Nazism after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989-1990

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the FRG ended up as the “political and economic winner” while the GDR vanished after the upheaval in 1989.<sup>144</sup> The German Unification Treaty marked the agreement of the five new reconstructed eastern federal states under the German Basic Law on 3 October 1990.<sup>145</sup> The reunification process started as an experiment but proceeded with the idea that former East Germany had to reach the western German standards, with its democratic political institutions and well-functioning economy.<sup>146</sup> Accordingly, reunited Germany represented the continuity of the FRG in which the eastern German federal states had to align to the system of the FRG through modernisation and democratisation processes.<sup>147</sup>

German reunification was accompanied by significant political and social changes and economic problems, which significantly impacted East Germans, who felt that the West-German system was “imposed” upon them.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, Simone Hoehl argues that the social position of East juveniles was affected by the reunification, as the youth organisations of the SED disappeared after the fall of the Wall, leaving young people in a social vacuum and much less involved in the new German society.<sup>149</sup>

Consequently, while membership in neo-Nazism movements stagnated in the territories of former western Germany, the number of neo-Nazis rose drastically in the former GDR with 2,000 neo-Nazis being present, twice as much compared to the western parts.<sup>150</sup> The first attacks against refugees also started quickly after reunification, as youths in twenty German towns attacked buildings of foreigners in 1991.<sup>151</sup> Further aggression is perceived in the outbreaks against foreigners and asylum seekers in the eastern German towns of Hoyerswerda and Rostock Lichtenhagen, in 1991 and 1992 respectively.<sup>152</sup> In Hoyerswerda rightists attackers stormed two apartment complexes where foreigners lived, whereas in Rostock Lichtenhagen hundreds of right-wing extremists threw rocks and firebombs at a building used to house asylum

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<sup>144</sup> Jonas Rädcl, “Two Paradigmatic Views on Right-wing Populism in East Germany,” *German Politics and Society* 37, no. 44 (2019): 31, doi:10.3167/gps.2019.370404.

<sup>145</sup> Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Einigungsvertrag,” accessed on May 7, 2022, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/deutsche-einheit/einigungsvertrag/>.

<sup>146</sup> Rädcl, “Two Paradigmatic Views on Right-wing Populism,” 31.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>148</sup> Simone Hoehl, “Neo-Nazism and the Right-Wing Movement in Germany: Should Offenders Be Punished Severely?,” *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 7, no. 1 (July 1995): 95; Duitsland Instituut, “Duitsland na 1990: Integratie Oost- en West-Duitsland,” accessed March 9, 2022, <https://duitslandinstituut.nl/naslagwerk/707/integratie-oost-en-west-duitsland>.

<sup>149</sup> Hoehl, “Neo-Nazism and the Right-Wing Movement,” 95.

<sup>150</sup> McGowan, “Much More Than a Phantom Menace!,” 262.

<sup>151</sup> Stephen Kinzer, “A Wave of Attacks on Foreigners Stirs Shock in Germany,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/10/01/world/a-wave-of-attacks-on-foreigners-stirs-shock-in-germany.html>.

<sup>152</sup> Kinzer, “A Wave of Attacks on Foreigners.”

seekers.<sup>153</sup> Lehr explains these developments by the exclusion from the reunification process that most East Germans felt, who were therefore vulnerable to easy-to-grasp explanations to make sense of what was happening, such as the chant “they steal our jobs”, with ‘they’ referring to immigrants.<sup>154</sup>

Following up, between 2000 and 2006 even more neo-Nazi attacks and plans for attacks were visible in Germany. The RTV reported twenty-five deadly attacks related to right-wing extremism in Germany during this period.<sup>155</sup> Among others seven known groups planned attacks, several of them being carried out such as the arson attack on a synagogue in Erfurt by three neo-Nazis in 2000.<sup>156</sup> In 2001, a small group of four Nazis planned bomb attacks against Turkish and Jewish institutions in Berlin.<sup>157</sup> During this time, the last known right-wing group before the NSU discovery, Oidoxie Streetfighting Crew, prepared large terrorist attacks as well.<sup>158</sup>

An important turning point in the neo-Nazism developments is the discovery of the NSU in 2011. The right-wing terrorist group was exposed in November 2011, consisting of three people: Uwe Böhnhardt, Uwe Mundlos, and Beate Zschäpe.<sup>159</sup> From 2000 to 2007, the NSU committed nine murders in small businesses with a migration background throughout Germany and attempted to murder two police officers in Heilbronn in 2007, while staying unnoticed by the German authorities.<sup>160</sup> In a confession video, the NSU group referred to their motto as “action instead of words” (“*Taten statt Worte*”) and stated that their activities will continue as long as no fundamental change occurs in politics, press, and freedom of speech.<sup>161</sup> Their “terror” was also focused on harming the norms and values of German society.<sup>162</sup> German society and the media perceived the NSU discovery as a failure by the BfV as the institution did not recognise they were dealing with right-wing extremists.<sup>163</sup> For example, the journalist

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<sup>153</sup> Kinzer, “A Wave of Attacks on Foreigners,”; Charles Hawley and Daryl Lindsey, “Racism and Xenophobia Still Prevalent in Germany,” *Der Spiegel*, August 24, 2012, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/xenophobia-still-prevalent-in-germany-20-years-after-neo-nazi-attacks-a-851972.html>.

<sup>154</sup> Lehr, “Still Blind in the Right Eye?,” 195.

<sup>155</sup> Aasland Ravndal, Lygren, Wibe Hagen and Ravik Jupskås, “RTV Trend Report 2019,” 14.

<sup>156</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 87.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>159</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2011* (Spangenberg, Germany: Werbedruck GmbH Horst Schreckhase, 2012), 60.

<sup>160</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2011*, 60.

<sup>161</sup> Tanjev Schultz, *NSU: Der Terror von rechts und das Versagen des Staates* (Munich, Germany: Droemer, 2018), 122-125.

<sup>162</sup> Schultz, *NSU: Der Terror von rechts*, 122-125.

<sup>163</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 129; El Ouassil, “10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung,”; Pidd, “How could German Neo-Nazi.”

Heribert Prantl harshly stated that the BfV deserved the maximum penalty for its failures, namely, “its dissolution”.<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore, the refugee crisis in 2015 had a significant impact on the amount of right-wing violence in Germany. After the outbreaks of various conflicts in, among others, Syria and Iraq, and the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the numbers of refugees and asylum applications rose steadily to 1,5 million asylum seekers in 2015, synonymously to the number of right-wing attacks, as perceived in the increase of 22,9% in violent crimes in 2014 compared to 2013.<sup>165</sup> Although Germany was seen as a pioneer of Europe’s open-door strategy, the country lacked an effective strategy, creating more conflicts between locals and immigrants and thus, in turn, influencing the rise of right-wing violence in Germany.<sup>166</sup> Neo-Nazism continued to rise after this period, as in 2019, the RTV trend report counted five fatal and thirty non-fatal right-wing extremists attacks in Germany.<sup>167</sup>

Overall, the end of the Cold War significantly influenced the number of neo-Nazism attacks in a reunified Germany. Due to the economic problems and political and social changes, unrest emerged among East Germans in particular.<sup>168</sup> Consequently, the number of neo-Nazi supporters rose dramatically in former eastern Germany, followed by several attacks after reunification.<sup>169</sup> These attacks continued between 2000 and 2006, with several neo-Nazi groups planning and carrying out violent attacks.<sup>170</sup> An important turning point was the NSU discovery in 2011.<sup>171</sup> A new upsurge in neo-Nazi violence arose after the refugee crisis in 2015, continuing to this day.<sup>172</sup> This continuous rise of neo-Nazism attacks called for a securitisation of the threat and adoption of measures. This will be investigated in the BfV’s annual reports in the next chapter.

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<sup>164</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 129; Heribert Prantl, “Die schlimmste Entdeckung in der Geschichte der Republik,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 24, 2014, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/nsu-bericht-die-schlimmste-entdeckung-in-der-geschichte-der-republik-1.2099406>.

<sup>165</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 106; The Guardian, “Germany Expects up to 1.5 million Asylum Seekers in 2015, Says Report,” October 5, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/05/germany-now-expects-up-to-15-mln-migrants-in-2015-report>; Bundesministerium des Innern, *Politisch motivierte Kriminalität im Jahr 2014*, accessed on May 30, 2022, 2, [https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/2015/pmk-2014.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=1](https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/2015/pmk-2014.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1).

<sup>166</sup> Shuya Yan, “A Brief Analysis of Neo-Nazism,” *2020 3rd International Conference on Interdisciplinary Social Sciences & Humanities*, 2020, 25, [https://webofproceedings.org/proceedings\\_series/ESSP/SOSHU%202020/SOSHU20005.pdf](https://webofproceedings.org/proceedings_series/ESSP/SOSHU%202020/SOSHU20005.pdf); Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 100.

<sup>167</sup> Jacob Aasland Ravndal, Sofia Lygren, Anders Ravik Jupskås and Tore Bjørgo, “RTV Trend Report 2020: Right Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe 1990-2019,” *Center for Research on Extremism: The Extreme Right, Hate Crime and Political Violence*, 2020, 8, <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/publications/c-rex-reports/2020/rtv-trend-report/c-rex-rtv-trend-report-2020.pdf>.

<sup>168</sup> Hoehl, “Neo-Nazism and the Right-Wing Movement,” 95.

<sup>169</sup> McGowan “Much More Than a Phantom Menace!,” 262.

<sup>170</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 87

<sup>171</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2011*, 60.

<sup>172</sup> Hille, “Right-Wing Terror in Germany: A Timeline,”; Shaffer, “Neo-Nazism in Germany and Beyond,” 1847.



## Chapter 2 – A More Optimistic View? ‘Waves’ of Security Perceptions and Measures in the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* Annual Reports

“With its diverse tasks, the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* is a supporting pillar of our defensible democracy”.<sup>173</sup> Originated from one of the annual BfV reports, this quote illustrates how the security authority perceives itself as an important institution to protect the German democracy. Through its annual reports, the BfV aims to enlighten the public about anti-constitutional efforts in Germany caused by right- and left-wing extremists, terrorists, and espionage activities.<sup>174</sup>

In this chapter, the annual BfV reports will be analysed by investigating how the neo-Nazi threat is perceived and described by the institution and actors involved. It is noteworthy, that the BfV belongs to the portfolio of the BMI, which is why the Federal Minister of Interior often speaks on behalf of the BfV in the annual reports and on press releases.<sup>175</sup> The reports will be examined by looking at the ideas and narratives adopted by the German agency, through cues of securitisation elements such as speech act mechanisms and extraordinary measures based on the ST.<sup>176</sup> In doing so, this chapter will elaborate upon the BfV’s security perceptions and preventative measures towards the neo-Nazi scene developed from 1990 till 2020. This chapter argues that the BfV had reoccurring ‘waves’ of security threat perceptions and preventative measures against the neo-Nazi threat, revealing a more nuanced impression that contrasts earlier research.

### 1990-1999 – From Politicised to Securitised

In the first years after the reunification, the BfV did not explicitly address the relevance of neo-Nazi movements nor discuss measures against them. The neo-Nazi threat was evaluated by the former Federal Minister of the BMI Wolfgang Schäuble as equally important as left-wing extremism, stating German democracy should be fought “from left to right”.<sup>177</sup> In addition, Skinheads were described as people using neo-Nazi mannerisms (e.g., Hitler greetings) “only to provoke” their environment, the word “only” exemplifying the diminishing

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<sup>173</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2016* (Spangenberg, Germany: Werbedruck GmbH Horst Schreckhase, 2017), 4.

<sup>174</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2000* (Magdeburg, Germany: Gebr. Garloff, 2001); Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, “Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution,” accessed on May 15, 2022, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/security/protection-of-the-constitution/protection-of-the-constitution.html>.

<sup>175</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, “Federal Office for the Protection,”; Schmeer, “Intelligence for the Masses,” 249.

<sup>176</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*.

<sup>177</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1990* (Dortmund, Germany: Fritz Busche Druckereigesellschaft, 1990), 3.

of the danger posed by neo-Nazi expressions.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, neo-Nazism was seen as a problem coming from youths, disregarding the threat's significance.<sup>179</sup> The neo-Nazism issue should thus be categorised on the securitisation spectrum as a politicised issue – as part of the public debate but not acted upon with measures.<sup>180</sup>

After 1992, a change can be perceived in the discussion on the impact of neo-Nazism. More subjective designations to the portrayals of right-wing extremism appeared such as the description of its violence as of “unprecedented scale”.<sup>181</sup> Another example is the debate of the right-wing extremists' riots against asylum seekers' accommodations, labeled as “particularly frightening” – words not used before.<sup>182</sup> These examples are illustrative of the speech act mechanism in which a political actor, the BfV, speaks of an issue as a security threat.<sup>183</sup> The BfV legitimised the need for extraordinary measures, recognised in the creation of the *Informationsgruppe zur Beobachtung und Bekämpfung rechtsextremistischer/-terroristischer, insbesondere fremdenfeindliche Gewaltakte* (IGR).<sup>184</sup> On the securitisation spectrum, from 1992 onwards neo-Nazism was perceived by the BfV as security issue.

The securitisation development of neo-Nazism continued in the years to follow. For instance, the 1993 report pointed towards the need for a better understanding of neo-Nazi groups and a continuation of measures.<sup>185</sup> The networking of neo-Nazi groups was perceived as a “decisive threat component” and new measures were implemented such as bans on neo-Nazi organisations and the ban on the so-called “imperial war flag” (“*Reichskriegsflagge*”).<sup>186</sup> In 1994, more space was created to describe the threats from the BfV's perspective, with a particular high emphasis on the “intellectual-political confrontation” (“*geistig-politische Auseinandersetzung*”) concerning the risks of violence coming from, among others, extremism, intolerance, and xenophobia.<sup>187</sup> In the 1995 report, a subsection explicitly discussed the forbidden neo-Nazi organisations.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1990*, 116.

<sup>179</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1991* (Dortmund, Germany: Fritz Busche Druckereigesellschaft, 1992), 91.

<sup>180</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 23.

<sup>181</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1992* (Dortmund, Germany: Fritz Busche Druckereigesellschaft, 1993), 14.

<sup>182</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1992*, 77.

<sup>183</sup> Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” 7.

<sup>184</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1992*, 86.

<sup>185</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1993* (Dortmund, Germany: Fritz Busche Druckereigesellschaft, 1994), 14-15.

<sup>186</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1993*, 78. Neo-Nazi groups used the “imperial war flag” (“*Reichskriegsflagge*”) for many years and was developed as a piece of equipment for neo-Nazi appearances.

<sup>187</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1994* (Bonn, Germany: Mirgel & Schneider, 1995), 228.

<sup>188</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1995* (Berlin, Germany: Bundesministerium des Innern, 1996).

In 1996 and 1997, measures against the neo-Nazi and right-wing extremist threat were expanding and firmly imposed by the BfV. For example, “special importance” was given to the neo-Nazi threat followed by measures such as the implementation of the Awareness Campaign against Extremism and Xenophobia.<sup>189</sup> In the European Year Against Racism of 1997, the urgency to investigate and educate about right-wing extremism was explicitly discussed, visible in the number of measures adopted connected to educational work on right-wing extremism and xenophobia.<sup>190</sup>

With the vanishing of the left-wing group RAF in 1998, an even higher emphasis was placed on neo-Nazism. The interest in weapons and explosives by neo-Nazis was portrayed as an “uncalculated risk for the internal security”.<sup>191</sup> Another important development was the creation of the BfV’s website, providing online information through brochures and texts for the public with a focus on the causes of racism and xenophobia.<sup>192</sup> By the end of the decade, former Federal Minister of the BMI Otto Schilly expressed special concern on right-wing extremism referring to the daily news reports of xenophobic and anti-Semitic attacks and the positive stance of neo-Nazis towards violence.<sup>193</sup> This concern, shared by political, governmental, and non-governmental organisations contributed to the creation of the Alliance for Democracy and Tolerance - Against Extremism and Violence.<sup>194</sup>

### *Reflection*

From 1990 to 1999, a securitising process of the neo-Nazi threat was visible in the BfV’s annual reports. At first, there were no signs of securitisation as the urgency or relevance of the threat was not discussed and even diminished. In accordance with previous research, on the political level there was indeed this seemingly ignorance and even blame on East Germans for the neo-Nazi crimes in the early 1990s.<sup>195</sup> Namely, the official response of Helmut Köhl’s government to the neo-Nazi violence was to underscore a positive identity for the new Germany

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<sup>189</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1996*, 235, accessed on April 4, 2022, <https://verfassungsschutzberichte.de/bund/1996>.

<sup>190</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1997* (Fulda, Germany: Parzeller GmbH, 1998).

<sup>191</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1998* (Fulda, Germany: Parzeller GmbH, 1999), 25.

<sup>192</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1998*, 207-208.

<sup>193</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1999* (Fulda, Germany: Parzeller GmbH, 1999), 14-15.

<sup>194</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1999*, 120.

<sup>195</sup> Esther Adaire, ““This Other Germany, the Dark One”: Post-Wall Memory Politics Post-Wall Memory Politics Surrounding the Neo-Nazi Riot in Rostock and Hoyerswerda,” *German Politics and Society* 37, no. 4 (2019): 48, <https://doi.org/10.3167/gps.2019.370405>.

by rejecting the reality of racial hatred.<sup>196</sup> Also, Wagner stated that “people wanted to paint a milder picture of reality” regarding the radical right-wing scene.<sup>197</sup>

However, the problem moved from a politicised to a securitised issue with increasing measures and awareness from 1992 onwards. This development is visible in the more subjective designations of right-wing extremism appearing in the reports, describing the threat as “frightening” and having “a decisive threat component”.<sup>198</sup> Also, extraordinary measures were implemented, such as bans on neo-Nazi organisations and the creation of awareness campaigns (e.g., Awareness Campaign against Extremism and Xenophobia).<sup>199</sup> This securitisation is in line with earlier findings, as Malthaner and Waldmann state right-wing violence was “soon perceived” as a serious threat at this time to the international security and public order and acted upon with determination by federal and state authorities and security forces.<sup>200</sup>

Particular noteworthy is the continuation of the threat perceptions and increasing measures from the 1992s onwards by the BfV, in contrast to the statements of Malthaner and Waldmann who argue after the early 1990s public and media attention diminished significantly toward right-wing extremism.<sup>201</sup> Even more, Lehr acknowledges that after the disappearance of left-wing terrorism in the late 1990s, the Islamic threat rather quickly appeared, indicating that after the left-wing terrorist threat, there was no room for the neo-Nazi threat.<sup>202</sup> These observations of scholars cannot be entirely justified as a continuous securitisation of the threat by the BfV is visible until the end of the decade, even after the disappearance of the RAF. The results thus show a more “positive” view of the BfV's threat perceptions and measures towards neo-Nazism in this period compared to former statements.

### **2000-2009 - The Dark Shadow of 9/11?**

After the turn to the twenty-first century, the BfV's concern towards neo-Nazism continued. The 2000 report started with former Federal Minister of the BMI Schilly's fear of the increase in right-wing extremist violence, considering the issue as a “focal point” for domestic politics.<sup>203</sup> Special attention was drawn to the comradeships of the neo-Nazis because

<sup>196</sup> Adaire, ““This Other Germany, the Dark One”,” 48.

<sup>197</sup> Peter Wensierski, “Rechtsextremismus in der DDR: Real existierende Neonazis,” *Der Spiegel*, January 22, 2015, <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/neonazis-in-der-ddr-video-zeigt-rechte-szene-1988-a-1013448.html>.

<sup>198</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1992*, 77; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1993*, 78.

<sup>199</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1992*, 86; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1996*, 235.

<sup>200</sup> Malthaner and Waldmann, “Terrorism in Germany,” 121.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> Lehr, “Still Blind in the Right Eye?,” 207.

<sup>203</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2000*, 3.

of their aggressive manners for “open racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism”.<sup>204</sup> This concern coincided with numerous preventative measures such as seminars for teachers, researchers, and students, and further awareness campaigns against extremism and xenophobia.<sup>205</sup>

However, the 2001 report was, not surprisingly, marked by the attacks of 9/11 in the United States. The BfV discussed the Islamist extremist attacks as a new dimension of hatred and contempt for humanity.<sup>206</sup> Consequently, most measures implemented by the BfV were related to the events of 9/11. Still, there was also room for the implementation of measures against right-wing extremism, for example, the creation of the Exit Program for Right-wing Extremists.<sup>207</sup> The program aimed to encourage supporters not firmly integrated into the right-wing extremist scene to take a critical look at the right-wing extremist ideas and prevent them from further integrating.<sup>208</sup> As part of this program, a “hotline” was constructed through which right-wing extremists interested in leaving the scene could receive concrete assistance.<sup>209</sup> Thus, despite the influence of the 9/11 attacks, some attention was still paid to the securitisation of the neo-Nazi threat in 2001.

In the following years, the neo-Nazi threat became an issue of secondary importance to the BfV, due to the Islamic terror facing Germany and the global world. For example, the Act on Combating International Terrorism was put in place in January 2002 accompanied by extended powers for the BfV.<sup>210</sup> And, although a multidimensional strategy of action against right-wing extremists was created with focal points such as promoting the integration of migrants in 2002, one year later, right-wing extremism was no longer perceived as the only emphasis as “all forms of extremism” were now considered important.<sup>211</sup> In 2004, further measures were developed against Islamic terror such as the counter-terrorism centre.<sup>212</sup> Notable is this firm and more comprehensive approach to Islamic terrorist threats compared to the neo-Nazi threat.

Nevertheless, some perceptual change toward the neo-Nazi threat is visible from 2005 onwards. For example, right-wing extremists were discussed as being “at the forefront” of the current debates, showing signs of a renewed securitisation.<sup>213</sup> In 2006, the former Federal

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<sup>204</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2000*, 50.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>206</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2001* (Kevelaer, Germany: Bercker Graphischer Betrieb, 2002), 3.

<sup>207</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2001*, 31.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2002* (Fulda, Germany: Druckhaus Parzeller, 2003), 16.

<sup>211</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2002*, 18; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz,

*Verfassungsschutzbericht 2003* (Niestetal, Germany: Druckerei Silber – Druck, 2004), 18.

<sup>212</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2004* (Köln, Germany: Druckhaus Locher, 2005), 5.

<sup>213</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2005* (Köln, Germany: Druckhaus Locher 2006), 6.

Minister of the BMI Schäuble expressed his concern about the development of “neo-Nazis” having positions on the boards of state associations.<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, on the international level, a framework in the Council of Justice and Home Affairs Minister of the European Union was agreed upon, aimed to sanction public incitement to violence, hatred, denial, and trivialisation of genocide throughout Europe.<sup>215</sup>

The reports of 2007, 2008, and 2009 were marked with preventative measures against the right-wing extremist as well as the Islamic terrorist threats. In 2007, the first bans by the federal government since 2000 on organisations from the far-right spectrum were implemented, designating extraordinary measures to fight the threat.<sup>216</sup> In addition, a new program for the German youth was launched, educating them about tolerance and democracy through “*Vielfalt Tut Gut - Youth for Diversity, Tolerance and Democracy*”.<sup>217</sup> However, Islamic terrorism was still referred to as “the greatest threat to the stability and security of Germany and Europe”.<sup>218</sup> In the 2008 report, the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (GTAZ) with its joint counterterrorism file was created, representing a logical step following the strong words about Islamic terrorism.<sup>219</sup> Particularly significant is the international dimension of 2008, recognised in the discussion of the cooperation by the BfV with partner services abroad as well as European states, the United States, and Canada.<sup>220</sup> The decade ends with some attention to right-wing extremism, although the countering of espionage became prominent as well.<sup>221</sup>

### *Reflection*

The 2000s thus started with the securitisation of neo-Nazism by the BfV, continuing the trend of the previous decennium. This period was, however, strongly marked by the brutal attacks of 9/11, responsible for most of the far-reaching measures of the BfV. Still, substantial room was devoted to measures in the realm of right-wing extremism with major programs such as the Exit Program for Right-wing Extremists. In accordance with previous research, Malthaner and Waldmann also recognise this enduring awareness of right-wing extremist violence of German authorities in the early 2000s.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2006* (Pößneck, Germany: GGP Media GmbH, n.d.), 7.

<sup>215</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2006*, 7-8.

<sup>216</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2007*, <https://verfassungsschutzberichte.de/bund/2007>, 3.

<sup>217</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2007*, 3.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2008* (Niestetal, Germany: Druckerei oHG, 2013), 7.

<sup>220</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2008*.

<sup>221</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2009* (Niestetal, Germany: Druckerei oHG, 2013), 3.

<sup>222</sup> Malthaner and Waldmann, “Terrorism in Germany,” 123.

The following years were characterised by the secondary importance of the neo-Nazi threat, whereas after 2005 there is a clear renewed attention for right-wing extremism, in which the threat is discussed as “at the forefront” of the debates.<sup>223</sup> This finding demonstrates a more positive view of the BfV’s awareness and securitisation of the neo-Nazi threat compared to the “underestimation” of the German authorities as previously stated.<sup>224</sup> For example, Koehler identified that the emerging attentiveness to right-wing terrorism of the late 1990s was halted due to 9/11, resulting in the public, academic, and official deflection to Islamic terrorism.<sup>225</sup> Although an emphasis was indeed paid to Islamic terror in the immediate years after the Al Qaeda attacks, the BfV still gave, unexpected, considerable attention to neo-Nazism by securitising the threat and implementing measures in the respective years from 2005 onwards.

### **2010-2020 – The Turning Point of the NSU**

After a clear trend of securitisation, neo-Nazism seems to have been replaced with other threats in 2010. Although the former Federal Minister of the BMI Hans-Peter Friedrich stated no signs of an “all-clearness” regarding the national extremists was in place, the neo-Nazism section vanished from the annual reports, signalling a possible decline of attention.<sup>226</sup> The report furthermore touched upon the “holistic and strategic” fight against international terrorism through multilateral cooperation with international bodies, referring to the Islamic Salafistic movements present in this period in Europe.<sup>227</sup>

Nevertheless, the NSU discovery in 2011 sparked a tremendous shakeup within the BfV, marking a development of, yet again, renewed threat perceptions of neo-Nazism for the years to come. The NSU discovery has led to severe criticism toward the BfV and the fulfilment of its tasks.<sup>228</sup> According to former Federal Minister of the BMI Friedrich, the “painful” failures of not recognising the right-wing extremist motivation of the NSU perpetrators had to be clarified.<sup>229</sup> This awareness was followed with the aim to drastically reform the BfV.<sup>230</sup> Particularly noteworthy is the discussion of neo-Nazism as having a readiness to use violence for their causes, which was not stated before.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2005*, 6.

<sup>224</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 251.

<sup>225</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 3.

<sup>226</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2010* (Niestetal, Germany: Silber Druck oHG, 2011), 4.

<sup>227</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2010*, 3. Salafistic movements strive for a complete transformation of the state and society, as described by the BfV.

<sup>228</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 129. In 2011 a neo-Nazi terrorist cell, the NSU, was exposed and responsible for a series of right-wing extremist murders and attacks between 2000 and 2007, see Chapter 1 for further details.

<sup>229</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2011*, 3.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

The following years were characterised by the reforms, imperative measures against neo-Nazis, and the explicit discussion of the right-wing extremists' tendency to adopt violence. Accordingly, a shift took place in the BfV's perception as right-wing extremists ultimately seemed to be positively inclined to use violence.<sup>232</sup> Also, the Joint Extremism and Counterterrorism Centre emerged out of the Joint Defense Centre against Right-wing Extremism and Terrorism and the GTAZ in 2012, functioning as a communication platform for all the authorities involved in extremism and counterterrorist measures.<sup>233</sup> The "comprehensive" BfV reform was particularly central this year, aimed to collect information about individuals and groups classified as violence-oriented and to increase public relations and transparency to regain lost trust.<sup>234</sup> The influence of the NSU discovery continued to be felt in 2013 observed in the measures targeting the area of V-persons (e.g., the introduction of common standards for the management of V-persons).<sup>235</sup> Even more, in 2014, an Early Warning System was implemented, to generate intelligence on political extremism, terrorism, and espionage well-in advance before the implementation of police measures.<sup>236</sup> Also, Islamic terrorism was now described as something that "must not be left out of sight", words previously adopted to describe the right-wing extremist threat.<sup>237</sup>

The refugee crisis of 2015 further fuelled the securitisation of neo-Nazism, due to the anti-asylum standpoint of right-wing extremists. The BfV stated that special attention should be placed on "the identification of right-wing terrorist structures and their modes of action".<sup>238</sup> The explicit indication of terrorist structures in the context of right-wing extremism was another salient change, as this description was not adopted in this explicit way before.

As of 2016, Islamic terrorism became apparent again by "shaping Germany for months", while there was a balanced focus on neo-Nazism.<sup>239</sup> Important to mention is the substantial weight placed on the lone-wolf analogy to explain far-right attacks: attackers being described as acting alone without involvement in extremist structures or hierarchies.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, Federal Minister of the BMI Seehofer stated that right-wing extremists were in "fundamental

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<sup>232</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2012* (Spangenberg, Germany: Werbedruck GmbH Horst Schreckhase, 2013), 64-71.

<sup>233</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2012*, 21.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>235</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2013* (Spangenberg, Germany: Werbedruck GmbH Horst Schreckhase, 2014), 20.

<sup>236</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2014* (Spangenberg, Germany: Werbedruck GmbH Horst Schreckhase, 2015), 15.

<sup>237</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2013*, 3-4.

<sup>238</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2015* (Spangenberg, Germany: Werbedruck GmbH Horst Schreckhase, 2016), 47.

<sup>239</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2016*, 3.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.



contradiction to the universal values of the German constitution”, clarifying the undesirability of this group.<sup>241</sup> In 2018, anti-asylum agitation was still perceived as dangerous and as having a high mobilisation potential for right-wing extremists.<sup>242</sup>

Due to the murder of CDU politician Walter Lübcke and the attack in Halle, a significant emphasis was placed on the right-wing extremist subject during the end of the decade. Federal Minister Seehofer initiated various personnel and organisational measures in the security authorities following these “horrific acts of bloodshed”.<sup>243</sup> Another prominent development was the replacement of the subheading in the 2019 report from “right-wing extremism” to “right-wing extremism/right-wing extremist terrorism”, emphasising the terrorist aspects of the right-wing extremists.<sup>244</sup> The decade ends with the firm words about right-wing extremism embodying “the greatest threat to the free democratic basic order”.<sup>245</sup> In this period, the COVID-19 pandemic was of particular importance as it was a recurring theme in the discussion of right-wing extremists.<sup>246</sup> Lastly, in 2020, a Cabinet Committee to Combat Right-Wing Extremism and Racism was created accompanied by a catalogue of measures - including measures to combat anti-Semitism.<sup>247</sup>

### *Reflection*

The period from 2010 to 2020 was characterised by a high degree of security perceptions by the BfV towards neo-Nazism. The Islamic terrorist threat was even of secondary importance in 2013 to right-wing extremism.<sup>248</sup> The BfV addressed the threat with firm measures such as the extensive BfV reforms, likely to have been influenced by the criticism received after the controversial NSU discovery in 2011.

This result contrasts the literature and media criticism toward the German neo-Nazism approach. For example, columnist El Oussail strongly contended that Germany turns a “blind eye” to the neo-Nazi threat similar to Koehler.<sup>249</sup> However, the BfV clearly emphasised the threat posed by right-wing extremism, especially after 2011, and acted upon the threat with several preventative measures. Furthermore, Meier states that there is a persistence of power relationship in society, despite the “turning points” that could change policymaking, while the

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<sup>241</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017* (Niestetal, Germany: Silber Druck oHG, 2018), 44.

<sup>242</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2018* (Bexbach, Germany: Kern GmbH, 2019), 46.

<sup>243</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2019* (Bexbach, Germany: Kern GmbH, 2020), 3.

<sup>244</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2019*, 45.

<sup>245</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2020* (Bexbach, Germany: Kern GmbH, 2021), 3.

<sup>246</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2020*, 23.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>248</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2013*, 3-4; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2015*, 47.

<sup>249</sup> El Oussail, “10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung,”; Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 251.

analysis demonstrates that the NSU discovery clearly resulted in a change in policies within the BfV.<sup>250</sup> Lastly, Klikauer touched upon the danger of V-persons growing closely to neo-Nazis, which could make the German approach to the right-wing extremist threat vulnerable.<sup>251</sup> In contrast, the BfV showed particular awareness of the weaknesses of the use of V-persons, by implementing reforms in the area of V-persons. While these measures may not have solved the problems related to V-persons, the BfV at least showed to be mindful of its weaknesses.

### Concluding Remarks

In contrast to the literature, arguing for the prioritisation of Islamic terror, Germany's "underestimation" and "blind eye" of the neo-Nazi threat, this chapter has demonstrated from the analysis of the BfV annual reports from 1990 till 2020, a more optimistic and nuanced view against the BfV's security threat perceptions and preventative measures should be adopted.<sup>252</sup> Although the neo-Nazi issue moved to a securitised issue in the 1990s in accordance with previous research, the continuous BfV awareness of the neo-Nazi threat and increasing preventative measures throughout the 1990s were in stark contrast to Malthaner and Waldmann.<sup>253</sup> In the 2000s, a great influence on the BfV's threat perceptions and measures was caused by the events of 9/11. Nevertheless, neo-Nazism, while of secondary importance, remained an important subject for the BfV, contradicting findings of Koehler and Lehr.<sup>254</sup> Lastly, the 2010s were characterised by a renewed high degree of security perceptions and preventative measures of the threat, also opposing the literature and media criticism. The "blind eye" to neo-Nazism and "underestimation" of the threat can thus not be solely justified considering the BfV.<sup>255</sup>

Overall, a key finding from this analysis is the BfV's significant alertness toward the threat from 1990 till 2020. The BfV discussed the neo-Nazi threat as predominantly threatening German society and implemented several preventative measures, especially in the more recent decades. Particularly evident were the renewed securitisation processes after the attacks of 9/11 and the violent neo-Nazi attacks in the 2010s. Thus, although Malthaner and Waldmann argue right-wing violence "was neither considered a major crisis nor a threat to the state or the political order", this statement may only partly be true.<sup>256</sup> Accordingly, the reality is not this

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<sup>250</sup> Meier, "The Idea of Terror," 9.

<sup>251</sup> Klikauer, "The Public Prosecution of Right-Wing and Racist Violence," 205.

<sup>252</sup> El Oussail, "10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung,"; Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 3.

<sup>253</sup> Adaire, "This Other Germany, the Dark One," 48; Wensierski, "Rechtsextremismus in der DDR,"; Malthaner and Waldmann, "Terrorism in Germany," 125-126.

<sup>254</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 3; Lehr, "Still Blind in the Right Eye?," 207.

<sup>255</sup> El Oussail, "10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung,"; Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 3-251; Meier, "The Idea of Terror," 9.

<sup>256</sup> Malthaner and Waldmann, "Terrorism in Germany," 125-126.

black and white, as the recurring 'waves' of securitisation processes demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of the BfV's threat perceptions and measures against neo-Nazism.

### Chapter 3 – Case Study Comparison: The Oktoberfest Bombing and Halle Attack

To find evidence for the insights gathered in Chapter 2, the Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 and the Halle attack of 2019 will be compared in this chapter. The Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 was a massacre on the Munich Oktoberfest, killing twelve visitors and injuring many more.<sup>257</sup> Approximately forty years later, Stephan Balliet tried to enter a Jewish synagogue to create a bloodbath in Halle, ultimately failed to enter and shot two people and injured others as he fled.<sup>258</sup> At first glance, similarities between these two seemingly different attacks cannot be recognised but both perpetrators have been identified as right-wing extremists.<sup>259</sup> This similarity provides an opportunity to examine how the BfV has responded to these two attacks respectively and whether anything has changed in the BfV's threat perceptions and measures before and after the German reunification. Furthermore, the attacks are chosen because *Der Spiegel International*, *Der Spiegel* and *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* identified them as “major turning points” in German history.<sup>260</sup> Even more, the attacks received significant attention from the media, resulting in a significant number of written materials about the attacks, useful for an extensive investigation.

The comparison will be executed by first applying the comparative approach of Haupt and Kocka to reflect on the conditions for a legitimate comparison between both case studies. Next, the attacks will be discussed in more detail before demonstrating the differences and similarities in threat perceptions and measures by the BfV, through the lens of ST. This chapter will argue that while the Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 was somewhat less perceived as a security threat without significant extraordinary measures by the BfV, the Halle attack of 2019 was considerably more perceived as a security threat accompanied by extraordinary measures. This finding is somewhat in accordance with the results of Chapter 2, which demonstrated a more nuanced view of the BfV's threat perceptions and measures after German reunification. Therefore, it is hypothesised that a ‘positive’ change in securitisation and measures toward neo-Nazi threats occurred after reunification within the BfV.

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<sup>257</sup> Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Vor 40 Jahren: Rechtsextremer Anschlag auf das Oktoberfest,” September 22, 2020, <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/hintergrund-aktuell/315909/vor-40-jahren-rechtsextremer-anschlag-auf-das-oktoberfest/>.

<sup>258</sup> Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, “Verfassungsschutzchef: Halle-Attentat war “weder vorhersagbar noch vorhersehbar”,” October 28, 2020, <https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/sachsen-anhalt/landespolitik/u-ausschuss-anschlag-synagoge-halle-aussage-verfassungsschutzchef100.html>.

<sup>259</sup> Wojtasik, “Utøya–Christchurch–Halle.,” 90; *Der Spiegel* “Mit Dum dum aus der Schußlinie.”

<sup>260</sup> *Der Spiegel International*, “Deadly Attack Exposes Lapses in German Security Apparatus,” October 11, 2019, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/far-right-terrorism-in-germany-shooting-exposes-lapses-in-security-apparatus-a-1291075.html>; *Der Spiegel*, “Bombenterror vor dem Bierzelt,” September 19, 2008, <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/oktoberfestattentat-a-949614.html>; Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Vor 40 Jahren: Rechtsextremer Anschlag.”

## Comparative Approach

The first condition of the comparative approach is the necessary identification of appropriate units of comparison, which are the securitisation processes and measures adopted by the federal states Bavaria (Munich) and Saxony-Anhalt (Halle) and the regional authorities.<sup>261</sup> Another condition that should be present is a minimum similarity between the case studies, to study them with regard to their differences.<sup>262</sup> As previously stated, the similarity can be perceived in the right-wing extremist motive of both perpetrators.<sup>263</sup> However, an important difference to consider is the context of both attacks: the Oktoberfest bombing took place in the former FRG, and the Halle attack was carried out in the reunified Germany. Nevertheless, the BfV had already been established in the FRG in November 1950 and continued to be present after reunification as an important intelligence service, making the comparison of the BfV's perceptions and measures possible.<sup>264</sup>

Next, the presumptions and values of the researcher should be reflected upon, as they play a role in the choice of a case study.<sup>265</sup> Here, the choice of both attacks relies on the presumption that both attacks would demonstrate valuable and significant information, as they were discussed as major turning points in the media.<sup>266</sup> The last condition is the consideration of differences in conceptualisation and terms, thus, the comparison of conceptualisation of neo-Nazism in both case studies.<sup>267</sup> In the BfV annual reports of 1980 and 2019 respectively, the neo-Nazi ideology was defined in a similar fashion, discussed as characterised by nationalism, xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, and hostility towards the democratic order, allowing for a legitimate comparison of both case studies.<sup>268</sup>

### Case Study I: Oktoberfest Bombing of 1980

On 26 September 1980, “the most serious fascist terrorist attack in German post-war history” struck an unsuspecting crowd on the Oktoberfest in Munich.<sup>269</sup> At 10:19 p.m., while thousands of the Oktoberfest visitors headed home, a pipe bomb exploded and killed thirteen

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<sup>261</sup> Haupt and Kocka, “Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems,” 26.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>263</sup> Wojtasik, “Utøya–Christchurch–Halle,” 90; Der Spiegel “Mit Dum dum aus der Schußlinie.”

<sup>264</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Our History.”

<sup>265</sup> Haupt and Kocka, “Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems,” 27.

<sup>266</sup> Der Spiegel International, “Deadly Attack Exposes,”; Der Spiegel, “Bombenterror vor dem Bierzelt,”; Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Vor 40 Jahren: Rechtsextremer Anschlag.”

<sup>267</sup> Haupt and Kocka, “Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems,” 27.

<sup>268</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2019*, 46; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutz '80* (Bonn, Germany: Bonner Universitäts-Buchdruckerei, 1981), 15.

<sup>269</sup> Rolf Clement, Gudula Geuther, Thies Marsen, and Frank Überal, “Unterschätzte Gefahr,” *Deutschlandfunk*, November 14, 2011, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/unterschaetzte-gefahr-102.html>; Manthe, “On the Pathway to Violence,” 61; Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Vor 40 Jahren: Rechtsextremer Anschlag.”

visitors and injured more than 200 people.<sup>270</sup> The attack was committed by the 21-year-old student Gundolf Köhler, connected to the neo-Nazi, paramilitary organisation WSG, of which some claim Köhler was a member of whereas others state he had only been part of its military training exercises.<sup>271</sup> *Der Spiegel* portrayed the perpetrator as a 15-year-old boy who was intrigued by right-wing ideas in school and referred to a “decisive crackdown in politics”.<sup>272</sup> Later, as Stuttgart state security guards recorded, Köhler participated in field exercises from the WSG.<sup>273</sup> Köhler died in the explosion and would later be identified as the perpetrator in the days after the attack.<sup>274</sup> However, the identification of those responsible for the Octoberfest bombing was, and remains, a controversial debate in the media.<sup>275</sup>

Even more notable are the special political circumstances of the Octoberfest bombing, as nine days later on 5 October 1980, a new *Bundestag* was to be elected.<sup>276</sup> The Minister-President of Bavaria and CDU/CSU top candidate at this time, Franz Josef Strauss, was running against the current Chancellor Helmut Schmidt.<sup>277</sup> These circumstances increased the pressure to quickly present the results of the police investigations.<sup>278</sup> Noteworthy are the speculations of the intensive contact between neo-Nazis and CDU/CSU functionaries at this time and the rumours that the attack was aimed to strengthen Strauss in the elections.<sup>279</sup>

### Case Study II: Halle Attack of 2019

As marked by *Der Spiegel International*, “Jews in Germany must fear for their lives once again”, referring to the attack in Halle on October 9, 2019.<sup>280</sup> On this day, a heavily armed shooter, Stephan Balliet, tried to enter a synagogue in Halle to commit a massacre.<sup>281</sup> In the synagogue fifty-one people were celebrating the important Jewish Holiday, Yom Kippur.<sup>282</sup> The terrorist attack failed because the attacker could not enter the door and saved the lives of the people inside.<sup>283</sup> As the attacker fled, he shot and killed a bystander on the street and executed a man at a kebab shop nearby.<sup>284</sup> Balliet broadcasted his crimes online through a live

<sup>270</sup> Manthe, “On the Pathway to Violence,” 62.

<sup>271</sup> Clement, Geuther, Marsen, and Überal, “Unterschätzte Gefahr,”; Manthe, “On the Pathway to Violence,” 61.

<sup>272</sup> *Der Spiegel*, “Mit Dumdum aus der Schußlinie.”

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> Manthe, “On the Pathway to Violence,” 62.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>276</sup> Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Vor 40 Jahren: Rechtsextremer Anschlag.”

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> *Der Spiegel*, “Mit Dumdum aus der Schußlinie.”

<sup>279</sup> *Der Spiegel*, “Täter war in Neonazi-Szene verstrickt,” October 23, 2011,

<https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/anschlag-auf-oktoberfest-1980-taeter-war-in-neonazi-szene-verstrickt-a-793437.html>.

<sup>280</sup> *Der Spiegel International*, “Deadly Attack Exposes.”

<sup>281</sup> Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, “Verfassungsschutzchef: Halle-Attentat.”

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>283</sup> *Der Spiegel International*, “Deadly Attack Exposes.”

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

stream which was first watched by five users and as it unfolded by 2,200 others.<sup>285</sup> As *Der Spiegel* stated shortly after the attack, the 27-year-old man was out to kill Jewish people, clearly visible in his manifesto in which he described his goal to “kill as many anti-Whites as possible, Jews preferred”.<sup>286</sup> Balliet was arrested on the same day in the town Zeitz, about fifty kilometres from Halle.<sup>287</sup> Immediately after his arrest, Balliet admitted his far-right and anti-Semitic motive for the attack.<sup>288</sup>

As stated by Karolina Wojtasik, a massacre of Jewish people was avoided in Germany on this day.<sup>289</sup> Although the attack in Halle was unsuccessful in killing a large group of Jewish people, Balliet aimed to murder the Jewish people inside the synagogue, an action based on right-wing extremist ideas.

### Comparison Case I and II: Similarities

To start, both case studies share some key features such as the BfV’s classification of the attacks as lone-wolf operations. For example, the Bavarian State Office of Criminal Investigations and the Federal Attorney-General discontinued the investigation of the bombing in 1982 by stating in their reports that Köhler acted alone and the suspicion of other perpetrators could not be sustained.<sup>290</sup> However, after new information became public more than thirty-six years later, the BfV officially admitted there was evidence of other perpetrators involved for the first time.<sup>291</sup> Consequently, the lone-wolf argument was not sufficient to explain the Oktoberfest bombing any longer. The argument was, however, frequently and for a long time used in the discussion of the Oktoberfest bombing by the BfV, perhaps to reduce fear amongst the German population towards the neo-Nazi threat.

This explanation is similar to the BfV’s discussion of the Halle attack, as stated in the 2019 annual report. In the report, the detection of lone perpetrators is perceived as a special challenge for security authorities by referring explicitly to the attack in Halle.<sup>292</sup> However, BfV President Thomas Haldenwang nuanced the lone-wolf argument in December 2019, stating that there are too many single cases of right-wing extremist attacks and the authorities should look

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<sup>285</sup> Der Spiegel International, “Deadly Attack Exposes.”

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Wojtasik, “Utøya–Christchurch–Halle.,” 90.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Vor 40 Jahren: Rechtsextremer Anschlag.”

<sup>291</sup> Florian Naumann, and Marc Dimitriu, “Oktoberfest-Attentat: Ermittlungen ziehen sich doch noch hin,” *Die Tageszeitung*, May 25, 2019, <https://www.tz.de/muenchen/stadt/schwanthalerhoehe-ort43337/muenchen-oktoberfest-attentat-ermittlungen-ziehen-sich-doch-noch-hin-zr-8063415.html>; Bild, “Hinweise auf weitere Täter beim Oktoberfest-Attentat,” April 1, 2017, <https://www.bild.de/politik/inland/bundesamt-verfassungsschutz/hinweise-auf-weitere-taeter-beim-oktoberfest-attentat-51102860.bild.html>.

<sup>292</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2019*, 46.

into (online) networks connected to the attackers.<sup>293</sup> In a similar fashion, Federal Prosecutor General Peter Frank argued that “even when they [the perpetrators] commit acts of violence by themselves, they are part of a virtual community that cheers the murders they commit on the internet”.<sup>294</sup>

This parallel in the application of the lone-wolf argument, although more nuanced in the case of Halle, could have been used by the BfV to diminish the threat by disconnecting the attackers from a right-wing extremist network that could potentially carry out further violent acts. Accordingly, the adoption of the lone-wolf argument could perhaps demonstrate that the threat was not sufficiently securitised in either case.

Another similarity between the cases can be perceived in the amount of criticism from the media and experts toward the BfV’s approach after both attacks. This criticism could reveal greater efforts were needed in terms of securitisation and appropriate measures. For instance, in the case of the Oktoberfest bombing, the investigating authorities were accused by *Der Spiegel* of having more knowledge about the perpetrator and his right-wing extremist background than previously stated.<sup>295</sup> Journalist Conny Neumann furthermore argued that the public prosecutor’s office, the BfV, and the police were too quick in abandoning the research relating to Köhler’s extremist environment and did not recognise clues or believe witnesses.<sup>296</sup>

The BfV’s approach towards the Halle attack was also met with quite some criticism, as extremist expert Peter Neumann refers to Halle with the words: “something always has to happen in this country before the authorities react”, thus determining the reluctance of German authorities to deal with the right-wing extremist issue.<sup>297</sup> Furthermore, *Der Spiegel International* stated that the Halle attack demonstrated the “ill-preparedness” of the German security authorities, despite their efforts to make up for “lost time” due to its failures of the NSU discovery.<sup>298</sup> The criticism from the media in both case studies illustrates that the media was convinced mistakes were made by the BfV, signalling that the neo-Nazi threat may not have been sufficiently securitised in both cases.

These findings indicate somewhat lower levels of securitisation of both attacks, as seen in the lone wolf argument adopted to describe the perpetrators and the amount of criticism received for the BfV’s efforts after the attacks (see Table 1). The results are in accordance with

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<sup>293</sup> Florian Flade, and Georg Mascolo, “Lagebild Rechtsextremismus: Dem Verfassungsschutz fehlen Daten,” *Die Tagesschau*, June 11, 2020, <https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/ndr-wdr/rechtsextremismus-oeffentlicher-dienst-101.html>.

<sup>294</sup> *Der Spiegel International*, “Deadly Attack Exposes.”

<sup>295</sup> *Der Spiegel*, “Täter war in Neo-nazi-Szene verstrickt.”

<sup>296</sup> Conny Neumann, “Die Zeugin, die 34 Jahre schwieg,” *Der Spiegel*, December 11, 2014,

<https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/oktoberfest-attentat-1980-die-zeugin-die-34-jahre-schwieg-a-1007917.html>.

<sup>297</sup> *Der Spiegel International*, “Deadly Attack Exposes Lapses.”

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*



previous literature, for example, Malthaner and Waldmann argued that right-wing extremist violence was seen as “easy and controllable” in the 1980s, explaining the lower levels of securitisation after the Oktoberfest bombing.<sup>299</sup> Regarding the Halle attack, in line with the findings, several scholars and journalists have indicated that Germany underestimated the neo-Nazi threat in more recent years as touched upon by El Oussail, Koehler, and Meier.<sup>300</sup> The lower levels of securitisation in both cases also slightly oppose the more optimistic view on the BfV’s threat perceptions and measures after the reunification found in Chapter 2.

Similarities	Lone Perpetrator Argument	Amount of Criticism
Case study I: Oktoberfest bombing 1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorities stated perpetrator acted alone</li> <li>• Lone perpetrator argument used for a long time, until 2017</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorities accused of having more knowledge about motive perpetrator</li> <li>• Authorities too quick in abandoning research</li> </ul>
Case study II: Halle attack 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BfV referred to small groups and lone perpetrators</li> <li>• Slight nuance to lone-wolf argument by BfV and Federal Prosecutor General</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctance German authorities to deal with right-wing extremists</li> <li>• “Ill-preparedness” of German authorities</li> </ul>

Table 1. Overview Similarities between Case Study I and II.

### Comparison Case I and II: Differences

While the similarities between the case studies suggest unsuccessful securitisation processes by the BfV, the differences between the Oktoberfest bombing and the Halle attack illustrate a contrasting pattern.

First, fewer direct cues of securitisation after the Oktoberfest bombing can be recognised compared to the Halle attack. On the day after the bombing on 27 September, 1980, the festival was reopened as “if nothing had happened”.<sup>301</sup> The continuation of the festivities after the attack, demonstrates that the German authorities did not identify the attack as important enough

<sup>299</sup> Malthaner and Waldmann, “Terrorism in Germany,” 126.

<sup>300</sup> El Oussail, “10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung,”; Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 3-251; Meier, “The Idea of Terror,” 9.

<sup>301</sup> Robert Andreasch, “Vier Jahrzehnte im Kampf gegen das Verdrängen und für die Perspektive der Überlebenden,” in *Rassismus. Macht. Vergessen.*, eds. Onur Suzan Nobrega, Matthias Quent and Jonas Zipf (Regensburg, Germany: Friedrich Pustet GmbH & Co. KG, 2021), 189.

to shut the Oktoberfest down. Furthermore, the Bavarian Interior Minister Gerold Tandler dismissed, shortly before the Oktoberfest bombing, the WSG as a “half-crazy” but harmless organisation.<sup>302</sup> This statement exemplifies that the neo-Nazi group to which Köhler was connected was not perceived as a significant danger to Germany.

While there seem to be fewer cues of securitisation after the Oktoberfest bombing, there were significantly more cues of securitisation after Halle. Notable are the statements of the Federal Interior Minister of BMI Horst Seehofer who labelled the danger posed by right-wing extremism “the greatest threat in our country” shortly afterwards.<sup>303</sup> Consistent with this quote are the remarks of BfV President Haldenwang in November 2019, stating that “the attack in Halle is only the latest evidence of the great risks from the area of violence-oriented right-wing extremism”.<sup>304</sup> These remarks can be identified as speech act mechanisms of Wæver, the political officials of German institutions spoke of the right-wing extremist threat as a security issue.<sup>305</sup>

Another difference between both case studies can be observed in the discussion of the motive of the attackers. In contrast to the description of the Halle attacker, the incentive of the Oktoberfest assailant was not directly recognised as a right-wing extremist. For example, the Bavarian State Office of Criminal Investigations and the Federal Attorney-General argued in 1982 that the motive of the perpetrator was based on hate against his environment and personal frustration.<sup>306</sup> It was not until July 2020 that the Federal Prosecutors Office officially identified the motive of Köhler as a right-wing extremist, despite the BfV knowing in 1980 that Köhler had connections to the neo-Nazi group WSG.<sup>307</sup> However, the Oktoberfest attack was discussed under the heading of right-wing extremism in the 1980 annual report accompanied with a discussion of the growing “neo-Nazi fanaticism” that culminated in the Oktoberfest attack.<sup>308</sup> But, the perpetrator was not explicitly discussed as originating from a neo-Nazi ideology by the BfV at this time.

Unlike the Oktoberfest bombing, the perpetrator of the Halle attack was identified as a right-wing extremist immediately. For example, in his press statement on 29 October 2019, BfV

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<sup>302</sup> Clement, Geuther, Marsen, and Überal, “Unterschätzte Gefahr.”

<sup>303</sup> Der Spiegel International, “Deadly Attack Exposes Lapses.”

<sup>304</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Rede von BfV-Präsident Thomas Haldenwang auf der BKA Herbsttagung ‘Ausgrenzung, Hass und Gewalt – Herausforderungen für den Rechtsstaat und die Sicherheitsbehörden’ in Wiesbaden,” November 29, 2019, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/reden/DE/2019/rede-haldenwang-bka-herbsttagung.html>.

<sup>305</sup> Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” 7.

<sup>306</sup> Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, “Vor 40 Jahren: Rechtsextremer Anschlag.”

<sup>307</sup> Der Spiegel, “Mit Dumdum aus der Schußlinie.”

<sup>308</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutz '80*, 3.

President Haldenwang referred to “the perpetrator of the anti-Semitic attack in Halle”.<sup>309</sup> In the short time frame after the Halle attack, the BfV quickly identified the right-wing extremist motive of the attacker, compared to the Oktoberfest bombing, where it took forty years to speak of such an intention. Still, this difference should be explained while considering the target of the Halle attack, a Jewish synagogue, clearly demonstrating the right-wing extremist incentive of Balliet, whereas Köhler murdered a randomly selected crowd during the Oktoberfest. Nevertheless, the categorisation of the perpetrator's motive in both cases indicates a difference in securitisation processes. Namely, the clearer the categorisation of the attackers' motive, the more evident the threat can be described by the BfV. In the case of the Oktoberfest, the motive of the perpetrator was less clear which may have caused fewer security perceptions within the BfV toward the neo-Nazi threat compared to the Halle attack.

Lastly, a difference can be perceived in the measures taken by the BfV after both attacks, as no extraordinary measures were taken after the Oktoberfest. The only measures adopted after the Oktoberfest assault were the ban on the WSG and the increase in investigations into right-wing extremists.<sup>310</sup> The BfV also considered the neo-Nazi problem to be “under control”, pointing towards the stagnation of neo-Nazi violence as a result of their successful work, from their perspective.<sup>311</sup> However, criticism from society about the long inaction of the city and state to implement political measures demonstrates there could indeed have been a lack of appropriate measures.<sup>312</sup> The weak measures, high criticism from society, and the description of the situation as being under control reveal the unsuccessful securitisation of right-wing extremism after the Oktoberfest attack.

In contrast, considerably more extraordinary measures were implemented after the Halle attack. To start, Gudula Geuther states that the BfV aimed to closely work together with other agencies, particularly with the *Bundeskriminalamt* (BKA), to hit right-wing extremist groups.<sup>313</sup> Also, Federal Interior Minister of the BMI Seehofer aimed to take a closer look at gaming platforms, and investigate if they deal with a computer game or a covert to plan a terrorist attack.<sup>314</sup> The BfV also discussed working towards the withdrawal of the firearms licenses because, among others, the Halle attack brought the threat of right-wing extremists in the

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<sup>309</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Dritte öffentliche Anhörung der Präsidenten der Nachrichtendienste des Bundes durch das Parlamentarische Kontrollgremium im Deutschen Bundestag,” October 29, 2019, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/reden/DE/2019/eingangsstatement-haldenwang-dritte-oeffentliche-anhoerung-durch-das-parlamentarische-kontrollgremium.html>.

<sup>310</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutz '80*, 3.

<sup>311</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutz '80*, 3.

<sup>312</sup> Andreasch, “Vier Jahrzehnte im Kampf gegen,” 190.

<sup>313</sup> Gudula Geuther, “Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus: Zwei Behörden an einem Strang,” *Deutschlandfunk*, October 15, 2019, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/strategien-gegen-rechtsextremismus-zwei-behoerden-an-einem-100.html>.

<sup>314</sup> Geuther, “Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus.”

possession of firearms into the picture.<sup>315</sup> On the local level, the Saxony-Anhalt's State Office for the Protection of the Constitution made plans for a reorganisation of their agency.<sup>316</sup>

Again, the more far-reaching measures after the Halle attack, compared to the Oktoberfest, should be explained keeping in mind the target of Halle (a Jewish synagogue), allowing the BfV to clearly identify the right-wing extremist motive and protect the Jewish people, as referent objects. Even more, it is likely that more information can be found on preventative measures after Halle due to the increased level of transparency of the BfV after the NSU discovery in 2011.

Thus, the differences between both case studies demonstrate less securitisation of the BfV in the case of the Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 compared to the Halle attack of 2019 (see Table 2), indicating a shift in their threat perceptions against the neo-Nazi threat.

Differences	Securitisation Cues	Motive Perpetrator	Measures
Case study I: Oktoberfest bombing 1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of Oktoberfest festivities</li> <li>WSG identified as "harmless" organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motive at first based on hate and personal frustration</li> <li>Right-wing motive not identified until July 2020</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ban WSG and increased investigations</li> <li>Criticism about long inaction</li> <li>No extraordinary measures</li> </ul>
Case study II: Halle attack 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attack identified as "greatest threat" to Germany</li> <li>Attack perceived as evidence for great risks of violent right-wing extremism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perpetrator identified as "anti-Semitic"</li> <li>Nuance: Motivation recognisable due to Jewish synagogue as target</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working closer with other agencies</li> <li>Investigations gaming platforms</li> <li>Withdrawal firearms licenses</li> <li>Local plans for reorganisation</li> </ul>

Table 2. Overview Differences between Case Study I and II.

This finding is in line with Chapter 2 which revealed an increase in the securitisation of the neo-Nazi threat by the BfV after the reunification. The shift between both attacks also

<sup>315</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2019*, 58.

<sup>316</sup> Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, "Verfassungsschutzchef: Halle-Attentat."

contradicts previous literature arguing for an “underestimation” of the threat by German authorities.<sup>317</sup> However, the findings should be cautiously interpreted, as the BfV could more easily identify the Halle attacker as a right-wing extremist due to his target, making the securitisation of the threat and the implementation of far-reaching measures easier compared to the Oktoberfest bombing.

### Concluding Remarks

The comparison between the right-wing extremist Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 and the Halle attack of 2019 respectively has illustrated similarities and differences in the securitisation processes and measures by the BfV. More specifically, the chapter has demonstrated that whereas the Oktoberfest bombing was somewhat less securitised with a lack of measures, the Halle attack of 2019 was increasingly more securitised with accompanying extraordinary measures.

The comparison showed that both case studies share some similarities in the securitisation process, namely, the lone wolf argument and the amount of criticism towards the BfV’s approach. These resemblances could imply that both cases were securitised to a lower extent, demonstrating evidence of previous research pointing towards the disownment of right-wing extremist attacks in the 1980s, and the underestimation of the right-wing extremist threat in more recent years.<sup>318</sup>

However, the differences between the attacks are in accordance with the hypothesis of this chapter, showing that the Oktoberfest bombing was less securitised compared to the Halle attack. Namely, fewer cues of securitisation elements were recognised in the discussion of the Oktoberfest bombing compared to the Halle attack. Even more, the perpetrator’s right-wing motive was less evident to the BfV in the Oktoberfest bombing in contrast to the Halle attack. This finding could indicate that the threat of neo-Nazism in 1980 was not as prominent compared to 2019, although the result should be considered keeping in mind the clear target of the Halle attack. A striking divergence could also be perceived in the extraordinary measures by the BfV, as it appears that the Halle attack was accompanied by extraordinary measures as opposed to the Oktoberfest bombing.

To conclude, considering the differences between the attacks, a change seemed to have occurred in the BfV’s threat perception toward neo-Nazism after the reunification, in contrast

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<sup>317</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 3-251; El Oussail, “10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung,”; Meier, “The Idea of Terror,” 9.

<sup>318</sup> Malthaner and Waldmann, “Terrorism in Germany,” 126; Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 3-251; El Oussail, “10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung,”; Meier, “The Idea of Terror,” 9.

to the literature and accordance with Chapter 2. But, as the similarities between the attacks paint a more nuanced view accordingly to the literature on the subject, the findings do not correspond entirely with Chapter 2. Thus, while there is evidence of a shift after the reunification, an even more 'cautious' optimistic view of the BfV's threat perceptions and measures toward neo-Nazism is appropriate.

## Discussion & Conclusion

At the press release for the presentation of the annual BfV 2020 report on 15 June 2021, current BfV President Thomas Haldenwang drew attention to the recent right-wing extremist attacks in Germany, stating: “Anti-Semitism is and remains a bond that unites diverse extremists. But there is no place for anti-Semites in Germany! (...) I assure you that we will work with the utmost commitment to protect Jewish institutions and Jewish life in Germany!”<sup>319</sup> This reassurance by the BfV to protect the German public, especially the Jewish population, from neo-Nazi violence is illustrative of the findings obtained in this thesis: the BfV's substantial awareness of the threat posed by neo-Nazism.

This study started with an observed issue, namely, the action of the German government against neo-Nazism possibly being at stake and heavily criticised for its underestimation of the neo-Nazi threat. This topic is highly relevant because of the dangerous blind spot toward right-wing terrorism in the academic field, especially as right-wing extreme acts of violence have increased significantly in Germany in recent years.<sup>320</sup> Therefore, this thesis aimed to contextualise the key factors, security threat perceptions, and preventative measures of the domestic intelligence service the BfV from 1990 to 2020 for the understanding of the German neo-Nazism approach and threat perceptions.

First, a diachronic analysis of the neo-Nazism development in Germany and the German governmental approaches to the neo-Nazi threat and other threats from 1945 onwards was examined. Furthermore, security perceptions and preventative measures adopted against the neo-Nazi threat by the BfV from 1990 till 2020 were investigated in the BfV annual reports by making use of ST. To demonstrate empirical evidence for the findings obtained in the BfV's annual reports' analysis, a case study comparison was conducted between the right-wing extremist Oktoberfest bombing of 1980 and the Halle attack of 2019. The comparative approach was first applied and followed by the application of ST, to demonstrate the differences and similarities in the BfV's threat perceptions and preventative measures in both case studies and to perceive if a change had occurred in threat perceptions and measures after German reunification.

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<sup>319</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Statement von BfV-Präsident Thomas Haldenwang zur Vorstellung des Verfassungsschutzberichts 2020,” 15 June, 2021, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/reden/DE/2021/statement-haldenwang-vorstellung-des-verfassungsschutzberichts-2020.html>.

<sup>320</sup> Koehler, “Violence and Terrorism,” 4; Schuurman, “Topics in Terrorism Research,” 463-480; Association of Counselling Centres for Victims of Right-wing, Racist and Antisemitic Violence in Germany, “Rechte, Rassistische und Antisemitische Gewalt in Deutschland 2020.”

As revealed by the diachronic analysis, the East-West hostility of the Cold War highly influenced the denazification processes of the FRG and GDR and explained the developments of neo-Nazism in each state. Although the examination of Nazi crimes was inadequate and delayed in the FRG, it was much more influential compared to the GDR.<sup>321</sup> The development of neo-Nazism seemed to have been somewhat similar in the GDR and the FRG. While first signs of neo-Nazism can be traced back to the 1950s in West Germany, origins in East Germany were visible in the 1960s.<sup>322</sup> Furthermore, the states shared a similar ignorance to combat the neo-Nazi threat at this time. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, a significant increase was visible in neo-Nazi attacks, especially in the former GDR.<sup>323</sup> In the years to follow, a continuous development of neo-Nazi brutality was recognised, with the notable NSU discovery in 2011 and a new increase of violence after the refugee crisis in 2015.<sup>324</sup>

A key finding from the analysis of the BfV annual reports is the identification of the reoccurring ‘waves’ of securitisation between 1990 and 2020, demonstrating this more nuanced impression of the BfV’s perceptions and measures toward neo-Nazism compared to previous research. In the decade after the reunification, the neo-Nazi threat moved from a politicised to a securitised issue with a particularly notable development perceived in the continuous securitisation from 1992 onwards.<sup>325</sup> In the 2000s, an expected decreased attention for the neo-Nazi threat was observed due to the events of 9/11. Still, the neo-Nazi threat remained an essential subject for the BfV, visible in the implementation of measures such as the Exit Program for Right-wing Extremists and renewed threat perceptions after 2005.<sup>326</sup> The 2010s were marked by again a renewed securitisation of the neo-Nazi threat and implementation of preventative measures by the BfV, recognised in the BfV’s discussion of the threat as having “terrorist structures” and the reforms within the BfV.<sup>327</sup> This impression of renewed attention reveals that the BfV was certainly conscious of the threat posed by neo-Nazism from German reunification until 2020.

Next, the case study comparison demonstrated that while the right-wing extremist attack on the Oktoberfest of 1980 was somewhat less securitised with fewer extraordinary measures, the attack in Halle of 2019 was more securitised and supplemented with extraordinary

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<sup>321</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory: A Nazi Past in Two Germanys*, 385-386.

<sup>322</sup> Neeb, “Rechtsextreme Orientierungen unter Jugendlichen,”; Adenauer Campus, “Neonazis in der DDR.”

<sup>323</sup> Hoehl, “Neo-Nazism and the Right-Wing Movement,” 95.

<sup>324</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2011*, 60; Bundesministerium des Innern, *Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität im Jahr 2014*, 2.

<sup>325</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1993*, 78; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1992*, 86; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1996*, 235.

<sup>326</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2015*, 47.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*



measures. While the similarities of the lone-wolf argument and media criticism showed some evidence for a lower degree of securitisation in each case, the differences connected to the measures, cues of securitisation, and the identification of the attacker's motive confirmed that the Oktoberfest bombing was less securitised and effectively acted upon compared to the attack in Halle. The results showed to be in vigilant agreement with the findings of Chapter 2 as the similarities presented a lower amount of securitisation, resulting in the adoption of a more "cautious" optimistic view regarding the BfV's securitisation of the neo-Nazi threat.

In terms of the BfV's threat perceptions and preventative measures toward the neo-Nazi threat from 1990 to 2020, it can be concluded that the BfV made key steps in its securitisation and preventative measures against the neo-Nazi threat since the German reunification. These results contradict previous literature on several fundamental points. Firstly, the continuous securitisation of neo-Nazism by the BfV in the 1990s opposed the statements of Malthaner and Waldmann who argue for the "limited priority" that was given to the threat after 1994.<sup>328</sup> Secondly, although neo-Nazism was somewhat replaced by Islamic terror in the 2000s, this was not reflected in the BfV's threat perceptions and preventative measures towards neo-Nazism as was expected from the statements of Koehler and Lehr.<sup>329</sup> Thirdly, the findings of the 2010s revealed renewed securitisation and increased preventative measures against neo-Nazism, whereas journalists referred to Germany's "blind eye" toward the threat in more recent years.<sup>330</sup> However, the case study comparison revealed a more cautious interpretation of the findings as the similarities showed lower levels of securitisation in both neo-Nazi attacks. Still, the differences indicated this 'positive' shift in the security perceptions of the BfV from 1980 to 2019. Thus, the results proved to be a valuable addition to the literature as it can tentatively be ruled out that the BfV was ignorant of the neo-Nazi menace after the German reunification, even underestimating the threat somehow.

This different perspective may have been found due to the application of the ST and the comparative approach in this research to explore explanations for Germany's alleged reluctance toward the neo-Nazi threat. Another explanation could be connected to the investigation of ideas and narratives in the BfV's annual reports, that have not been examined in this particular context before and surprisingly did not receive much attention in the academic field.<sup>331</sup> These new approaches might have revealed, at least regarding the BfV, a slightly contrasting result.

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<sup>328</sup> Malthaner and Waldmann, "Terrorism in Germany," 121.

<sup>329</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 3-251; Lehr, "Still Blind in the Right Eye?," 207.

<sup>330</sup> El Oussail, "10 Jahre NSU-Enttarnung."

<sup>331</sup> Schmeer, "Intelligence for the Masses," 265.

However, as this study was limited to the investigation of the BfV, the findings are not generalisable to the perceptions of other agencies or even the German state as a whole. In the end, German institutions such as the BKA and local state offices of the BfV (*Verfassungsschutzämter*) could display different levels of securitisation about the neo-Nazi threat and may offer explanations for the hypothesised underestimation of the threat. A further weakness is a disregard, due to the scope of this thesis, of the security culture approach which catches the cultural differences and developments of threat perceptions over time.<sup>332</sup> According to Christopher Daase, security culture is the sum of beliefs, values, and practices of institutions and individuals that define what can be perceived as an insecurity and how this threat should be tackled.<sup>333</sup> Adding this approach could have provided a more definite and broader understanding of the BfV's securitisation processes. Lastly, the questions remain *why* there is still a significantly high number of neo-Nazi violence in Germany and *why* there seems to be a mismatch in translating the threat perceptions to effective approaches against neo-Nazism in Germany.

Accordingly, the remaining questions and limitations reveal recommendations for future research. To start, future research should investigate the securitisation processes and measures adopted by other German institutions to demonstrate how neo-Nazism is perceived in other sectors within Germany. Furthermore, a comparison between the threat perceptions of Islamic terrorism and neo-Nazism could be worthwhile to demonstrate whether Islamic terrorism is actually prioritised over neo-Nazism in Germany and which possible explanations underlie it, as there is indeed an emphasis on Islamic terrorism within the BfV. As put forward by a German security intelligence elite in an interview with Meier, Islamic terrorism “threatens society as a whole and the foundations of society: property rights, democracy, Christian values, Western values (...) This is just my theory, but the victims [of far-right attacks] were “only migrants”.”<sup>334</sup> The different targets of Islamic terror might be a cause for prioritisation and a useful starting point for a further investigation into this discrepancy in threat perceptions. The prioritisation of Islamic terror could also be connected to another critique against the ST by Sarah Bertrand, who points towards the ‘silence problem’ that encounters marginalised groups.<sup>335</sup> Bertrand argues that these marginalised groups are unable to securitise their problems because they are

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<sup>332</sup> Christopher Daase, “On Paradox and Pathologies – A Cultural Approach to Security,” in *Transformations of Security Studies: Dialogues, Diversity and Discipline*, eds. Gabi Schlag, Julian Junk and Christopher Daase (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2016), 82-93.

<sup>333</sup> Christopher Daase, “National, Societal and Human Security: On the Transformation of Political Language,” *Historical Social Research* 35, no. 4 (2010): 22, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25758856>.

<sup>334</sup> Meier, “The Idea of Terror,” 9.

<sup>335</sup> Sarah Bertrand, “Can the Subaltern Securitize? Postcolonial Perspectives on Securitization Theory and Its Critics,” *European Journal of International Security* 3, no. 3 (2018): 283-290, doi:10.1017/eis.2018.3.

silenced or spoken for by others.<sup>336</sup> The silencing processes might apply to the victims of neo-Nazi attacks, consisting mainly of ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups, who might be unable to reach the German authorities with their grievances due to silencing processes.<sup>337</sup> Investigating these mechanisms in the German context could deepen the understanding as to why the neo-Nazi threat is supposedly receiving less attention compared to the Islamic terrorist threat, which may target groups and values more likely to be noticed by German authorities.<sup>338</sup>

Furthermore, further research could conduct a comparison with other countries to examine whether Germany has a unique approach that causes failures in dealing with the neo-Nazi threat. For example, research by Jacco Pekelder illustrates that the Netherlands and Germany had a similar approach to dealing with terrorism, at least regarding the RAF.<sup>339</sup> Pekelder argued that Germany's approach to the RAF was not unique or even “typically German,” demonstrating that the Netherlands also lacked sovereignty to fight terrorism.<sup>340</sup> A comparison of the approaches against neo-Nazism between Germany and a similar country could provide insights into whether Germany specifically makes poor decisions or whether other countries are making equivalent mistakes, offering a new perspective on the criticism against the *Bundesrepublik*.

Thus, although additional research on the perceptions and measures of German authorities toward the neo-Nazi threat is required, this thesis provided salient understandings of the BfV's threat perceptions and preventative measures towards the threat from 1990 to 2020. Namely, the results suggest that the criticism toward the German approach and securitisation of the neo-Nazi threat should be replaced with an optimistic, but cautious, interpretation of the security perceptions and measures against neo-Nazism in the case of the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*. Decades after the crimes of the Holocaust and the victory of the Allied forces over Nazi Germany in 1945, the German authorities thus seem to have securitised neo-Nazism. But, as neo-Nazi violence remains to haunt Germany, there is still much to be gained in reducing the neo-Nazi cruelties. In the end, actions do speak louder than words.

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<sup>336</sup> Bertrand, “Can the Subaltern Securitise?,” 283-290.

<sup>337</sup> Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 165.

<sup>338</sup> Meier, “The Idea of Terror,” 9.

<sup>339</sup> Jacco Pekelder, “Dynamiken Des Terrorismus in Deutschland und den Niederlanden (The Dynamics of Terrorism in Germany and the Netherlands),” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 35, no. 3 (2009): 427-428, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25622206>.

<sup>340</sup> Pekelder, “Dynamiken Des Terrorismus in Deutschland,” 427-428.

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## Appendix – Plagiarism Rules Awareness Statement



Faculty of Humanities  
Version September 2014

### PLAGIARISM RULES AWARENESS STATEMENT

#### **Fraud and Plagiarism**

Scientific integrity is the foundation of academic life. Utrecht University considers any form of scientific deception to be an extremely serious infraction. Utrecht University therefore expects every student to be aware of, and to abide by, the norms and values regarding scientific integrity.

The most important forms of deception that affect this integrity are fraud and plagiarism. Plagiarism is the copying of another person's work without proper acknowledgement, and it is a form of fraud. The following is a detailed explanation of what is considered to be fraud and plagiarism, with a few concrete examples. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list!

If fraud or plagiarism is detected, the study programme's Examination Committee may decide to impose sanctions. The most serious sanction that the committee can impose is to submit a request to the Executive Board of the University to expel the student from the study programme.

#### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the copying of another person's documents, ideas or lines of thought and presenting it as one's own work. You must always accurately indicate from whom you obtained ideas and insights, and you must constantly be aware of the difference between citing, paraphrasing and plagiarising. Students and staff must be very careful in citing sources; this concerns not only printed sources, but also information obtained from the Internet.

The following issues will always be considered to be plagiarism:

- cutting and pasting text from digital sources, such as an encyclopaedia or digital periodicals, without quotation marks and footnotes;
- cutting and pasting text from the Internet without quotation marks and footnotes;
- copying printed materials, such as books, magazines or encyclopaedias, without quotation marks or footnotes;
- including a translation of one of the sources named above without quotation marks or footnotes;
- paraphrasing (parts of) the texts listed above without proper references: paraphrasing must be marked as such, by expressly mentioning the original author in the text or in a footnote, so that you do not give the impression that it is your own idea;
- copying sound, video or test materials from others without references, and presenting it as one's own work;
- submitting work done previously by the student without reference to the original paper, and presenting it as original work done in the context of the course, without the express permission of the course lecturer;
- copying the work of another student and presenting it as one's own work. If this is done with the consent of the other student, then he or she is also complicit in the plagiarism;
- when one of the authors of a group paper commits plagiarism, then the other co-authors are also complicit in plagiarism if they could or should have known that the person was committing plagiarism;
- submitting papers acquired from a commercial institution, such as an Internet site with summaries or papers, that were written by another person, whether or not that other person received payment for the work.




Universiteit Utrecht

The rules for plagiarism also apply to rough drafts of papers or (parts of) theses sent to a lecturer or feedback, to the extent that submitting rough drafts for feedback is mentioned in the course handbook or the thesis regulations.

The Education and Examination Regulations (Article 5.15) describe the formal procedure in case of suspicion of fraud and/or plagiarism, and the sanctions that can be imposed.

Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse. Each individual is responsible for their own behaviour. Utrecht University assumes that each student or staff member knows what fraud and plagiarism entail. For its part, Utrecht University works to ensure that students are informed of the principles of scientific practice, which are taught as early as possible in the curriculum, and that students are informed of the institution's criteria for fraud and plagiarism, so that every student knows which norms they must abide by.

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.	
Name:	Anouschka Witte
Student number:	6247407
Date and signature:	13-06-2022 

Submit this form to your supervisor when you begin writing your Bachelor's final paper or your Master's thesis.

Failure to submit or sign this form does not mean that no sanctions can be imposed if it appears that plagiarism has been committed in the paper.